MARY – A YOUNG PERSON'S STORY

Growing up in Northland: 1934 – 37
(The Making of a Socialist)

I remember to the minute when I became a socialist, as a fourth former at Southland Girls High School. It was a conservative place but we did read Dickens and it was a story about an old couple going off to the workhouse and having to part forever that produced my lifelong hopes for a community where such misery could never happen. Not that this was a sudden conversion because I was already well acquainted with the class war – fought every day at our place between my father, descended from dispossessed crofters, or so he said, and my mother who had her name in De Brett and could prove it. 'Only the Upper Classes know their history' my father would grump, 'us Working Class didn't count'.

We lived in Kaitaia until I was thirteen and in such a remote spot Class was important all right although perhaps Race was more so … or maybe they were the same. Small towns are still the worst for these things (as the 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour protesters found out) but in the 1920's we absorbed snobbery and racism at breakfast, dinner and tea. White collar whites were top, we just knew that. The Bank Manager, the doctor's widow, the lawyer and his family; young men at the Council offices and my father's foreman just made it. There was a problem about origin and occupation in classifying people, though my mother was quite clear on the matter. Once a lady, always a lady; family was all that really counted and although the doctor's widow now owned a small drapery shop and served behind the counter that made no difference. On the other hand, it was unfortunate that a well brought up newcomer to the town was married to the local grocer because trades are not Upper Class at all. Some years ago William Congalton wrote a book about Class in New Zealand and never mentioned Family. My mother could have told him that he had missed the point entirely. If this sounds crazy in Kaitaia in the twenties, of course it was, but children accepted their parents' notions then, no matter how crazy, and I suspect they still do mostly in spite of TV etc. My mother knew what kinds of visiting cards to leave, and how many of each. Table manners were important and politeness to inferiors. 'A lady can make anyone feel at home' and money didn't count. 'A lady never mentions money – the presence of it, or the absence of it'. There must never be any comment on guests nor on family affairs, outside the house.

My maternal grandparents lived at Frankton Junction in a splendid old house full of tiger skins, carved furniture, old silver, ancient aunts and a crazy housekeeper. I used to dream that at night the tigers got up and prowled around with the housekeeper. My grandfather had been sent out from Home as a remittance man when he failed his examinations to get into the Indian Army where generations of the family had served. An older brother who was smart enough to pass the exams did go out – and was dead within a week of cholera. So Grandpa had the best of it, marrying one of the many daughters at the Whangarei Heads farm where he was sent as a cadet, and eventually running a dairy herd, badly.

Why my father got into this set up we could never understand. He professed to despise it and broke as many of the rules as possible, every day. We did not meet our paternal grandmother until we moved south but we knew only too well what poverty there was in that background, of a small farm at Waitahuna, with no money for anything and rigid Presbyterianism to make a virtue of the necessity of a Spartan existence, based on the Scots tradition of hard work and hard living in a tough climate. Two sisters died young of TB – a poverty disease – and a visit to a doctor or a dentist was rare indeed. Night and morning there were cows to milk before the ride on horseback to school. On Sundays they got up early for milking before Church and a day when only the Bible was allowed reading and the sermons were interminable. School finished at fourteen, then there was work in a dreary Wellington office until the War brought terrible events, only ever hinted at, as a Sergeant in the Auckland Light Horse. Perhaps he was part of the misery and bad leadership described in the recent book 'Behind the Lines'. Certainly he suffered for years from nightmares, frightening us all when he would wake up, screaming about the Turks or shouting about the horse (Star) that he had to shoot before he left Palestine. He threw away all his medals and ribbons though he was a loyal RSA man until we left the North (and Robert J Service's war poems were among his books).

The Upper Classes were, we understood, responsible for all this – for the poverty of the workers, for the war, for the Depression which was in full swing. It came out in a permanent state of hostility in our household, something my mother never understood as she took it all personally, an insult to her connections. If hostilities ever flagged, my mother could be counted upon to reactivate them by some proud reference to breeding or to the uncouthness of not using the butterknife. My childish response was to weep unreasonably and to devise the sort of magic that Ian Cross describes so feelingly in 'The God Boy'. By the time I began to understand what caused so much unhappiness my father was dead and it is part of the knife in the heart reality that we never talked it out.

The family attitude to race was perfectly clear, too. Like everyone else we knew, we were racists to the bone, despising non Anglo Saxons. Not that this was meant unkindly. It was just a fact, and my father included the poor b's in his mental list of those badly done by in the System, like himself. Dalmatians were the only foreigners we were aware of, and all were in poor circumstances. As children we knew only vaguely of the poverty and hard work of the people in the gum fields. Just a few Dalmatian families (Dallies) lived in the township and their names gave us cruel kids endless opportunities for torment. Thoughtless cruelty in which we all joined as a group and nobody opted out. This is all shameful to relate but it explains something to me of the base for the terrible race crimes of more recent times. An 'in' group is reassuring. The Maori community was a large one and the children came to school with us. We never taunted our Maori classmates although they were poorer than the Dalmatian children. Perhaps there were more of them. Most had runny noses, sores, head lice, and some were smelly. My mother forbade me to sit near them because of the likelihood of 'catching something'. They were strapped if they used the Maori language. This was for their own good as my father explained to me that it was a primitive thing and dying out. In his own work as a surveyor and at the native Land Court there was always 'some old fellow' who could translate but soon that would not be needed. When I made it to the High School I learned Latin and French, ridiculous as that seems now, but nobody would have considered Maori as an option. Our only

close contact with a Maori person was with the Maori woman who came to do the rough scrubbing for my mother – Mrs. Robinson, who wore my mother's old riding breeches as bloomers, and who accepted our gifts of eels caught in the nearby creek with what was probably politely assumed pleasure.

No Maori child was ever brought home to play, nor did we make the slightest effort to understand the Maori community (which must have been vigorous in those days) nor to visit a pa. At the pub Maori men drank at one end of the Bar, pakeha at the other; at the picture theatre, Maori went downstairs, Whites upstairs. Such was apartheid at Kaitaia in the 1920's and 30's. The other group that suffered from our family's ill educated prejudice was the Missionaries – clearly, in my memory, a group apart from the rest of us. They were mostly settled on poor farmland and their straggly children were thin, poor, and very religious. My best friend, reluctantly accepted at home, was confirmed at age ten, which my mother pronounced as disgraceful. Missionary families had intermarried a good deal and there were a few slow-witted kids in our classes, mostly tolerated well enough although a form of reproof was to accuse us of acting 'like a little Puckey'. With phrases about Maori givers and Maori time this was how we reinforced our patterns of belief, and drew the boundaries of assumed superiority that cut us off from any understanding of the place we lived in, the people, the language or the culture. We may, justly, be blamed for this, but we ourselves were the losers as we turned our backs on the richness and excitement around us. Alas, for the lost chance to be bilingual without pain, and to identify with Aotearoa as our turangawaewae instead of a wistfully remembered Home in the northern hemisphere! Try to forgive these homesick first generation New Zealanders, deprived people in every way as they were.

Sexism was part of our lives, too. My sister and I were never in any doubt that we were a great disappointment to our father. Although he was always good to us and he was my special friend as I grew up, in early days this lack of a son was often mentioned bitterly as part of the bad deal he had to put up with. We could not blame the Upper Classes really, but somehow it was plain that it was my mother's fault, and my sister and I always felt apologetic for causing so much reproach. Of course my mother didn't 'work' … How could she? Her ladylike upbringing meant that she had not been educated for anything and her schooling had been constantly interrupted by expeditions to Kawau Island for the huntin' and shootin', or by the need to help to entertain at home. 'If a girl has a good figure, she needn't know how to spell', she was told and so she stayed at home among all the aunts and tiger skins, until a suitable young man should appear. There were a few terms at a Convent in Waihi, with a much-loved, sensible Aunt Mary for whom I am named, but even there the emphasis was on piano and embroidery and there was no history taught – supposedly because of the Reformation it seems. Of course there was no thought of a job as my mother grew up, ignorant, and bored to tears.

Nursing was forbidden, to her sorrow, and was only allowed at last during the influenza epidemic, which my mother remembers as an awful but exciting time. By then her first sweetheart, accepted as 'a suitable match', had been killed in the mud of Flanders. She had been to Church every day to pray for him and this was the end of her faith and, I suspect of her hope of happiness. She hardly spoke of this loss, ever, and I don't even know the man's name, only that she waited until she was over thirty to marry and was 'engaged' twice before then. I think that nothing really mattered any

more, but at least marriage was a way to escape from the Frankton ménage. Perhaps my father had not understood this and his bitterness was reinforced when he realised it. He was, at any rate, the head of our household. Everything was done to please him and he slept in a separate room when we were babies so that we should not disturb him. We were often reminded that it was his job that kept the household going, and everything to do with money was his affair – though as we realised later he was no good at it.

My mother had no money at all, ordering the groceries by telephone and pocketing the 'discount' which the grocer allowed for payment by the end of the month. There was also the 'swear money' that was considered fair game after some particularly bad upset, when my father's jacket pockets were raided in the wardrobe. By this means plants were bought for the garden that was the delight of my mother's life, and my sister and I had 1d a week pocket money to eke out what we got by selling bottles. Every other purchase, like a new dress or a pair of stockings, was a matter for a special request and dispute. My father said we were hard up, though he indulged himself with two weeks' golf at Rotorua each winter, and we were always conscious of the need to be careful. Once we lost, somehow, two new winter coats and it was a disaster that hung over us for months, the subject of recriminations and rows, blocking out any other memories whatever of the winter. Being poor is awful.
The women's life was full. Housekeeping was demanding with stoves to clean, kindling to cut and lamps to prepare. Baking was an art, so was gardening, and bridge and tennis were the Trivial Pursuits that brought ladies together while husbands worked.

If class prejudice, racism and sexism were part of our everyday lives, so was an awareness of how everything seemed to have gone wrong for many people. The Depression was always there, in my early childhood. It provided arguments for my father's outbursts against the Upper Classes and The System – and for us children there was a daily proof of what he said. We were always reminded that we were lucky to have a father with a job, shoes for our feet (unlike many at school), and good food on our plates. Any reluctance to eat led to a lecture about the unemployed, and the hungry children in Auckland. (It is terrible to think that once again there are soup kitchens, and hungry people, in New Zealand.)

My father supervised two large camps for the unemployed men who left their families in town and were housed in barracks. There were two big projects as I remember. One was in the swamps north of Awanui, where men worked in deep mud, in thigh boots, shovelling the muck out of the trenches. The other project, no doubt also aimed at bringing more land into production, was in deep virgin bush somewhere. Huge trees were being cut and cleared and burned. It was a treat for us to be taken to watch the fire. How it writhed up inside the trees that were too big for the sawyers to fell, and finally emerged far above our heads in a wicked, triumphant surge of flame. Who can tell what we all lost when that bush went, another tribute to ignorance and poverty!
The men worked in terrible conditions for a small unemployed benefit, and rarely saw their wives and children, but the theory was that they were preserved from 'getting something for nothing' and would keep their self respect and the work ethic. I think that this was called 'Scheme B', and my father said that it was a bloody disgrace. The men made home brew in the coppers in their wash house. It was strictly forbidden officially but my father turned a blind eye to this blip in the workhouse pattern.

Many men chose to walk the roads at this time. We called them tramps and they were always welcomed at our house for a meal and a billy of tea. No doubt my mother felt good, being a sort of a Lady Bountiful, and my father growled that an occasional feed wasn't much good when the whole System ought to be changed. But really they both had good hearts. None of my mother's friends would take the tramps in and my father said they should be ashamed of themselves, so we often had rough characters in our kitchen tucking into sausages and mash and going off with a full billy and matches or some other small necessity. They camped out near the Showgrounds and moved on the next day. Sometimes they confided their woes to my mother. Us children had to make ourselves scarce if we peeped in to see a grown man crying, or with his head in his hands. Later my mother would tut-tut and say that this shouldn't be allowed because New Zealand was a great place with plenty for everyone if we shared it around, a remark which was bound to draw fire from my father.

At school poverty was obvious. Some of the children came without lunch so sandwiches were provided and during the winter hot cocoa was brewed up. In theory the farm children brought milk, the rest of us provided cocoa and sugar but people often forgot and there were some pretty strange concoctions. I can still taste them, as I can smell the grimy 'poor kids'.

Such are my memories of hard times – and, no doubt, part of my preparation for Dickens later on.

All this might sound as if our household was a political one, but not so. My father did not have the confidence or the know-how to follow up his complaints. I don't think that he even wanted to try to change the world. As a permanent victim he had both a clear identity and a good reason to be a grouch. He naturally always spoke up for the Labour Party, at home, but this might just have been a way of annoying my mother who constantly criticised 'those people'. As they couldn't even speak good grammar, how could they govern the country?

But in public my father was apolitical. He was anxious about his job and explained that 'he couldn't afford' to get mixed up with any political party. When Social Credit began work a friend called Joe Robinson, who was standing for our district, began to call, riding his horse across from Mangonui. I remember him as a cheerful Maori man. But it was his politics and not his race that caused concern; my father asked him not to come in during the election because, as a public servant, he had to be careful. Even Colonel Bell could not be invited to dinner for a while because of the fear of our becoming known as 'political'. This exaggerated fear that one's job or promotion prospects might be put at risk seemed craven to me as a child. Why not say out loud what you thought! But now I see it as one of the restrictions that come with poverty, when choice is limited, and a secure job is a prize to be guarded. Freedom of speech is merely a notion in these circumstances. The wonder is that so many poor people have in fact been ready to risk everything, in the past, to have their say. Our welfare state was bought with their courage – and now is being lost through our selfishness.

Whatever the impression given so carefully in public, there were constant battles on the domestic front as the 1935 election drew near. My mother was almost hysterical about people like Bob Semple and all the common fellows with him. My sister and I were under the impression that the sky would fall if Labour got in, and on the dat after their victory we were up early looking for calamity. But by breakfast time we had to admit, rather disappointed, that it looked all right 'so far'. But before long the effect of the Labour victory on the North was spectacular. The camps closed and there was money in people's hands – I think all pensioners were given five pounds for Christmas, a fortune after years without a spare penny. There were no more rows about how the money would be found for the hospital or for a doctor or, perish the thought, for a new baby. Uncle Tom's choir and Michael Joseph Savage's speeches told us that we would all look after one another now, in Godzone country. What sentimental do-gooders they were by present market standards! But it is impressive to remember that even at the end of the Depression, a National Health Scheme was financed and Maternity Benefits, one idea not opposed even by the doctors, came into effect very quickly.

My mother's reaction was amazing. She kept saying how marvellous it all was and became a complete convert to Labour. Never mind the bad grammar if there were no more hungry tramps asking for a meal and no more women friends beside themselves with anxiety because of a pregnancy they couldn't afford. Even sixty years later, my mother was still a rabid Labour supporter – almost the only one in the Old People's Home, and a target for disapproval because of her views on the Springbok Rugby tour and Mr Muldoon, as well, I suspect, for her tendency to play the Grande Dame.

Our entertainments were simple, healthy ones. Poverty and a country existence save one from a great deal of harm. Our parents played golf, or rather my father did, and the rest of us had to go along to the various country links all the way from Kaitaia to Rawene. There were cut down clubs for the children and we were expected to amuse ourselves trailing along one hole behind the adults. My mother made especially good pies in solid china dishes. But overall the memory is of frightful boredom and I still cannot bear to watch even the champions on TV. Another bore was auction bridge, an enthusiasm of my parents. My father regarded it as a test of concentration and made our lives miserable by questions about 'how many trumps in my hand?' with cross remarks when we couldn't tell him. This would be when I was about ten. I grew up hating all card games, as a result.

There are just a few good memories from these tense days. After all we had miles of open countryside and hills close at hand and we would explore all day, sometimes, on the low ridge behind our house. I can still feel the wind in my hair, scratched legs, the open sky and the relief at having left all the worries and squabbles far away as we lay in the grass on the hillside and watched the clouds. Later there was a good feeling of being physically tired, ready for a bath and dinner. At Guy Fawkes we would make guys from an old sack and other rubbish, and spend hours building up the bonfire at the Hesters' farm. Preparation was the best part because I was afraid of fireworks and of the way the boys threw crackers into our hair. The smell of gunpowder and of burning hair means Guy Fawkes to me. Then we would go up to the sitting room at the farm for fresh scones spread with lovely home made butter (which tastes quite different to Anchor) and jam.

The School Concert was a wonderful evening, the time for parents to recoup their investment in piano or elocution lessons for their children. I enjoyed performing and can still say most of Edward Lear by heart as he was a special favourite. The Fancy Dress Ball was another Event of the year. My Mother made the costumes and the build up to the day was electric. Once I got chicken pox just before the Ball. On the night I wept and wept and my father, left to babysit, came in to tell me stories and to talk on and on for kind, patient hours that showed me a new side to his character. If only that side could have been released instead of the angry one!

The A & P Show took days to prepare for. We all entered special blooms, stuck in a glass, or some kind of floral arrangement – perhaps a sand tray, or a bowl, or a mixed posy. Baking, too. There was great excitement when we filed in to look at the prize cards propped against the exhibits and I kept my cards for ages. And the School picnic was a great day when the whole school would pile on to the back of a truck or two – no seat belts or safety bars anywhere, just a friendly heap being flung from one side to the other on the bumpy roads, with food and sweets later. I don't remember playing games. I was a butterfingers so nobody ever wanted me on her team. At the Sports everyone had to run and it was humiliating always to be last. So officially I didn't like games; that gave me a way out. Swimming terrified me which wasn't surprising as my father literally threw us in the deep end of the river swimming hole and expected us to get out somehow. I did, but choking and scared.

I read voraciously as a child. It was one way of escaping the constant quarrelling and a childish sense that 'something awful' would happen soon. I know how much I treasured reading to myself while very small, getting away to safety in a quiet place where another world opened up. I read fast, from the beginning, and was impatient of being read to. Illustrations were equally frustrating, interfering with my own mind picture. The princess in the book never measured up to imaginings. From the beginning of my reading life I treasured a world in the mind, just as I still do. The selection of reading matter was peculiar, though my father especially did his best. He was so anxious indeed that I should get the education that he had been deprived of, that I read huge chunks of indigestible books just to please him, at an age when I could not possibly enjoy them. I still have some of the presents he made me of Scott and Dickens in the old maroon and gold bindings. Scott was really hard going. Who on earth were the Knights Templar and Ivanhoe? But I did not dare to complain, or not to finish these stories conscientiously. Comics were allowed only under strict supervision. The Rainbow and Arthur Mee's Weekly were approved, but the others were dismissed as rubbish.

The family bookshelves offered an extraordinary mixture. By the age of ten I had read all of Ruby M. Ayers, Wheeler Wilcox and Jack London, besides many other romantic novelists, and the Robert Service poetry brought alive for me the miseries of war and the excitement of the Yukon. What a precious world for a child growing up in an unhappy household and in Kaitaia. Then there were the books hidden in the linen closet, which I read only because they **were** hidden away and therefore must be special. Havelock Ellis' 'Little Essays of Love and Virtue' meant nothing to me but I read them to the end, as well as 'Practical Palmistry', hidden I suppose because my father treated my mother's enthusiasm for reading hands with such scorn. Equally a mystery to me was the Marriage Manual. My parents were completely frank with us on sexual matters and must have been enlightened beyond their time in answering our

childish questions honestly – but the total picture, so to speak, remained a muddle for many years and the linen closet reading didn't help, at my age.

My own most precious books were the Ann of Green Gables series, rather frowned on as 'too soft' by my father. At the age of twelve, I should have been past such stories he said. He would rather have seen me making use of his own great contribution to our education, a complete set of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, twenty-four volumes, all carefully covered in waxed map paper, splendid in blue and gold, and a wonderful source of ideas and information. We never thought about it or appreciated what that purchase must have cost – perhaps a whole year's salary, or at any rate only possible with the strictest discipline in saving. We still have the set, safely, a memorial to Scots devotion to education as the greatest good and the Spartan readiness to give up lesser things for it. Poor Pop! At a time when the University is under attack as an elitist outfit he, at least, would have been proud to see some of us making a lifetime of learning in a place for which he had so much respect, and which he so hoped that we would reach.

Last Days in Kaitaia

It was great news that we were to leave Kaitaia to go to a new job – at Invercargill, of all places, but at least it counted as a city to my mother, who often said how she hated being in the country and how she missed the bustle, the trams, the bright lights of the picture theatres and the calls of the newsboys with the papers. Kaitaia in 1936 was a typical 'one horse town' with no electricity, more buggies and riding horses than cars, and a lone tattered picture theatre – though we did have the A&P Hall for School Concerts and RSA Social Nights. Tragedy of tragedies, I caught chicken pox and had to stay home from the School Fancy Dress Party at the end of that year. I wept, after my mother and sister had left the house, and my father comforted me with thoughts of the journey ahead and prospects of meeting his South Island relatives – uncles and cousins and a grandmother whom we had never seen. 'Blood is thicker than water', he said … but how sadly mistaken that turned out to be.

Many arguments and unhappy times were ahead. We had little money and removal expenses were ungenerous so we were not allowed to take many possessions. I begged for my books and smuggled in all my Ann books as well as 'Travels with a Donkey' and 'Oliver Twist' in the old maroon and gold bindings that cost 1/6 each. Other treasures had to be abandoned, with as good a grace as we could muster. Children's complaints were not encouraged in our household, and maybe that was not a bad thing. (If homework seemed heavy, we could leave school and work in a shop all our lives; if the dentist terrified us, we could lose all our teeth young; if we regretted leaving loved possessions behind, perhaps we'd rather live in the backblocks for ever … so it went and we learned not to winge and, sometimes, to count our blessings – quite a useful skill.

By the time we finally set off, though, the atmosphere was tense and my mother and father were hardly speaking to one another. What ever was the matter to cause silence like this? Years later I learned that my father had exchanged our good solid house, built with so much care and I'm sure love for the bride who hated it, for the Graham Paige motorcar in which we had driven away from the North. Pop always had a mania for good cars. He had never owned one and had used the office car (quite legally) for

our personal outings to Oruru for golf or to Ahipara for the summer holiday. Now he had been unable to resist the proposition by Jimmy Taafe, the local garage owner, to swap the house for a really splendid car that would be all his own. My mother had not been consulted and she was furious. While Pop was bursting with pride about the good arrangement, my mother foresaw that we would never own our own house again. Nor did we, until my mother inherited from her own parents and (amid truly horrendous rows) took out a mortgage to my father on a nice big house in St Albans after we moved to Christchurch. Joint ownership was not a possibility it seemed, given the tensions. Later I often thought how complicated and unhappy absolutely everything had been, so unnecessarily really, but so inevitably.

No wonder my sister and I stayed like mice in the background.

The Journey

The trip was miserable all the way. We had the AA. Strip-maps for all the roads. They were wonderfully informative but they were very detailed, noting every side road and insignificant object along the way. While one of us held the map there was constant interrogation … 'Did you see the big tree?' … 'Have we passed the road to Rawene?' … If not, perhaps we were going the wrong way and should turn back. It was a way of making everything uncomfortable and worrying and we could never relax even if we had not suffered from carsickness on the unsealed winding roads.

In addition there was a polio epidemic that summer and there were road blocks outside every township. Nobody was allowed to travel except with a special pass and we were checked in and out everywhere, as if we were in a war zone. My sister and I felt that we were!

Although we travelled right through the North Island, across Cook Strait on the ferry and then from Christchurch I have absolutely no memory of the trip, except misery, until we reached our grandmother's house in Waitahuna, in Central Otago. The little town had been ravaged by alluvial gold mining, and all the former farm land for miles, including our grandparent's place, was turned up in stony ridges. It was an unpromising start but worse was to come. My grandmother's house was the standard old timber bungalow (now loved by developers) with veranda in front, and a long hall inside with rooms going off each side. It was cold and dark and smelled musty, a special smell that I associate with grandparents on both sides – none of them believed in opening windows and at Livingstone Park they were all nailed down.

Grandma was chair bound, from arthritis, and sat very excited and welcoming in a big arm chair by the kitchen range with her elderly, rather forbidding, minder beside her. She had, we knew, not liked my father (later she told us she had hated him) but the greetings were fond enough – after all they had not seen one another for more than twenty years. My father was anxious to make a good impression on us all and especially, I think, to mollify my mother who was ready to blame Pop for his origins whenever possible. I find it hard to think about the moment when, soon after our greetings, my father looking cheerful and more or less happy for once, clapped his hands together and said, 'Well now Mum where's the bathroom, we could all do with a shower', our Grandmother replying "No bathrooms here, Tom, it's just as usual you know', implying that he was taking far too much for granted and putting him in the

wrong from the start. Poor Pop. My mother did not say a word but we could feel what she was telling my father … just as ever … 'What kind of place have you brought me to? I might have guessed this is how it would be, not even a bath' and so on. Our childish ears were well aware of these messages but we actually enjoyed splashing in the bedrooms, using warm water brought from the big kettle on the stove in a huge patterned jug and poured into the basin that stood on the marble-topped stand. Of course there was a chamber pot in the cupboard underneath, but we were used to that from Kaitaia days, at least.

Our dinner was not a success. Poor Grandma, she did try to show her pleasure at seeing us I think but we were all too different. My sister and I had never seen steaks like the ones that covered our plates and the idea of eggs, tomatoes and onions on top actually filled us with disgust, not that we said a word, but our struggle to eat even half of what we had been given must have been obvious. I don't remember anything else about our visit and I can't remember ever seeing my grandmother again, though I suppose we must have called in on her a few times. My mother told us that Grandma asked her how on earth she managed to live with Tom, he had been such an unpleasant child and 'she had never been so thankful to see anyone go down the road as when he left home at 14 and never came back'. Although he had often been thrashed for it, he always took the easiest cow to milk and used to pinch his two brothers' collection money on the way to Church and 'play up' about everything. She did not mention that he had been Dux of Waitahuna School and top of his class at Lawrence District High, 20 miles away, for two years.

I remember my Grandmother as an upright, energetic looking person – a bit like Queen Victoria really. She was knitting on four needles, ferociously. Her men, she said, 'had never had a boughten sock to their foot' but she did not make socks for my father and when she died years later she left him out of her will entirely. My only memento is the wedding ring which I wore for years – the keeper, a thin braided band that had protected my great grandmother's 'proper' ring from slipping off her finger. I suppose it is about a hundred and fifty years old and some day I shall trace its story.

After Waitahuna my father was grumpier than ever and no wonder poor man. I have only a blank for the following months that took us to Invercargill and a modest rented house in a nice enough suburb, Waihopai I think, next door to a tennis court and near a large park and golf course. At least we were in a 'proper' town now, with electricity, paved streets, tramcars and picture theatres as well as 'proper' high schools so there was no more argument about sending me away to school. I had looked forward to that as an escape from the quarrelling, but now I began adolescence with four years at Southland Girls' High School and a whole new world of ideas and worries in the few years remaining before war.

Invercargill (1938/9) to Napier (1940)
(Written July 1993)

Some time has elapsed since I wrote the last words and much has changed in my life in unexpected ways that blocked writing. But now the news that Zoe, aged eleven, is ready to go on to High School has reminded me of all the excitement and new ideas in that period of my life and I want to set it down for her, especially, although she will not read these words until she is older, and may never read them or be interested in them.

I write for myself today, to lay some ghosts and to bring others into the light of memory because these were important years, a growing time for new ideas, a formative time for values and hopes – and alas also for dreams and a somewhat romantic view of the world. School was important and the despised 'spinsters' were well educated and devoted teachers to whom I owe an enormous amount and whom I sensibly remember with love. I am utterly convinced of the importance of building and supporting a decent state school system. Where else can children from backgrounds such as mine find food for the mind and new horizons?

Both my parents were fiercely committed to education. My father, dour Scot, always felt cheated because he had left school so early. My mother never failed to remind me that even if I were plain at least I was clever and now that things had improved for women so much since her day I should be able to find a job, even if not a husband, to keep me. I was driven, no doubt about it – but beyond that was a real sense of happiness in finding out more and building a new world in my own head. What a time it was.

I had gone early to Kaitaia District High School, a year younger than usual, and as I was small, unattractive, useless at sport, I was not accepted by the other children very well so the need to succeed academically became rather desperate. Fortunately I was allowed to join my own age group at Southland Girls' High School and a happier time began. Reading continued to be the greatest pleasure and although the school library consisted merely of cupboards around the big Assembly Hall there was plenty to stir the imagination. I remember Rafael Sabatini and Rider Haggard for blood and thunder and D. K. Broster for more sober history, while Dickens stirred my social conscience and (strangely) the London Tatler fascinated with pictures of contemporary high life. Later came poetry, especially Palgrave's Golden Treasury in the gold and maroon edition with rice paper – so pleasant to hold in the hand even decades later, and a real vade mecum of my early teens. Here were new worlds indeed, laughable to an adult memory but soul food to a teenager. A custom that has gone from classrooms helped to make poetry live for me in 'choral verse speaking' as we read aloud in groups the tragic or romantic or fanciful words calling up places and people from long ago and far away.
'O Mary, go and call the cattle home, and call the cattle home, across the sands of Dee!', we chanted and others took up the story, full of dread;
'The western wind was wild and dank with foam, and all alone went she',
The Lady of Shallot was treated in a similar fashion, Horatio kept the bridge, and the forsaken merman grieved with us all:
'Children's voices, wild with pain – Surely she will come again!'
Some of us wept I remember.

Notions of romance grew with Shakespeare sonnets, Shelley, Keats, Byron and many others. Barbara Cartland was not yet around. My ideas had a poetic origin as I stored the lines in my head … …
'I could not love thee dear so much, loved I not honour more', and
'Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths …… '
Such poetry we did not read aloud, it went straight to our silly hearts as we dreamed of a Prince Charming in the future.

Janet Frame has written powerfully about all this. Blessings on the teachers who brought us such stabs of wonder and delight!

Virginia Wolfe also has written about the transformation one finds in reading, though at a more sophisticated level. The reality might be the merchant Smith, doing business in Liverpool – but in reading one may wonder at the unicorn with a jewel in its brow, and *'Where is Smith, where is Liverpool?'* then.

Language was fun too and it is amazing to find that learning patterns laid down so long ago still remain although (perhaps simply because of) the old fashioned memorising we had to do. 'Latin for Today' required simple learning of the declensions although the pheumonics suggested caused hilarity sometimes; there was some simplified history and pictures of Roman houses and people to sweeten the pill. Our Latin teacher was a small sweet-faced young woman. For French there was Miss Budd, Bloss 'because she's past the budding stage', seeming ancient to us with grey hair in a bun and a motherly manner. I built on Bloss's instruction for ten more years and cannot speak a word that is intelligible to a Frenchman, but I value bilingual reading skills that have opened so many French authors to me.

Science teaching and facilities were abysmal. Girls did not 'do' physics in those days and chemistry was a closed book to me as was mathematics although I dutifully memorised all the formulae and the theorems. I tried hard but I understood not a thing, not even the second law of thermodynamics which I believe is basic. The 'two worlds' of science and literature are far apart for me and I see it as a terrible gap in my schooling, unlikely to occur today.

To get to school we had to ride our bicycles several miles across the park. If snow was down it was an arduous trip made exciting only by the possibility of passing some heart-throb busy pedalling to Southland Boys' High School which was of course on the opposite side of town to the girls' establishment. We met these wonderful creatures only at the approved Dancing Classes held for students of the Fourth Form up, on a Friday night in town. These evenings were almost unbearably exciting for me. I enjoyed dancing and was good at it, but dancing with BOYS gave a sense of bliss I did not understand at all. It was an overheated environment and my mother found it the time to issue many warnings. Looking back I see this as an indictment of my education in an all-girls school which gave no opportunity to mix with boys as ordinary friends. So I favour mixed schooling although it is said that girls do better academically in a single-sex environment and nowadays there are many chances for boys and girls to meet socially and sensibly.

During these years my father and I began to talk to one another. We went for long walks and asked, looking at the stars, 'Where did it all come from?' and 'What do you

think happens when you die?' As my father remarked people have been asking these questions for a long time without finding answers but that is how human beings are made, trying to explain the meaning of their existence …

But at home things were still stormy, low level conflict remaining the norm with full-scale war always remaining a possibility in the minds of my sister and myself. Holidays were infrequent but at Christmas we always went camping at Alexandra in Central Otago where we basked in the hot sun that we missed in grey old polar Invercargill, enjoying the apricots from orchards now drowned and swam in the river and the local baths. Apart from these excursions I have no memory of any other trips away from home even though we did now possess the treasured Graham Paige. The sharpest memories are of what was going on in my mind, the 'world within' which David Malouf speaks of as holding our real history.

I had been very religious since my childhood and now Bible Class had the added attraction of providing a meeting place with the boys who whizzed past me during week days or attended the Dancing Classes. My mother finally agreed that I was old enough to be confirmed in the Anglican Church and I went with enthusiasm to the instruction provided while my mother made a white dress for the big event. Disappointment awaited me, and my first experience of disillusionment and the trials of conformity, for when I asked what seemed to be inevitable questions like, 'What do you mean by the Trinity?' and 'Surely the Bible doesn't mean that God made the world in seven days like Monday to Sunday', I was met by shocked reproof and the assurance that I was too young to understand. Faith, I was told, was all I needed.

Totally unconvinced, I knew now that I could not truthfully accept confirmation as a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. Nor could I say the Creed whose articles of faith remained totally incomprehensible to me after all my efforts to extract explanations. I could not begin to explain these things to my mother, and my father had considered the Church to be a farce ever since his bleak Presbyterian childhood. The dress was made and a celebration breakfast arranged. So I suffered the laying on of hands; the dove, I was told, duly descended; and conscious of deceit of the worst kind, I went home and took to bed for the day with a migraine attack.

World affairs must have been black at that time. My mother and father did agree on the need for a Common Front against Hitler but I do not remember being aware of any of the dreadful events in Europe nor of any sense of involvement either for myself or for New Zealand. In 1939 I was aged fifteen, still young in a Matriculation class and working hard for a good pass in the December examinations although there would still be two more years at school before matriculation could mean entrance to University. There was never a word about the perils of the Jews or Socialists in Germany, either at school or at home but I do remember how sad my mother looked when we knew that another World War was upon us. Not again! She said, looking dreadful. My sister and I thought it rather exciting and moreover we were moving again, to Napier this time, to the sun and new friends. World affairs were far from our minds. Our schooling had not bothered with 'current events' but had stuck to what were considered basic academic topics. Current government policies praise this system but to my mind it leaves far too many gaps.

To Napier 1940 – at Napier Girls' High School 1940/part 1941

Napier Girls' High School was certainly traditional. More of a ladies school than Southland it insisted on black stockings for street wear all year round, with gloves and hats to be worn, not carried, and ladylike behaviour much mentioned. We had an efficient but horrid history teacher. She was best friends with the youthful, fair headed pretty French teacher with whom she walked arm I arm round the school grounds. But by now I was so sold on history that I needed only the books and our sharp tongued teacher never bothered me. Latin in the Sixth Form suddenly became so taxing that I decided to concentrate on Maths. I had long given up attempts at Science, though I fancy that Napier was better equipped than Southland. There were no more outside exams to qualify for entry to University although the clever ones could try for a scholarship or a bursary.

Instead of this, I took the chance offered by an old friend of my mother's to board in Hastings and attempt three degree subjects in my last year at school. I took three papers, History, English and French. There was no teacher available for Stage 1 History and I failed the very subject I wanted most, narrowly passing the other two. However this year (1941) my grandmother (my mother's mother) died. My grandfather, absolutely devastated, came to live with us and there was more skirmishing than ever before between my mother and father. I could not wait to leave home to escape the rows and to find out everything in the world at University.

More about 1941

I have to say that 1941 was a momentous year for me. I turned seventeen on May 6, 1941. I read 'Man and his Universe' in the Rationalist Press edition (1/6) with my first 'boy friend', the overweight, serious Brian. I began my University career extramurally – at first doing French 1 and History 1 entirely on my own, just from the syllabus in the Calendar I got by post from Victoria University College. Extramural study was acceptable in those days. In Term 2 I went to Hastings High School and was tutored in French by Leslie Matheson, a first class teacher. Leslie had been briefly engaged to my mother and she kept his ring. Beth has the ring I think – he did not want it back. I added English 1 belatedly with a young Indian migrant teacher quite out of his depth. History 1 I continued, unsupervised, in the company of two Form 7 boys. (In the event I passed French well, English barely, and failed History 49/49.)

A diary kept 1941-3 records some typically teenage angst but reminds me of events I'd left behind in memory. There is a lot about young men, especially one called Bruce Boaden, a young surveyor once in my father's office who came to Napier in uniform to say goodbye. I was captivated and knitted him a pair of air-force blue socks when he left for training as a navigator, in Canada. I pined to get to know him better – when he came home. Alas, he didn't come home. His plane crashed in the English Channel returning from a bombing raid on Germany in mid 1943 and his name is on the wall of the Auckland War Museum with all the others lost to us. This was a sorrow to come later.

In 1941 my diary records my two main interests – schoolwork and boys. I struggled to manage the Stage 1 University subjects I had decided to attempt extramurally as it did not seem likely that the family would be able to afford to send me fulltime to

University – I would have to go to Teachers' College in Wellington and try some subjects part time – an idea I hated. In the first term of 1941 I find a record of early rising and a constant struggle to keep up with the ordinary 7th Form work I still had to do at Napier Girls' High School. 'Anyone that likes can knife Miss Clark for me' I wrote of one teacher and 'the sooner this year is over the better … full of trivialities'. A wonderful but little valued English teacher enlivened our days with stories of her travels in Europe to places mentioned in English Lit. and poetry.

Lesley Matheson, once engaged to my mother – and still in love with her, was teaching French 1 extramurally at nearby Hastings High School. The family offered to take me in, so off I went in the second term for first class French tutoring, indifferent English 1 classes and nil History teaching – only cheerful gossip sessions in study periods with the two boys also doing the subject (we all failed). The diary records most days how determined I was to pass the exams and my fear of failing. Nervously I noted Winifred Holtby's 'Prayer for Learned Women':
'Lord, bless all Learned Women, and teach them to be beautiful, for the sake of Eugenics and the future … '

As my diary records, boys were much on my mind but not many appealed … 'if they are anything up to 10 years older than me they can talk sensibly, in many cases (but) they must be at least twenty before they do'. I still pined for the young airman who (probably) had only been polite to the boss's daughter. 'Wish I could annex something romantic', I wrote, but soon after of some escort: 'a handsome boy, but not especially intelligent I should imagine'. And eventually a more acceptable, more regular boyfriend came on the scene 'The steamroller presents himself and is now an established fact – although unromantic, (he is) intelligent and rather nice. By this time I have been to 4 dances with him, numerous walks and to dinner once.' We began reading and discussing 'Man and his Universe', questioned the meaning of life and considered that people feared death only because 'they can't comprehend a life without the joys of the body'. All through the diary there are lengthy quotations from the books and poetry I was reading, often with 'the steamroller'. I still remember most of the quotations that made such an impression on me as a teenager and the comments and quotations from the novels like 'Quiet flows the Don'.

At the end of 1941, November I think, my grandmother died at Livingstone Park in Frankton Junction. She was only 76 years old when she died but she had always seemed ancient to us, dressing in long black clothes, dying her hair a ridiculous shade of black, and wearing funny hats. I never saw her actually doing anything although when we visited the Park as small children we were told that she bred dogs and Beth and I were allowed our own little Pekinese or Pomeranian dogs as pets. Photographs show my grandmother wearing a long coat and a funny hat walking beside my grandfather who always had a military, upright bearing. The housekeeper, Winnie (Mrs Winfield), did all the work at Livingstone Park and my grandmother's three strange sisters also just sat around, sometimes playing cards vaguely ('What are trumps, my dear fellow? What are trumps?' is a long remembered question spoken with an upper class accent by the batty oldest, Annie, who died her hair red.) Then there was Grace, bitter and bad tempered, and Kate, a pale hypochondriac, forever ailing and consulting a doctor about some complaint. Both Grace and Kate had been married but their husbands had disappeared, reputedly to go prospecting in Papua

New Guinea. I never knew them though they have both written in my mother's pre-war autograph book (My mother would have been 22 years old).

The news came early one morning by telephone when my grandmother died. My Grandfather was distraught and helpless, sobbing 'she died in my arms!'. They had been a devoted pair. Grandma had always managed everything even to laying out his clean clothes on bath night. Perhaps he missed having a batman. It must have been a weekend as I was home from the Matheson's place. My parents quarrelled and my mother wept ('I always thought he'd help me if anything like this happened'). I remember sharply the sense of loss and sadness and the usual tightness of heart at the sound of quarrelling. 'Never mind, Jim Hutton will be there', said my mother. He was a music teacher in Hamilton who had been befriended by my grandmother who just saw a lonely young man, and one of a large group of young people who had been welcome at Livingstone Park. It all seems dreadful to think of now. My parents quarrelled about what to do but eventually, I'm told, my father drove my mother to Hamilton to oversee the breaking up of the household.

When my grandmother died the strange ménage must have fallen apart. I have no memory of wondering what would happen, nor of asking any questions about it. The whole event caused a feeling of being on the edge of a volcano because my father had always resented the upper class nuances of Livingstone Park and he seemed to respond to my mother's distress with anger. As always I would have kept my distance. I suppose that the old aunts went to homes for the genteel poor. Grace had a small home in Frankton Junction and I visited her there on my way to Canada in January 1950. But what happened to anyone or anything else I have no idea. The big house and all the land would have been auctioned. The suburb is now called 'Livingstone' but of the old Park there is no trace.

What happened to all the treasures in that house? Of course none of the huge carved sideboards, the long dining tables or the elaborate chairs could have fitted into our modest bungalow in Napier. But what about the crockery and silver, the carpets and carvings, the old books and letters and photographs and other records of the years since 1880? Beth has some photographs of upper class wedding groups, but nothing else was brought back to Napier except a silver salver (properly meant to be used to deposit visiting cards from new acquaintances) as far as I know. I have this modest heirloom on my mantelpiece and who is best to care for it in the future I don't know. It is said to come from India – loot I suppose from my great or great-great grandfather's time in the Indian Army or from other relatives in the East India Company.

Everything else from Livingstone Park just disappeared, but my mother brought back with her my poor, distressed Grandfather who for months and months still cried in distress for my Grandmother. My father was shockingly unkind. Even in his grief my grandfather was unmistakably 'upper class' – he couldn't help it – in accent and manner, and this triggered the worst in my father's character. I suppose he felt threatened; maybe he was jealous, but my grandfather had to eat his meals alone and never joined the family any time anywhere. He was diagnosed as a diabetic and used to steal sweet things from the kitchen being scolded like a child when caught. Poor, sad old man. It was as a result of years of this experience that my mother swore that she would never come to stay with Beth or me when she was old. Alas, that caused

her to opt for an Old People's Home eventually – a miserable, regretted decision too sad to remember really. **(Note for my own old age if ever relevant.)**

For me, at the end of 1941 I was self centred enough to concentrate on University exams and on outings with the faithful Brian Painter, reading everything and anything including more 1/6 editions of the Thinker's Library. I still have these books including History of Ancient Philosophy by A. W. Benn, inscribed as a gift from Brian who added 'your own choice'. Later we read and talked about some of the chapters together while my mother worried about our staying out late!

The one good thing about the death of my grandmother was that a little money now came to my mother, so that it was possible to think about full time University for me – only for two years, and only at the most economical possible level, doled out by the month after I had submitted a detailed list of needs, but still wonderful. It was decided that I should go to Auckland.
(Revised October 2003)

Summer 1941 – 42 (written 16/2/96)

I remember this as an important few months. I was impatient to be away. I had found my first 'boyfriend'. I was reading the Rationalist Press library (at 1/6 a copy). Everything was happening in a hurry.

Brian P. was a large, overweight lad, good at cricket and maths, looking forward to University in Dunedin. His parents and a young sister were all overweight and jolly. I enjoyed the cheerful atmosphere in their house. But they were distinctly lower class, 'not at all our sort', my mother said. My father, always pouring scorn on my mother's pride of 'class', spoke to me seriously about 'getting in with the wrong crowd'. But we managed our innocent affair happily enough. Ludicrous as it may seem in these times, our greatest bond was the Rationalist Press books which we had both been collecting. We spent most of our summer evenings reading aloud from John Langdon Davies' 'Man and his Universe', discussing it chapter by chapter and arguing late into the night – too late for my parents' peace of mind. Typically for a seventeen year old, I was impatient of the fussing and unwilling to share the ideas that went to and fro in the argument.

The book as I remember it made the typically Rationalist assessment of religion down the ages – mere superstition, the enemy of science, reason, and progress. Chapter by chapter it discussed the slow growth of scientific knowledge about the nature of man's universe and showed how at every point the Church had opposed acceptance of or use of the new understanding. The Pill had not yet been developed but it would have provided another instance of the entrenched attitudes that, for example, insisted that the earth was the centre of creation with sun, moon and stars circling round it. The arguments opened many doors for me. For one thing, it treated religion seriously and not just as a set of fairy stories put around by the feeble minded, believed by the foolish, which was how I had thought of it since my phony confirmation. For another it emphasised the courage of those who thought differently from their society. How is progress possible unless wise, brave people are prepared to confront error, even ideas considered 'common sense' by their contemporaries. 'Speak Truth to Power' say Quakers, and here is an idea to carry the youthful idealist through a dozen crusades,

especially as it is clear that what is ridiculous today may become taken for granted tomorrow. Witness Nuclear Free New Zealand and the ending of apartheid in South Africa, causes in the future for me in 1941.

There was plenty of work about, during these war years. I biked five miles early every morning to work on a farm and was fit and burned brown. Brian worked in the wool-stores and was fit and pale and still overweight. I made about 20 pounds for three months work. Brian made 100 pounds, enough to pay his board for the year at Otago. We parted quite cheerfully but looked forward to sharing ideas for a long time to come after the great experience of University where there must surely be Answers! Of course we made new friends, found other sweethearts, followed quite different interests and we hardly saw one another in the years ahead but it was a fond, good friendship. An important part of my life, worth remembering and recording.

Auckland University College 1942 – 3 (Written in 1999)

1942 was an exciting year, but frightening as well in such an unfamiliar environment. Early in March my mother came to Auckland to see me safely into board with the Twiss family in Bracken Avenue, sharing with Pat, a girl from my form at Napier, who was doing a degree in Music as well as a two year course at Teachers' Training College. She had been much disliked at school because of her 'superior' attitude but we soon became friends and shared our ideas and problems and boyfriends. I remember my dread and excitement as I went through the enrolment procedures at the University – always afraid of doing something wrong, completely unfamiliar with anything about academic life. My most vivid memory is of the introductory trip around the Old Clock Tower Building, standing with a small group of other freshers in the entrance hall and looking up in amazement at the space above us.

Over the 59 years since that moment the memory is still sharp and the feeling still recalled every time I step into that space though everything has changed. At that time the Registrar's Office was on the left as one entered, other offices also on that floor. The Library was to the right, the University Hall (lecture space for the Music courses) on the left, other lecture rooms below us. Lectures for Architects, part timers, a bit off-centre, like the law students, took place on the level above – which was the scene of some memorable parties to come. I soon fitted into a regular, wonderful pattern with classes in second year French, first year History, Psychology and Education, cycling in each morning from Epsom and back (often quite late) to Bracken Avenue where our put-upon hostess would have saved the dinner in the oven. Pat came in for lectures after 5 p.m., as many people did then.

Two University Clubs kept me busy and brought new friends. The Debating Club was supported by Professor Davis (the Law Prof.) and Professor Rodman (Economics). I was much in awe of all University staff, but Professors really did have God-like status. All through term time there were debates in a tournament between different faculties judged by our Professor mentors, taken seriously by students, and leading to selection for a team to debate at Tournament (now much reduced in content because of the war) for the Joynt Scroll. I think that the first debate for this was in Auckland. John Pocock, a first year student from Canterbury, spoke on the topic 'That youth is wiser than age', using many classical allusions that foxed most of us. Afterwards we

had a good party and walked home in a group, singing our way down Gillies Avenue – thus beginning a life long friendship that has persisted in spite of the disparity of our skills.

The Tramping Club was a marvellous discovery and took me into a new world that has been wonderful to me all my life. I read an invitation to Fresher's Tramp on the notice board – 'Meet on the platform for the Henderson train next Sunday' it said, but of course I had no idea where to go. I left a note 'To someone kind going tramping' and was immediately taken into what became a second family for me, by people mostly dead now but still alive in my mind. Over the next three years I explored the Waitakeres and the Hunuas, helped to build the University Hut, listened to Ces read us Father Brown stories round the fire, sang loudly on the train trip home (always in the last carriage), patronised the Milk Bar on Broadway (laughing rudely at the Salvation Army prayer meeting on the adjacent corner), and often finishing the day by listening to Beethoven and other music hitherto unknown to me, lying in a heap with a lot of others, on the floor at Cam Reid's place which was a few doors down on Manukau Road, conveniently near Bracken Avenue. It was truly a new world.

I missed my 'steamroller' and for some time we exchanged long, long letters (none survive). I continued to be critical although interested in the various men around. Bruce Boaden's brother Ross took me to his Graduation Ball which began at about 10 pm after the procession and the ceremony in the Town Hall, and ended in the small hours, perhaps a pale imitation of Oxbridge custom. 'Home at 5.30 am' I record in my diary together with comments about the pie cart near the ferry and an amazing trip round the harbour. This was a totally brotherly gesture later transferred to my flatmate, Pat, especially after the tragic news of Bruce's death, a moment I remember only too well because of its impact on Ross. He later married Pat and I lost touch with them. Other boyfriends were in our lives that first year with socials and dances, debates and tramping where we met the few men remaining at University - science students excused from military service. There were regular socials in the Men's Common Room – downstairs from the Cloisters in the space now filled by the Bank and a Pharmacy. Upstairs was the Women's Common Room and the Cafeteria ruled by the dragon, Mrs Odd. The Architects hosted a Studio Stampede each year and we vied for the most extraordinary fancy dress and some crazy dancing.

The big events were the formal Balls run by each Faculty. For these a ball-gown was essential. I had no money for clothes and rationing lessened the pangs as I fitted into dresses recycled from aunts and others. A red silk taffeta gown with puff sleeves and frills round neck and hem was a particular success. For parties I had a dress passed on to me by my mother which just fitted my ample shape and had a neckline suitable for showing off a moonstone necklace sent from Egypt during the first War and a particular treasure. I still have this to hand on.

My diary records the pangs and drama of new boyfriends. One, Gordon, I even took home to Napier during a term vacation but I had no interest in any permanent attachment – first I had to pass my exams and I was not clever enough or well prepared enough for that to be taken for granted. A friend told me that I had broken Gordon's heart but the next year he went off to Canada with other Physics graduates to work on radar and maybe preliminary studies for the Bomb and no doubt he did not grieve for long. No doubt I acted badly.

At the end of that year, Pat and I were in no mind to go home early. We moved into rooms down Grafton Road (the house, still a slum, remains) and worked in Heard's Sweets Factory at the end of Parnell Road. I packed and wrapped chocolates and enjoyed the revelations of factory staff, especially as the windows gave a good view of American ships coming to port. When that happened, half the staff left work to go and greet the sailors on the wharf and great were the stories told subsequently.

After I went home I was still 'manpowered' to work on the Bayview tomato farm. I renewed my friendship with Brian, on a lower key, but the main event of this vacation was a trip with the Hawkes Bay Tramping Club, led by Norm Elder from Hastings, over the Kaimanawas. My knowledge of locality was and is hazy. We went in off the Napier Taupo road and emerged at Waiouru. Several Auckland Tramping Club friends joined in, mostly botanists, including Cam Reid, Ces Segedin and Laurie Milner.

1943 (Written 17 July 2001)
My 1942 year at University finished happily. My flatmate Pat and I spent the last month in a rather rundown flat (still standing in 2001), working in Heard's sweets factory in Parnell and staying out late with our boyfriends – both physicists who later went on to work at Chalk River and disappeared from view, not without a considerable amount of angst. All this is detailed in my diary for 1942-3 which now reads foolishly. I was only 18 years old, very idealistic and romantic, reading poetry and French classics, Tagore and Voltaire and Montaigne and Fitzgerald with the profound and the superficial all mixed up. For years I taped up this embarrassing juvenile record though I could not quite bring myself to throw it away. I shall leave it in my box of old diaries and notebooks but perhaps a 30 year ban should apply on the reading of it by any of you. That is, if anyone is interested. It is naïve, silly, romantic and innocent – a great contrast I think with present day teenagers' ideas and lives. 'Last year has been too much of a whirl' I wrote, 'the happiest and fullest of my life I think … lots of tangles to straighten out …'

By 1943 the Second World War was in full swing but it does not get a mention. I had passed my exams (French 2, Psychology 1, History 1 and Education 1). My old boyfriend had reappeared for long talks and walks. Another season of picking tomatoes kept me fit and in funds. I went tramping with the Heretaunga Tramping Club for two weeks.

Among the quotations (unattributed) this one sums up my state of mind:
'My thoughts shimmer with these shimmering leaves and my heart sings with the touch of the sunlight; my life is glad to be floating with all things into the blue of space, into the dark of time.'

Then it was back to Auckland and a flat at 19 Symonds Street (now the Department of Political Studies), new subjects (History 2, French 3, Music 1) – and a shattering reminder of the dreadful times we were living through.

My much admired surveying cadet/Airman, Bruce Boaden, had a brother in Auckland who had befriended me and my flatmate. One day he came to our study table in the Library with a sprig of rosemary in his hand. 'That's for remembrance', he said before

telling us in tears that Bruce had been shot down over the English Channel and picked up 'not quite alive'. Then he collapsed in sobs and Pat took him home to our flat to comfort him. I record this as being on 31st March, 1943, the first breath of war to reach me, though with only brief sadness it seems.

New boyfriends appeared, more tramping in the Waitakeres, on Waiheke Island and in the Hunuas and on Coromandel. I record one trip '16 miles tramping in the wind and rain' – stayed the night at Muriwai in Westward Ho 'which is windy and has rats'. Cam Reid was the Captain of the Tramping Club and I was flattered when he was kind to me. His father had been a respected gynaecologist but he was now a hopeless alcoholic taking rides between his rooms (which nobody ever visited) and the pub. Cam's mother, a dear plump lady, did her best and we liked one another. The Tramping Club often went on after trips to the Reid's big old house on Manukau Road near Epsom Girls' Grammar School.

Apart from tramping there was dancing (several Balls of the season and an ancient red taffeta dress handed down), 21st birthday parties, French classics, Debating Club, with the Joynt Scroll held at Massey, a Student Convention and election to the Students Executive. Meanwhile, problems over exams and boyfriends caused equal agony. Italy capitulated in September but Debating Club and the Student Executive meetings and the terrors of third term exam swot got more attention from me. I went home to Napier at the end of the year to tomato picking, a tramping trip in the Ruahines, Cam Reid as my new and slightly more serious boyfriend replacing the faithful steamroller, - and a BA.
'Ah,Jeunesse, qu'un jour vous ne soyez plus lâ –
Vous, vos reves, vos pleurs, vos rires et vos roses.'
Chateaubriand – recorded 6 June, 1943.

1944 (Written September 2001)

Each of these years seems in retrospect to have been especially important. 1944 is no exception with its numerous milestones, though I have no more diary entries to remind me of events. My teenage diary comes to an end in September 1943 with a rash of quotations from my French books, mention of Italy's capitulation (Thursday 9th Sept.), a record of outings with various young men with dancing and long discussions, Debating Club meetings, anxiety about forthcoming examinations, and a foray to different churches one Sunday (none met with our approval).

In the long vacation I worked on the tomato farm, went tramping once more with the Heretaunga Tramping Club over the Kaimanawas to Waiouru, joined by Auckland people including Cam Reid, Laurie Milner and his dog, and Tony Druce, and I heard that I had passed my exams. This meant that I had completed a B.A. but I still needed to pass History 3 before going on to do an M.A. in that subject.

I returned to Auckland in March 1944 but my flatmate Pat Fullalove, was now out teaching, so I moved into a shabby room at the back of the building in Symonds Street. It was a real slum, a sort of annex built out across a muddy yard, with no proper kitchen – only a gas ring on the landing – and bathroom and lavatory upstairs. (All this has now gone, the space is occupied by handsome buildings for Business Administration and English.) I didn't care about the slum conditions but managed as before with 10/- for rent and 10/- for food, though I was better off now because I had

decided to combine doing History 3 with teacher training and in those days all the students at Training college were paid a small stipend in return for an undertaking (not always honoured) to teach for three years and to serve one year in a country school.

A unit had been started at the Teachers' Training College in1943 to train secondary school teachers, so with other graduates 938 women and 3 men!) I joined the course in its second year of operation. Previously training for secondary school teachers had not been thought necessary as long as one had a good degree and it must be said that the course at that time was of little help to us except in the periods 'on section' when we had practical experience in classrooms around the city high schools. Our physical education training course also proved useful to me when I actually began teaching because as the youngest on the staff I inevitably took the girls' 'phys-ed' and I enjoyed that. And the training was a life saver when I taught in Canada later (1950-52) and badly needed a job. I certainly appreciated the money, and accepted it in good faith because I fully intended to be independent and to teach for some time before 'settling down' to marriage and domestic life, which still seemed to be the highest good expected by my mother and many of my cotemporaries.

My History 3 classes were all in the late afternoon like other lectures designed to suit the many part-time students. For example, all Law classes took place after 5pm or at 8am and I think that Architecture (then housed on the landing under the Clock Tower) kept the same hours. Incidentally, but memorably, the Architects annually gave the best party of the year, the Studio Stampede, on this landing. Cam and I once attended as a Pink Elephant and Keeper! And I still have the ludicrous photograph. I did my study in the Library in the evenings, just as before, enlivened by trips to Smith's Coffee Shop with buttered crumpets, thanks to various tramping club friends who would appear just at closing time to take me off down to Queen Street.

I decided to begin my Thesis for the Master's degree that I would do as well as five papers the next year, and consulted the Professor of History, Professor Rutherford, about a topic. I wanted to do a history of the Library or of the prison, but these were said to be 'soft options', too-like sociology and I was set the grand topic of 'The effect of the naval race on the outbreak of World War 1'. I dutifully struggled with accounts of naval policy in the files of British Parliamentary debates and with pages of figures about British and German ship tonnages – lost in the stacks of the Public Library Reference Department housed in the long hall looking out on to Albert Park that is a wing of the Art Gallery now. It was utterly boring but I dared not confront the God Professor and ground on, despairing, until the end of the year when common sense asserted itself.

I had a place on the Students Executive 1943-4, and enjoyed the meetings and discussions. Debating Club took me on a trip to Lincoln College for the Joynt Scroll. Regular tramping in the Waitakeres, the Hunuas, Coromandel or Waiheke Island kept me fit and deepened my friendships, especially with Cam Reid my first serious love with whom I went dancing regularly at weekends to Westhaven.

In May 1944 I graduated B.A. (University of New Zealand). This was a great occasion. Beth came from Napier to attend the ceremony. I recall that she was upset by my shabby room and the nasty view of a muddy back yard and little cabins

occupied by impoverished old men, though of course these surroundings did not bother me. I was enjoying myself far too much to notice. I had just turned twenty – a lovely age. Graduation took place in the Auckland Town Hall just as it still does (but taking days not a few hours). We went in procession from the University, carrying our mortar boards but wearing borrowed gowns and hoods. The women wore long dresses, the few men dinner suits. My dress was red taffeta, a hand down of course and out of date, but in war time any long dress was a treat. This one had puff sleeves and a frill round neck and hem and I had my one piece of jewellery, which I still treasure – a moonstone necklace sent to my mother from Egypt during the War (maybe by her long lost love or maybe by my father). John Morton was capped at this ceremony too and I think that he still had the programme on which each graduand was honoured by a quotation. Cam Reid graduated M.Sc. that night. Student hecklers were in full voice and shouted out or displayed posters during the speeches by various dignitaries (Boring!! Too long!! Dictionary needed!! etc,) while throwing rolls of toilet paper at intervals.

As each woman graduate left the stage, she was presented with a bouquet by a representative of the Federation of University Women. Women graduates were still something special even though in wartime we made up the majority of students. After the ceremony we all walked back up the hill to the University Hall (now part of Further Education). Dancing began at about 10pm with a Graduation Waltz for the new graduates while friends and relatives watched from the seats upstairs. Beth stayed for that and then retired, with the other spectators. She must have gone off lonely to the awful little room but I don't remember giving it a thought as I went on dancing until the early hours – though there was no grand breakfast at dawn as in Oxbridge of the day.

In later days there were photographs. I still have a box of these. My picture shows a plump faced beaming young woman, hair carefully pinioned into sausage curls which came undone in the rain. Every relative got a copy of this photograph and my father was especially proud of it – a dream fulfilled.

There were two important events for our family at the end of 1944.

My father's mother died, in Waitahuna. We had visited her only two or three times after we moved to Invercargill because my father and his family seemed to have a mutual dislike for one another. My grandmother told me that 'she had never been so pleased to see anyone go down the road as Tom' when he left home at age 14 to work in Wellington and my father never had any close contact with his brothers or his parents after that. However, my parents and Beth went to Waitahuna for the funeral and attended the reading of the will. My father got nothing – a humiliating experience, rejection shown beyond the grave. My grandmother had already given to me all she intended our side of the family to have – a thin gold ring, the 'keeper' to the wedding ring worn by my great grandmother, Jane Tod Scott, used as my own wedding ring and worn until January 1992.

The other change was that my father was transferred to Christchurch and I joined the family there at the end of 1944, ready to continue working on a more suitable topic for my thesis and to complete work on a Master's degree. I was not to return to live in Auckland for 33 years.

1945

This was the year the war ended and the Bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I moved to Christchurch, ended my attachment to Cam Reid and completed my Master's degree. Of all these events, I am not sure what seemed most important in my 21 year old mind. (In old age I try to remember this if I feel disturbed by many young people's lack of concern for current horrors.)

I worked part time because, although living at home was a great economy, I needed pocket money for books and outings. The work I found was tedious – first in the Vocational Guidance office, where Cam Reid's sister worked (Eleanor, a bit older than Cam) and Winifred McNaughton was the boss. I had been taught by Winifred at Southland Girls' High School and we met again on more equal terms thirty years later, at Friends Meeting in Auckland.

I was not really qualified for primary school teaching but that was my next job. When term started I worked half-time at a small private school belonging to the Parents' National Education Union (PNEU). This was an awful experience. My year at Teachers' College had not equipped me to deal with bored, well-off ten year olds. However teachers were in short supply and I needed money so I kept working until the August vacation when I left for some intensive study.

This year I attended lectures for four papers in Honours History (M.A.) and completed a thesis. I had absolutely no assistance or advice about topic or method. The History Department was reduced to an aged, kindly Professor (Jimmy Hight) and a variety of well-meaning, not very good lecturers including the Head of Connon Hall, the women students' hostel. There was a war on, after all.) I changed my research topic, having found research into naval tonnage unrewarding to say the least. With my experience in Vocational Guidance I decided instead to research the pattern of women's work in New Zealand from 1840 to 1940, far too ambitious an undertaking, especially as there was no training in any aspect either of research or of writing. I soon realised the limitations in what I had planned and settled for a more limited field.

February 1946 to December 1949

These years were for full time teaching, tramping during every possible vacation, decisions about when and if to marry Cam, how to end that fond relationship before forming a new partnership that was to last for the rest of my life. An important, turbulent time.

Teaching began at Rangiora High School. It was an unusual place for its time, being run on democratic lines according to the theories and practice of its Headmaster, J. E. Strachan. When Mr Strachan was a student teacher at Lawrence District High School he had by a curious coincidence taught my father. New Zealand is after all a very small place. The school was run according to theories developed by Mr Strachan in his book 'The School looks at Life'. His ideas were considered strange at the time though they would not raise any eyebrows now with their introduction of equality for girls and boys (about 200 of each in these years) and the application of democratic principles for all school decisions.

There were no prefects – all students were to take equal responsibility for observance of rules for good order and safety. It was a time when corporal punishment (for the boys) was still considered indispensable for keeping order, with detentions and writing of lines for the bad girls. But we had no cane! We had as the last resort a Judicial Committee made up of senior students before whom a persistently troublesome student would have to appear to account for his behaviour and be given some kind of duty (like mowing the school lawns or tidying up the library books). A weekly class committee meeting was held to sort out the day to day issues, and in preparation for this every third form class studied 'committee procedure' including the correct way to keep minutes. In later years I often had the occasion to wish that fellow committee members had had the chance to attend such instruction when young – much time and temper could have been saved if so. Fourth Formers at Rangiora High School became eligible to serve on a school committee of which there were a variety including the Sports Committee or the Grounds Committee as well as the top job of the Judicial Committee for seniors to whom any troublesome student could be sent if spells of gardening or classroom cleaning had not led to an improvement in attitude.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Rangiora High School community was the complete acceptance of friendships between boys and girls. Most classes were mixes except for PT, there were no rules about who sat with whom in class nor about who kept to which part of the playground, though the students did divide up quite naturally for different sports. Once a term when the day was considered especially suitable there would be a School Walk to the Ashley River and back and students mixed and even held lands without any embarrassment except from the Third Formers' jeers. (Staff smiled benevolently on observing some new attachment not noted before.)

I began a school Tramping Club with the help of the PT teacher who spent one day a week with the High School while doing the rounds of the Primary schools as well. We had many happy day trips to the nearby country and hills, and once a year I took a group of about twelve senior students away for a few days in the vacation. We went to stay in a shearing shed on a North Canterbury farm one year. A highlight was rescuing a penknife from the pit latrine – the owner being lowered by the heels with a cheering audience. I still have a photograph of this escapade. In my second teaching year I took about ten seniors to Arthurs Pass and a sad final trip was to a hut on the Port Hills. Each term there was a School dance for seniors, eagerly anticipated and sometimes gatecrashed by recent ex-pupils. In addition I helped with the local Youth Club which ran swimming classes and tramps and once a year a real evening dress Ball with a slippery floor and a good band.

The rest of my life did not stand still. I went back to town most days and attended lectures in political studies. I went to all the University social functions, especially the Balls for which one could really get dressed up, and tramped regularly with the University Tramping Club. Cam was still a question mark but his job was in Dunedin and I had several regular partners for the various Balls and dances and parties that took place every weekend. But I kept my resolve to work for a while before considering any marriage, though fond enough always of Cam.
