Older Women's Network North Shore Inc.

Our Own Stories

for future generations

OWN Writing For Our Grandchildren group in 2007

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Foreword

The *OWN Writing Group* started in the East Coast Bays in 1999. It flourished to such an extent that a second Group was later established at Beach Haven. Currently there are 40 Group members, ranging in age from mid-fifties to four-score-years and beyond!

The *Writing Groups* are a welcoming forum for older women to get together and write their stories for future generations. Women from many places, many walks of life get together because they all share a love of writing.

The diversity of the members contributes a richness to the Group. Meetings produce a feast of wonderful stories written about their own lives and their heritage.

There are valued records of what life was like forty, fifty, and sixty years ago here in New Zealand and overseas. There are stories of courage in adversity, adventures, love, and the abiding strength of families. The writers' voices give great insight into their lives and we are able to appreciate their journeys.

We hope you will enjoy reading some of the memories selected for this volume. We feel privileged to share our stories with one another, and with our readers.

Anne Briggs
December 2014

Contents

Writing For Our Grandchildren

Written in praise of the fellowship and creative diversity found in *Writing For Our Grandchildren* (*WFOG*).

We meet to tell the stories of our childhood and youth,
Of veggie patch and boarding school, the loss of our first tooth,
Of moving house, of starting work, of friends and family,
Of games we played,
Of wartime,
And of black and white TV.
Our pets, our birthday presents,
Our Christmases of old.
For each of us
A little piece of memory to be told.

continues ☞

We write to paint our grandchildren
A picture of our past,
A patchwork glimpse of bygone days,
A gift for them to last.

In doing so, we find out more
Of how we came to be
The women that we are today,
In WFOG.

And in the telling of our tales
We've found out about each other.
We've laughed
And shared some special thoughts,
Supported by one another

When they read, we hope our grandchildren
Will have the same amount of fun
As we have had in writing down
Our mem'ries of when we were young

Edna Peters

From War Torn Germany to a New Life in Canada

My father survived the war. As a young farmer he was drafted and sent to the Russian Front – he was wounded nine times, 'mended' each time and sent back out to be wounded again (he was damned lucky to make it through the war alive). He returned to his village, a broken young man, both in spirit and body. There he met my mother, a refugee from the east; also a 'survivor'! They fell in love and married.

Life was not easy for my mother in the narrow-minded Catholic village, not only was she a refugee, but also a Protestant. This, together with my father's disillusionment with Germany and the pull-factor of the post-war industrial boom in the 'new world' enticed my parents to apply for immigration to Canada. However, because of the war, most Germans were prevented from entering. In 1950 this immigration ban was lifted – economic factors dictated over social issues – Canada needed the workers.

Sponsored by my uncle in Alberta, my parents left Germany in 1951 to start anew with two young children (my little brother was only three months old). My uncle's farm was in Northern Alberta, 90 miles north of the capital city, Edmonton. Only weeks before our arrival, my uncle's house had burned down and his family of six was living in the garage. They had cleaned out the chicken shed for us to live in.

Alberta winters are very long and severe with temperatures as cold as minus 45 degrees for up to five months and it was November, the start of winter. The nappies that my mother hung inside to dry overnight were frozen to a solid sheet by morning. My father worked as a lumberjack further north –

twelve hours a day, six days a week – and had leave to come home every three months.

When he had acquired a smattering of English, we moved to Edmonton to make a start in the city. Work was plentiful and Dad got a labouring job with a large firm dealing in pipes. For a few years we lived in a basement flat with apple boxes for furniture. Every morning my mother packed lunch for Dad and then both took the bus to work – my mother to clean other people's houses. She spoke hardly any English and as a domestic servant had little opportunity to learn. I was left to mind my little brother while the landlady (who was also German), 'kept an eye' on us. At the weekend the whole family went to clean the offices of the same firm Dad worked for. My brother and I emptied waste bins and soon graduated to sweeping jobs (does this remind you of something from *Charles Dickens*?).

Most weekends during the summer months we took the bus to the Parliament Park for a picnic. These were special family interludes cherished by us all. We didn't have much in material possessions, but we did have a lot of love and the family unit worked for a common goal; to be able to afford our own home.

1950's European immigrants in Edmonton, Canada

Because of the large German population, the area we lived in was often referred to as "Little Berlin". German was spoken in the local shops, we attended a German church, and socialising was with relatives and other German immigrants. Our cultural sub-group with its own unique set of 'group perspectives' had grown out of the common bond these people had. All had left their homeland and possessions to settle in a foreign country. The church played a very important role in our lives as did our social support network.

There were other cultural sub-groups in Edmonton, such as "Little Italy", "Little Holland", and "Little Ukraine", to name just a few. Like us, they were also post-war migrants wanting a better life for their children. Most held the same ideology – try to fit in, never complain, don't expect charity and you will be accepted as a 'Canadian'!

Rosemarie Carr

Born in Wurtzburg-am-Maine, Germany. Rosemarie travelled to Canada, aged two, with her parents. She came to New Zealand in 1970 with her Kiwi husband and settled in the East Coast Bays.

The Codling Moth

The Codling Moth does a lot of damage to apple and pear trees. I think the invention of the Codling Moth trap is a dream come true.

There is nothing worse than eating into an apple and finding a caterpillar in the middle – "a maggoty apple"!

Female codling moths lay eggs on flowers, leaves and twigs, then the larvae emerge and burrow into the core of the fruit. They stay there for three to five weeks.

The traps attract the male moth on their sticky mat with the smell of the female moth. In addition to traps we can grow lavender and nasturtium plants around our trees instead of using sprays.

Gloria Day

Gloria is a born and bred New Zealander with a great love of nature. She has written many short informative pieces for the group about the countryside she loves. Although Gloria does not currently attend meetings she enjoys receiving stories from group members to read in the retirement home on the North Shore where she now lives.

Nostalgia

I am walking on the coastal path at Long Bay on a still and partly cloudy Autumn morning. The sea shimmers with a soft light, sail boats pass between the cliffs and Rangitoto, the birds sing in the bush and the cattle graze in the long grass – and my throat catches with the beauty all around me.

I reflect that I have had seventy-seven 17th of April days in my life and although this particular date has no particular significance that comes to mind, it is possible that I may not experience another April 17, ever. Not probable – I am strong and healthy, and my legs carry me wherever I wish to go without any problem – nevertheless, possible. I cannot be sure that while there may be other April 17s ahead, it could be that for some reason (accident, illness) I may not be able to walk, climb and ramble again. This could be "the last time" – an ending of sorts.

Samuel Johnson wrote: "In every life there are pauses and interruptions … points of time where one course of action ends and another begins; and by vicissitude of fortune,

or alteration of employment, by change of place or loss of friendship, we are forced to say of something, this is the last." He was writing for the last issue of the *Idler* and he knew it was the last, but so often we don't know. And I wondered …

When did I stop walking on walls
Or watching the clouds roll by

When did I stop believing in fairies,
Santa Claus and Happy-ever-after endings

When did I put away my dolls
When was the last time I climbed my old Pepper-tree
When was the end of innocence and trust?

When did I last carry one of my children in my arms
Or read them a bed-time story

When did I stop building castles in the sand
And romancing about being a Hollywood star?

We may never know the "last time", the ending of precious things we took for granted. But we can remember that every day is a gift and that, as the song goes — "We don't know what we've got till its gone".

Shirley Williams

Shirley was born and raised in Mount Eden and worked most of her life as a social worker. She now lives on the North Shore.

Falkland Islands

On 25th February, 2013, Graeme and I, along with his sister Dianne, and her husband Peter, boarded the *Star Princess* for a 29-day cruise from Buenos Aires to Los Angeles. Of the 16 ports of call on the trip the one that we were most looking forward to visiting was the Falkland Islands. The Captain explained that of the previous twelve cruise ships attempting to get into the Falklands, because of extreme weather conditions, only one of those was successful. As I am not a very good sailor, this was not sounding very good.

On 2nd March, the day dawned and the weather was beautiful – 15 degrees and sunny, but with a very cold wind. Success! We were going to be able to go ashore. Out came the Kathmandu jacket, the possum merino and silk hat and gloves. I was not going to be cold. We travelled from ship to shore by tender, which took ten minutes.

The Falkland Islands is very desolate with hardly a tree in sight. We were met by Dave, and were shown to a 4-wheel drive which was going to take us to *Volunteer Point*, where we would see the three different types of penguins – the Gentoo, the King, and the Magellanic.

We travelled for 30 minutes on a clay road and then traversed across rough paddocks for the next 16 kilometres. There were no roads and the tracks were muddy and full of potholes,

which we became stuck in twice. It took us 1¾ hours to travel these last 16 kilometres. We finally came to this beautiful picturesque bay, which no one swims in because it is so isolated and also far too cold. Dave, our driver, told us the weather in the Falkland Islands is appalling. There are two seasons. Winter is winter and summer is winter.

We alighted from the vehicle, and there in front of us was a large penguin colony, with the three breeds of penguins living in harmony. There was an outline of a circle about 50 metres in circumference with a sign that said, "Penguins only beyond this point". I did not realise that penguins could read, but they must be able to, because there were thousands of them within this circle. The smell was incredible! They are taller than I had envisaged, and so beautiful. The white part is so white and the silver part so shiny. The King Penguins are the prettiest with the bright yellow colour on their heads and under their chin. There were adults with cuddly grey babies beside them, or hiding under their fronts.

As we walked amongst the penguins, they were not in the least intimidated by our presence. In fact they came up and treated us with curiosity. I was amazed at the size of their eggs, which are huge. I watched as some of them wandered off down towards the sea and took a quick swim, then came back to the colony. Their predators are the seals.

After spending two hours amongst them it was time to travel the 2¼ hours over that rough terrain to get back to our ship. But, oh, what an unforgettable experience. Well worth the trip.

Judy Brocherie

Judy was born in Christchurch, and moved to Auckland in 1987 with her husband and three children.

Teal Crescent Polling Booth

As the 2011 Parliamentary Elections are drawing near, it seems to me to be a very appropriate occasion to remember the time when our basement / garage at 55 Teal Crescent, Beach Haven, was used as a Polling Booth.

In 1983 when we had *First Past the Post* electoral system, the wealthy Wellington business man, Robert (Bob) Jones got fed up with the then National Government and its Leader, the Prime Minister, Robert (Rob) Muldoon. So, the next year Bob Jones started a new political party called the New Zealand Party. Rob Muldoon did not take too kindly to Bob Jones' interference, so he went to Parliament in a very drunken state and called for a snap election on 14 July, 1984.

Usually the NZ Electoral Commission has three years to plan a Parliamentary Election, but this time, they had only one month to organise themselves. Ordinarily, it is a huge task with a multitude of arrangements to be made. Two of the many tasks are the printing of voting papers and arranging venues that are suitable Polling Booths.

You can imagine our shock when two very well dressed gentlemen arrived at our place one Saturday morning. One of the boys was cutting the lawns, another was washing the car, and the boys next door were riding their bikes on our drive and giving everyone cheek. They proceeded to walk past Ian, so I caught up with them and asked what they were doing. They asked if our basement / garage could be used as a Polling Booth, as many of the usual venues that were normally used for Election Day, were booked up! They went ahead and inspected our property and found we met their criteria. The basement had a separate toilet,

tea-making facilities, and had a phone extension (mobile phones did not exist). So, my husband Ian and I started the biggest spring-clean you can imagine. You would have thought we were shifting house! We emptied out the garage of all its junk and carefully stored ladders, tools, etc. around the back of the house, and then I scrubbed out the garage, the little kitchen, shower / toilet room and the rumpus room that we used as a bedroom adjoining the garage.

I was officially employed as a Poll Clerk / Receptionist, answering the phone, and the cup-of-tea-maker. Somehow, everything was ready in time, with all the necessary furniture, signs, voting boxes, stationery, etc. having been delivered. The day dawned, and it was quite showery, but the people came and queued all along our flat drive to the letterbox. At one stage, it rained quite steadily and I went out to give a man in a wheelchair an umbrella and apologise that there was not enough room to shelter in the garage. The man pushing the wheelchair said, "Don't worry lady, we have got to get rid of Muldoon," and then the people in the queue started chanting it right out to the letter-box. I quickly ran back inside! I did not want to become a political activist!

People power won the day because David Lange was voted into Parliament as our Prime Minister. Bob Jones disbanded the New Zealand Party the next year in 1985. He had achieved what he set out to do. The first *Mixed Member Proportional* (MMP) election was held in November 1996.

I was employed as a Poll Clerk at three later elections and found it to be very interesting.

Kathleen Sharkey

Kathleen was born in New Zealand. She has lived in Auckland all her life. Her grandfather was a builder on the construction of the *Titanic*.

The Front Room

I grew up in the shadow of World War I. It wasn't actually discussed, but in the front room of our home there was a large picture on the wall of a handsome soldier photographed in sepia. He had lovely soft eyes and a droopy moustache. Next to him was a matching picture of my Dad. Both men were dressed in khaki army uniforms. When I sat there with my father, as a small enquiring child, Dad told me, "That's your Uncle. He was killed in the war a week before peace was declared." I now realise that Dad never really recovered from the guilt of his own survival.

That room was so special. I was only allowed in there to dust, but, early on, I decided that dusting was a pointless exercise. Instead, I got stuck into the books and spent a lot of time arranging them in a way that I thought looked like a library. I always liked my Dad's bound copies of *The Strand* magazines with their interesting pictures of Edwardian ladies trying to ride penny farthing bikes, or one of Siamese twins, now called "conjoined". However, that initial impression of my uncle looking down at me from the photo has been so strongly associated with tragedy that I believe it re-surfaced when my daughter died in 2004 and I was told by a complete stranger that a man dressed as a soldier was near to me. I had no doubt it was Uncle Charlie.

In the 1930s, the legacy of the Great War was all around. Close by lived the blind man with several children, so poor that he was forced to sell matches on the street every Saturday. Even then, I felt ashamed for him to be so demeaned. Likewise, veterans hobbling round on crutches were conspicuous reminders of a tragic event that I could barely understand and yet, the plight of the survivors was apparent to anyone.

Our family life was pretty normal. When we played marbles on the street my sister Jeanne would generally win so many that she systematically gave me half, so that I could go out and lose them again. We skipped in time to special chants and when we couldn't get chalk, marked out squares on the pavement with squashed up leaves from the hedge, so that we could play hop-scotch. In time, we were accepted by the big kids, who gossiped amongst themselves and made us aware of more serious stuff, such as how babies were made or what Charlie Chaplin was up to in the movies. Jeanne was younger than I, but seemed to be developing so quickly that as we grew, we both got a crush on the same boy. We managed to get near to his group one day and he showed us how to do the Big Apple and Jitterbug. It was a beautiful September Sunday and we arrived home for lunch, feeling elated. My father was waiting looking anxious and announced, "We are at war with Germany."

I had no idea what this would mean, but for a long period, it meant little, except that an air raid warden's hut was erected on the grassy playground near to our house, and we were given an Anderson air raid shelter. That involved my Dad digging a huge hole in the garden so that the shelter, when assembled could be half submerged. In the spring, my father planted a

A back garden Anderson air raid shelter

marrow that would spread its tendrils over the exposed corrugated iron roof and hide it from the German planes expected to arrive. In the event, the shelter filled up with water and was scarcely used, only to be replaced by an indoor shelter known as the Morrison shelter. This consisted of boarding up the windows in the front room and pushing the piano up against the outside wall. Nearly everyone had a piano, even if they were poor. By the time we all went in there to sleep it was so stuffy, we went back upstairs.

During the Blitz one of the bombs damaged our house, and my brother was injured as the hot water tank fell through his bedroom ceiling. He was taken to hospital. It did extensive damage to the area and for a brief time, my mother opened up the front room for my teacher to hold classes, because our school had been damaged by bomb blast. During subsequent attacks, we were hit again, and the house was so shaky we were moved out of the area into a requisitioned house. The bomb had directly hit a house around the corner, and the three sisters who survived were our schoolmates. They lost their parents. I worried about what would become of them but no-one seemed to know immediately, and leaving as we did, I never found out..

Once the danger was over, the owners of our temporary residence returned from the country to re-claim their home. We were allocated a newly built one. I was pleased for my mother, who thoroughly deserved a break, with all the strain of managing on rations of food that were barely adequate. She kept it immaculate, especially the new front room which again was only used on special occasions.

Some time after the war ended, I became what Winston Churchill described as a deserter ''leaving the sinking ship''. I left England in 1947 for New Zealand. For years, I suffered extreme homesickness, but would not see my parents again until 1966.

One of my Dad's employers thought his work was so amazing that he gave them the fare money to visit us. It was one of the best times of my life, having my Mum and Dad in our home, hectic as it was, with our six children whom they had never seen before.

I wasn't able to re-visit London until 1971. The house seemed smaller than I recalled, and the front room was still off limits and kept for special occasions, such as funerals. When Jeanne whizzed round in her Austin 7, we would gather in the living room, and her infectious humour relaxed Mum in a way I never could.

One afternoon, my younger brother called in briefly and unexpectedly. Suddenly, to our surprise, there was a great flurry and my mother was galvanised into action. We were all ushered into the front room and treated to the rarely used best china for tea and cakes.

I felt a sense of formality as we sat on the cold upholstery in a room that seemed rather lifeless and smelt of carpet and furniture polish. The books had all gone and the photos had been put away for safe keeping in a cupboard. Luckily, my brother seemed unaffected and came out with his usual witticisms to keep things moving along. My mother's sense of occasion was quite touching and her reverence of that room was symbolic of social attitudes that have altered since World War II – the war that changed many lives.

Enid Hillier

Enid was born in London and emigrated to New Zealand in 1947.

The 1986 Census

The *Heaphy Track* is beautiful and varied, and its location in a remote area at the top of the South Island making it one of New Zealand's "Great Walks".

In March 1986, I joined eleven of my friends to walk the *Heaphy Track*. We were all at once excited and anxious to begin this great walk, and so did not take any notice of the population census that was to be held during that week. We were well prepared for the challenge ahead, and filled out our intentions in the Department of Conservation log book at the *Brown Hut*, before setting off on our first day – a testing uphill walk.

On the second day we crossed the *Gouland Downs* – a natural woven carpet of mosses and tussock grass – and then further on, into the bush clad hills. Early morning drizzle turned to heavy rain. The rain teemed down relentlessly, and the hard worn track became a muddy stream. In some places, where there was a bend in the track, torrents of water spilled over the edges, forming new tracks and detours.

With visibility impaired by the heavy rain, and our eyes ever focused on each footstep, we could be easily fooled by a newly formed rain-track and soon realised how simple it would be

Gouland Downs on the Heaphy Track

to lose our way. Rivers rose quickly and we made our final crossing that day, up to our knees in fast flowing water, and linking arms in what would have been a small stream only a few hours before.

By late afternoon we finally we arrived at *McKay Hut*, very wet and tired. It was a great relief to shed our wet weather gear and strip off the woollen clothing beneath. Thanks to the provision of dry fire wood, we soon had a roaring fire. We lined our boots up along the hearth and draped our wet gear over any clothes line, hook, or shelf we could find in order to have it dry for the next day.

We prepared some food and with darkness almost upon us, we settled down by the fire to eat. Even amongst the smell of wood smoke, tramping boots, and wet woolies the dehydrated concoction tasted good. The perils of the day faded as our bodies thawed and we began to relax, regaling ourselves with stories of how we survived the day.

Then, suddenly, the door of the hut burst open and there stood a very wet and bedraggled man. He stepped inside and proceeded to hand out our census forms. After such a wet and exhausting day none of us had remembered this was Census night. Our visitor had come on horseback to this remote location (from where we do not know). He asked us to hand in the completed forms at the pub in Karamea, when we reached there in a few days time.

His duty done, he rode off again – perhaps to another hut, perhaps to a shelter in the bush. We were all so stunned to see him appear on this very dreadful evening that we forgot to ask.

Cherrie Keane

Cherrie was born in Devonport and continues to live in this beautiful suburb.

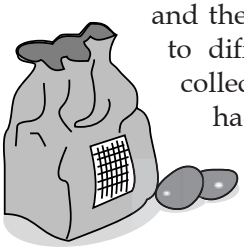
The Potatoes

My grandparents used to live in Moravia, a neighbouring region to Bohemia from where the first Puhoi settlers originated. In both regions there were many German settlements for almost 200 years. Catherine the Great, the German wife of the Russian Tsar Peter III, invited Germans to come and settle in these regions which then belonged to the powerful Russian Empire. My ancestors were part of these immigrants, in search for some land they could work and live on and raise their families.

After the Second World War, the Czechs expelled all ethnic Germans from what now was Czechoslovakia and took over all their possessions. Most men spent several months in Czech concentration camps. If they survived, they were then put in cattle wagons and transported to Germany. My grandparents were happy that, at least, they were almost all together (two of my uncles found my grandparents months later).

From being hard working, proud farmers raising a big family, my grandparents and many others found themselves now as refugees in Germany. This was the country of their ancestors, but they had never been there, nor did they know anybody there. They arrived in refugee camps where there was not enough food or water for the refugees coming from all parts of Eastern Europe. They were treated like beggars and were often badly humiliated by the local Germans who were supposed to share, but often did not want to.

When the harvest time came, my grandmother took, every now and then, some of her ten children with her and went to different farms, where she asked if they could collect the potatoes on the field that the farmers had left after harvesting. One day, she arrived again with some of my uncles and aunts at a farm and talked to the farmer's wife.

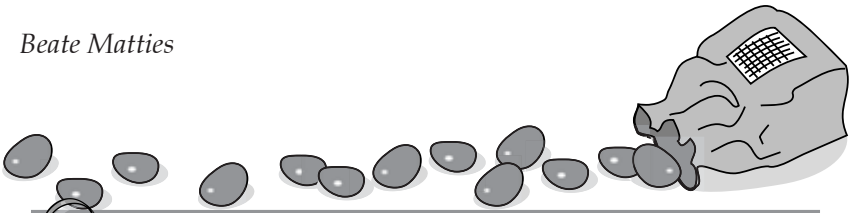


She asked if they could collect the left-over potatoes. The farmer's wife agreed, and so they started immediately collecting these potatoes. My grandmother was so happy when she touched each single potato. She started to think of how she would prepare the potatoes and feed her family. She smelled the potatoes and was reminded of her own fields "back at home".

When they had collected a sack full of potatoes and were ready to leave the field, the farmer suddenly ran towards them, shouting that they were thieves and they should give him back the potatoes which belonged to him! My grandmother was shocked and tried to explain that she had received permission from the farmer's wife. The farmer wouldn't listen. He took her sack, emptied it on the ground, returned the empty sack and chased her and her children from the field.

My grandmother could never forget this incident. It was burnt deep in her heart.

Beate Matties



Beate's country of origin is Germany, arriving in New Zealand in 2010.

Hop Picking: 1946

We set off early in the morning. We weren't the only family going and the lorry was packed to the hilt with everything we needed for the six weeks we were going to be there. Pots and pans, cutlery, old china, bed ticking, food, buckets for water, and a Tilley lamp. We sat on the wooden crates which would become our tables. We spent the journey laughing and singing, excited to be travelling in such a way. The back of the lorry was open, and the men and some of the bigger boys sat on the tailboard with legs dangling over the side.

The streets of London eventually gave way to the Kentish countryside, and when the oast houses began to appear, we knew we were nearing our destination, the hop farm where we were to spend our "holiday". I don't know if Mum truly thought it would be a holiday, or whether it was the need for extra money that persuaded her to transport us, lock, stock, and barrel, to the little hut which would be our home for six weeks.

When we arrived we unloaded the lorry. Our first task was to fill our ticking with straw that the farmer had provided. The hut was very small, very damp, and very dark. Some of the families that went every year brought bits of wallpaper for the walls and old net curtains for the tiny window.

Next morning we were called on to the field by the bailiff and on that first day the rules were read out.

The hop picking was done as a family. We sat around the bin, a large sacking bag supported by poles. A pole puller came round and cut the bines with a long thin pole with a blade on the top. The bine would tumble down and we set about stripping the bine of the hop flowers. The pole pullers were always the men, and I remember Dad doing it for us,

although I don't think he was there all the time. The bines were covered in sharp prickles so it took a while for our hands to become hardened to the job.

At regular intervals the tally men came round and the hops in our bin were measured in bushel baskets and then emptied into a poke, a ten bushel sack, to be taken to the oast houses for drying. The amount we had earned was entered into our account book. We didn't get paid until the end of the hop picking season.

The day lasted from 7:00am until about 5:00pm. Sandwiches were taken with us to the field. I can't remember how we got cups of tea, but I have no doubt that they were produced somehow, as Mum could not go without her regular brew-up. The cry, "Pull no more bines!", was the signal to stop at the end of the day.

You can imagine that pulling the hops off the bines could not keep us children interested for long. But we were expected to do our share and not skive off. We got plenty of time to play though, and the favourite pastime of the boys was scrumping for apples. The enormous green apples we called "scrumping

apples" were used for cider. One day Pete came haring back to the hop fields chased by an irate farmer. He managed to off-load his apples without slowing one jot, and without the farmer realising.

Dinner was cooked outside in a hopping pot, a large cast iron cauldron suspended over a fire. Water in the kettle was boiled the same way. Collecting the faggots for the fire was our job.

Occasionally, after dinner we strolled into the village so that the adults could have a drink in the local pub. Afterwards, we walked back to our hut, singing loudly to counteract the silence and deep black of the country lane, small bats whirling around our heads. We believed that if they came too close they could get caught in your hair, so Doreen and I were always very careful to wear a head scarf.

I think we only went hop picking twice, but if I concentrate, I can still see the small hut, the hop bin with Mum at one end stripping the hop flowers off the bines; can still smell the bitter smell of the hops, and feel the soft, warm dusk of the walk home with the bats circling overhead.

Edna Peters

Edna was born in London, and emigrated to New Zealand in 1965 with a newly acquired Kiwi husband.

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It has buttons and seams and suspenders
All made for a perfect fit

It's stiff looking, my liberty bodice
A bit like a suit of armour
Protecting my chest – over my vest
Donning it can be quite a drama

The buttons are soft and rubbery
And fastening them is a pain
Especially when they get flat and mis-shapen
'Cos they've been through the mangle yet again

This thick white cotton contraption
Is a "must" in my mother's book
She won't take "no" for an answer
No matter how pleading I look

She buys them from the Co-op
I really wish she'd desist
Will I still be wearing them in my teens
Will boys find me easy to resist?

The suspenders dangle forlornly
With no stockings on which to attach
They really are quite useless
And none of them really match

continues ☞

At long last, winter is over
And I can abandon this garment of mine
Oh, please, let this be the last time
Now that I'm almost nine

Patricia Russell

Patricia was born in County Durham, England and emigrated to New Zealand in 1973 with her Kiwi husband, after spending six years in Toronto, Canada.

Wartime in Denmark: 1943

When I was eight years old, German soldiers came in the middle of the night knocking on the windows calling, "Aufstehen!" (get up) loudly. Our parents got up and let them in. They were accompanied by a Danish man, who could speak German and was willing to interpret for them. They asked about our Jewish girl, Ruth, who had lived with us for some time. She had been helping our Mum in the house. I was awake and heard them talking. I was afraid, they might shoot us. I could see their guns through the gap in the partly open door, and was quiet as a mouse.

My heart was racing. Our Dad told them, that Ruth had left our family and found work in another household in the next village. He told them the name and how to find them. Then they left. He hadn't mentioned that Ruth had since moved on from there.

We heard later that Ruth had been warned of their coming. She had dyed her black hair red and was walking down the road with her suitcase hoping to escape. At the same time the Germans were driving up the same road to try and catch her. They most likely passed each other, but Ruth managed to escape to Sweden, which was neutral. We didn't know that, until after the war, when we received a Christmas card from Ruth posted around Christmas 1943. She was on the way to Palestine. The post office had kept that card a long time. Maybe they thought, we would get into trouble if discovered by the Germans.

Our parents had a Polish girl living with us at the time when Jews were being sought. She had heard them coming in the night and was afraid they had come to take our food. Also, they might suspect she was Jewish and ill-treat her.

Our village had a Jewish school teacher in those days. His wife, also Jewish, was an excellent dressmaker, who had made some dresses for our Mum. I remember one dress, which had been so beautifully decorated with hundreds of small shiny pearls. We heard that this lovely couple had been taken to a concentration camp in Germany, and that the wife had been pregnant and had lost the baby. We didn't ever find out whether they had survived after that.

There were many stories about those times. Afterwards, books were written, and I read them with great interest. Stirring times indeed.

Betty Vaotogo

Betty grew up in Denmark. When she was aged 17, she and her family emigrated to New Zealand. Betty and her Samoan husband lived in Samoa for four years, before settling on the North Shore, where they raised their five children.

German soldier outside the Østerpost Station in Copenhagen, Denmark

Saturday, 5th October, 1946

It was my Grandpa's birthday that day. Each Saturday, my brother Adrie and I had to go to school from 9:00am till noon. We had just about arrived home from our 15 minute walk back. We lived in a nice neighbourhood, in a lovely little street. As you came around the corner, you could already see our house, with its nice bay window, which gave us a good feeling and we were always pleased to be back home again.

This time the house looked different. We slowed our pace, and kept looking at the house. The net curtains were closed and that was odd. They were always open and the pot plants were usually on display on the window sill. I knew straight away what it meant and told Adrie my concerns. When we came into the house our parents looked so sad. They told us what had happened – our darling little sister Truusje had passed away that morning.

We all knew that one day that could happen, as she was born with a very weak heart, because one valve was not working. The doctor had discovered this condition when she was about six months old. Due to this, Truusje never put on much weight and stayed very tiny.

When she was diagnosed, my parents explained to me and my brothers and sisters what was wrong with her, and that we should always be very gentle with her. She could not handle excitement, because that could give her an attack. When she was having one of these, one of my parents would take her into the next room to calm her down again. She was a lovely and bright child.

As she was not walking around much and was so very fragile, my parents had purchased a very special high chair that enabled her to sit very comfortably and still be part of the family's

activities. Also, we always had to leave the room when Truusje needed a bath, so that there was never any interference from the other children and to keep her as calm as possible.

My mother was a very organised lady and she tolerated no nonsense. She was fast in everything she did around the house. Yet, with this little girl she had to be patient and calm and stay as relaxed as possible. My little sister taught my mother to have patience in those years.

So, sadly, when we saw the drawn curtains, we instantly knew that she had left us to be an angel in heaven. She was nearly three years old.

Sanny Leur

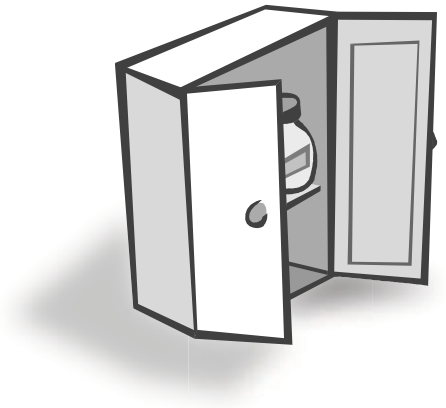
Sanny was born in Wormerveer in the Netherlands. She was the second child born into a family of 16 children. She came to New Zealand with her husband in 1984 to settle in the East Coast Bays.

The White Cupboard

The white cupboard actually started out as a rather pale yellow and was left behind by the vendors of the first house we bought in the UK. It was fairly tall, but not very wide, with a small compartment at the top and a bar underneath in the main compartment. It had many uses over the years.

First it was used as an airing cupboard for the babies' clothing, etc. after my husband, who has two left hands and all thumbs, made some slatted shelves and fitted them in with a small heater on the bottom. He did a brilliant job. In later years it became a wardrobe for my young daughter, after removing the slats. When we bought her new bedroom furniture, I used the cupboard for storage, after doing a really good job of painting it white.

In later years, when our twin sons left the UK for New Zealand, they dumped all sorts of things on me, and the white cupboard was bursting at the seams until 1 was asked to ship their belongings to New Zealand. What a sigh of relief when their things were packed. However, it didn't stay empty for long, and I remember I even had the top tier of my daughter-in-law's wedding cake stored in the top compartment.



Forty five years on since acquiring the cupboard, it was time for us to move to New Zealand. On the day the removal men came to pack all our belongings into a somewhat large container for delivery in Auckland, everything was packed in really tightly, and it appeared to be full, but there was still more to get in. A lot of items got taken out onto the pavement and the

packing began again. Eventually it all went in, apart from my white cupboard. It looked forlorn, lonely and unwanted standing all by itself on the pavement. My husband said that we didn't need it, and to leave it. I replied, "I do want it, it has so many memories, I know I'm being silly."

It did make it to New Zealand, all on its own as a special delivery a few weeks after the main shipment, at no extra cost. I couldn't find anywhere to put it in our house here, so it sat in the garage for quite some time until a good home was found for it in our son's house.

Marie Martin

Born in Caversham, outside Reading, Berkshire in the UK, Marie came to New Zealand in 2004, when she and her husband settled in Browns Bay.

Atholl Crescent: 1951

After my year at home, the time came to enter the *Domestic Science College* at Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh. My Mother had gone to Glasgow, so I had to assemble my scanty wardrobe myself, carefully pressing the blue suit, the main item. Only later did I realise that I should have pressed the seams flat.

On arrival, we had first to go and have our photographs taken for the records. My room was on the third floor and looked out the front onto the Crescent and the main road. It had a bed, desk, wardrobe, and chest of drawers, … and privacy – a vast improvement on boarding school dormitories. On the second floor, there was the common room where all could meet, and on the ground floor the dining room and Principal Miss Persis Wingfield's office. Down below in the basement were the classrooms and kitchens.

I had undertaken a four term course in *Household and Institutional Management*. There was also a three term course in *Household Management*, and another called *Housekeeper Matron*. As well, there was a three year course in teaching. We all wore white overalls and white caps, which were an oblong piece of material which had to be tied in a different way for each course.

We all soon got into the routine, and made friends with girls from all over Scotland and overseas. We even had some nuns in our class. In our free time, we went up Princes Street, which was nearby, and on Saturday nights would go to the *Dick Vet* dances at the *Veterinary College* or go to the theatre. I particularly remember seeing Joyce Grenfell's show, especially her take off of the poem *Come into the Garden Maud* and her answer *Maud's Not Such a Sucker*. I used to go to *St George's West Church* on the Sunday morning where the minister, Murdo MacDonald, came from the island of Uist. He was a great preacher.

In our classes we studied cooking, of course, but also nutrition, bookkeeping, and first aid and home nursing. These last two I only scraped through as I tended to have to put my head between my knees, as talking about blood and nerves, etc. made me want to keel over. I would never have made a nurse. We also did upholstery, and I upholstered a stool which lasted until quite recently. I enjoyed the cooking more when we got onto institutional cooking. This was in the last term when we spent half the term "in house".

We had to get up very early and walk to one of the other boarding houses. There we were responsible for all the cooking, cleaning, and serving of meals. We were divided into groups and moved round from kitchen to pantry, to cleaning the Matron's room, where we were expected to black-lead the back of the fire. This also meant my first encounter with a vacuum cleaner. I could not understand what to do with the steel pole and also wondered why a flexible pipe was so difficult to use. It was only when I was doing the common room that my fellow student picked up the steel pole and inserted it into the flexible pipe. "Oh is that what that's for?" I said and told her of my struggles. We both collapsed in helpless laughter on a nearby settee.

College of Domestic Science, Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh (circa 1890)

After the common rooms, we had to do the student bedrooms. I think we were each responsible for five rooms, and one each day got a thorough clean. We had to polish the hallways and a Swiss girl used the electric polisher, but my friend and I enjoyed pushing the heavy polishers and reckoned they made a better job.

In the pantry, we had to prepare breakfast and do all the washing up (I think there was a dishwasher) and serve the meals. In the dining room, we had to set the tables and serve the meals. In the kitchen, we had to cook the meals, prepare vegetables, do baking, etc. The great joy was using the enormous mixer for baking and for mashing potatoes. All in all, I enjoyed this part of the training best.

The second part of the term was given over to tests and exams. We each had to prepare a lunch for two of the staff. We had to make a menu, then work out the quantities we needed and cost everything. I have found detailed notes in the back of my cookbook. We had to sweep the floor, polish the table, and clean the silver before preparing the meal. My test was distinguished by the fact that the announcement of George VI's death came right in the middle of it!

All in all it was a useful course, especially for one destined to have a family of six children!

Wendy McLeod

Born in Glasgow and raised in the Shetland Islands. Wendy came to New Zealand in 1959 with her husband and settled in Hillcrest on the North Shore.

Grandpa's House

My grandfather was born in this house in 1875 approximately. When the house was built, I wouldn't know, but it must have been one of the first houses to be built in Timaru. It had two bedrooms, a lounge and a very large kitchen. I don't ever remember the lounge being used, and it had very little furniture in it.

The kitchen was the biggest room, It had a large scrub top table, on which sat a kerosene lamp. There was a wooden form under the large push up window and an old rocking chair either side of the coal range, which was the only form of heating. There was a water tank on the side of the house, with a tap. This was the only water supply in the house. There was no sink, only a wooden bench with a basin on it to do dishes. Outside, across the yard, was a two-roomed house, that had an old copper (which was actually made of copper, hence its name). The toilet was in the back of this building, which I presume was the original building on the property.

I loved this house. If ever I was in trouble at school, or at home, I would go over to Grandpa's house, as it was never locked, and I would look out the window, down the large garden full of fruit trees and watch the chooks scratching around in the grass. Under the house was a big grinder in which he used to grind up shells from the beach for the chooks and, of course, I would grind up everything in sight, much to Grandpa's disgust.

The section was full of fruit trees. There were apples, and pears, and lots of gooseberry, redcurrant, and blackcurrant bushes. It was our job as kids to pick the berries for Mum to make jam. It was also our job to top and tail the gooseberries, and clean the black currants. We would get out of this job if it was possible. We were sick of the sight of these fruits by the time the season was finished, but now my mouth waters at the thought of them.

Many years later, I returned to Timaru for a holiday and I visited the street where this house was. It was still there, and as I stood at the gate, it looked just the same. I could feel the warmth still coming from this old house. I wondered if the people who lived there now knew the history of the place. I also wondered if it had the power laid on or the water in the house. I did not want to go in, as I knew inside would not be the same, so I just walked on by with my wonderful memories of my childhood.

Betty Faesen

Betty was born in Timaru, South Canterbury – a fourth generation New Zealander. In 1853 Betty's great grandfather arrived in Lyttelton by ship from England, settling in Timaru.

Jack, Ray, & the Skeleton

The year is 1934. The place, Matarau Valley, 10 miles west of Kaikohe.

My two brothers, Jack and Ray Barrott, were walking around the bush covered hills, shanghais (catapults) in hand looking for birds to aim at. They stumble into the entrance of a cave.

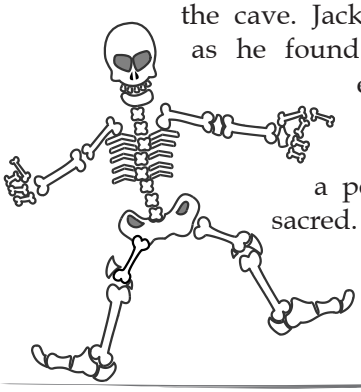
"Look Ray, look!" calls Jack as he picks up a long bare bone.

Their gaze is fixed on a human skull. Ray is not so sure about those bones, or that skull with big empty eye sockets. "Those aren't animal bones, Jack," he says. "Let's get out of here!"

Jack is too excited to listen to his brother. He takes the arm bones. He folds them across the skeleton ribs, then reorganises the legs and feet bones. "Come on!" says Ray "I don't like this cave."

At school the next day, Mr Corpe, their English school teacher, listens to Jack and his exciting news. But he is not pleased with the antics and excitement of Jack and Ray and their cave discovery.

That day after school, Mr Corpe takes the boys home, hoping to talk to our parents. With our father in tow, they go back to the cave. Jack has to replace the skeleton exactly as he found it. Dad rolled a stone across the entrance to the cave, telling the boys, "You boys are not to come near this cave again, or Mr Corpe will have a policeman after you. Those bones are sacred. They belong to the tribe of Hone Heke, a Ngapui Chief."



Mr Corpe, the school headmaster, did report the finding of the skeleton to the police. The policeman was Mr Robinson from Kaikohe. Between them they found a gun towards the back of the cave. The cave was not much more than an incline under very large rocks. The gun was a revolver, Ray remembers it distinctly. It was a six chamber revolver. The handle had rotted away and the mechanism was very badly rusted. Mr Robinson, took the gun away.

Due to the revolver lying in the cave, it was later understood that the body was that of a British soldier. It is figured that the British soldier was wounded in heavy bush surrounding the area, and had crawled into the cave and later died. The headmaster, Mr Corpe and the Kaikohe Police were involved in this discovery.

There were no roads in those days in this area. The fighting took place by following the rivers. This particular river ran from Waimatanui down to Waitangi.

Ray didn't want to have much more discussion regarding this incident. It brought back too many memories of his brother Jack, who died two years ago. I often think about how that revolver got in the cave. The Maori men were probably of Hone Heke's tribe. Did they kill the British soldier and place the body in the cave then throw in the revolver? The revolver probably belonged to the British soldier.

We will never know.

Jean Sandford

Jean was born at Kawakawa, Northland, and lived most of her life at Waipu, then latterly on the North Shore.

Le Mot Juste
Misunderstandings

1989 was the first time in France for me and my husband.

Our French friends (not French fries) were at Nice Airport waiting for us – so nice to see loved friends again. They lived in La Roquette sur Siagne, near Cannes, in a very nice villa. We stayed with them for a week and then went to Paris by train.

In Paris we rented a car and started travelling to some other cities because we wanted to see the country this way, not only the touristic places. Each day we travelled no more than 200km.

One day we stayed in a little town. We were happy with the hotel, an *Ibis Hotel*, if I'm not wrong. It was morning; our plan was to travel to the next town and we would need a room for the night. As my French is better than my husband's, he asked me to book a room in with the same chain of hotels.

I phoned reception and told the operator what I wanted, and she asked me, "Pour quand?" meaning "When?"

So I answered "Pour toujours."

Silence! Then the operator told me, "Madam, you had better come here to reception and we will help you," and hung up.

"Is everything OK?" asked my husband.

I said, "I don't know …" and suddenly started laughing. What I should have answered was, "Pour aujourd'hui," meaning for today and I had answered, "Pour toujours," meaning "forever".

Heloisa Barczak

Heloisa was born in Brazil in 1940. She arrived in New Zealand in 1998 to visit her son and his family, then emigrated four months later, after falling in love with the country.

Marae Protocol & Customs

A Marae is the place of greatest Mana, greatest spirituality, and where Maori customs are given ultimate expression.

Marae of yesteryear were the dwelling places of tribes similar to "compound living". The Elders were treated with utmost respect and if anyone committed a heinous crime, they faced the wrath of the tribunal which comprised of mainly male Kaumatuas or Elders. This brought disgrace upon your entire family, hence criminal activities were minimal. I am talking of the early 1940s. Sadly, the Kaumatuas (Elders) no longer hold the Mana they once had. Verbal, and perhaps physical, abuse appear to have taken over.

Protocol

In this modern age, Marae are open to anyone for a specific purpose and this is done by arrangement with the Tangata Whenua or Home People. It is not open for browsing around. First time Manuhiri (visitors), no matter what race, are instructed by one of the Tangata Whenua on their protocol.

- First of all, wait outside the gate, or wherever their waiting area may be, until the Kaikaranga (always a female and if none is available, proceedings cannot continue) calls you on.

- You proceed towards the Whare Tupuna and at the same time as the Kaikaranga (female who welcomes you) greets you as a Body.

- The speaker for the Manuhiri (visitors) responds on behalf

of the group with an introduction and whatever is appropriate for the occasion.

- Seating is always provided, Manuhiri sit opposite the Paepae (orators) bench where genealogy or Whakapapa are recounted.

- Men, always without exception, sit in front, as this is an act of protection for the ladies and the same applies when entering Marae grounds. Men either flank the ladies or walk behind.

Customs

- Remove your hats (men only) and shoes upon entering the Marae Tupuna – the final resting place for the Tupapaku (deceased) before internment in the Urupa (cemetery) when visiting the Urupa.

- Always wash your hands (a container of water is put in an accessible area) each time you leave the Whare Tupuna if the Tupapaku is lying in state (also applies at Urupas). This is an act of cleansing as one is considered contaminated or unclean until this ritual is performed. It is a common belief in Maoridom that unpleasant events will take place, even death, if this ritual is ignored or overlooked. This practice relates only when there is a Tangi (death) and at no other occasion unless you are visiting.

- Nothing adorning the body is placed on any area where food is prepared. Never comb your hair in the kitchen / dining room, as this is considered unhygienic. Never sit on a kitchen work bench, dining table, or pillows. Absolute No-Nos!

- The head of a Kaumatua is considered sacred, therefore never touch their heads. In this day and age, because of changing circumstances, the above is probably unrealistic

as Kaumatuas are now, due to circumstances, in a Caucasian establishment where their rule is the norm.

- Removal of shoes is mandatory on entering the Whare Tupuna at all times. Slippers are acceptable.

These are but a few of the do's and don'ts

Bon Ritchie

Bon was born in Wairoa (now Clevedon) and settled in Auckland, where she has been involved in the health sector from the age of 18 until 2013.

Napier earthquake, 3 February, 1931

Napier Nurses' Home after the earthquake

Earthquake Fears

My mother (Linda Jane McKenzie née Goddard) all her adult life had a fear of earthquakes, after being in the Napier Earthquake of 3rd February, 1931.

At the time, Mother was working in an office in Emerson Street – the main street of the town. She was just about to leave the building and go further up the street to a sports shop and collect her tennis racquet which was being restrung. It was never collected, as it was burnt in the fires that very soon broke out in the town and smouldered for days. Broken gas mains were the cause. These fires impeded rescue of the injured and the fatally injured. Eventually, sailors from the Naval training ship *HMS Veronica* (whose bell now hangs on a prominent structure on Marine Parade and is rung every New Year's Eve) that was anchored in Hawke's Bay, were able to get ashore with manpower and equipment, to help in many, many ways. Also, the communication systems on board the ship were able to notify the rest of New Zealand and the world of the disaster.

My mother's first thought was to get home to my Grandmother (Bridget Mary Goddard) who lived on Napier Hill – the area known as *Hospital Hill* – just below the botanical gardens (where I walked Tony, my firstborn, in a pram thirty three years later). Apparently, my Grandmother was placing her washing board against the back garden fence to dry in the sun, when the quake struck. She hung onto the fence and watched the nurses' home (with night nurses asleep) "go down like a pack of cards" (her description), killing all seven nurses.

Eventually, Mother found her way up the hill to her home, meeting her younger brother on the way – walking from *Napier Boys High School*. The rest of the day was spent gathering essentials together and making their way down to *Nelson Park*. They were in the open there until enough tents

were found for shelter. Badly injured people received attention first.

The temporary accommodation lasted about a fortnight, while the aftershocks occurred. Most people were too nervous to go back to their damaged homes (a lot of brick chimneys were down and brick houses in ruins). Hawke's Bay is still anti-brick for building.

My mother met my father several months later. He was a builder. Construction people came from all over New Zealand, pleased to get the work. My father came from the Nelson area; his parents from Scotland were farming in a small way. He and his five siblings enjoyed a happy childhood in the country, even though it was "depression years". They all did well, with a good education, and eventually were in a profession, or owned their own business. My parents were married in 1935. My sister Glenis and I were born in Napier, and schooled in Hawke's Bay.

As Glenis and I were growing up, we were always aware of Mother's fear of quakes, so were naturally frightened too. It wasn't until I was 19 years old and doing my nursing training at *Hastings Memorial Hospital* that I lost this fear. One evening during the nurses tea break, another nurse and I were on duty in the children's ward when a very noisy quake occurred. We immediately had to calm, cuddle and tuck down our small charges, forgetting about our own fears. Since that day my fear of quakes has diminished.

Judith Fleming

Judith was born and raised in Napier. She has lived on the North Shore since 1962.

"Two Bob's Worth of Fish & Chips"

I started work the day after I arrived in New Zealand! It happened like this …

On a cold, dark, snowy morning in February 1956, our family of five — Mum Dad, sister, brother, and I — left our home in Denmark. After six weeks by car, boat, train, and air, we arrived in Auckland. By then, it was mid-March, and the weather was warm and sunny. At last, after such a long journey we were all very happy to be in here in New Zealand. Mum and Dad's good friends, Karen and Paul welcomed us into their home in Ponsonby.

We discovered that Karen and Paul owned a small restaurant, called *Paul's Place*. After some discussion with my parents, it was decided that I would work in the shop after school. I felt a little worried. I had studied English for about year in Denmark and wondered how I would cope with the spoken language. But Karen said, "Never mind, I'll help you. We are all here at the back of the shop, cooking and preparing the food. Just ask us anything you want to know. Now come out in the shop and I'll show you what to do."

There were about eight tables and chairs. The menu was sausages and chips, served with lettuce, a slice of tomato and a plate of white buttered bread (not forgetting tomato sauce). Takeaway was also available and wrapped in real newspaper. I studied the money and generally found my way around the shop.

Just before four o'clock on the next afternoon I was out in the shop, practising saying, "Hello, what would you like?" Karen

introduced me to my first customer, "This is Inge. She has just arrived from Denmark; she will serve you," Karen told the lady.

She smiled very kindly, saying, "Welcome, and how do you like New Zealand?"

I also smiled, saying "Very nice."

All the customers were very kind and patient with me and I enjoyed my first day at work very much indeed. There were lots of new words to learn. Actually, it was a great way to learn English.

That first week, Bob arrived. "Two bob's worth of fish and chips please," he said. Oh dear! I thought, what is two bob? I rushed out the back to Karen and the cook, calling out "What is two bob? Right, yes I understand – it's two shillings."

I told Bob, '"Sorry, we don't have fish; we have sausages."

"OK," said Bob. "I'll have two bob's worth of sausages and chips to take away."

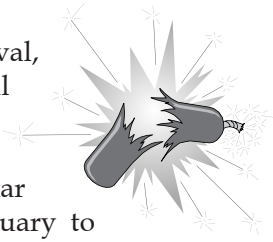
As I look back on meeting Bob, I can still see him standing there by the counter, smiling. He wore a brown felt hat, slightly on the back of his head, white shirt with a tie a little loose around his neck, and his grey jacket over his arm. I wonder if he was a returned soldier and fought in the War. Perhaps he belonged to the RSA.

Bob came in to eat his dinner with us every Friday. And, every Friday Bob gave me two bob as tips. Now in those days, there were absolutely no tips given in New Zealand. I still have my little *Green Guide* diary, with my accounts, noting, "Two bob from Bob". I saved all the two bobs Bob gave me. Those two bobs added up, and I put the money towards my new secondary school uniform for my new school.

Inge Andersen

Inge was born in Odense, Denmark. This was also the birth place of Hans Christian Andersen (although Inge is not related to him). She came to New Zealand in 1956, aged 13.

Chinese New Year



Chinese New Year, or Chinese Spring Festival, holds the most significant position among all Chinese festivals and holidays. It's also called the Chinese Lunar New Year, because its date is determined by the Chinese lunar calendar, which falls sometime from late January to early February and varies from year to year. The celebration lasts for 15 days. There are many exciting things happening during this festival.

1 **Clean the home in time for New Year**

This tradition is founded in the belief that cleaning the house at this time of year will "sweep away the bad luck" that has accumulated inside over the past year. Cleaning also makes the house ready for the good luck to start entering again. Normally, we do not clean our home during the 15 day celebration, such as sweeping or wiping the windows. To do so is to "sweep away" the good tuck you've just received for the New Year.

2 **Decorate the home**

The colour that is most recommended is red. Red is the colour or symbol of good luck in Chinese culture. The number 8 also symbolizes good luck and wealth, as in Chinese the word for eight rhymes with fortune or wealth.

- Place flowers and mandarins in bowls through the house. Mandarins with their leaves still intact are the fruits of happiness for the New Year. Keep their numbers evenly, as uneven numbers bring unhappiness.

- Set out a tray of candies with eight different types of candies arranged along it. The traditional candies are those made from lotus seeds, peanuts, coconut, red melon seed, candied melon, etc.

3 **Offer a sacrifice to the Kitchen God**
This sacrifice could include foods such as fruits or meaningful vegetables, for example lettuce, spring onion, and celery. Good behaviour should be used so that the Kitchen God will make a "good report when he goes back to Heaven".

4 **Cook our own Chinese cuisine**
Such as sticky rice cake.

5 **Have a traditional dinner on New Year's Eve**
This is one of the most important parts of the holiday and the food eaten at this time of year has traditional meanings related to the Chinese New Year. Traditional dishes include fish, chicken, meats, vegetables, noodles, and desserts. Dumplings play a special role in New Year food because of their shape, a shape which resembles the ancient Chinese gold or silver ingots.

6 **Dress for the occasion**
People always purchase new clothes, and even get new haircuts for the new year. This associated with joy, happiness, good luck, wealth and good fortune, red clothes will ensure that they're fully participating in the spirit of the celebrations. People avoid wearing too much black during the celebration period. Black symbolizes bad luck and even death.

7 **Interact with others in a positive manner**
Chinese New Year is a time of happiness and good fortune and it's important to spread the goodwill.

- When greeting other people during the New Year period, use greetings such as "Xin Nian Hao", meaning "Happy New Year".

- "Kung hei fat choy" means "We hope that you will be wealthy".

8 Visit your relatives and friends

This is the most important part of the New Year and is a time of connecting and sharing the celebrations together. Bring the red envelopes with you, to pass to children. Usually, the red envelopes are filled with money. The red colour is meant to scare away any evil spirits. These envelopes are usually given to the unmarried from the married. Parents always encourage children to save the money to buy their favourite things or for their future education.

9 Set off firecrackers

The firecrackers used in China and Hong Kong are loud, banging fireworks that are mostly lit on the ground. The loud noises are thought to scare the bad spirits away, to prevent them from bringing bad luck.

10 Visit a parade

Parades are full of excitement, including firecrackers, activities, and dragon dancers. There are people who are disguised as dragons and lions – the dragon is revered in China rather than being viewed as a monster. Indeed, it could be said that the dragon almost symbolises China

itself. The dragon dance and lion dance are an important part of the Chinese New Year. They're decorated beautifully and are a sight worth seeing.

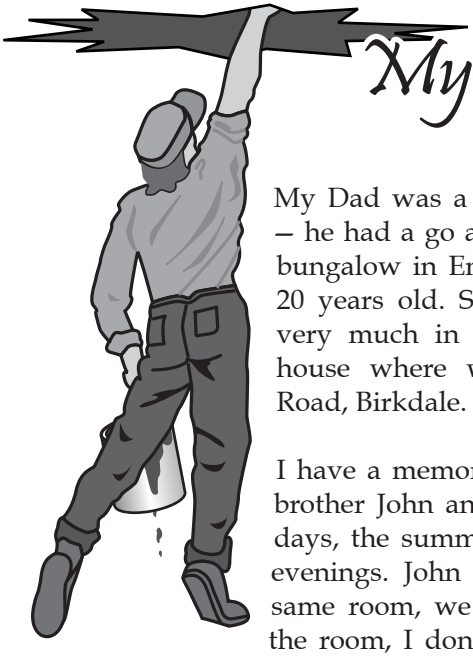
11 The Lantern Festival is held on the last day
People carry lanterns designed as insects such as dragonflies or animals with them on the streets. At this time, people will try to solve puzzles on lanterns, eat glutinous rice balls named after the festival (yuanxiao, also known as tan), and enjoy a family reunion.

Friede Ruan

Friede was born in China, and arrived in New Zealand in 2004. She has two teenage children.

Chinese New Year Lantern Festival

My Dad's Fall



My Dad was a real do it yourself sort of man – he had a go at everything. He even built our bungalow in England as a young man of only 20 years old. Something that wasn't heard of very much in those days. He also built our house where we used to live in Lancaster Road, Birkdale.

I have a memory of him in England when my brother John and I were quite young. In those days, the summer evenings were long twilight evenings. John and I were put to bed in the same room, we had a bed each either side of the room, I don't think we were very old, and being a light summer evening a lot of talking went on. We didn't feel like going to sleep.

This particular evening, Dad decided to do something up in part of the roof. We could hear the noises going on.

We were doing a lot of chatting, when I thought it would be a good idea if John hopped over to my bed to look at some books. He hesitated as we were quite sure we would be told off if they caught us, as Mum was quite strict. Finally John hopped over to my bed.

He hadn't been there long when there was an almighty crash, and looking over to John's bed we saw lots of dust and dirt, and our Dad hanging on to a rafter with one hand and a pot of paint in the other, dangling over the bed.

The door opened, with Mum rushing in, in a mad panic screaming, "Where is John? Is he alright?" She didn't seem too concerned about Dad who, by this time, had dropped on to

the bed. Mum was so pleased to see John safe and sound in my bed.

She always said it was Divine Intervention that made John change beds. I think she was right.

Pat Foster

Pat was born in Winchester, England, and settled in New Zealand in 1947. She celebrated her 17th birthday on board ship. Pat and her Kiwi builder husband built their own home in Birkdale / Beach Haven.

Memories of Africa

Scenes evoked by some small
Thing, sudden scents or sound
Brings flooding back the memories,
That round my heart are wound

When memories flood back.
It's then that I yearn to be,
In that land that is as old as time.
Where nature's wild and free.

Where the plains stretch ever out
To the blue and distant hills,
And at night, from a sky of indigo,
Ten million diamonds spill.

To see just once again the lake,
Stand on its sun baked shore,
Watch fish eagles soar and dive
And hear their echoing cry once more

continues ☞

See sunbirds on the bottle brush,
With plumage glittering bright
Watch butterflies like petals
Float and twist against the light.

The children with their impish grin,
The women with their loads
Balanced gracefully on their heads
As they sway along the roads.

Many scenes and memories,
Are etched into my mind and then
Some trigger sets them free,
And with nostalgia I am stricken.

Helen Walsh

Helen was born in County Durham, England, and has lived in Fiji, Australia, and Malawi before emigrating (for the second time) to New Zealand.

Our Memorable Xmas

December 2012

I have many happy memories of bygone Christmases.

We were an extended family and, as Bill and I had a large double garage which Bill had just finished building, we decided to have Christmas in the garage. The week before Xmas we had a day for cleaning and decorating. Whoever was free on that day came along. The grandchildren were into decorating the tree and the garage, while the rest of us cleaned and set up tables and chairs etc, all ready for the big day!

Our first garage Xmas was amazingly successful, so we continued doing it for 11 years. Santa always came, arriving on the garage roof, when no-one was looking!

Then the family decided that Bill and I had been doing Xmas long enough and it was now their turn, so the next Xmas was at Melody and Dave's home.

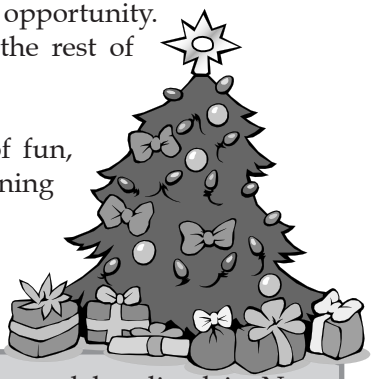
Melody told us all "NO PRESENTS – except for the children". So imagine our astonishment when we arrived at their place to find an enormous pile of wrapped presents at the base of the Xmas tree. "What's this then?" someone asked.

"Oh, I thought I'd give you a treat," said Melody.

Joy opened her parcel – she had a fur coat! William received a tie and book. "Oh that is nice," said his wife politely.

Sue received an old brunch coat and hair rollers, David a broken aeroplane, Bill had some Y-fronts with holes, and I had a hat and bag, and so it went on.

We were all laughing hysterically by now as we realised Melody, who worked at an op shop, had carefully selected gifts for all, to be returned at the first opportunity. We all wore our "new" clothes for the rest of the day.



Our Christmases were always full of fun, laughter and love and the true meaning of Xmas was remembered by all.

Lucy Fatharly

Lucy was born in Wellington and has lived in New Zealand all her life.

Grandad

I had two grandads – like most people, I suppose. But I never knew one of them. He died the year before I was born.

My other grandfather, Mum's father, was a real storybook Grandad. I remember him from my childhood, as a big man with a full beard and glasses. He wore funny little half spectacles that he would perch on the end of his nose somehow to read the newspaper and then look over the top of them to look at me and everything else.

He had a garden full of vegetables and an orchard and one of his (and our) favourite entertainments was to watch him peeling an apple. He always used his own special knife – short and very sharp, like a miniature dagger. Surrounded by an admiring audience of grandchildren, he would slowly peel round and round the apple, starting at the top and all the way down to the bottom in one continuous length of peel without a break. It was such a wonderful party trick!

Then he would carefully slice up the freshly peeled apple, cut out the core and give us each a piece. For me and my brothers this was a novel way to eat an apple. At home we were used to just biting into it skin and all, and my older brother rather prided himself on being able to eat it core and all till only the pips were left!

Eventually I worked out why Grandad did apples this way. He had no teeth. Apparently at some stage, years before I ever knew him, he had all his teeth out and purchased a set of false teeth, but he didn't like them. Perhaps they didn't fit well, or maybe they hurt – anyway he didn't persevere and that set of 'near new'

dentures sat on a shelf in the shed forevermore. Having no teeth didn't seem to handicap Grandad in any way, well, not that I could see. He ate meat and all the usual things first cutting everything into small pieces, again with the help of his special knife.

Another interesting thing about Grandad and food; he had potatoes for breakfast – not hash browns or anything like that – but tiny, tiny, little, boiled-in-their-jacket "spuds", freshly dug from his garden the night before. There was a ritual to their preparation, which he involved us in each evening. We would get the message that Grandad wanted to see us and we knew we would find him sitting on a stool just outside the back door, washing potatoes in a bucket of water. He would look at you over his glasses and say through his whiskers, "How many spuds for you for breakfast, my girl?"

What a hard question! Was six, say, an acceptable number? Would it seem greedy? Or should I say four? "Ah, six! Are you sure?" and there was a twinkle in his eyes.

But next morning at breakfast, as I looked at Grandad sitting at the head of the table, a pot of steaming potatoes in front of him, I would suddenly feel a twinge of anxiety because I knew what came next. One by one he would signal to us to pass our plate to him and without actually saying anything he would raise an eyebrow as he looked at you. And that raised eyebrow was really saying, "How many spuds for you?" – and the tension would build. Did I say I'd have six, or was it four? Would he remember? What if I got it wrong? Would it matter? Take a deep breath – "Six, please, Grandad", and I'd catch his eye (there was that twinkle again) – and he would count out six little spuds onto my plate. Whew! I must have got it right! "Thank you, Grandad."

Anne Shaw

Anne is Kiwi born, having lived in Auckland for the past 50 years. Her ancestors arrived in New Zealand in 1841.

Bread Carts, Nutsellers, & Snowball Carts in Barbados

Precious memories from the early 1950s

You would hear the noise of the steel-banded wooden wheels on the road moments before the smell of freshly baked bread reached you, and then you joined the neighbours heading out to the front gates to meet the cheerful Negro fellow, ready to sell you a variety of delicious breads and cakes, baked early that morning. He would be wearing a wide brimmed hat to protect him from the hot sun, and he would be sweating, because he had to push the large, heavy bread cart, which would usually be painted bright red. Some bakeries sent out their bread carts every day, and would employ strong men to push them around. They had a hard job, for very little money.

The bread carts looked like a miniature shed attached to a frame with large wooden wheels, with a flip lid on one side, the length of the cart. Fresh baked bread was stacked in the bottom and on one shelf – lovely crisp bread rolls, which were called "chicks" or "penny loaves" because the original cost was one penny; large, light sweet loaves which went well with anything, and plain loaves with a

Bread cart in the Barbados Museum

nice crust. They also sold coconut turnovers (the texture of a brioche), apple turnovers, a crisp sweet triangular pastry filled with stewed apples and raisins, and a wonderful sugary glaze, and rock cakes.

Snowball carts were smaller, fitted to half a bicycle, and a bit easier on the strong men who rode them. These were individually owned and carried a huge block of ice bought from the ice factory. Inside the cart on a small shelf were stored about seven different flavours of very thick sweet syrup and an ice shaver which looked like a small plane. You had to carry your own container out to the cart to be filled with a measure of shaved ice, and watched to make sure you got the full measure of syrup poured, which spread through the ice crystals. Deliciously refreshing in the tropical heat for us children who enjoyed them, but what a tough way for the owner to make a living for himself and his family.

Nutsellers were women who carried large wooden trays of goodies. They would fill their trays in the morning, balance

Snowball / Sno-cone street seller in Barbados

them on their heads on a large circle of twisted fabric, and then walk from their homes to the bus depot where they congregated in small groups to sell their stuff. The trays would be filled with roasted peanuts, home-made peppermint sticks which were called "comforts", toffees, coconut sugar cakes of various colours and textures, as well as small seasonal fruits called "ackees", "dunks", gooseberries, and "hogplums". Sometimes there was a larger fruit called a "sugar apple", which is similar to a cherimoya; also, some limes. In a loud almost musical chant they would call out a list of what they had in their trays, "Nuts, toffees, extra strongs, useful limes — who callin'?" Extra strongs were strong peppermint candies. Some of the sellers walked around the buses selling their goodies through the bus windows. They called everybody "darling", were also self-employed and worked long hours in the hot sun.

Various other foods were sold from bicycles with large baskets on the front, like flying fish and sea eggs (kina), but not quite so interesting for children.

Patsy Phillips

Patsy was born in Barbados in 1942. Her parents originated from England and Ireland. She came to New Zealand in 1966, and feels very much at home here.

Public Health Nurse weighing a baby

The Public Health Nurse

Hokianga Sheep Farmers in the 1950s

Because of the isolation factor, when a woman became pregnant and couldn't get out to attend the clinic, and the one and only doctor, the Public Health Nurse would come instead, taking the usual steps (pregnancy tests) off to the laboratory, then phone through with the results. If all was "A-OK", life went on as usual, but if not, a trip to the clinic had to be organised to see the doctor. This was a major upheaval to the day, requiring fathers to baby-sit the rest of the family and a two mile hike out to the road, climb aboard the "cream truck", sitting on uncomfortable filled cans of cream on its way to the dairy factory.

When the baby's due date arrived, the Public Health Nurse also helped with hospital booking, general advice, and recommendations to ensure that all went well for mother and baby. She also provided good pre-natal care and, later, ante-natal care in the home.

After son number five was born (who is now 58 years old), a new Public Health Nurse arrived in the district. Fresh from nursing training, a shiny diploma, city born and bred, she had no idea of the complexities of farming, country life, and winter mud. But she assured us that she was willing to learn. I was one of her first at-home mother and baby visits. What a to-do that caused!

It was late October, and our tank supply of water was getting low. To help conserve water when washing the family, a large aluminium tub, a metal milk bucket, as well as soap and towel, and clothing, was taken down to the stream of running water à la horse and sled. Number eight wire was wrapped around a large macrocarpa tree, and the older children were tied to the wire with old stockings around each ankle to keep each child stable and away from the stream. They had a blanket to sit on, wooden pegs to play aeroplanes with, and I had food and fruit

to keep them fed and happy. The baby slept in a drawer, lined with towels, sleeping peacefully under a ti-tree shrub, while I got on with baling water from the stream to the tub and soaking the washing. This type of washing was utilised by many farmers' wives and was a natural occurrence for families living in outlying areas with no power.

The new nurse came to visit that day – a very pretty 22 years old, with a few freckles sprinkled across her nose, bright red lipstick, and brand new gumboots. When she stopped her blubbering, and pointing at the children and at me, she let fly. She was going to report me to the doctor, the police, the priest, and anyone else who would listen to her rantings about this uneducated Maori woman / mother. Sometime later, she calmed down and we introduced ourselves. She played with the children while I waited for the baby to wake up, then she weighed and checked him out, and then I fed him. She later checked on me, while I filled her in on life in the country as it related to families and health professionals.

On her next visit, she came to the house. The children saw her coming and scones were cooked by the time she arrived. She later fell in love with a farmer not too far away. So, there was a wedding in the district, party line phone calls now and again, and the number eight wire stayed circling the tree for the next family when we moved on.

Martha Hoani

Martha hails from the Hokianga, where she has lived most of her life and raised her family.

Coffin-making Day

Many people are uncomfortable talking about death, discussing their demise and the practicalities associated with it. They say that someone else will take things in hand when the time comes. I guess I have a more pragmatic approach to my own death, arising from having had to deal with those matters quite a few times over the years. Also, I have been touched by the Maori people's matter-of-fact acceptance of death.

I remember years ago, when my husband's cousin's son died unexpectedly. The funeral director would not release his body to the family until his account had been paid, and how everyone had to give money so that the funeral director could be paid. No doubt he had been stung by Maori families who hadn't paid the funeral costs, most probably because they were poor. I have also known how some families have incurred a large cost for a funeral, simply because they were too emotionally distressed at the time to tell the funeral director of their financial situation.

When my husband died eleven years ago, that same funeral director asked for a deposit. My pakeha brother-in-law remarked that he had probably only asked for deposit – rather than the whole amount – because there were a few pakeha faces around. Now, it wasn't a problem for me, since I had the money, as well as a small life insurance just for that purpose, but some poorer families wouldn't have the $1,000 deposit. When the book was brought out with the photos and costs of coffins, the first one that was shown was the "budget" casket. "That will be fine," said my brother-in-law. "He was a simple man in his life."

About two years ago, at the same time that my sister was terminally ill, my brother-in-law (David) had to arrange a simple funeral for his aunt, and was horrified at the cost. So, when

my sister was near death, he and his son made her coffin. When she died, he saw to the necessary paperwork and arranged with the crematorium for her cremation, thus bypassing the funeral directors altogether. The total cost for the funeral was about $650.

Now, I don't think that funeral directors are parasites, or anything like that. They do, of course, have their costs and can also take a load off a family in shock and grief. Most people have made provision for just such an expense. Also, the funeral director will be as helpful as he can be, if informed of the family's circumstances. I also know that not all of them ask for a deposit, or for the full cash amount, to be paid before burial or cremation.

My sister, Betty, and I – as well as David – were discussing these matters one evening, and I said to Betty, "Why don't you and I go and buy the materials for our coffins, so they are there when we pass on?"

So, we decided that we would do just that. We set a date for making the coffins under Betty's carport. The materials were purchased from *Mitre 10*. David came, along with my grandson and Betty's son, who

Anne (above) and Betty (below) standing in their home-made coffins

is a builder. They brought saws, and set to, making the coffins while Betty and I watched. It took one and a half hours. The coffin lid was screwed to the back and shelves were inserted. The total cost for each coffin was $92.20.

It now sits proudly in my office. When we had our last card game, I showed it to my friends, who had various reactions. I said that I might have to lose a bit of weight to fit into it better, whereupon my friend said, "Well, that's the first time I've heard being able to fit into your coffin as a reason for going on a diet!"

Anne Mutu

Anne grew up in Denmark. She was age 14 when she and her family emigrated to New Zealand in 1952. She and her Maori husband settled in Beach Haven to raise their two daughters. Anne still lives there.

Anne helping to build her coffin

Adoption

I was born in Wellington's *Bethany Salvation Army Home* in 1945. Ivy and Jim Daly of Palmerston North adopted me and named me Shirley Ann. They did not want me to know I was adopted. Mum always said that she was on holiday in Wellington when I was born. However, she did not cover all the bases. She used to tell me about the day she was in conversation with an old neighbour when he dropped down dead.

My dad used to love walking around the cemetery with me in tow and one day we came across Mr. Lovejoy's grave. Hawkeye that I was, I exclaimed, "Hey! He died on my birthday, the 28th of October, 1945 and Mum was supposed to be in Wellington having me." Dad replied that they must have made a mistake with the inscription, but I was not that easily persuaded and when we went home I wanted to know what was going on. Mum still would not admit to me that I was adopted – even my Gran told me it wasn't so. When I was 13, Mum finally told me the truth.

My Dad was very special to me and he let me tag along on adventures – fishing, shooting his slug gun – and whenever he was doing practical jobs around home, teaching me how to mend fuses, change tap washers, and repair punctures. I have fond memories of going mushrooming on his motorbike.

I left *Freyberg High School* at age 15, with no qualifications and went to work. At age 19, I moved to Auckland and three years later, met and fell in love with Marty. We were married in 1967 and eventually settled in Takapuna, after many years in Glenfield, where we raised our son and daughter.

Eventually, I decided to make enquiries about my birth mother and was successful in tracking her down, discovering that she lived in Panmure.

After her initial refusal to meet, she finally agreed to a phone conversation. When I first spoke, I said that this is the most difficult conversation I have ever made and she agreed, but we soon relaxed and talked for the next hour. At the conclusion she agreed to a meeting, outside the old *Central Post Office*, in the city. It was my happiest day, ever. I was to become one of the first adoptees to meet with their birth mother legally since the law change in 1984.

As I approached the *Post Office*, I was looking at all the people around and wondering who it could be? What would she look like? Would I be able to find her? Would she turn up?

A likely lady was sitting on a bench seat, so I approached her and said, "Excuse me, are you Leila?"

She replied, "Yes, and you are Shirley". She got up and put her arms around me and said, "Don't cry your make-up will run."

We went to lunch and chatted. She told me about her other children – Shirley, Marlene, and Murray. I was quite gob-smacked at having a sister Shirley. And when I queried this she said we would cross that bridge when we come to it. We spent the afternoon just getting to know each other.

Things have turned out wonderfully and I feel as though I have known her all my life, and I am included as a member of the family. It turned out that she breast-fed me for five months before I was adopted, so we were well bonded and we share

many similar characteristics. In fact, my siblings say that I am the one most like our mother.

My adoptive mother was much older and, as time passed, I became closer to her, but could never talk about finding my birth mother. In her last years we talked about old times, about me being in the talent quests, and how I would throw my togs out the toilet window and pick them up on my way to school when she said I could not go swimming. I would then hang them on the clothesline when I got home. I said I was sorry that I was such a naughty kid, to which she replied, "No you weren't, you were alright."

In conclusion, I love life, love to laugh, I treasure my family and friends and try to make the most of what I've got.

Shirley Martinengo

Rule Britannia

With all the recent attention on the Royal Family, I thought I would re-write an encounter with Royalty some years back.

As Vice President of the *YWCA*, I – along with my husband – was invited to a cocktail party on the *Royal Yacht Britannia*, which had brought the Queen and Prince Philip on a visit to New Zealand. The invitation said "Evening Dress". My husband (ex-British Army) got cracking and dug out his tailored suit from a previous life (never worn since we came to New Zealand). He sent for miniature medals to pin on his manly chest. Spit and polish. He didn't half look good!

My young friend, Avril, decided that I needed a make-over. She did my hair in a new, sophisticated style. I resurrected my black evening dress (also from a previous life) which, to my surprise, still fitted! She added a purple sash (à la Vogue pattern) and applied make-up, including mascara (me, who never wears make-up). Using a length of damask that I had bought in Hong Kong years previously, Avril created a floor length cloak to complete my ensemble. The preparation was a lot of fun for all of us.

On the night in question, we were both dressed up and ready to go. A huge storm with gale force winds and bucketing rain was gathering momentum. We set forth in our little Volkswagen. Driving along, when, out of nowhere, a dustbin came hurtling towards us, crashing onto the bonnet with a loud bang! Relieved that it did not shatter the windscreen, we battled on.

The rain continued to pelt down on arrival at the wharf. Did we have an umbrella? No, we did not. No-one did. We dashed to the imposing ship – me holding up my dress and cloak – only to encounter a queue at the stairway, waiting to board the Royal Yacht. So, there we were, a cluster of drowned rats, with not an

umbrella in sight. My hair was bedraggled, and my mascara was running – my make-up was ruined.

I thought that, once aboard, we could slip into the loo and repair the damage as best we could. But, at the head of the stairs stood the Duke of Edinburgh – resplendent in uniform – with large, dry hand outstretched; my damp "paw" in his. How he kept his hands dry, after shaking all the wet ones, I couldn't imagine.

The Queen was dressed in a pale, blue lace gown, complete with tiara. She looked graciously at this bedraggled specimen. and afterwards I scuttled off in as dignified a way as I could muster, given the circumstances, looking for the restroom.

A young naval officer, in dazzling white uniform with an abundance of gold braid, showed us the way to the "Ladies", where I had the opportunity to dry off as best as I could, with *Royal Britannia* tissues. (I slipped a couple into my handbag as mementoes.)

Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh during a visit to New Zealand in 1963

Somehow, my spirits weren't dampened for the rest of the night. The Queen made sparkling conversation with various luminaries. Tiny canapes were handed round on plates, along with a glass of champagne. I saw various local politicians – some I had little respect for – but the young officers in those dazzling white uniforms were a credit to the Navy - and the laundry. I wondered what soap powder was used to produce such fantastic results!

My husband put up stoically with the event; he really would have preferred a cup of tea. But, after all, it was his Queen. He always stood to attention for the National Anthem in his formative years.

We did have a memento from the event – a dent in the bonnet of the car – and the opportunity to remember and have at laugh at the memory.

Joan Lardner-Rivlin

Joan was born in Queenstown, Cape Province, South Africa. She studied and lived in London, before returning to South Africa, and then Zambia, where she met her husband. Along with their children, they then moved to Hong Kong and, subsequently, settled in New Zealand with her family.

Paris for Beginners: 1965

Two weeks in Paris! We could hardly contain our excitement at the thought of our first holiday abroad. And, oh, did we feel so sophisticated and worldly! My newly acquired contact lenses gave me an air of confidence – and glamour (slightly misplaced maybe) – that I'd never possessed all during my bespectacled childhood and adolescence. Oh yes, I was ready to impress those Frenchmen with my "new" sparkly eyes, heavily made up for maximum effect. They would find me totally irresistible, I was sure. As for my friend, Mary, she was a natural beauty, so deep down I knew I had my work cut out.

A bout of seasickness during the *English Channel* crossing from Dover to Calais did little to boost my holiday mood. I felt wretched. Meanwhile, my good friend Mary occupied herself by tallying up how many times I threw up. This was information I wasn't especially interested in. Thankfully, my recovery was immediate once we made landfall, making for an uneventful train ride from Calais to Paris, where we were booked into a youth hostel. We readily adapted to hostel life and the restrictions it imposed, including a rather grumpy roommate, who constantly complained about the lateness of our return to the dormitory each night. I mean, who goes to bed early in Paris?

Oh, did we love Paris! Our high school French was sufficient to converse at a basic level. We'd already discarded our French phrase book on the train, having discovered that it was pitifully out of date. For example, we could see little use for the phrase "my hairnet is torn".

Before long, I met a gorgeous young Frenchman called Marc (my contact lens were doing the trick), who invited us both to dinner at his parents' apartment, which boasted a spectacular view of the *Eiffel Tower*. Although Marc spoke English, his

parents didn't, so it was full on French all evening. The conversation was, well, different, as his parents were determined to discuss the Second World War for most of the evening. But, the cuisine was superb.

Then disaster struck! One of my contact lenses fell into the gravy. Quelle horreur! I somehow managed to rescue the errant lens and discreetly put it in my pocket (unnoticed, I think) and continued the evening with 50% vision. Thankfully, conversation was flowing and Mary and I were riding on a wave of confidence, speaking their language with less difficulty than expected.

We had never dined in such style — or eaten so much! Consequently, when the eighth course was presented, I politely (in French) said that I'd had ample sufficiency. Or, that's what I thought I'd said. It's fair to say that there was a discernable shift in the atmosphere, which bordered on the chilly from that point on. Marc's mother barely spoke to me after that, and it was only when I returned to England that I discovered I'd announced that I was pregnant. Quelle horreur again!

Thankfully, I was totally oblivious to my faux pas until well after the event, but the embarrassment was just as acute.

Bastille Day was one of the highlights of our stay. The *Champs Elysee* was alive with partygoers and cars honking their horns. We danced on the streets right through the night. Even my second contact lens incident didn't dampen my spirits, when it popped out onto my cheek. By now I was getting expert at retrieving

them, and quickly wrapped it up, put it into my pocket and carried on dancing. Vanity has no price.

In no time at all, we were homeward bound. Sadly, the Parisian weather hadn't given us the tan we'd hoped for, so on went the fake tan which dried streaky and orange. Never mind, we donned our dark glasses and carelessly tossed a chiffon scarf round our heads (very fashionable in the 60s). We were going for the Brigitte Bardot look, with measured success – or so we thought. Would our parents even recognise these mysterious, rather European looking "women"? It came as some surprise that they did.

Patricia Russell

Patricia was born in County Durham, England and emigrated to New Zealand in 1973 with her Kiwi husband and baby daughter, after spending six years in Toronto, Canada.

Writers Are a Funny Lot

Writers are a funny lot –
No exercise, they go to pot
Horned rimmed specs and great big eyes
Everybody thinks they're wise.

They sit with hand enveloping pen,
Writing their piece again and again.
They always have a notebook near
In case they are blitzed by a good idea.

They get a notion in their head.
Must write it down. Can't go to bed!
They stay up very late at night
To get their wording exactly right.

continues ☞

Like laying an egg, they diligently strive
To get their piece succinct, alive.
The meeting comes, they stand to speak,
Their hands are sweaty, knees feel weak.

Reaction good? Did listeners grin?
Secrets out, which once were in!
Our children, grandchildren love to hear
Of things that happened yesteryear.

They can't imagine the fun we had,
And all those things we didn't tell Dad!
We all have much that we can tell,
And everyone can write quite well.

Events, some sad, but joyful days
Have fashioned us in many ways.
They've made us really what we are.
Now we can shine like a vintage car.

So scribblers all with one accord!
The pen is mightier than the sword!
Unite with us and join the team!
Get writing, before you lose your steam!

Jenny Goldsbro

Jenny was born in London and came to New Zealand in 1962 with her Kiwi husband, and settled on the North Shore.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