



Our Own Stories 2



for future generations



Acknowledgements

*Cover illustration by Heloisa Barczak
from a photograph of Edna Peters and her grandson.*

*Grateful thanks to Michelle Hyslop for allowing us
to use a photograph as the basis for the illustration.*

*The editors would also like to thank and acknowledge
all the contributions of our members. It has been
a pleasure and a privilege to assemble **your** stories
into our second book.*



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Dedication

In December 2014, we celebrated the launch of our first book of *Stories for Future Generations*, little knowing that Edna Peters, our group leader, would die suddenly days later. This book is for you Edna.

Heloisa Barczak's memory of you says it all.

“ In 2008 I joined the Writing Group to improve my English. The first time I visited I was impressed by Edna Peters, the leader of the Group. She was intelligent, dynamic, direct, and kind. I was not close to Edna, I only met her at OWN meetings, but I remember her friendliness. I miss her. She will be forever in my memories of the persons that I admire.

Heloisa Barczak

Edna's personal philosophy of accepting everyone's writing has given the Group the opportunity to forge strong bonds. We have shared one another's lives with laughter, humour and sometimes tears. Women from many countries and many walks of life have come together to share special moments in their lives for future generations.



Edna Peters
18 August, 1937 - 15 December, 2014





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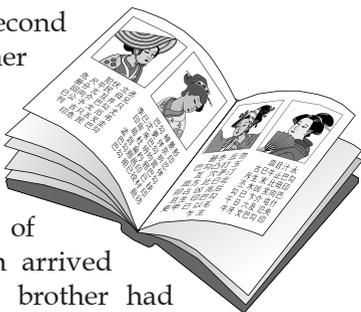


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The Catalogue Bride

Many years ago, before the Second World War, my Dad's younger brother wanted to send home to China for a lass to come to New Zealand to marry him. Catalogue brides were a common occurrence then. They were all from Canton in the days of *Chiang Kai Shek*, before Communism arrived in their part of the country. Dad's brother had his own market garden with an old farm house and a shed attached to the property.



Work began to clean and beautify the said establishment in preparation for the coming of the new lady. Paint, paper, new flooring, kitchenware, bedding, etc. were bought and arranged, with my Mum in charge, while Uncle daydreamed about what she would be like. Would she like him? Would she stay? Would she marry him? Or would she want to return home disappointed?

He sent funds to his relatives in their village to be used for her passage, clothing, presents for her family, etc. Then he waited. It took nearly six months for the legal paperwork to be approved and accepted. Time was then given to write to her family. In due course a letter arrived, with photo attached, for Uncle to peruse. Oh dear, she looked rather plain, though homely. The photo was head and shoulders only. She was strong. Could, or would, she work in the garden? Could she cook? Would she be prepared to have children? Would she like him? Oh, goodness, what would happen if she didn't?

My mum would always settle him down and talk about being positive, assuring him that love would grow; to always be gentle, kind, understanding, and patient, and all would be

well. Word arrived that she would travel by ship, nervous, but prepared to come. They studied the photo. She had short black straight hair, with a fringe. A navy frock or blouse across her shoulders was all they could see, but at least they knew how to recognise her when she arrived.

The day dawned warm and sunny. She had come. Disembarking would begin at 11:00am. Mum, Dad and Uncle were there early, but they couldn't see her. Oh, gosh, maybe she wasn't coming after all. The flowers Uncle was holding started slipping out of his hands. Then Mum saw a lady with curly hair, leaning on the rails, looking sad and lonely. She was one of the few left on board. They waved to her to come down and she was greeted with smiles all round.

Later, over a cup of refreshing Chinese tea, she explained that she wanted to look her best, so had her hair permed and bought a new grey suit with pale pink blouse and black patent court shoes. Mum said she looked lovely and Uncle nodded in agreement.

The couple married some weeks later. They went on to have five children and enjoyed 54 years together before he died. She lived a short time after him and, although she couldn't speak English, and Mum knew only a few words of Chinese, Mum was her closest friend.

The moral of this story could be: Have faith and give love a chance. What do you think?

Martha Hoani



Kia ora from Martha. Now a widow and retired, Martha is originally from the Hokianga, but has lived for many years on the North Shore. In her career Martha has taught in country schools, main stream, and bi-lingual. She has also written stories for School Journals.



Backwards Through Life

Between eight and ten per cent of the population live in a backward world and I am one of them.

We go through life with people calling us clumsy and awkward, and, unless you are one of us, you will not understand just how much we have to adapt. Yes, I am talking about left-handed people.



My first memories of being different were at the age of five, when I first went to school and had to stay in after everyone had gone home to practise writing on the blackboard with my right hand. This I found impossible and I was growled at by the teacher. I must admit that writing on the blackboard in chalk left-handed, my hand would come across it and rub it out. Of course when I was older and we wrote in ink, my hand came across that too and smudged it, which was very much worse. My school books were messy and I had a reputation for doing untidy work.

As the years went by, I learned to live with it. Practically all kitchen appliances are made only for right-handed people. For example, have you ever tried to pour liquid from a milk pot with a spout backwards? You can't see what you are doing.

My iron has the cord coming out of the wrong side for me, hence it is always in the way.

I was not the best doubles partner at tennis (a game I loved). We both guarded the centre well, but our back hands were both on the outside.

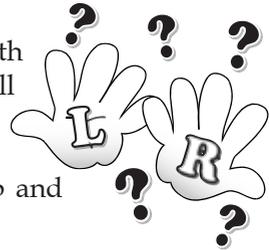


I eventually took up golf, thinking that it was a solo game and I did not have to consider a partner. This was true, but I could not escape the disadvantages, as left-handed clubs were not easy to buy and were more expensive than right-handed ones which could be picked up reasonably cheaply. I tried to buy a glove for the right hand, but all of the golf shops had plenty for the left hand – and at sale price too. A right-handed one was always more expensive. However, as you go through life you learn to accept this.



I don't know if this is just me or the norm, but when I am given directions to go anywhere I always visualise it opposite to what it is.

Although I have lived all these years with this problem, I have one thing that I still have not mastered. I do not know my right hand from my left. If anyone says "Hold out your right hand", I always have to stop and think first.



Do you think that I live in a backward world? Just try it and see.

Life is not the always the way you think it is supposed to be. It is the way you cope with it that makes the difference.

Betty Faesen



Betty Faesen was born in 1925, a fourth generation New Zealander, and raised in South Canterbury. She lives in Auckland.



Isle of Skye

My Mother's eldest sister, Lettie, had married a Skye man in Glasgow during the First World War, and had lived her married life in Glasgow. Her husband, Archie, worked on the railways. However, their holidays were spent with the family in Skye and Archie's ambition was to retire there to run the family crofts. In this he succeeded and they lived in a typical croft house – two up, two down – with kitchen at the rear, and a bathroom.

Skye had been connected to electricity in the early 1950s, but, as yet, not to the water supply. However, water had been piped in from a "burn" [stream or creek], which ran down the hill behind the house.

Archie took his crofting seriously and grazed young "stirks" [bullocks] for the market and, in loading these beasts on to a truck one day, Lettie was knocked down and ended up in *Inverness Infirmary* with broken ribs. This worried my Mother and she felt Lettie needed support. So she suggested to Archie

that if he could find a house for them, she and my Father would live near them. This Archie was pleased to do, and found them a "but and ben" [small cottage with kitchen and sitting room] built into the hillside about half a mile away.



It needed a bit of work, such as a new floor in the bedroom and, though there was no running water, my Mother had a small sink installed under the window. The walls were stone snow "cemmed" [whitewash used on stone] on the outside and the roof was iron. The house was built into the hillside, but had double walls at

the back with a cavity, so it was not damp. There was an electric stove and a fireplace. My Mother bought a ten gallon boiler, and this we filled with rainwater, or water from the nearby burn and boiled up the clothes. We got drinking water from a nearby spring. However, if this was iced-over in winter, we would drink the burn water, secure in the faith that if it had crossed seven stones, it would be clean – and there were plenty of stones! Our toilet facilities were an “Elsan” [portable toilet] in the shed alongside.



We soon settled in and regularly visited Upper Ollach, where Lettie and Archie lived. Here, we would help in boiling up the hen’s potatoes and mix them with oatmeal to make a morning meal for the hens. It was wonderful for cleaning the hands and making them soft. I often accompanied Archie up the hill to check on the sheep grazing there, and in winter to take feed to them.

We also fed his highland cattle. Archie was a County Councillor so when he went to Inverness to attend meetings, these chores fell to me. I called out “troat troat”, which is Gaelic for “come”, and the sheep or cattle would gather round for their feed. I had to count the sheep to make sure they were all present! We also spread tons of basic slag on the ground to improve the pasture. At the appropriate time of year, we would cut the hay. Archie had a small tractor for this purpose, but it still had to be turned with rakes and made into small “coles” [haystacks] by nightfall, then spread out the next day to make sure it was properly dry. There was always something to be done. I loved it, as it was like life in Fetlar as I’d known it.

Lettie acquired a goat for milk and I often milked it, which was no fun at all in the summer evenings when you’d be enveloped in midges. There is no equivalent to a Scottish midge in New Zealand. The nearest would be sandflies.



Another pleasure was to go fishing. Archie and another crofter, Iain Mor, would get out the rowboat and row us out into the *Raasay Sound*. We had long lines with lots of hooks pulling behind the boat and we caught “saith” and “lythe” [types of fish], and occasionally dog fish, which looked like miniature sharks. Best of all was to go through a shoal of mackerel – they fairly jumped onto the lines. To go home close to midnight and fry up mackerel in oatmeal was heaven.

Wendy MacLeod



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



Give Us a Lift

When I arrived in New Zealand early in 1962, I got a job almost immediately as secretary to a lawyer in Shortland Street. The company worked in a very old building, so it was good news that they were planning to move, and shortly afterwards we all moved into the brand new green glass *AMP Building* on the corner of Queen Street and Victoria Street East – the then-current “skyscraper of Auckland” with its SEVEN floors!

The new offices were light and airy, elegant and modern, so much better than the old, and we were the envy of the town. Most of the new tenants were lawyers or accountants, and the top floor had been taken by a High Commissioner from overseas. It all oozed respectability, so the staff in the building were expected to behave with dignity and be formally dressed.

A few days after we had moved there, a group of about ten of us, men and girls, gathered at the fifth floor lifts. It was just after 12:00 noon, so we were going down to Queen Street for lunch. We all got in and the button was pressed. The lift started going down.

Suddenly it stopped between floors and no amount of button pressing would get it started again. Then it suddenly dropped what seemed like several feet. It stopped again for a while, then another drop. One of the girls screamed. The emergency button was pressed. Nothing happened. Another girl said she felt faint, so we tried to calm her.

The cabin was very hot. The sporadic drops continued. We hoped we wouldn't hit the bottom of the lift shaft. Somebody started to light a cigarette, but it was generally agreed that was most unwise. The cigarette was put away. The lights went out. We waited in the gloom of the emergency light, which was much more scary than before.



An hour passed. It seemed much longer.

Suddenly there was a tap on the roof of the lift cabin. A trapdoor in the ceiling opened, and a man's face peered down at us with a torch. He told us that the electricity had been turned off, so the lift wouldn't drop any more, and that we were safe, but he said that we would have to climb out. Of course we business girls, mostly in our early twenties, were elegantly dressed in slim skirts, stockings and high heels. So, off came the shoes, up went the slim skirts to our hips, giving a great display of knickers and suspenders.

The men-folk lifted us up one by one to the trap door and, when we were through, we had to crawl across the roof of the cabin to the wall of the lift shaft, where there were metal rungs. We climbed these to the floor above. The doors were open and we were pulled on to the lino on our stomachs.

By this time a large number of people were waiting for lifts, so here we had a bigger audience for our displays of underwear. The men then followed us up, having hauled each other out of the cabin. Our shoes came up in the men's pockets.

I must give the guys with us in the lift their due. At no stage were there any ribald remarks or obvious grins about the



embarrassing predicament of the girls. The guys behaved like real gentlemen. Even after the event there was no reference to it made within earshot of any of the girls. Mind you, we never knew what the guys said between themselves. We suspect some of them had probably enjoyed our display!

But it all goes to show that Grandma was right with her advice: "Always make sure, my dear, that you have clean underwear on every day when you go out, just in case you are in an accident ..."

Jenny Goldsbro



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



The Coffee Shop

As a youngster, I loved walking round exploring the neighbourhood and I was drawn to the coffee shop because it was an intriguing place. Each time I wandered past, I wondered how a building could emerge from a tree, or if the tree was growing out of the building. The old oak tree had probably been there from time immemorial and grew close to the edge of the pavement, so that the branches had spread towards the roof of the building and the tree had turned itself away from the traffic. In time it even invaded the entrance. To my childish mind it was magic.

A young child's life is full of mysteries. After a while, I gave up asking questions and tried to work it out for myself. I fancied myself as a detective striding through the undergrowth of a wood with my faithful Alsatian dog seeking clues to crimes. We didn't actually have a dog at the time, but my Dad's friend had Rinty, short for Rin Tin Tin, and I loved him.

One day I decided to go inside the shop. I found myself in a cave-like structure with a low-beamed ceiling made of rough oak. The walls were equally dismal but I was undeterred, because I was investigating like the detective I fancied myself becoming



one day. I became aware of a counter to the left of the room, olive green in colour, with a man wearing a black apron, brewing and serving mugs of steaming coffee.

The rest of the den was filled with crude rough tables surrounded by wooden forms occupied by old men puffing on well-worn pipes. They were all dressed in shabby old suits and jerseys that had been washed too often. But they were very much alive, if a little slow, as they chatted to one another in between swigs of coffee in the all-male environment. I suppose they had been labourers in their time at work, but they were too old for that now.

The drink then wasn't pure coffee because it was mixed with chicory. I remember it came in an oblong bottle about the same size as a small sauce bottle.

My curiosity satisfied, I never returned.



Eight or nine years passed before I was considered old enough to go out drinking coffee alone. We youngsters would assemble in a place called *Nelsons* and all we did was drink a single cup of coffee as we gossiped and arranged to meet at our Youth Club run by a man called Mr Allen. He played records, served coffee and he was almost invisible. One of the boys had his own band and had supplied their recorded performance.

After the war ended, *Nescafé* was the product we used. It was pure coffee and came in the form of powder in a brown and gold tin.

Arriving in New Zealand in 1947, I discovered no-one had heard of *Nescafé* coffee powder. It would be some years before post-war Kiwis adopted the coffee custom. I think



it might have been influenced by folk from the Netherlands. It would still be another 30 years or so before the cafés of today would pepper our cities.

No wonder, the popular song proclaimed, “There’s an awful lot of coffee in Brazil”. I suppose it’s a million dollar industry rather than the modest refreshment for people on the fringe, like the old men I described earlier. Drinking coffee has evolved as a widespread way for people to meet informally. It’s emblematic of a lingering, chatty interlude in busy lives and to me it is still accompanied by a feeling of being slightly decadent.

Enid Hillier



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

The Art of Pastry-making

It was the year 1950 and, having left boarding school at age 16, I found employment as an office junior in Adam Bruce's office in Ponsonby. I was fortunate in having found suitable accommodation in a Maori girls' hostel which was managed by the *Anglican Maori Mission*. It was a beautiful two-storey villa located in Shelley Beach Road, with a spacious park a few minutes walk away.

There was a band rotunda in the park, which was used by the *Salvation Army* band every Sunday afternoon, and drew quite a captive audience. The rotunda no longer exists, but the boarding house does, although not as a hostel.

My job description was typing envelopes, filing, mailing, and preparing morning and afternoon tea for a staff of six. Morning tea was usually tea / coffee and hot buttered toast. Afternoon tea was cakes or biscuits, whichever the staff preferred. These I would acquire from the factory downstairs.

On one occasion, as I went to get afternoon tea from the factory, I saw men stomping on what looked like dough and, because of my facial expression, was invited by the foremen to observe the men making flaky pastry. This was done in



wide shallow tubs or vats and the men had to remove their gumboots and stomp barefoot all over the dough until they had acquired the correct consistency.

The foreman then proceeded to tell me that if the public knew how the pastry was made, there would be no sales. I silently agreed and he quickly assured me that “every pair of feet was hygienically hygienic!”, but he would have to say that, wouldn’t he?

For years, the site of pastry, whether raw or baked, brought back visions of bare feet stomping. Hygienic? Ask yourself!

Bon Maxwell-Ritchie



Born in Clevedon to parents of Maori and Scottish descent, where her father farmed on tribal land, Bon has a number of tribal affiliations, the main ones being Ngai Tai, Tainui, and Ngati Porou. She has three children and six grandchildren, and lives alone with her cat Kooti.

A Love Story

Last October, my late husband and I would have celebrated 60 years of marriage. Where had the time gone! The early to mid-fifties, when we met and married, seems a lifetime ago – and life was different then.



My husband was Maori, and I was a young Danish girl, recently arrived from Denmark and new to New Zealand, with its different customs, language, and Maori people. I had no pre-conceived ideas of race relations, so I came and saw everything with new eyes.

Race relations was good on the surface, but underneath it was a somewhat different story. It was a time when there was discrimination and segregation in the picture theatre and barbers in Pukekohe, which raised a real storm of self-examination in the Pakeha world.

There was most certainly discrimination in obtaining accommodation and, to some extent, in the job market. In the streets, you might see a Pakeha man with a Maori or Polynesian wife or girlfriend, but, in the almost two years of our courtship, I never saw a Pakeha girl with a Maori man, so people would turn around in surprise on seeing my husband and I together. However, we never came across any overt discrimination. People were friendly and, if there was anyone who didn't approve, they certainly kept it to themselves.

So, we married, had a family, and got a house with the help of the *Department of Maori Affairs* (they don't give that kind of help any more). We didn't experience any opposition from either his family or mine, which I think was a real plus for us.





And so, we lived our life, and what a happy life it really was. Of course, it was not without its problems, and we certainly had some adjustments to make, with language making for some misunderstandings, as English was the second language for both of us. But, we were very good at communicating with each other, and sorting out any differences.

We lived in a really nice neighbourhood, and soon made friends there – Pakeha, Maori, and Polynesians. We would sometimes have a hangi in our backyard for friends and neighbours, and life was good. Our girls grew up, went to school, and our eldest moved to Wellington to take up a job with the *Department of Lands & Surveys*.

A couple of years later, on one of her visits home, she remarked, “We didn’t know it at the time, but we’ve lived a charmed life in our family.”



So, the years went by. My husband developed heart problems in his late fifties, so I decided that we would have a big family celebration on his 60th birthday. It was a lovely day, with lots of

singing and speeches. A few years later, we celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. Sadly, he passed away two years after that.



Looking back, I think how really blessed I have been and what an interesting life I have had. How lucky I have been to have married a Maori and learnt so much about the Maori people, their language, and life philosophy. How enriching and broadening of the horizons it has been. I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

I must say, I have found the Kiwis in the main to be fair minded people. They were very welcoming to us immigrants, and accepting of our inter-marriage. And, today, no-one bats an eyelid when they see a mixed marriage.

Anne Mutu



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



Waiheke Wine

The ferry was crowded with day trippers, holiday makers and commuters on this sunny holiday weekend.

As Richard and I cruised towards Waiheke Island, I found myself in the company of a young man. He talked passionately about his Maori heritage and his excitement at the prospect of joining his Waiheke Whanau in a celebration of the land they had occupied for many generations.

My mission was far less emotional. I was on my way to buy one bottle of wine.



We arrived at the Island and made our way through the crowded ferry terminal. Our connecting bus to Onetangi awaited us, and we squeezed inside just as the doors flapped shut. Those on the pavement would have to wait.

As the bus made its way up the hill, the murmur of passenger chatter fell to the background, and my thoughts took me back to the evening when Richard offered our dinner guests a glass of wine. "Yes," they all said and, before I could stop him, Richard had the wine open and ready to pour. "I found it in the garage," he announced.



At the top of the hill the bus stopped and more people got on, crowding the vehicle with their luggage, shopping, children, and chatter. The driver, who admitted to doing this job to supplement his old age pension, called out in a loud, gruff voice, "Push to the back," and his captives shuffled obediently as far to the rear as they could manage.

Close to the driver, a scruffy little dog sat quietly with its owner, undisturbed by the noise and bustle of the human cargo squeezing past. With no room to move in the aisle, a flustered mother passed her crying baby over to a seated stranger, who sang nursery rhymes and soon had the child calmed. Three young men from Wellington announced to all that they were on their way to a wedding, and proceeded to practise a few lines of the wedding speech, to the amusement of the passengers. Two couples, visiting from Britain, talked loudly of their travels, and an elderly gent gave his advice about the best places to visit on the Island

Then, a kind young lady gave up her seat for my older bones and I found I was chatting with a woman from Masterton, coming to visit her daughter who lived at Waiheke. I told her I was here to buy a bottle of wine.

The standing passengers clung to whatever they could find to steady themselves as the bus wove its way through suburban streets, passing small holiday baches and substantial homes, skirting idyllic beaches and rows of vineyards. Here and there, new arrivals boarded the bus and were greeted with the driver's instruction, "Push to the back." The passengers were rearranged and the banter continued.

The miles fell behind us and passengers began to alight at various stops. The lads found their wedding venue, the mother was reunited with her baby, the overseas visitors were met by their Island hosts, the kind young lady had returned home, and various other passengers had reached their destination.

With the bus quieter now, I wondered if I would find my one bottle of wine.

The driver had signalled each stop along the way, but amongst the noise and chatter inside the bus I must have missed his gruff announcement, "*Te Matua Vineyard*," and we found ourselves way past our stop, and at the end of the run.



It was not a long wait for a returning bus. The ride back was quiet, and we found our stop without further incident. On such a hot day, it seemed a very long uphill walk from the bus stop to the door of *Te Matua Winery* and we ducked beneath the shady trees, trying to avoid the burning sun.

As we trudged up the road I thought of Andrew and Kate visiting here with their parents a few months earlier, I recalled the marriage proposal, their excitement, and the bottle of Rosé wine shared in celebration.

It had seemed like a good idea to buy a box of that special Rosé wine as their wedding gift. But since that dinner party, there was a void, a glaring gap in the box that begged a replacement bottle.

Supplies were low at *Te Matua Vineyard*, but I did manage to purchase one bottle of Rita's Rosé wine at Waiheke that day, and we returned home to slip it into the box.

The gift was complete again.

Cherrie Keane



Cherrie was born in Devonport, Auckland. She got married in Melbourne in 1965 and later returned to her birth place with husband Richard to raise their three sons.



Observations

made while sitting on a bench on the village green

There goes a beagle spotted and fat,
It's following a woman in a straw hat.
There goes a man; with tattoos, his feet bare,
And there goes a child who hasn't a care.

The Magnolia flowers are fading and dying.
Oh! There skips a girl, her ponytail flying.
And there goes a woman with ebony skin,
Here comes a youth who's alarmingly thin.

There goes a girl in shorts, my but they're brief,
The things people wear, are beyond one's belief!
A pensioner follows her, riding a scooter.
Oh, what a racket she makes on that hooter.

A man hurries by with two dogs on two on leads,
And a willowy woman, with cascades of beads.
The people who practise Tai Chi on the green,
Are finished today; and so not to be seen.

Now it's a matron, her bosoms a'bounding,
Giving her husband a bit of a trouncing.
She certainly shatters the peace of the place,
But he seems to be taking it all with good grace.

continues 



I sit on this seat 'neath the blue summer sky,
And happily watch the world floating by.
I ponder and contemplate all that I see,
And marvel how different we people can be.

Helen Welsh

(poem and illustration)



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

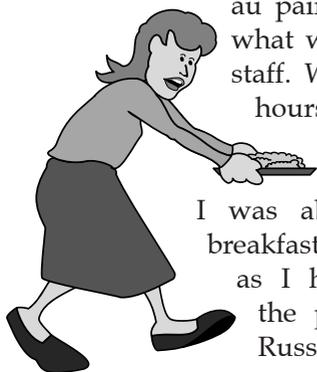
Upstairs / Downstairs

The year was 1967. After a great experience as an au pair in Paris five years earlier, I decided to try it again, this time in London. My aim was to improve on my school English and experience English culture. My first two jobs were not very successful. Perhaps the third, in a truly English upper class household, would be the perfect one.

Most of you will remember the TV series *Upstairs / Downstairs* about the Bellamy family living in an elegant Edwardian house in Belgravia, London. Mr Bellamy was an MP in the 1920s. His aristocratic wife, Marjorie, ran the household with the help of five servants.

From the street, the house of my employers looked just like the Bellamy residence. Befittingly, my room was downstairs. My mistress was a beautiful 22 year old, expecting her first baby. Her husband looked about thirty years older. I was told that prior to their marriage, he lived with his butler in the house. Before the young bride moved in, the place was converted and renovated.

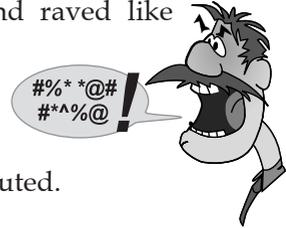
As servants were no longer easy to come by, they could be replaced with au pairs. This option was much cheaper. These au pair girls were miracle workers, able to do what was once done by at least three domestic staff. Well, I gave it my best shot in the three hours per day I was paid for.



One morning, my boss asked me if I was able to cook him scrambled eggs for breakfast. My answer was a confident "Yes", as I had been shown how to do this dish the proper "English" way by my previous Russian employer. So, I scrambled away

and, once I had served it in the most beautifully furnished and carpeted dining room, the master took one forkful, and spat it out. He then threw the contents of the plate towards me. He called me a “bloody fool” and ranted and raved like a lunatic.

I had no idea what could be wrong.



“In this house we use butter, not oil!” he shouted.

Stammering how sorry I was, I went into the hall where I had left the vacuum cleaner. I pulled it into the dining room and sucked the whole mess up. The man then turned purple with rage. I feared he would blow a gasket or worse, attempt to kill me.



His wife must have been woken up with all the yelling. She tried to calm him down and then lectured me on how to clean egg off a carpet. Alas, this came too late ...I had already sucked it up completely and, boy oh boy, did I feel good about it!

Irene Knowles



Irene was born and raised in Switzerland. In 1969 she came to New Zealand, having met her Kiwi husband in London. They have two daughters and a grandson, and have lived in Torbay since 1973.

My War Experience

Although I was born during the Second World War, I was of course, too immature to appreciate the sacrifice the soldiers made for their countries.

Growing up in a small Northland town, no-one in our immediate family was killed or maimed. Three uncles served overseas, but, because of my father's ill health, he served only in New Zealand.

My only real memories were of rationing of food, blackouts, and the Victory Parade, which terrified me, as I had never seen people dressed in grotesque costumes previously. No television for us in those days.



When a fellow student and I were hitchhiking in the South Island during our long summer break from study, we were given a ride one day by two middle-aged men who each had only one leg. They were returned servicemen and had lost



their legs during the War – one his right, the other his left leg. They told us that when they were evacuated home to New Zealand by ship they met and, as they had only one pair of shoes between them, they shared these and became great friends on the long sea journey. Before they landed, they made a pact that one day they would meet up again and take a road trip, stopping at every water hole or stream for a swim and every pub for a beer.

These two were a source of much amusement and, sure enough, the stops were made. After the third pub, we decided to part company. I sometimes wonder how the remainder of their trip proceeded, hopefully with their remaining legs intact.

Maryanne Baird



Maryanne Baird was born in Whangarei, a descendant of early settlers there.

Glyndebourne

When I was a student in London, still very new to England, and coping with the different culture and the ways of the English, a fellow South African student gave me a couple of tickets to *Glyndebourne*.

Glyndebourne is a beautiful old mansion, set in the countryside, surrounded by velvet-like lawns, with a stream meandering through it. All I knew was that it was a 16th century country house famous as an opera venue.

Her husband, a journalist, had got the tickets. They were unable to go as she was not well, so she kindly gave the tickets to me, as someone who enjoys opera. I invited a fellow student, an American, to come too. I thought my friend said that dress was “informal”.

We were told to be at *Paddington Station* in time to catch the train at 3:00pm. As it was a lovely summer’s day, I wore a simple cotton frock and sandals. My companion was also



Glyndebourne Opera, 1934





Glyndebourne Opera, 1934

casually dressed. Off we went, eagerly looking forward to the opera.

Arriving at the train station, we were amazed to see other passengers in evening dress – the women dripping with diamonds and furs – all dressed up to the nines. We were distinctly out of place and I realised she had probably said “dress formal” not “informal”.

The opera was *The Barber of Seville*. We had excellent seats and enjoyed the performance immensely. Looking at the programme, we noted that the interval was three hours in duration. We wondered why it was to be so long. By that time we were feeling peckish, and went outside to see where they would be selling cold drinks and something to nibble. Alas – nothing like that! What we saw was an array of cars: Rolls Royces, Bentleys, Cadillacs, with chauffeurs bringing out hampers of fine foods, tables and chairs, wine and glasses. These were carefully placed on the lovely green lawns along the river.

We were the only ones dressed for picnics on rugs. Unfortunately, as foreigners, we were unaware that one

attended *Glyndebourne* in one's finery, with champagne and pheasant served up during the interval. We looked longingly at the feasts, but no-one offered to share. There was nowhere for "plebs" to even buy a Coke and chips.

I never had the opportunity to go back to *Glyndebourne* in evening dress, with a limousine and a hamper from *Fortnum & Mason*.

I don't remember as much about the performance as I do about the feeling of being an "outsider". After accepting British traditions – like one always put on evening dress at 2:00pm on a summer's day to catch a train to opera in the countryside – I become a true Brit. I would join in at the Proms, bobbing up and down at the appropriate times, lustily joining in singing *Rule Britannia* all out of tune and overcome with feelings of patriotism – as if I belonged.

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 their family.



Editors' Footnote

Glyndebourne is an opera house in East Sussex, just one hour from London, which has been the venue for the annual *Glyndebourne Festival* since 1934. It is a world famous venue for fine opera.



The Wedding Shoes

Two weeks before we were due to be married in August 1965, Graeme decided it was time to buy shoes for the wedding. The next day being Friday, we decided to go into Christchurch City, have a meal together, and look for an appropriate pair of shoes.

We walked into *Ballantynes* (similar to *Smith & Caughey's*) and headed for the Shoe Department. A young man, who looked about 17 years of age, approached us and asked if he could help. Graeme explained to the young man, that we were getting married soon and he needed a pair of wedding shoes. "They must be black, leather, and a size nine."

Several boxes were placed before us. Graeme tried each pair on. Finally, he decided on the ones he considered to have the finest leather, the best design, and the correct fit. The young man boxed up the shoes, and put the docket and money in a container. We watched as it whizzed on a wire to the office upstairs. Within minutes the container whizzed back and Graeme had the docket, change, receipt, and shoes, and we were on our way.



The day of the wedding dawned.

Graeme's brother Des, Best Man, and the two Groomsman decided Graeme needed some "Dutch courage". They took him along to his Club where they downed a few beers. A very happy Graeme and Des made their way home where Graeme's Mum, Eileen had a roast meal waiting.

After lunch it was time to get dressed for the wedding. The new suit and shirt were hanging on the hanger, both beautifully pressed by Eileen. From under the bed came the box with the wedding

shoes. Graeme opened the box. Horror of horrors – two left feet!

Graeme sobered up pretty quickly. What to do? Checking the phonebook under *Ballantynes*, there was the home phone number of the owner. Graeme rang the number and explained the situation. Mr Ballantyne said, "I will be there very soon."

He arrived and took the shoes away. In the meantime, Eileen polished up the old shoes, just in case they might be required.

The time came to go to the church. The shoes had not arrived. On with the old shoes and Graeme took off for the church leaving a neighbour, Lyn, at the house in case Mr Ballantyne showed up with the shoes.

Just as I was arriving at the church, *St Teresa's* in Puriri Street, Riccarton, Lyn came running up the aisle with a pair of new shoes. Graeme went out the back to the Sacristy and changed into the new shoes. The wedding was able to begin.

During the ceremony as we knelt down, I could hear a few giggles. There on the bottom of the shoes for all to see was the price sticker.



After our eight-day honeymoon at *The Hermitage*, Mount Cook, Graeme went back to the shop to see Mr Ballantyne, not only to thank him, but to explain that the shoes were not the wedding shoes he initially purchased. The original shoes were replaced with the ones worn on the day.

Graeme asked Mr Ballantyne what would happen to the loan shoes. They were going to be offered to the staff for half of the original price. They were expensive shoes and at half price would be a bargain. Graeme asked if he could purchase them. This was agreed upon.



Looking around the Department, Graeme could not see the young man who sold him the shoes. He asked Mr Ballantyne if the young man was on leave. The reply was, "No we had to let him go, *Ballantynes* cannot have staff making errors like that."

Judy Brocherie



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



Fairies

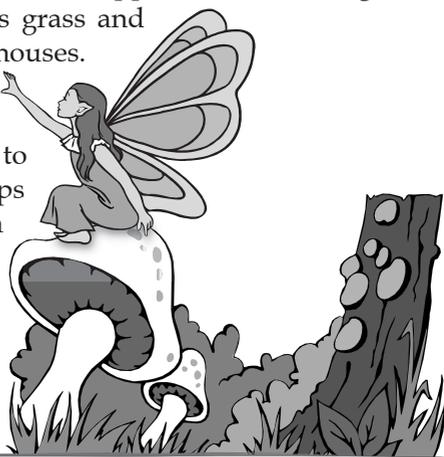
Fairies were at the bottom of my garden. I was sure of it, but no matter how hard or how often I looked, I could never see them. I knew they existed and that I would recognise them, because the illustrations in my book all showed them as beautiful, dainty, ethereal creatures. They had magical powers as well and I so wanted to find them to talk with them, perhaps even fly and dance with them. But first I had to find them!



The experience of my first tooth loosening and falling out was a wonderful event because, by placing the tooth under my pillow, a fairy would take it away and leave a threepenny piece behind as payment. I wasn't sure what they did with those teeth, but I was happy to assist. I found it strange though, that I was not aware of their visits, and no matter how determined I was to stay awake when they called, I was not able to manage it.

My longing to meet with the fairies led to a plan which I was sure must work. At the end of my road, if I turned left and took the second road on the right, I would be in Queen's Avenue. The left side was lined with houses (as my road was), but the right side was lined with Pepper trees which grew close together. Underneath was grass and an earth path. There were no houses.

I loved this road, like no other I had ever seen, and always begged my mother to walk that way to the shops when I was with her, even though it was further. I felt it was a special place, and if I could not find the fairies at the bottom of my garden, then



surely this must be their preferred place. To a six year old, it was both beautiful and mysterious. That would be where to find them.



I had a very pretty mauve silk dressing gown with frills all around the edges and sleeves and I thought it the loveliest article of clothing I owned and therefore it would be exactly the right thing to wear if you were going to meet the fairies.

My plan was complete! I went to bed as usual, listened to my bedtime story, barely able to contain myself. I said good night and my light was turned off and the door closed. I had to wait until it was completely dark and my parents were safely out at the front of the house listening to the radio, but I was so excited that I was in no danger of falling asleep. At last I was going to realise my dream. Tonight I would finally meet the fairies!

When I decided the time was right, I slipped out of bed and into my pretty gown. I opened the door and crept through the darkened house, through the kitchen, out the back door, down the stairs, and out of the gate. In bare feet, I ran down the road, around the corner and on into Queen's Avenue. There seemed to be no-one around and there were few cars in our neighbourhood. It was very quiet – everything was perfect!

My heart was pounding with anticipation. At last I would see the fairies, maybe talk to them, dance with them. I walked slowly now, under those large trees which looked bigger than I remembered. There was a little moonlight to show me the way and as I passed each tree, I looked eagerly and thoroughly for movement, but there was none. Before I knew it I had reached the end and in front of me stretched busy Dominion Road.

My heart fell, I did not want to linger here and I grew afraid of the shadows all around me. I wanted to go home. I turned back and began retracing my steps quickly. I thought I saw movements, but not the sort I had been wanting. Suddenly it seemed so dark. Perhaps there were no fairies here after all,

but maybe there were goblins or other nasty creatures – lions and tigers even. I started to run faster and faster and there was my own gate at last! Out of breath, I crept as quietly as I could back through the house and into my bed, where I pulled the covers thankfully right over my head. I was so relieved to be safe that my disappointment faded and I quickly fell asleep.

I did not attempt this particular adventure again, but my faith in fairies stayed alive for some time. In my mind, it was my plan that did not work for some reason. I simply got it wrong!



Years later, my mother told me that she and my father had heard me creep out of the house and my father had silently followed me all the way, waited patiently for me, and walked behind me all the way home without a word or a sign.



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.



The Maiden Voyage of the Santa Catalina

We had been boating since 1984 and, sadly, sold our sailboat *Bloodline* in 2003. The gracious lady had provided us with many adventures and much family joy for over 18 years.

While emptying the boat, we could not believe how much stuff had been stowed away in the various holds of the 36-foot sailboat. In total, it took five carloads to clear. Much of this we stored at my mother-in-law's home in Manly, as it was our intention to be without a boat for a few years. Finally, we would have time to do some much needed maintenance on our ageing home. However, that same year Rod found the lovely *Catalina* for sale on the Internet. We had come across a *Catalina* the previous summer on Great Barrier Island when we were given a tour of the interior. I quite fancied the style of boat.



The *Catalina* is an American-built sailboat, built with comfort in mind. No doubt it was the eight inch inner sprung mattresses that clinched the deal for me, and when Rod suggested we buy it, I did not have the heart to say no.

At the time, I thought "stupid me", but later realised we would have missed out on a lot of fun and also a few hair-raising adventures, had we

stayed on land to do the much needed house maintenance (that incidentally is still not done).

Thus, a few days after Christmas in 2003, we were heading out of *Gulf Harbour Marina* on *Santa Catalina* with our daughter, son-in-law, and our dog Frodo. There was little time to get ready for our big trip, having taken possession of the new boat only days before Christmas, it was a rush job to put all the bedding and provisions on board.

Our daughter, Angie, and her husband, Nigel, arrived from Brisbane on Christmas Eve to join us for a couple of weeks. They would then return from Great Barrier Island to fly back to Brisbane while Rod, Frodo, and I carried on. From Great Barrier Island, we would go to Tutukaka, then the Bay of Islands, and, finally, Whangaparaoa, where we were meeting up with other sailing friends. We barely had time to prepare for the family Christmas, let alone equip and stock a boat for our four to five week summer holiday.

It was already afternoon by the time we got all the provisions, bedding and fishing gear onto the boat. Rod was anxious to leave so we could get to Kawau Island before nightfall. Already underway, he called the coastguard: four POB (people on board) and one DOG aboard. Frodo, our dog, was a great seadog having been introduced to sailing when he was only a pup. While the others were in the cockpit taking us out of the marina, I was below, hardly able to move with the saloon floor completely covered in boxes and bags. Having already dumped the bedding in the fore cabin, I was frantically trying to stow away all the perishables.

The first priority was to get the frozen items, including meat, into some kind of order in the freezer so I could find them when needed. Then the vegetables and other fresh supplies were loaded into the fridge (what a treat to have enough room, as this one was twice the size of my *Bloodline* fridge). I had managed to find places for glasses, crockery, cutlery, and some



utensils and tea towels. I even found room for the snack foods behind the seat backs and, most importantly, for the masses of tin cans, jars, and wine, which I stowed under the seats.



Rosemarie's daughter, Angie, with husband Nigel, and Frodo the dog

Finally, I was able to move through the cabin. Surveying my work, despite an aching back, I was happy ... until

I realised that we did not have a single pot or pan! We had food for four to five weeks, yet nothing to cook it in! Then I remembered that we had stored a lot of the items off *Bloodline* at Nana's place and a phone call confirmed that, sure enough, the pots and pans were still in her basement.

As we were already rounding Whangaparaoa Peninsula, I informed the captain and crew on deck that we had to make a detour into Manly Bay. There was a strong off-shore wind and by now it was pouring with rain. Rod dropped the anchor on a hard sandy bottom, so he had to stay at the helm to secure the boat, thus it was up to someone else to brave the waves.

As neither Nigel, Frodo, nor I were rowers, it was left to poor Angie to battle the wind and a fair few breakers to retrieve the pots from Nana. On the beach stood Nana, this little 90 year old lady in her raincoat with sou'wester and light blue polyester pants rolled up to her knees, which made her look even tinier than she was, holding a huge bag of pots and pans. Dear Nana, who was always so neat and tidy and concerned about her appearance!

When the dinghy arrived she waded out and helped Angie pull it in. They then placed the huge bag with all the pots and pans

into the dinghy. It also contained a grater and cheese knife that Nana thought we might need. She then hugged Angie and helped her launch the dinghy.

The wind meant that the dinghy was almost propelled back to *Santa Catalina*. Nana stood there in the wind, watching and waving until Angie was safely back on-board. Then she turned and struggled up the beach through the sand, much of which would have been flying straight into her face. Angie and Nana, our heroines, saved the day.

A pity we did not realise we needed to request a can opener as well!

Rosemarie Carr



Rosemarie was born in the picturesque medieval walled city of Karlstadt on the Main River in Bavaria, Germany. She met her New Zealand husband Rod while travelling on her OE and came with him to New Zealand in 1970, where they now live in Rothesay Bay. They have two grown married children, Angela and Reagan, and two very lively dogs, Bella and Rocket.



Cold War

The United Kingdom is leaving the *European Union*. How sad. I have always thought that the *European Union (EU)* was one of the great achievements in world history. Europe had been so divided and war-torn for centuries. Millions of its inhabitants fled the continent to different parts of the world before, during, and after crises. Seventy years of peace – the longest period of peace ever in Europe’s history.



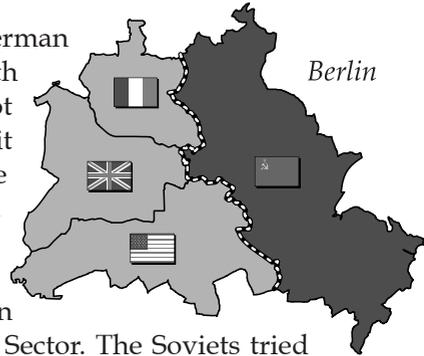
Whereas my grandparents suffered in a dictatorship and a war, my parents grew up in post-war times, but still with very scarce means. When I was born, the “Cold War” had already started. I grew up at about 15 kilometres from the West German / East German Border.

After the Second World War, the Allies divided what was left of the former German territory. The Eastern part of former



Germany (East-Prussia), had already become part of Poland and the Soviet Union. What was left was divided into three sectors: the American, English, and Soviet Sectors. The so-called Western Allies then decided to share their part with France. The Soviets didn’t want to cut “their” part of our country. This is why the four Western Sectors corresponded roughly to two thirds of post-war Germany and the Soviet Sector was roughly one third.

It was decided that the German capital Berlin should be dealt with separately. Legally, it was not part of any of the Sectors, but it was divided the same way as the rest of the country was divided. The city of Berlin was in the Soviet Sector which meant that the three Western parts of Berlin were like an island in the Soviet Sector. The Soviets tried to incorporate the whole of Berlin several times, but fortunately didn't succeed.



When the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded, East Berlin became the capital. This was not really possible as the city of Berlin was legally separated from Germany – hence East Berlin was not part of the German Democratic Republic!

However, the dictators of the German Democratic Republic were always good at words and at manipulation. As an example, for them “Democratic” meant the decision of the people – and, of course, it was the “State Party” who knew what the people wanted (no need to ask individuals!).



When I was born, The Wall had been built already. The expression “The Wall” is somehow confusing as it sounds like one wall between two streets for example. We had a wall that was all around the Western Sectors of Berlin. Then there was the big wall all through the country. Each of these walls consisted of several walls, ditches and landmines, surveillance towers, cameras, soldiers, and army dogs. There were about 1.5 million landmines along the walls through the country.

I grew up quite close to the wall through the country. My father was born only three kilometres on the other side, an area that was called “Sperrbezirk”, which meant that it could not be



visited because it was too close to the border. When the farmers on the Eastern side were working on the fields there, they were kept under surveillance by helicopters and cameras. My grandparents had left their village just in time to escape the dictatorship before the walls were built.

When the walls were built, villages and families were separated and nobody knew that it would take more than 40 years before they were re-united again. In my family we always thought of the people on the other side of The Wall, the so-called “Iron Curtain”.



West Germans (right) watching the East German construction workers build a wall across a Berlin road – the start of the Berlin Wall (August 1961)

We were grateful for being in the American Sector. The Americans had been good to us. After the war, my mother’s family had received care parcels from the United States. In one of these parcels was a red dress which she wore as a teenager, and it was one of the few things that she kept until I was a teenager – and I also wore it. I loved that dress and its history. I had many American friends, I did babysitting for American families, and I spoke American-English.



When I was about 15 years old, I first met a former conscientious prisoner from “drueben” as we used to say – which just means “from the other side”. He was about 35 years old, but his story moved me so much that I wanted to know more.

He said that his career was quite normal in the German Democratic Republic (GDR): when he was 14 or 15 he was discovered as a good sportsman. The *State Party* had its eyes everywhere ... he and his family were approached and he was offered to be trained as an officer for the *NVA* (*Nationale Volksarmee* [*National People's Army*]). This was an excellent offer and his family was very proud of him. When he finished school a few years later, he was recruited and, at the age of 25, he was an army officer with great potential.

Things changed for him when he started to question. Some of his questions were extremely dangerous for him:

- Why is the Federal Republic of Germany our enemy?
Answer: They are all fascists and capitalists and exploit the workers.

or • How do we defend ourselves against the *NATO*?

Answer: We attack first as we know when our enemy is planning to attack us.

These are the two questions that I still remember more than 30 years later.

The man told me that he was getting more and more concerned and was convinced that the State was using him. He was struggling and doubting until he decided to flee the system.

His attempt to escape was not successful. He was jailed and sentenced to 25 years hard labour for treason, and his family was certainly punished for his action, too. After almost ten years of jail, torture, and hard labour, he was freed by the Federal Republic of Germany and that's when he shared his experiences in some talks.

The Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany, was concerned about political prisoners and felt morally obliged to help them. Between 1964 and 1989 West Germany bought 33,755 prisoners free for which the GDR received more than 3.4 billion German Marks. This kind of business was strongly



rejected by many Germans – I guess on both sides. The money was vital for the survival of the GDR, but it certainly helped many people whose only crime was that they were longing for freedom. It was also known that the GDR sent some spies this way, but taking on board refugees always bears risks and the majority of these political refugees were extremely grateful.

I had many other encounters with political refugees and ex-prisoners. This was the beginning of my involvement in social justice.



I remember my first trip to Berlin, which was in the early 1980s. When I think about it, I still feel shivers down my spine. We drove through the GDR by bus. At the border we had to get off the bus, were checked, and then the bus was thoroughly examined, including big mirrors which were held underneath the bus in order to detect anybody who could have hid there.

We were told not to talk to the people we might meet. Not that we didn't want to, but if they were seen talking to West Germans they would be interrogated later. For foreigners the situation was more relaxed, but we, as West Germans, were always seen as a danger for the well-controlled State.

When we were in East Berlin, I once happened to see how two GDR policemen arrested a young man. I had never seen that kind of treatment to a person before ... I was shocked and very much afraid.

In West Berlin I also met with political refugees and some members of a non-governmental organisation that was taking care of these people when they had to learn how to survive in our system with freedom and responsibilities. This was the only trip to Berlin that I did during the *Cold War*. It made a deep impression on me. I felt so sorry and so helpless. I had no intention of crossing the border into that system again.

The Berlin Wall was brought down on 9 November, 1989. Small parts still remain as historical monuments for tourists to visit



I was even more grateful that I was born and raised in West Germany. This was not an achievement, but a blessing that I had received.



When I visited the United States in March 1989, a young American asked me about Germany. I said that one day we would be reunited again. He laughed, but I said that the system in the GDR was so cruel to its people, I just couldn't imagine that it would last much longer. Little did I know that the reunification was so close.

I would like to celebrate this unification every day. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, many former members of the Warsaw Pact asked to join the *EU*. They saw it as an advantage to be part of this strong union. I think that these kind of unions are even more important in today's world of globalisation. I wish the British voters who voted against the *EU* would have considered the German saying "together we are stronger".

Beate Matthies



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



The Bach on Rangitoto Island

The first time I visited the bach, called *Hazel*, at Islington Bay on Rangitoto Island was in the summer of 1961-1962. Ian and I had become engaged in the August of 1961, so I was keen to go and see the bach that I had heard so much about.

I had never been to Rangitoto Island, so was really looking forward to the trip on the harbour. It was a lovely summer's day and the boat (one of the group named the *Blue Boats*) called in to Rangitoto wharf to let those passengers off who were planning to walk to the top and see the crater. It then proceeded to Islington Bay at the other end of the island. Many small boats moored there, as it was sheltered from all the gales in the Waitemata Harbour.

After getting off the boat we walked on a very rough, rocky path along the coastline until we reached a narrow road, ending near the tennis courts and a hall situated next to *Hazel*. Most of the baches had names such as *Flounder Inn*, *Kumonin*, *Wild Flower*, *Eastwind*, *Have a Rest*, and *Do Drop in*. It should be noted that the small holiday homes in the North Island are called baches but, for some reason, are known as cribs in the South Island.



Rangitoto is comprised of volcanic rock, formed by a series of eruptions between 600-700 years ago. The paths and roads on which we walked were built by prisoners of war. Surprisingly, the island next to it – Motutapu – has fertile soil and is used as a farm. These two islands are joined by a short causeway.

Hazel was named after Ian's aunt. She and her husband lived in the bach for some time. Inside the bach were two small bedrooms, a living room with an open fireplace, an entrance with a sink, and a tiny room with a cooking stove. Outside was an old army hut with a bed and another small building with an old tin bath and washing tubs. All the water had to be heated on the cooking stove. There was a long drop-toilet. For lighting, kerosene lamps had to be used.

The original bach was built with the timber from the sailing ships, which sank in the early days at Boulder Bay. A few years ago, David Sharkey and his cousin, Stephen Penk, rebuilt it, as the timber was rotting. Stephen was called the brains, especially as it involved getting legal building consents. David, a carpenter was very handy when it came to the physical work, such as organising the new timber, the actual construction work, and getting the materials to Rangitoto. I can remember one weekend when David asked me to pray for fine weather. He was taking a water tank to the bach on his dinghy, powered by an outboard motor. He got it there in one piece!

I can also remember a time when Stephen asked Ian and me to come to the *Supreme Court* in Auckland to support him. A Queen's Counsel from Wellington was fighting for us to continue using the bach. We won! The bach was beautifully restored with solar powered lighting and a modern toilet. It is regularly used by Stephen, David, and their families.



My last visit to *Hazel* was by water taxi. When we arrived at Islington Bay the boat was tied up to a floating pontoon and



then I had to climb up a vertical steel ladder to reach the main part of the wharf. When we had arrived it was full tide so I only had to climb up a couple of steps. However, when it was time to go home, it was low tide and I had to climb down many steps. I thought I would fall in the water. It made me realise that it will be difficult now for me to go the back by water taxi, but there are boats that go to Islington Bay once or twice a year.

I have wonderful memories of my visits to *Hazel* and I am happy in the knowledge that it will continue to be loved and enjoyed by the family.

Kathleen Sharkey



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



The Plunket Nurse's Pearls

In 1981, when my daughter was a few months old, my husband and I moved to Pihama, Taranaki from Wellington. We had a fantasy of an idyllic life in the country. It was maybe a bit “dippy hippy”. My husband, who had had a very English upbringing, had not known anything of country living. That was another story again.

We ended up living in what used to be a worker’s cottage, which was on a property next to a closed, run-down dairy factory, for a token rent. There was no running water or electricity. There was not even a water tank. There was, however, a tank on another run-down cottage property not far from us.

So after cleaning our cottage, which had been used to extract honey, we gave it a paint job, and moved in. A wood stove, as well as a pot belly, was enough for us to be able to cook and get hot water, and it was warm in the cold winter months by the mountain. Life was basic. Washing was done by hand, water was collected in containers, and for lighting we had tilly lamps. We gathered wood and pine cones, and we had an outside loo and a veggie garden.



Inger was our first child and I began to get concerned that the life we had chosen might inadvertently have a harmful effect on her. It was time to bite the bullet and contact the local *Plunket* office for a check-up for her.

With trepidation, I cleaned and polished all I could for the arrival of the *Plunket* nurse. I boiled the kettle and left it on the back of the stove to keep warm. It wouldn’t take long to



reheat it on the wood stove. I told my husband to make himself useful elsewhere, as we only had two chairs, and a wooden crate with a cloth on it for a table.

Then I heard a car approach our place. It was too late now for any doubts about our suitability as parents. Sending a quick prayer that all would be alright, I put my best foot forward and, with Inger on my hip, I went outside to meet the *Plunket* Nurse.



My first impression was of a practical woman. No nurse type brogues, but a pair of gumboots caught my eye as she came into view from behind the car. A friendly greeting and, after removing her gumboots, a thick pair of socks made their appearance. She put me at ease straight away. She very efficiently weighed and measured the baby, then questioned me on Inger's milestones while I re-boiled the kettle. Then it was my turn for the questioning. Before sitting down with a cuppa, she reassured me that she had no concerns about Inger, who was progressing well.

Over the cuppa, she told where I could go for assistance in the area, where the mothers' groups were, the name of a good children's doctor, and the location of the cottage hospital, if I had any major concerns.

With a sigh of relief and another pot of tea, conversation became more general. Knowing I was a first-time mother, I gratefully listened to her pearls of wisdom:

- 1 Learn the aesthetic value of cobwebs and dust. Cobwebs catch flies and bugs. Dust adds another protective layer over your stuff.
- 2 In the morning feed and clothe yourself and child, and then get the washing out. Anything after that is a bonus.

- 3 Learn that children's toys are not a mess and tidy them up only once a day.
- 4 Keep one room of the house presentable for those unexpected visitors. The state of the rest of the house does not matter, as you can close doors and deal to them when you can.
- 5 Get a 15 minute warning before visitors are due to arrive, and only get the essential food, clothing, and washing done. Put dishes in the sink, fill with water, and leave to soak. If you have an oven, put them in that and close the door. Sweep the floor and leave debris under the mat. Any other items in the room which are making it look untidy should be put in another room and the door closed. Take two minutes to calm down, so you look like a tired mum and not a harassed one.

And the most important pearl of all . . . **the Plunket Nurse!**

Moana Mutu



Moana is the daughter of Anne Mutu. She has two daughters and two grandchildren. In 2015 she returned from Australia to live on her Father's ancestral land at Karikari Peninsula, Northland.



Matchmaking

Regina, a lady with whom I worked in the largest department store, *De Bijenkorf*, in Amsterdam, told me one day that she was going on a tramping trip in the UK. She did a lot of tramping, but she had never been outside the Netherlands. She was so excited about it, as this would be her first experience of air travel. The day before her departure, I gave her a bar of chocolate to nibble on her way to her destination.

On the evening before her trip, she was already fully packed, and two young men friends of her daughter, Marianne, came over to visit. Marianne was not at home, but the guys stayed anyway. They were marine engineers and were there to repair Regina's Solex, a bicycle with a small motor. They began to repair the bike outside, but, when the rain came, they brought it into the kitchen. The motor was dismantled and the small petrol tank placed close to the stove.



The moment Regina started to brew coffee, the petrol tank caught alight and it was instantly thrown out of the door and into the garden, catching and burning Regina's leg in the process. Cold water was poured over the injury and, although in agony, Regina put on a brave face.

Later that evening, Marianne returned home and looked after her mother. Naturally, the guys felt miserable about the incident and went home, hoping she had a quick recovery.

The next morning, Regina was taken to the airport, but when the tour guide noticed her leg, he refused to take her on the trip. She was so disappointed. What to do now?

After locating a telephone booth, she phoned John (one of the guys) as she knew he was allowed to drive his father's car, and asked him to take her home. On the way back, she remembered

the bar of chocolate in her bag and, handing it him, she said "Please take this for your kindness. It was given to me by the loveliest girl at work and you should meet her. She is more your type than my daughter's."



After a week or so, Regina was still not back at work, so I called her and arranged to visit. I was invited to dinner and, on arrival, she introduced me to a very handsome young man. His name was John, and he was one of the guys who had worked on the "repair" of the bike.

The evening was very pleasant, with lots of laughter and hot chocolate. Marianne came in some time later and there was even more fun. At about 10:00pm, I had to go home, which involved a bus journey, a ferry crossing, and then a train ride. John decided to accompany me, and we said our goodbyes at the railway station.



A couple of days later, John came to see me at work and, when it was time to go home, there he was again, waiting for me. We walked together to the train station and then he asked me out. I was not sure, but he was very persistent. I gave in and, to this day, we are still together.

Regina was right. He really was my kind of man.



Sanny was born in the Netherlands in 1936. She emigrated to New Zealand in 1984 with John and their two daughters, Virginia and Celia.



To My Sister, Ann

Ann, do you remember
The path that led to the gate,
Where long ago a little dog
Was laid; beneath a mossy stone?

And through the gate, the path
That ran beside the river Wear;
To Pelaw woods; and the smell
Of wet leaves and mushrooms.

And do you remember Ann?
The shafts of sunlight filtering
Through the trees, that revealed
Swathes of spring bluebells.

There too, ethereal seeds
Of the dandelion clocks
Hung motionless in the
Sunbeams; waiting for rebirth.

continues 



We were school girls then,
Without a care; days untroubled,
In that last innocent summer;
Waiting, waiting.

Until dark clouds rolled in
Heralding the war, rationing,
Gas masks and air raid drills,
Black out and barrage balloons.

Do you remember?

Helen Welsh



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



School Life in Denmark

Being the first child in the family, my parents made a lot of fuss over me. Mother decided I should learn to read early in life. Therefore, by the time I started primary school at 7 years of age, I could read well, but I had not learned to count and add numbers, nor had I learned the "times tables". I was a bit bored when the other children were learning to read, but that couldn't be helped.

It was just a small village school with two rooms. The headmaster taught the older ones in the Senior Room and the lady teacher taught us younger ones in the Junior Room.



In 1945 the war ended. Father sold our home and we moved to a place closer to the city. Our Polish maid had to sit on the back of the truck amongst the furniture holding our cat in a sack. We children travelled inside the cab with Mother. Father drove the horses and cart with the rest of our belongings. I don't remember knowing how many loads he moved with plants and bushes from the nursery.

From then on, I was sent to the Catholic School in the city. Only the Catholic Sisters taught there and they were very well informed.

Once in winter, there was a lot of snow and I was half an hour late for school. For once, I had an acceptable excuse for lateness; other times I didn't have a good excuse and was told by the Sister, "You had better be careful you are not late for heaven and miss out!"

We went to church a lot, and were encouraged to pop in and visit for prayer. The school was next door to the church.

Sometimes the Priest came in to the school, and someone had to open the door for him and close it again behind him. I felt special when I got to be the “door person”. There were three Priests resident in the villa behind the church. They were Dutch or Belgian, and our vegetarian relatives were amazed to hear that they would sometimes eat pork for breakfast – how awful!



When I was 13, I went to the state college for girls and began learning some languages, as well as other interesting subjects. There was just one girl in my class who had dark hair and brown eyes. I thought she was very beautiful. All the other students had blue eyes and lighter hair.

My parents had to pay school fees for me there because we lived out of town. There was nothing to spare for extras. Several of the girls in my class would sometimes bring sweets to share, but



I never had any to share. I was hurt when I was not offered a sweet like the other girls were. The girl offering said, "I'm not sharing with you because you never bring any to share!"

Mostly I enjoyed my years in the state school. Religious Studies was an optional subject. There were only two of us who did not share the session – a girl who was Jehovah's Witness and myself, as I was a Catholic. We sat in an empty classroom and did some reading or just talked.

There was great excitement when it was time for our first school ball because the boys' college would be taking part. We didn't normally get together with any boys, except our cousins. From memory I don't recall getting a dance with a boy as a usual thing. There were probably more girls than boys.

Exams were important and we studied hard for them. After our last exam, our whole class had booked lunch together at a restaurant. We had open sandwiches – a Danish tradition – which were eaten with a knife and fork. There was a great variety of fillings and lots of it on each sandwich. Two vegetarian sandwiches, specially ordered for me, were arranged on a raised silver tray.

We were all very excited at the thought of going to work from then on. There was much talk of keeping in touch and getting together again sometime. We had all shared many wonderful memories.

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.

An Ode to Pantyhose

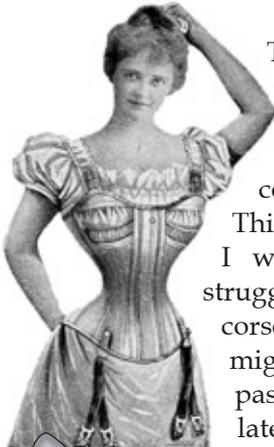
Why do I have such affection for the pantyhose? You put them on, you pull them up. They stay up, they hold you in just enough to keep you comfortable.



In the olden days of my youth, women wore stockings, so, of course, there was the problem of keeping them up. There were four methods.

First it was the garter, which we shall discount as really old. The other three that I know of were the corset, the girdle, and the suspender belt. Each of these last three used suspenders for holding up the stockings, and the principle was the same. There were four suspenders, one in front of each thigh and one at the sides of each thigh. This method worked quite well, provided they stayed in the proper position and you didn't happen to sit on one. This could become a problem, wriggling in an attempt to get it back into the correct position – at the same time, hoping your stocking didn't start to wrinkle.

Let me describe each method in a bit more detail for you.



The first one, the corset, was a magnificent affair. It could go from just below the bust to the top of the thighs. It had whale bones sewn into the seams – at least four, but could be six – and the usual suspenders. This was a garment of extreme torture, as I watched my mother on many a morning struggling to wrap it around her body. The corset was used mostly by women whom – you might say – were quite round and had sort of passed their spring time and were now into late autumn.



The girdle was a more comfortable garment – no bones, all elasticated – and was very effective at holding any soft spots nice and firm. All age groups used this one.

The suspender belt, which was quite small, was mostly used by the younger generation who hadn't yet succumbed to that extra bit of unwanted flesh. This was my mode of wear – in the olden days!



Now, let me explain why I have complete admiration for the pantyhose.

Picture a young girl of 15, out with her first boyfriend on a Sunday afternoon, walking in the spring in Scotland. All very formal: hat, coat, gloves, handbag. It is time to go home, so we proceed to the bus stop. No such thing as a bus shelter (we Scots are tough). We walk through the Abbey gardens towards the stop. There's grass, and small pots of flowers all around. No trees, bushes or shrubs. All open and clear. The bus is waiting at the stop. Some passengers are already on board, and some gazing out at the lovely spring scene.

I stop dead. My young man looks at me curiously. "What's wrong?" he asks.

I'm sort of speechless, as the stitching on the front of my suspender belt has suddenly disintegrated, and my stockings are slowly making their way down to my ankles – but not quite, as the suspender belt is still attached at the back by the hooks. To make this a bit clearer, these garments that I have described are the first to be put on. In other words, they are under your knickers. This being the case, the offending garment is hanging by the crotch at the back of the knickers, which are

also threatening to descend. What a predicament. What an embarrassment! The ground did not open up and swallow me. How cruel.

My young man very kindly stood in front of me, while I negotiated under my coat and skirt to unhook the suspenders, let the stockings fall down completely, step out of my shoes, then grab the stockings and stuff them into my pocket, hoping and praying that the grinning passengers already on the bus didn't see too much.

Hence, my deep and abiding admiration for the almighty pantyhose. No suspenders!

Anita Knappe



Anita was born in Paisley, Scotland, and followed her fiancé to Christchurch. They were subsequently married and have lived in New Zealand for 53 years. They have three children and two grandchildren.



The Little Plane & an Early Morning Call

Fifteen of us went on an organised tour in the South Island, starting in Queenstown. I was looking forward to relaxing, having had two weeks of things going wrong, including a battle with the weevil moth, and a dishwasher which refused to work. My neighbours assured me it would be quite warm and that I wouldn't need warmer clothes – maybe just a light cardigan for the evenings. I should have done what I have always done, and taken one warm set just in case.

The following day, we set off for *Invercargill Airport* to fly to Stewart Island. It was drizzling and cold and our flight was delayed because of low cloud. Two hours later, we boarded a small eight-seater plane. Prior to take-off, the pilot explained where our life jackets were, but that if we had to ditch, he would be first to jump out. Lucky old me got to sit up next to the pilot. He was a big chap, so I had to breathe in hard.

As we took off, the joystick in front of me suddenly came forward, making me jump. Was I supposed to do anything with it, I wondered? It was fascinating watching the pilot switch things on and off, but most of the time he sat with his hands in his lap. The plane dipped to one side then the other, making



for a rather bumpy ride. I noticed the pilot giving me a couple of sideways glances, no doubt to see if I had gone green. It was great being able to look ahead and to the side and see the South Island hove into view.



Early next morning, four of us bought warm jumpers before taking a tour round part of the Island, followed by a boat trip, and a walk. As we returned to the wharf, Eric began to feel unwell, so we hurried back to the motel. It soon became evident that it was the start of a nasty virus or stomach bug. The District Nurse was called and he was given something to stop the sickness before we flew back to Invercargill, and then on through the Catlins to Kaka Point, where we stayed the night.

Dunedin was our next port of call, where the morning was spent at an Emergency Clinic, awaiting treatment for Eric. Later that afternoon, back at the hotel, I decided to skip supper and go to bed early, having had four nights of virtually no sleep. After repacking our cases, ready to put out for collection at 8:30am the next morning, I climbed into bed at 7:00pm. Once in the soft, comfortable bed, I fell into a blissful sleep within seconds.



Eric's voice broke into my slumber, saying it was after 8:00am and I ought to get up to be ready to leave at 9:00am.



I lurched in a zombie-like state to the bathroom and sloshed a flannel over my face. Looking in the mirror, I thought how badly I had needed a good night's sleep as my hair was still in place, and not its usual morning mess. Obviously, I had slept well and hadn't moved all night.

We just made it down to the pick-up point with our cases in time, but there was no-one about. Eventually, I phoned our tour



guide, who said, “Oh Mary, you poor thing, it’s 9:00*pm*, not 9:00am, but at least you still have a good night’s sleep ahead of you.”

I vowed I would throttle Eric, as we trundled back to our room. Sleep did not come so easily second time around!

Mary Martin



Born in Caversham, near Reading, Berkshire in the UK, Mary came to New Zealand in 2004, where she and her husband settled in Browns Bay.

Family Bonds

My French father's family used to live in Issoire, a little town near Clairmont Ferrand, in the *Puy* region of central France. I went there in 1989 trying to find some of my relatives, but with no results. They had moved to Paris, and it was there that my grandfather was born in 1859. His mother was his father's second wife, who had a son from the first marriage.

In 1871, my great grandfather and his first son were involved in the events of the *Comune de Paris*¹, and the police were searching for them. My grandfather, then 12 years old, was a mischievous boy and his family was worried that he would do something wrong and be arrested. They feared he would tell the police where his father and older brother were hiding. So they sent the young boy with friends to South America.

This is all the history we knew. Then, about three or four years ago, descendants of my grandfather's sister contacted us via the Internet from Brazil. What is amazing is that our French cousin had letters that my grandfather, then living in Curitiba, wrote to his remaining family in France. How those letters survived all this time, through two World Wars is a mystery to me.

Two years ago, one of my Brazilian cousins went to Paris to meet Sylvette. This lady, over 80 years old, is the granddaughter of Victorine, my grandfather's sister. Sylvette gave my Brazilian cousin these letters and I have some copies. We had intended



to go to Paris to meet Sylvette, but because of my husband's illness, this was not possible.

With this contact we have again a relationship with this branch of our family, broken for such a long time. The last news I had from France is that a baby boy, Livio, was born, Sylvette's second great-grandchild. I am hoping that the new generation will stay in touch, but who knows?

Heloisa Barczak



Heloisa was born in Brazil in 1940. She arrived in New Zealand in 1998 to visit her son and his family. She came back for many other visits and, in her own words, "In 2011 I became resident of this lovely country."

1. **Les Communards**

The Communards were members and supporters of the short-lived 1871 *Paris Commune*, formed in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War and France's defeat. Thousands of French fled abroad. During the *Semaine Sanglante* [Bloody Week], 20,000 Communists were executed and 7,500 were jailed or deported under arrangements, which continued until a general amnesty during the 1880s.

The working class of Paris were feeling ostracised after the decadence of the Second Empire and the Franco-Prussian War. The Prussians besieged Paris in September 1870, causing great suffering among the Parisians. The poor ate cat or rat meat, or went hungry. Out of resentment for this situation grew radical and socialist political clubs and newspapers. While Paris was occupied, socialist groups tried twice to overthrow the provisional government. Many of those arrested were sent to the penal colony of New Caledonia.

Acceptable Insults From the Mouths of Babes

These are mostly from our grandchildren, and had us in gales of laughter at the time ...



From JoJo, when he was about five years old:

He had been diagnosed with ADHD and could be quite a handful a lot of the time. I was helping him do some weeding one day to keep him out of his mum's hair. I told him he'd have to show me which were weeds and which were plants. He looked dumbfounded and said, "I'll show you one weed. You better stick with that one."



From Cameron, when I was explaining that his grandad had glaucoma:

I told him what glaucoma was, and that he would need to look after his eyes every day, or he could go blind. He looked very sympathetic for a moment or two, then asked, "Grandad could really go blind?"

I said "Yes", and he quickly asked, "If he goes blind do you think I could have all his fishing gear?"



From Danielle, Cameron's sister, when she was about five years old:

I called her one day and said, "Come here to your old ugly Nan".

She answered immediately, "Oh, Nan, you're not ugly," and two seconds later, with a little shake of one hand, "Well, maybe just a little."



 **And another one from Danielle:**

They were all visiting us one Sunday and she bounced in and said, "Nan, I've got some nail polish to paint your toenails."

I told her that I really didn't like nail polish, and that whenever I'd used it in the past I couldn't wait to get it off, so perhaps we could give it a miss. She said, "Oh, that's a pity. I even brought a nice blue one to match your veins.""

 **And Cameron again:**

I was babysitting Cameron and Danielle one night. After putting them to bed, I set up the double sofa bed in the lounge for myself and went to sleep before Lynne and Rhys got home. In the early hours of the morning, both children got out of their beds and hopped in with me, one on either side. We cuddled together and went back to sleep.

I woke up at daylight, to feel Danielle gently stroking my cheek. She said, "I love your skin, Nan, it's so soft to touch".

Cameron sat up and, in his characteristic serious little way, he said, "Danielle, that's because Nan is very very old and her face is falling off now."

I had to explain that the skin might droop, but the face should stay put!

 **And, finally, a priceless one from Clare, but not directed at us:**

They were on the way to visit us and, after a couple of hours, had had



enough of being in the car, and were getting a bit tetchy. Val said to them, "Oh, well, we're nearly there. In a few minutes we'll be at Nan and Grandad's."

Clare cheered up and said, "Oh, I can't wait to get to Nan and Grandad's place. They always have such yummy food. Your cooking is disgusting, Mum."

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.



A Day at the Seaside

"Are you ready, Nancy? Time's getting on!"

"Yes, Jack," says mum. "I'll just pack the teapot, and make sure I've locked the back door and turned everything off!"

With family, food, and deck chairs safely packed in the car, we're on our way.

Sunday at the seaside during the summer of the 1950s was a family ritual. Most people during those times were just relieved that the dark days of the war were over and families could once again take pleasure in leisure activities without the threat of air raids and blackouts.

Sandwiches were wrapped in waxed paper, saved from the previous week's bread. There'd usually be a home-made apple tart or cake to follow.

While Mum was seeing to the food, Dad packed up the car, carefully strapping our three green canvas deck chairs onto the roof rack. My Dad's initials – JCM (John Cuthbert Madden) were emblazoned in large, bold, black letters on the back of each one, in the fairly unlikely event of theft. They served as a useful beacon if any of us got lost – especially for me, who was extremely short sighted. The changing tent was packed alongside the deck chairs; most essential in the interests of modesty.

Uncle Bill and Aunty Betty, and their two girls would join us, having made the journey by motorbike and sidecar. Uncle Bill was Dad's brother and, although not a car owner, considered himself to be an expert on the subject, particularly when it came to parking. On arrival at the seaside, Uncle Bill would hop off his motorbike and get straight into it. Arms waving, he was



off: "Left hand down a bit, Johnny! Oh, no, now right hand down, Johnny! Yes, that's it, just a bit further forward," and so it went on until Uncle Bill was satisfied that his instructions had been followed correctly, while we all looked patiently on until the manoeuvres were complete. Unlike my two older brothers, I was too young to be embarrassed.

Our Nanna generally came with us to the seaside, which to this day remains a mystery. Her frequent scowls of disapproval and mutterings to my mother certainly gave no hint that she was enjoying herself. She could be heard to offer dire warnings, such as, "Nancy, that bairn [referring to me] will catch her death of cold in the water," or "Them lads [my brothers] are nowt but trouble, flickin' sand everywhere." Dressed from head to toe in black, with grey hair firmly trapped in a hair net, she would take up her position by the changing tent, where she'd peer at us disapprovingly through black wire rimmed glasses.

My job, on arrival, was to carry the teapot (containing loose tea leaves) along the sands to the kiosk to be filled with hot water. The return journey demanded concentration, taking care with the full teapot and aiming for my target, the large black JCM letters on the deck chairs.



By now, it was time to eat our limp lettuce sandwiches, which had taken on board enough sand to render them crunchy. Another cause for complaint from Nanna, who laid the blame fairly and squarely at my brothers' feet

My bathing costumes warrant a mention. Both were one-piece, the first being grey and woollen, with red stripes. Wool and salt water were not an ideal blend, rendering it soggy, saggy, and itchy. On chilly days (fairly common) I wore a short dress (one that I'd outgrown) tucked underneath.

I then graduated to a multi-coloured elasticated bathing costume. This had a "rouched" effect and, without fail, worked its way down below my chest when wet. Just as well I was only six.

Rubber slip-on shoes protected my sensitive English feet from pebbles and stones when venturing into the sea. Once wet, they made a satisfying squelching noise, as the trapped sea water sloshed underfoot.

Happy days.

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.

Refugees

“... I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.”

The Bible, Matthew, chapter 23, verses 31-46

Dame Susan Devoy, the Race Relations Commissioner (2013 - ...), was reported recently¹ as saying she thought New Zealand should increase its annual quota of refugees.



*Dame Susan
Devoy*

New Zealand's involvement in the settlement of refugees began in 1944. The then Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, invited 837 Polish refugees to come to New Zealand, "temporarily" for humanitarian reasons. It was assumed that the Poles would return to their homeland once it became practicable to do so after the war. Most of the group were children, 755 of them. They were sent to a special camp in the town of Pahiatua. I have a connection to this event.



My Aunty Teresa lived in a nearby town. She was a widow with no children of her own and she took in a refugee child for holidays and occasional weekends just as, I suppose, many other local people did. He was a boy, Michael, aged about seven. My older brother, of a similar age, was also invited to stay to help entertain this little refugee.

Young Michael had five or six sisters, all bar one, older than him, who had all arrived in New Zealand on their own. Some years later, their father arrived here too and gradually was able to trace his scattered children and reunite them as a family. Unfortunately their mother had died in a concentration camp,





*Polish refugee children arriving at the Pahiatua Railway Station
(1 November 1944)*

I believe. According to my research, the majority of these refugees remained permanently in New Zealand and formed the nucleus of a post-war Polish community.

Michael's father and my aunt married each other and overnight I acquired a ready-made family of Polish cousins. Sadly, I did not have much contact with them, so I never really got to know them. Uncle Theo always accompanied Aunty Teresa to family functions and he is in all the family photos. He's always the one in the back row among the brothers-in-law, the tall man with the sad eyes.



My second encounter with refugees was in 1957. After the failed communist *Hungarian Uprising* of 1956, New Zealand took in over 1,000 displaced Hungarians, and two of them, teenage girls, arrived separately at my school. It was a boarding school and, as I recall, my fellow pupils were not prepared for their

arrival in any particular way, except to be told to make them feel welcome.

The older of the two refugees, and the first to arrive, was several years older than us. Aged 19, she had already left school and had a job. I knew nothing of what she must have been through, but I could appreciate how strange and scary it must be to share a dormitory with a bunch of 16 year olds with whom you have nothing in common, not even speaking the same language.

Even something as simple as introducing ourselves was not straightforward. It was clear we were not understanding one another – just getting confused! Our new friend was giving her family name first, then her Christian or given names – the reverse of what we were accustomed to! Some of the girls gave up after a couple of attempts, probably from embarrassment. Then the penny dropped for me and I realised the problem. I can still see the look of relief when I addressed Katalina correctly – someone understood her at last!



The adjustments refugees have to make when they settle in a new land are tremendous, and this is on top of the trauma they



Hungarian refugees at an Auckland beach during a sightseeing trip, a day after they arrived in New Zealand (just before Christmas 1956).



have already experienced and the anxiety about those they have left behind I can't even imagine how difficult it must be.

Currently¹ New Zealand takes 750 refugees annually. Dame Susan Devoy says that we should increase this figure to 1,000. There are very valid arguments both for and against this proposal, and, situated as we are in relative isolation in the South Pacific, our government has the luxury of time to make a considered decision. Unlike Lebanon – a country with a similar population to ours and an area the size of Northland! In the last couple of years, more than 1.2 million Syrians have poured across their borders seeking refuge and New Zealand is thinking twice about an extra 250!

Anne Shaw



Anne is a fifth generation New Zealander, originally from Hawkes Bay. She says that she does not think of herself as an “Aucklander” in spite of having lived in Beach Haven for the last 53 years!

1. Anne originally wrote this in April 2015 and the figures quoted were current then.

Stille Nacht / Silent Night

Belsen Bergen, Germany * Christmas 1948

The sky was full of snow, a light flurry came down over the hill and the children in the distance turned into blurry shadows. It was starting to get a little darker, the day was almost over. Over at the barrack gates the sentries were in their great coats, now and then stamping their feet, snowflakes whirling around them.

Little by little the other children left, "Bye bye" they called. It would be my turn soon, but I just wanted to feel that wonderful exhilaration again of whizzing down the slope towards the schoolhouse.

At last I could use my sledge successfully. Everyone had left, I had the hill all to myself. I could feel the snow inside my wellies against my socks, but it didn't really worry me because I was able at last to take a full run down the hill on the sledge at speed. It was amazing.

It became darker, time to go home. It was Christmas Eve.



When I arrived home the tree was up, adorned with shining glass baubles in a myriad of colours, there were coloured paper garlands in the sitting room. My Mother and Liselotte were busy in the kitchen. Wonderful smells wafted through the hall.

I was told to get my wet things off, put my wellies in the cloakroom to dry and to be ready for the arrival of Ilse and Wally, friends of my parents. My father said that if I got ready after tea he would take me down to listen to the band and the carol singers when they came. "Is that wise?" asked my Mother, "It is so cold."



“It will be fine if she is wrapped up,” said my Father and winked at me.

All of the children in our group of apartments and houses had talked of the band and the carols all week. We saw the band at parades sometimes, but to be allowed outside at night, in the snow to hear them would be wonderful. The carol singers would be the men coming from the barracks.



Ilse and Wally arrived. I had on my new fairisle jumper sent by my Grandmother. This went over my kilt which had a bodice. Underneath this was a warm woollen vest and a liberty bodice and finally long woollen stockings.

Ilse had brought a gift. “You can open it, Liebchen.” She always called me Liebchen. I opened the carefully wrapped box and was rather puzzled. There were some little round metal clips inside and a box of small candles.

“Come, Liebchen,” said Ilse. She took me into the living room and showed me how to clip the metal circles on to the branches of the Christmas tree. My father followed and adjusted some of them. Ilse said that after the carol singers had been we should light them.

“Now, Liebchen,” she said. “What are you hoping Father Christmas will bring you?”

I told her I was hoping for books (I always wished for books), a paint box, and, most of all, I would love a new sledge, colourfully painted, with bells, like the one I had read about in the story of the *Snow Queen*. My sledge had come with the storage locker in our apartment block and was old, quite used, and not very decorative. Ilse laughed and said it sounded very fancy and might be difficult for Father Christmas to bring. Sadly, I agreed.



Tea over, my Father said it was time to go as the band would soon be here. I put on my new thick winter coat which my Mother and Ilse had made. Clothing was very hard to come by; the coat had been made out of a grey blanket which had been dyed dark blue. It had lovely red lining (made from a dress of my Mother's), a bonnet to match with red pompoms at the end of the cords to tie the bonnet, and red mittens my Mother had just finished knitting. "Don't lose them" she said.



My Father had on his greatcoat, his black beret, a khaki knitted scarf tucked in the neck of his coat and his big leather gloves with the rabbit fur inside.

Off we went.



Trucks were arriving outside. Out got the band with their instruments, the troops in great coats with rifles and then some of the Polish troops. Lastly a small band of men in shabby-looking uniforms, some wearing khaki overcoats over their grey uniforms and scarves tied around their hats. These were the prisoners of war. The war had been over a while, but these men were still waiting to be repatriated.

Instruments were produced from the band's cases in the truck, and the Padre talked quietly to them and the officer in charge. The three groups of men were formed up by the Sergeant Major.

The Padre said a prayer and then the carols began. Carols were sung in English, Polish, and German, and the music echoed out over the frosty stillness of the night. We stood very still. In between the carols the bandsmen would rub their hands together and stamp their feet. The brass instruments had little



racks at the end with sheets of music on them which the men adjusted.

We joined in with the carols we knew, others we just listened to. Around the cul de sac some families stood at the doorways as it was so cold, others joined the group around the carol singers. I stood in wonder, holding on to my father's big gloved hand. This was really special.

All the Mothers appeared with trays of cake and biscuits for the men. A couple of men from another truck produced an urn and gave all the carol singers steaming mugs of cocoa. The men stood in a small group, putting their hands around the mugs, eating their biscuits and chatting quietly. The prisoners of war did not talk; they stared out into the night.

Snow had started falling again and in the distance the forest which was normally our playground lay in darkness. The trees were laden with snow, everything was very still. I noticed one of the men in the front row of the prisoners of war staring. He was staring very intently in my direction. Why?

The short interval over, the band struck up *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, this was one we knew. The other children and I joined in with gusto. Then *Away in the Manger* – yes, we knew that one too. Then the Padre went up to one of the prisoners and spoke to him quietly and the man turned to his compatriots and talked to them. I caught the words *Stille Nacht*. I shook my Father's hand and whispered, "I know *Stille Nacht*."

They started to sing without the band, and some of us children joined in for we had learned the words at school. Our teacher Miss Oxenham had said we should learn it in German because it had been written in German.



As the snow fell gently you could no longer distinguish one group from the other. Which ones were the troops, which ones the Poles, which ones the prisoners? I said to my Father, "They all look the same now, just people out in the cold, covered in snow."

My Father looked down at me smiling and said, "Aye, just men, Annie, just men, we are all the same."

The man who had been staring, kept on staring, and tears started to run down his cheeks. I had never seen a man cry. I wondered why he was so sad.

As the carol finished, he took a step forward towards me, putting his hand inside his overcoat. One of the troops stationed at the end of the line of prisoners straight away motioned him back with his rifle, but my Father indicated he should come forward and spoke to him in German.

The man produced a very creased, faded photograph of a little girl. I looked up at my Father who took the photo from the man and bent down and showed it to me. "Look, it is his daughter Annie, she is about your age. He has not seen her for a very long time."

I let go of my Father's hand and stepped forward to give the photo back to the man, shook his hand and stammered, "Froehliche Weinachten."

He smiled through his tears and bowed towards me and said with a heavy accent, "Merry Christmas."

Too soon the carols were over, the Mothers appeared again with small parcels for all the men. My Father said I should give the man his parcel. We again repeated our greetings to one another. I remembered to say "Bitteschoen" when he said "Dankeschoen". Then the men were all formed up and climbed back into the trucks and I waved to him as he left.





As I got ready for bed, I could still see in my mind that little girl in the photo. I wondered where she was. I asked my Father, he said that he hoped she was warm and safe waiting for her father. He glanced away and looked very sad.

We lit the candles. What a moment. All the lights were turned out. The whole room was glowing, the beautiful glass balls shimmered, and a wonderful smell of pine filled the room. I did not want this magic to end.

However, bedtime was bedtime. "Off to bed now," said Mother.



In the morning there were surprises. A beautiful book of *Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales*, a shiny green paint box with a tube of black and a tube of white paint, a small carved wooden cradle for my doll, but, alas, no sledge.

I could see my parents watching me. I think Father possibly sensed my disappointment. He said, "Let's go down into the cellar after breakfast to see if Father Christmas had left anything else."

Of course, that was where the chimney went to the boiler!

Down the many flights of stairs from our apartment into the cellar we went. As we approached the main cellar door you could feel the intense heat coming from the boiler. It smelled hot and dusty. By the boiler was something under a big sheet of canvas. My Father removed the canvas and there was a sledge.

Such a sledge! The wood was painted dark blue with hearts and flowers painted on the seat part. There was a plaited red rope to hold on to. The runners ran upwards at the front into a beautiful curl of black metal and there was a bell at the end of

each curl. There was a card attached to one of the runners. On the card, written in old fashioned black writing, were the words:



I was able to show my parents what progress I had made. I rushed down the slope like the *Snow Queen* on my magical sledge. Mother didn't even notice that I had just lost a mitten!

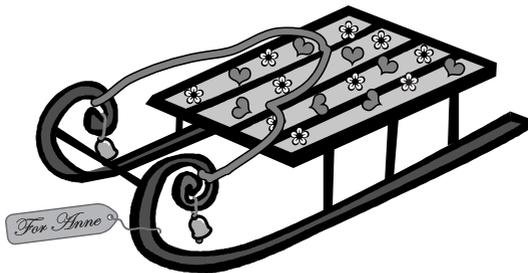


The sledge was left behind when we went back to England, but the memory of *Stille Nacht* remained. It was spoken of a whole lifetime later when my father came to visit me in New Zealand and we rekindled those childhood memories.

Anne Briggs



Anne was born in England and travelled widely with her family in the UK and Germany as her father was in the armed forces. After living and working in Europe, she came to New Zealand in 1968.



A Tribute to Book Two

I put up my hand with innocent abandon
T'was something I'd thought of in a moment of random
Our stories were good, we should share them all
But did we have the talent, did we have the gall.

Could we produce Book Two for others to buy?
Would our members again want to give it a try?
It would be a project, a challenge for me
To gather the stories from our *WFFG*.

The stories came slowly, as had been forewarned
But they gradually mounted as the deadline dawned
Patricia and Anne were there to assist
And to check for any things I had missed.

We sat over coffee and yummy cakes
And planned our layout and corrected mistakes
There was spelling and grammar, the forward, the cover
Not to mention the print size and the colour.

But wait! How would we find the finance?
Funds for *Book Two* could not be left to chance
There's the printer, whose fee is a tidy amount
And Andrew, whose talent we can't do without.

But then we referred to the minutes, no stress
Our *OWN Committee* had agreed, no less,
with amazing largesse to grant funds to assist
A generous offer we could not resist.

I'm sure we can still work within our budget
And I know that this project has been totally worth it.

I did put my hand up to begin this endeavour
But the thanks are due to people more clever
So please give the credit to where it is due
To our printer Geoffrey, and our layout designer, Andrew.

To the awesome talent of Patricia and Anne
– Always there with a helping hand
But without our members we would not have this book
So thanks to you all for the trouble you took.

Cherrie Keane

