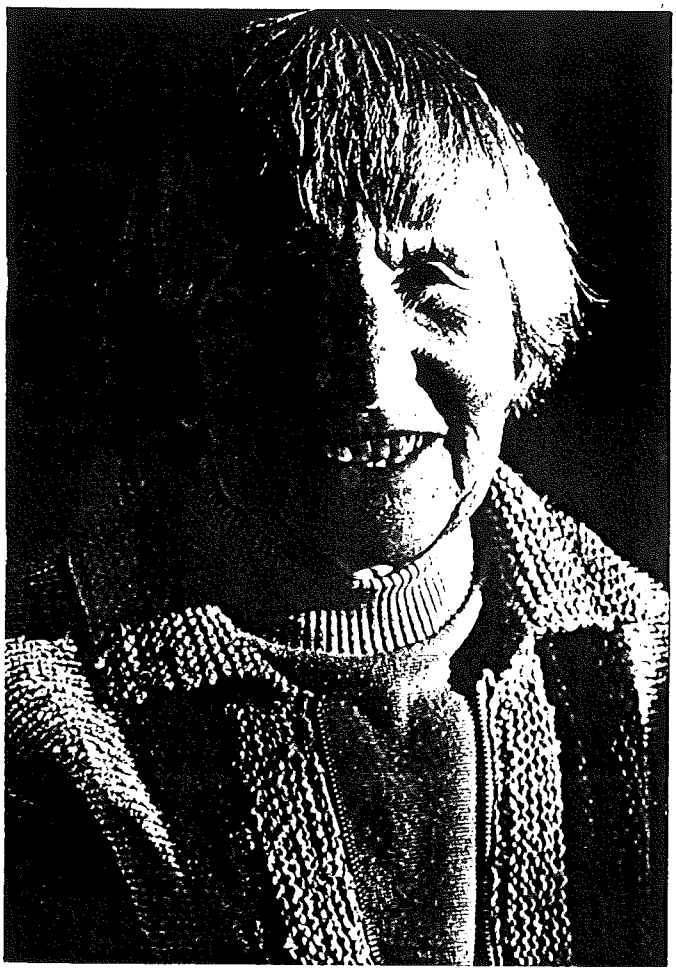
The Life of a Woman

-Muriel Morrison-



Written by Elwyn Clements, 1994.

MURIEL MORRISON (nee Ockenden)

Part 1 - Early Childhood

Muriel was born in Christchurch in late December 1912, at her parent's home in Linwood. (1) She was the second daughter in a family of four girls. The details surrounding her birth, and her infancy remain somewhat of a mystery to her as her parents very rarely talked about such things.

> *"I only know that I was quite a plump baby, and had a temper, and when I was a bit older I used to lie on the floor and kick".*

Her father,Albert Ockenden was a builder, working from home. (2) This involved more than just carpentry, because he also designed buildings and drew plans. (3) As a young man he emigrated from England to New Zealand working as a steward on a boat. He had been brought up in London as a Baptist, and later rebelled against this religious indoctrination, turning agnostic. He was a very well read person and was interested in all kinds of growing educational influences.

Her mother, Francis Alice McKenzie, came from a Canterbury family and trained as a tailoress before getting married at the age of twenty eight. As a young woman, she and her friends were *"very foreward looking because they did exercises and wore bloomers in place of skirts when they were bicycling or exercising".*

Her parents' concern for educating people meant that they were both greatly involved in the beginnings of the WEA in Christchurch. (4)

> *"The things that mattered to my parents at this stage were the Socialist idea, and their need for people to be educated or they couldn't make intelligent choices about their government".*

Both were strong pacifists, and opposed The Great War of 1914-18. Muriel cannot remember much about the First World War, however she does remember one occasion when she was held on her father's shoulders to watch a peace procession on Gloucester Street. She also remembers the terrible flu epidemic which plagued Christchurch at the end of the war. (5) Her mother caught it and got very sick but managed to survive. *"It was*

devastating. People died like flies". There was a depot near their house where everyone had to go to get fumigated.

When Muriel was four years old, the family moved round the corner to the end of Wyon Street and Buckleys Road. This was partly because they needed a larger house but primarily due to her father's business. As a builder he built new houses, and these sold more easily if they had been lived in. The new house was on a really big section with her step-grandmother living on one side and her aunt and uncle living on the other. Muriel remembers this house as a place where she played, and has lots of lovely childhood memories of this time.

> *"We had a paddling pond, which my father made which was concreted in, and a bridge that went across it and through the fence and into my uncle's place. We made boats and sailed them ."*

At this preschool age, she had little contact with children other than her siblings, and spent a lot of time at home, observing everything her mother did. She remembers following her mother around as she did the housework, in which there was a very definite routine. She could also see her Aunt following much the same rituals next door.

> *"I could see what stage she was at her housework, and when she emptied her ashes out of her fireplace".*

Her mother worked hard around the house and was determined to have everything nice for her family. (6) She made most of their dresses and nighties, and spent a lot of time making sure they looked good. The general memory Muriel has of her mother is as being always slightly cross due to being tired and under stress.

They also spent a lot of time with their step-grandmother next door, who was the closest they ever had to a grandmother. They would go over in the evenings and she would tell them stories about what she had been doing and who she had seen during the day. She had a business where she rode round on her bike helping people to buy things, and to advance the money. At one stage she also had a little dress shop in town, and sometimes they would get their best dress through her.

> *"Granny knew various dressmaking agencies and once or twice we had a dress made. Then other times my father who was a great scrounger, would come home with dresses, from people who owed him money, and they would fit one of us".*

It was when Muriel was six that her youngest sister was born, and they were sent away to stay with an aunt. It was the first time that she had stayed away from home and as a result, found it greatly traumatic. *"I was terribly homesick, It was dreadful"*. Then on arrival back home there was a new sister. She frequently helped put the baby to sleep in her pram, by wheeling her down the concrete path, round the corner and up in the back gate.

> *"We wheeled and wheeled and wheeled her and then she'd look up at us and she was supposed to be asleep"*.

Although the family was strongly bonded, they were all deprived of affection.

> *"My parents were very inhibited, very restrained. They didn't express love towards one another, and they didn't talk to us much, and I don't remember any endearement"*.

Despite this her parents very rarely spanked them because they did not believe in physical punishments, and there was never any favourtism of one child over another.

FOOTNOTES

1. By 1912, there were St Helens maternity homes in each of the four main cities, however the majority of women chose to give birth at home and not in a hospital. In1912, only 909 women chose to give birth in St Helens hospitals, out of the total 27508 registered births (New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1913: 137). This continued until the 1920's when doctors began to organise a challenge against the midwives control of birthing (Mein Smith, 1986:1).
   By 1939 they had succeeded in persuading society that it was optimal for childbirth to be medicalised and women began to view hospitals as the routine place in which to have their babies. By 1939, 78% of New Zealand births were in hospitals (ibid: 2).
   This control by doctors is only now being challenged. In 1990, Helen Clark amended the Nurses Act, enabling midwives to deliver babies without the presence of a doctor, and increasingly New Zealand women are exerting the choice of one again having home births (North & South, Aug 1993: 56).

2. Working from home destroys the clear cut boundaries in the assumed division between the public and the private. Men are thought to primarily inhabit the public sphere of paid work, whereas women are thought to primarily inhabit the private sphere of the home and the family (Cox & James, in Cox ed, 1987 :1).
   Albert disrupts this assumption by not fully separating his work from his home, simultaneously being the primary source of financial support for his family while basing his occupation within the domestic sphere.

3. In the first half of the 20th century it was relatively common for a person to begin their career as a builder, and then progress through to draughting plans without actually having any formal architecture training.
   Architectural Education did not begin in New Zealand until 1905, and the legal status of architects was not protected until the early 1960's. This means that today it would be relatively impossible to enter the profession without having done the proper qualifications (Waldow, Victoria University, School of Architecture, 19 May 1994)..

4. The WEA (Workers Education Association) was set up in New Zealand in 1915 (Sharfe, 1990: 2). It was a non-political, non-sectarian organisation which aimed at providing adult education for all New Zealanders so that they would have sufficient understanding and awareness to evaluate their own social situations. This was done through lectures, discussions and free exchange of ideas (Peet, 1989: 2).
The Government began funding the WEA in 1919, cutting this back in 1930, and then withdrawing financial support completely in 1982 (Shuker in Codd et al, 1985: 185-187). This is not surprising because the very idea of educating workers proves to be a visible threat to owners and managers, and one which those in control would want to do away with. The WEA has always been viewed with some suspicion because of this, not only did the state try to exert control over it in regard to financial support, but it also tried to exert ideological control, in particular during the 1920's when there was widespread fear of communism. They did this in terms of laying down the rules as to what they felt was appropriate subject matter to be taught and who was seen as 'safe' enough to give lectures (ibid:182).

5. The influenza epidemic of 1918 swept through New Zealand killing an estimated 6700 people (McLauchlan, 1986, p.590), 1000 of whom were from Canterbury (Eldred-Grigg, 1982, p.118). It is thought to have been part of the worldwide epidemic arriving in New Zealand through passengers on a ship returning from Europe which was not left for the proper period of quarantine because the then Prime Minister, Massey was on board (Keith, 1984, p.208).
There was very little the medical profession could do for those inflicted with the illness, or indeed to prevent others from getting sick. There were however inhalation chambers set up in various locations where people could go to inhale fumes of zinc sulphate. The Department of Health did not think that these were very effective(Keith, 1984, p.208), and ironically they could be seen as highly ineffective in so far as they brought everyone together, increasing the spread of infected germs. These chambers functioned primarily as symbols for society, giving the impression that the authorities

were indeed doing something to cope with the epidemic and that they were in control of the situation, even though medically they remain a failed and forlorn attempt to deal with such a major health problem.

6. It was generally understood that while the husband supported the family financially, the wife would take primary responsibility for the domestic work and childcare, which is what happened in Muriel's family. Such work was unpaid, and received little or no recognition. Society even imposed certain domestic standards on women which everyone, including women themselves felt had to be met (James, in Cox ed, 1987, p.107). It is no wonder that Muriel's mother felt pressured and under stress, as she tried to live up to society's expectations, in turn determining whether she was a good wife and mother. It was primarily through domestic work that women obtained their sense of worth, even though such work was never finished. Aspects of housekeeping, such as emptying one's fireplace, and dressing the children well, which were visible to society could be seen as symbolic displays of their competence and diligence.

Part 2 - Primary School (1918-1925)

Muriel began Linwood School at the age of five, and remembers it during the first few months as being a *"place of anxiety"*. Her trouble was that every friday they had to take their slates home to be washed and she never knew which day friday was. She never dared to ask which day it was in case she showed how silly she was. Looking back she feels that she was very inhibited in asking for what she wanted.

"I was a very conforming child, quite frightened of what might happen to me. I was never naughty".

She wanted to do everything properly so as not to be growled at. This she sees as a need for security. This however was not the case at home, and she says that she drove her mother to distraction because she teased her little sister.

At school Muriel was terrified of the teachers, and became anxious if she was ever asked to do anything. She remembers once being asked to go to the Infant Mistress, and she said *" Please Miss "* and then she could not get out what she wanted to say, and stood there stuttering for such a long time that her own teacher had to come in and find out what the problem was.

"The teachers were a race apart, and were really there to be feared and respected in every way". (1)

At school she can remember writing on a slate, and reciting sayings in a kind of chant for the tables.

"I didn't mind saying, twice one are two, twice two are four. I quite liked that. I remembered it all and it made sense to me".

They also did various musical games, where they marched around the classroom singing. Despite these early anxieties, she did not mind school. She does remember that learning to write was a real problem. They had paper copy books and had to copy letters into the book. The students had to buy the exercise books. *"I remember there was a certain shop in Elmwood and it sold all the school books in, and we went after school and there were streams of kids trying to get the right sort of books".*

When Muriel was in Standard two the family moved to St Andrews Square, and she began Elmwood School. Again this move was for her fathers work. Her first teacher here was very strict and believed in strapping children. (2)

"If you got more than three mistakes in spelling you got the strap. People were strapped at the front of the class"

The first time she got the strap her mother was absolutely furious and came to school to tell the teacher that she did not want her child to be strapped. This of course did not stop the teacher from strapping her, but meant that Muriel merely ceased to tell her mother when it had happened. She did have teachers she liked in later years.

One incident from school which she remembers vividly happened one day when she had to give the headmaster a message, and on the way saw a boy from her class leaning against the side of the building and crying. *"It just tore my heart in two"*. The headmaster had given him the strap for writing the word 'homework' across the top of his page in great big writing, taking up three whole lines.

> *"It's the sense of injustice and wounding. There was nothing I could do. So I never liked that headmaster, in fact I hated him"*.

There were school assemblies every Monday morning, where they stood in front of the school in lines of their classes, and had to salute the flag and sing the national anthem. (3) Sometimes if a child had done something terrible they were brought up in front of everyone during this time and the school was told what the child had done. Despite this, Muriel felt that the school was good. It went up to Standard six, and in her last two years she had a *"lovely"* teacher. At this stage school was no longer a worry to her, and she managed very well academically.

During the playtimes and lunchtimes she remembers walking round the playground arm in arm with her friends. Her friends at this age were predominantly girls, and there was a lot of talking about which girls had boyfriends, and also about the school's competition for the most popular girl and the most popular boy. *"Ridiculous. Of course I never got it"*. The school organised this prize for the most popular.

Although she had good friends at school she mostly spent time with her sisters and cousins. She remembers the taking of a bath as being a highly social occurence where she would sit at one end and her elder sister would sit at the other and tell her stories, frequently from books she had been reading. She also gave her a bit of information on life, but did not talk much about this. Muriel probably related best to Lorna, her older sister, because she frequently fought with the one directly below her in age. *" I don't think I was jealous of her, but I teased her, I disliked her, I hated her, I squabbled with her"*. She got on quite well with her

youngest sister however because she was in no way a threat being six years younger.

When Muriel was twelve years old, her father gave her two books for her birthday. They were Kenneth Graham's 'Golden Age' and 'Dream Days'. When he presented them to her she felt that they would be boring adult books, but she really loved them. This made her realise that her father was appreciating her as a person, and that he knew she would enjoy Kenneth Graham.

During this time her parents began sending the four of them to the Socialist Sunday School, held in the old Trade Union building.(4) This was run by people who were friends of her parents in the Labour Party and in the Socialist Party.

> *"They were lovely people. I used to love my Sunday School teachers. It was quite different from any ordinary sunday school. We learnt about righteousness, peace and justice. They sang hyms about the lovely age to come".*

Muriel attended this for four to five years, and it made a big impression on her life. This became the basis of her religious life, because it was here that she got some introduction to the Bible, and a strong feeling for peace and justice, and loving people.

In order to gain entrance to High School everyone had to sit the Proficiency Examination in Standard Six. She wasn't scared of exams, and even gained a Junior National Scholarship which gave her a certain amount of money once she got to High School.

FOOTNOTES

1. In the early 20th century New Zealand schools were highly regimented and hierarchical institutions, in which teachers exercised authoritarian control over students.(Eldred-Grigg, 1990: 92).
The teachers occupied positions of extreme power which was recognised not only by the children but also by society at large. This status was derived in part from the fact that they could inflict punishment on the children and that ultimately they were the ones to determine whether the children passed or failed.
The children's fear of teachers was a consequence of the use and abuse of this power, and it would have been relatively common for children to have felt terrified in this way.

2. Corporal punishment in New Zealand schools was permitted under New Zealand law since the Education Act of 1877 (Human Rights Comission, 1985, p.2). This was only amended in 1989, making the use of corporal punishment illegal in all early childhood centres and registered schools.
Up until 1989, teachers were socialised into assuming that corporal punishment was the appropriate way to control children in the classroom (Ramsay in Codd et al ed, 1985, p.113) and indeed the general ideology in the community at large was that to *'spare the rod* [would] *spoil the child'*. (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p.1).
Teachers frequently resorted to caning or strapping their pupils (Eldred-Grigg, 1990, p.92). Perhaps the reason why they had to use it so regularly was that physical punishment does not usually prevent children from repeating their inappropriate behaviour (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p.15). Because the state legitimated such forms of control, children and parents occupied positions of relative powerlessness. This might explain why Muriel continued to be strapped after her mother had told the teacher that she did not want this to happen.

3. Compulsory weekly flag-saluting was introduced for all New Zealand schools in May 1921, by the then Minister of Education, C.J. Parr (Openshaw et al, 1993:123). This was put in place to ensure that school children were socialised into being patriotic and loyal citizens. It was assumed that such public conformity in regards to flag-saluting and singing the national anthem would cause the students to internalise a patriotic commitment.
Flag-saluting had previoulsy been recommended for schools during World War One, but had not been made compulsory. The primary reason Parr gave for making it compulsory was to counter disruptive influences such as the socialist Sunday-schools (The Dominion, May 27 1921 : 12). There were however only three such Sunday-schools in New Zealand with about fifty children at each (Openshaw, 1993: 123), so they would not have been any real threat. Perhaps the widespread fear of communism was more influential in Parr's decision for introducing the compulsory patriotism in schools.
Consistent with this was the Education Amendment Act of 1921, which required teachers to take an oath of allegiance to the crown and the constitution indicating that they would make their pupils into "orderly, conforming citizens" (Eldred-Grigg, 1982:144). At this time there were also many prominant Communist Party members were being persecuted.

4. By1921, there were three Socialist Sunday Schools in New Zealand. (Openshaw et al, 193:292). The basic philosophy which was taught to the children at these can be seen in their declaration made at the beginning of each meeting. *"We desire to be just and loving to all men and women, to work together as brothers and sisters, to be kind to every living creature, and to help to form a new society with Justice for it's foundation and love for its law"* (Extract from undated speech notes in E.J.Howard papers, Hocken library).
These Sunday Schools proved to be very strong socialising forces and many of the children who attended, had lifelong commitments to peace and justice (Locke, 1992:72).
In 1932, the name was changed from the Socialist Sunday Schol to the Socialist Guild of youth, in order to avoid confusion with church Sunday schools (ibid: 73).

Part 3 - High School (1926-1929)

Muriel attended Christchurch Girls High School, where she had to wear a uniform for the first time. They had to wear a gym frock which had three pleats at the bust level.

> *"If you were just at the stage when I was, where your boosies were developing you were frightfully conscious of them. The three pleats were just the wrong sort of thing".*

Despite this she found the transition to High school greatly exciting. Muriel was originally placed in the Professional stream at school, which meant that she did not have to do Home Science, and she loved this class. (1) In her third form year she caught the tram to school, however the next year, due to financial reasons her family moved to a house on Latimer Square and from here she cycled to school.

Every week the students attended an assembly in the school hall, which Muriel remembers as being very cramped because the room was too small for them all. *"There was a polished rail up the middle which you didn't touch cos you'd put your finger marks on it".* The headmistress at the time was Mary Victoria Gibson who was an academic of distinction. *"She seemed a little woman, schrowded in a gown.....a crumpled up person".* She would address the school after they had all sung a hymn. Muriel remembers quite a few of the anecdotes which Miss Gibson told them at these assemblies, the majority of which were in fact religious (2) which in itself was new subject matter for Muriel. One such message which she vividly recalls was a statement from the Bible which she found out later was incorrectly translated, which went, *"I will lift myne eyes unto the hills from whence commeth my help".*

Miss Gibson lived with her sisters, who ran Rangi Ruru School, and each morning she would cycle across Hagley Park. Frequently Muriel and her friends would pass her on their way to school, and one morning Muriel decided to say *'Good Morning Miss Gibson"'* as she rode by. That morning in assembly the headmistress talked about this girl who had come up behind her and quite nicely and brightly said 'Good Morning Miss Gibson'. This made a big impact on Muriel's life and although the other pupils did not know that she had been the one to say this, it gave her great pleasure and a feeling of quiet confidence.*"I think it probably did a great deal for me".*

The Girls High School had many rules which the students were made to follow. There were of course the uniform codes such as the compulsory wearing of gloves however there were also others like the one which forbid them to walk down Worcester Boulevard because the Boys High School was there.

> *"We were not allowed to walk down Worcester Street to go to the square, because we might meet a boy and talk to him. They were thinking that girls didn't need to meet boys and that if they did it was a shameful thing".*

At the end of Fourth form, Muriel decided that she wanted to take Music instead of Latin. Miss Gibson finally agreed to let her do this, however in doing so transferred her from her class in the top academic stream, and put her into a class where most of the girls were in their fourth year at High School whereas she was only in her third. (3) They were all going for the matriculation.

> *"There were one or two girls who were my age, but mostly they were older, and they were all keen on boys and of course that just left me out. I certainly didn't make friends with them because they were quite different".*

She still maintained her friendships with people in the other class, but felt that choosing between Latin and Music and the consequences of this decision caused a real jolt in her life.

During the lunchtimes, Muriel remembers sitting outside on the seats in the sunshine and talking to her friends. On wet days they would sit in the lunchroom, which was completely packed with girls and someone would play the piano and they would all dance. The style of dancing would be the foxtrot or some other such dance. It was never cold in school because there were heaters which they would all sit around and on. They also had a warm school uniform. At one stage Muriel hung her blazer too close to the heater and burnt a hole in the back of it, however her Mother fixed it up and she had to wear it like that.

In her first few years at High School, Muriel did not belong to any clubs, however when she was in the Sixth form she helped start up the Tramping Club. She also took up Hockey and they had to go to Hagley Park for the practices. This would get them points for their houses.

During Muriel's years at High School her teachers mattered enourmously to her, and there were some whom she really loved.

It was an entirely female staff, except for a *"terrible male gym teacher"*, and they always wore gowns in class. She remembers some of them reading poetry, and thought that they had beautiful voices. There was one teacher in particular whom she had a real crush on.(4) This was an English woman who taught French. *"I was very bad at French and she showed me how. I loved her"*. Muriel now realises that because this teacher had a strong English accent, that this was the cause for her beginning to speak in a similar way, so much so that people now ask whether she comes from England. This imitation was not a conscious choice on her part, rather one that merely happened, and at the time she was not even aware that she was doing it.

There was also a girl at school who Muriel had a real crush on. *"I really and truly loved her, and I felt so flat when she wasn't there"*. This girl was in a different class, and also had her own group of friends who were in a different social group. Muriel remembers one year in Sixth form after the breakup when this girl came along and helped her put on her coat, and when Muriel asked her where her friends were she said *" But you're my friend"*. This gave her a great deal of pleasure.

After school Muriel would usually start on her homework or do some piano practice, which she had been learning since the age of nine. *"There wasn't much spare time"*. Most of her leisure time was spent with her sisters, although she did have many good school friends. Muriel got on relatively well with her sisters. *"We were quite good friends most of the time"*.

She did not have any relationships with boys during her High School years, *"I was too inhibited....and just felt awkward"*, and indeed she had very little contact with boys purely because of the fact that she attended a girls school and had only female siblings.

Some Sundays they would go on picnics as a family, missing the Sunday School for the day. Their family had a car and they usually travelled to North Canterbury, in particular to Southwater Creek where an aunt lived. Muriel can remember passing Willow trees in the car and being able to reach out and touch them. They also went to places like Mount Grey, or around the head waters of rivers, or to the hills. *"We went on really good walks, up to the top of something . It would take all day and was very exciting"*.

Muriel cannot remember any dances or socials arranged through the school, however several of her friends did have parties. At

these parties, which were held at people's homes, they would dance to an array of records and then eat .a 'gorgeous' supper.

"The parties were quite nice. The parents had cleared the house out, and you didn't have any alcohol , that would have been a shocking and dreadful thing".

At these parties people wore their best dresses; and Muriel remembers that she only had one party dress, and that if she'd worn it to the last party she would still have to wear the same one again. Sometimes her mother would modify the old one so that it looked like a new one, and she would also share clothes with her sisters which helped give them a larger selection of outfits.
There were always boys at these parties and Muriel recalls this as causing her a slight amount of embarassment because she did not usually know any of them. *"I wasn't very good on boys".* However she would usually go home quite early because her father would come to meet her at the square after the last bus.

Muriel and her sisters were given very little information about life in general and about womanly functions, nor we they told anything about relating to males or about sexual relationships. (5) Her mother had told her that at some point her period might happen. *"My mother could not talk about it. She always called it her 'monthly' "*. When Muriel asked her mother why they have it she replied *"Oh it's the way we live"*, which did not provide her with much information. Girls at school had however talked about periods so that when hers arrived she did know what it was. *"It didn't come till I was quite old, but when it did come I knew what it was".* They did not have bought sanitary towels, instead having to use material from old sheets, which they attached to a sanitary belt. Muriel remembers having to wash these for herself, and it was all kept very quiet. She did not even talk about such things with her sisters. (6)

During High School years, Muriel remembers going through a stage when she was *'very cheeky'* at home. After having been cheeky she would feel great remorse and decide that she must do more to help her mother. As she grew older she became quite close to her father in many ways. She talked quite a lot with him because the things that mattered to him were things that she knew about. At some point in her teens his work was not going well and he got very depressed, and Muriel felt this depression strongly.

When Muriel was sixteen she decided that she wanted a job. She got one at an old people's home called 'Jubilee Home' off Ferry Road because her father knew the matron there. She worked here for about a month. After her first week she was expected to give

the patients enemas. *"I just couldn't , I just didn't know what to do. I had no nursing training whatsoever".* (7) In the end she did a lot of the washing there. This work experience got her quite concerned about the fact that there were so many people lying in bed, elderly or not so elderly, without any contact from anybody. She became particularly concerned about one woman who was about forty, who had three children, and decided that she would take the children to see her. Muriel did not have a car and remembers cycling to where these children were boarders, and bringing them the long distance to see their mother. *" We somehow got to 'Jubilee Home' "*. She did this once a fortnight for quite a while, even after she had finished working there.

FOOTNOTES

1. At Christchurch Girls High School, there were three areas of study which the girls could take. There was the Academic Stream preparing them for University or Teachers College, there was the Commercial Stream preparing them for office work, and then there was the Home Life Stream giving them *"general education"* (1914 Christchurch Girls High School Prospectus).
   The stream which the girls 'choose' to go into would have been linked to their level of cultural and economic capital perpetuating the socio-economic position of their family to their own future position.
   These divisions among the students, assumed an obvious hierarchy, with those in the academic stream occupying significantly superior positions (Middleton in Codd et al, 1985: 86). Janet Frame highlights this also in her autobiography when she says *"for everyone knew that commercial girls were a little beneath professional girls"* (1983: 171).

2. The Education Act of 1877 stated that all public primary schools had to be entirely of a secular character due to the diversity of children for whom they were catering (McGeorge, 1981:17).
   This clause however made no provision for secondary schools, giving them the freedom to teach whatever religious matter they felt was appropriate. On the whole this usually consisted of prayers and hymns at assemblies (Dakin, 1973:26).
   Christian religious instruction tends to promote a particular set of cultural norms and values which perpetuate the status quo and legitimate a sense of order and place. To some extent such instruction can produce a compliant labour force also by directing attention away from existing socio-economic reality onto religious issues.

3. The learning of Latin carried highly symbolic value at this time. Not only was it seen to be an essential component for the world of academia, and a requirement for entry into medicine, but it also symbolised the achievement of equality

between the sexes since it had been a traditionally male area of knowledge (Fry,1985:39).
Christchurch Girls High School was highly academically oriented and the headmistress, Ms Gibson was herself an MA graduate (Cresswell, 1956:27), who placed a considerable emphasis on the importance of learning Latin. This helps explain why when Muriel chose not to study Latin she was taken out of the top academic stream because it was assumed that this choice reflected her academic aspirations.

4. The schoolgirl 'crush' appears to have been prevalent during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and indeed during this time was seen as socially acceptable (Vicinus in Freedman et al, 1982:47).
A crush consisted of loving an admired student or teacher and on the whole never led to any actual physical closeness. Instead the relationship was expressed through symbolic acts, indicating a desire on the part of the younger girl to emulate the achievements and qualities of the older girl or woman. At a single-sex school where a high emphasis was placed on women and their achievements, the 'crush' was one way of expressing these aspirations.
As a social phenomenon, the crush has been subject to various interpretations and, by the mid 20th century, rising fear about homosexuality led to negative views on such same-sex emotional relationships.

5. Schools have generally provided very little sex education for pupils, to complement what the parents have told them. In fact until 1984, group instruction in sex education was forbidden in all primary schools (Ramsay in Codd et al, 1985:105). Despite this, the issue was not completely ignored and as early as 1912, the Cohen Comission had put forward the idea that schools needed to give *"a single, brief account of the facts of life "* to students at puberty age (McGeorge, 1977:135) however nothing came of this until much later, namely the sex education in the 1960's. Eldred-Grigg refers to the lack of awareness surrounding sexual issues in his novel Oracles & Miracles set in Canterbury during the 1930's. *"Mix a teaspoon of baking soda and water and take that.....*[for period pain]*...that was all the advice she ever gave me about my*

periods or about sex or about babies or marriage or anything " (1987:102).

6. Menstruation has long been kept invisible due to the social meanings and taboos which have been imposed upon it. The general assumption has been, and perhaps to a lesser extent still is that *"menstruation is dirty"* (Martin, 1987:93). This in turn has shaped how women have been made to cope with it. Women have continually had to hide their own menstruation from others, and have also learnt that it is not a socially acceptable topic of conversation. This is why women rarely share their experiences of menstruating with each other and are often reluctant to educate girls on the topic. Given the circumstances and the restrictive discourse surrounding menstruation, Muriel's experience would have been much the norm.

7. The fact that Muriel as an untrained sixteen year old was expected to give the patients enemas, reflects the general belief that such paramedical work required very little knowledge or skill. The Nurses Registration Act of 1901, meant that all nurses in New Zealand had to be legally registered (Bryder, 1991:20) which did give them a certain degree of recognition. Despite this they have continually occupied low positions in the medical division of labour.

Part 4- University years (1930-1935)

During the Depression years Muriel's family was quite hard up because her father was owed a lot of money for work he had done.(1) Because of this they moved to Stonehurst Private Hotel, where her father had done a great deal of building work and had still not been paid. In addition to this it was not running very well. Her father felt that they could do a better job of running the place and he also had no other work at this time. Therefore the family moved in and her parents took on the job of managing the hotel. There was an area of the hotel in which the permanent residents lived, which was where they were all given rooms and the family also had a sitting room at their disposal. Muriel had a small room for herself. *"I really couldn't stand it cos the girl next door had lots of parties where everyone had lots of beer, and they made lots of noise"*. There were about twenty people who permanently lived at the Hotel, and there were also many regulars who became special friends. *" We met lots and lots of interesting people because we were willing to talk to them"*. The Ockenden family ate their meals in the dining room along with whoever else happened to be in there. At one point some of the staff and guests even formed a drama club, and produced a play.

Muriel decided to go to Canterbury University after her Sixth form year. *"This was my own decision really. I needed to go on learning. My parents didn't encourage me one way or the other, nor did they stop me"*. She paid for it all herself. There was no pressure from Girls High School either in regard to continuing on to higher education, however the headmistress did place a high emphasis on the girls achieving something. The main reason she went on to University was due to a feeling coming from within herself, and she does not think that she was too young to have gone.

A family friend, John Johnson helped Muriel work out her course at University. *"Because I really hadn't the faintest idea"*. She did a Bachelor of Arts degree, taking History, French and Music. Her music lecturer was Dr Bradshore, who was an old musician and conducted the cathedral choir. She remembers there being an even mixture of men and women at University (2) and in her stage one lectures there was often up to sixty students *"which was quite big for those days"*.

Muriel bicycled to University from Stonehurst Hotel

"I had a bike and I would leap on my bike, about ten minutes before the lecture, cycle vigorously along Worcester Street and round the corner and there was a little bike shed, and I seized my gown out of the locker and rushed to the lecture". (3)

At this stage Muriel was beginning to get interested in men and wished that she had a boyfriend of her own. However at the same time she was shuddering at the thought of anyone coming near her. She did have males take an interest in her, however she feels that she was far too inhibited. Every Saturday night at University there was a hop, and everyone would dance with each other.

"Once a chap I knew slightly asked to walk me home and he put his hand in my arm and I said 'Oh don't ' I couldn't bear to be touched. Then at the gate he said 'You don't even know my name and I don't know yours' and I said 'It doesn't matter really does it' and I ran up the path away from him and in the door".

She remembers being just too scared. The man apparently got a bit of a shock. *"It's laughable now but at the time it was a real blockage".*

She did meet lots of new people at University. On the whole her friends were mainly from The Student Christian Movement which she joined in her first year.(4) She was actively involved in The Student Christian Movement, which had lots of Bible study groups and prayer times. They did a lot for social concerns, sometimes raising money for different issues through concerts, and they also ran the secondhand booksale at the beginning of the year. Camps were also a prominant feature of the movement. She clearly remembers one friend in particular from this time who was not part of The Student Christian Movement, and who had very little money. Muriel used to go and visit her at her room she rented in town, and sit with her by the fire. This woman was quite a good friend of hers.

It was during this time that she discovered Quaker Meeting. She was already part of The Student Christian Movement and was looking around different churches, before deciding that Quaker Meeting was the one which meant most to her. She also knew several of the people attending the Meetings which helped influence her choice, many of whom had been part of the Socialist Sunday School in her early years.

Muriel frequently had her evening meal at the Students Union and remembers having to work out what was cheapest to buy because she did not have much money to spend. She also passed a lot of time in the Women's Common Room. *"It was a rather gracious room up in the top, and very pleasant and nice, and there was a piano there"*. Muriel recalls one episode where she was there with friends and they persuaded her to play her exam pieces on the piano.

Because Muriel found it so hard to study at the hotel she decided to rent a small room in a house on Fitzgerald Avenue, where she could study undisturbed. She decided to do this at a time when her mother was away visiting her sister, Lorna in Australia, because she knows that her mother would not have heard of it.

Muriel completed her Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1933, and then continued on to do Honours in History. She had to choose a topic for her thesis, and was encouraged by a friend, Norman Bell, to do it on "Samoa as a mandate of New Zealand". She wrote on this topic, even though she was not thoroughly enthused by it. In order to complete this she had to travel to Wellington on several occassions to read the reports of the mandatory comission. *"That was a blessed nuisance"*. The people at the library were very impatient, and not very helpful so she rushed her way through them, and did not read them carefully enough. At several times she even considered giving it up, but in the end finished it. Her thesis had to go to England to be examined. (5)

During her years at University Muriel always felt slightly guilty because it was during the Depression time, when people were out of work and hungry and there were lots of unemployed. *"I wondered what right I had to go to University and spend this time just studying when I should have been doing something about it"*. Along with others she was concerned about the social revolution that should occur. She did not ever go along with communism because it was too violent, but she did align herself with the socialist ideas.

Muriel paid her own way through University and went through many different jobs to earn the money. She was always able to teach the piano because she had her L.C.T.L music certificate. In her first few years at University she was employed part time at Stonehurst Private Hotel, where they were living. The work there involved a variety of different jobs. She did dishwashing, work in the kitchen, helping the waitresses, housework, and bedmaking to name a few. Whatever jobs they needed doing she would be

given. *"What I absolutely loathed was cleaning out the bathrooms because I had a revulsion with cigarette ends, and you had to wash under the bath and round the toilets and there were lots of these things"*. During the Depression she remembers that the cook used to put out bits of food in big golden syrup tins, and a woman would come and collect these and take them home.

One day while Muriel was doing cleaning work she decided that she needed more time for her University work and she did not need to earn so much money. The plan that she came up with was that she could easily share her job with somebody who desperately needed the money. Because her parents managed the hotel, and partly owned it, they were able to do this and a young woman called Eileen came in to share Muriel's job. She remembers Eileen as being a skiny woman who then stayed on and became a full time worker.

In her later University years, Muriel started and ran a kindergarten by herself. She had had no training in this area, and indeed the only experience she had was that she had visited a few local kindergartens. The main reason for choosing to do this was that she needed the money and it was something that she felt she could realistically do. She charged a shilling a week for each child and found no problems in getting a group of children to come along. *"It was a very struggling time for kindergartens"*. (6) Muriel ran the kindergarten every morning from half past nine until twelve. This was all fitted around her University schedule. She held it in a little sunday school room at the back of St Luke's Church.

> *"It was really hard work because the rooms were used by a football club on a Saturday night, and then on Monday morning the rooms were full of smoke, and cigarette ends, so I would have to go around early on a monday morning and sweep it all up"*.

Muriel provided the children with a box of blocks, and lots of pictures and picture books, and had also built a sandpit in the corner. They spent a lot of time with music, singing songs and playing games. In total there were usually about twelve to twenty children who came along. *"A good mixture of children came"*. The boy of [illegible], a local presbytarian minister, Alan Watson, came along, and the people who ran a club on the corner of Worcester Street and Latimer Square had a little girl who came along. On the whole the others were just neighbouring children. During the Depression children could not begin school until they were six, so she had children from the ages of three to six coming. She remembers

one day when a little boy cried all day and she carried him around the whole time, and then when his father came he gave him a slap on the legs and told him to shut up, and this worked.

" I'm absolutely amazed now at the energy I used to have. I used to collect two or three of them because it was too far away for them to walk by themselves, so I would walk around and collect them and take them to the kindergarten, and after I would walk them home. I remember being really tired afterwards".

Muriel ran the kindergarten for several years.

During her first few years at University Muriel was still taking piano lessons, and doing up to two or three hours of practice each day. After a while she began to realise however that she was far too busy and decided to look at how she was spending her time. She had a piece of paper with squares on and using different colours graphed the time in her life. *"I had a colour for sleeping, a colour for practice.....and there wasn't any time left".* Her piano teacher was Evelyn Reynolds who lived on Victoria St. Muriel enjoyed the piano and did quite well, passing all sorts of exams with the idea of becoming a piano teacher. However one day she got to her lesson and just told her teacher that she was not going on, because she wanted to spend more time on her University work. This episode is something which she now looks back on with great remorse because she never once told her teacher how grateful she was for all that she had done for her.

"At the time, I didn't really value the lessons ..... when you get older, the time you have with people is so pre cious, but then I was just someone learning to play the piano, this woman had taught me".

FOOTNOTES

1. During The Great Depression of the 1930's, the large majority of New Zealanders were suddenly faced with limited purchasing power (Simpson, 1974:6). This helps explain why Albert was owed money and also why he had no other building work during these years.
   The Depression was first felt in New Zealand with the falling export prices in the late 1920's (Bassett, 1967:1) which meant that New Zealand became caught up in the worldwide economic slump. Incomes fell by about 20% on average and at the height of the depression in 1931, about 80,000 people were out of work (McLauchlan, 1986:300). By 1935, with the election of the Labour Government and their new spending policies which were implemented, along with a recovery in the global market, New Zealand began to experience an economic recovery.

2. The percentage of female students attending Canterbury University College in 1933 was 29% at the undergraduate level, and 37% at the graduate level (New Zealand House of Representatives, Appendix to the Journals, 1934-35).
   This gender difference could partly be explained by the fact that this was during the Depression years, and many families would not have had the money to send all their children to University, frequently deciding that under the circumstances it was most appropriate to send the sons. This would have also been tied up with the general belief that women should place their prime emphasis on being a wife and mother (Bunkle & Hughes, 1980:159), therefore having no real need for tertiary education.
   However the fact that Muriel did not notice any difference in the ratio of men and women at University, would be due to the fact that in 1933, 48% of those studying Arts subjects were women (New Zealand House of Representatives, Appendix to the Journals, 1934-35). This clear gendering of disciplines is in line with what would have been considered appropriate feminine areas of study.

3. During the time that Muriel attended University, the undergraduate students were required to wear gowns to all of their lectures. This rule had been put in place by Macmillan Brown in 1877. (Gardner et al, 1973:151). Until 1928, when the rules were amended, graduate students had also been required to wear gowns. By 1936, it was no longer compulsory for any student to wear a gown, however they were still strongly encouraged to do so (ibid:285).
Gowns were symbolic of academia and aimed at endowing students with a certain amount of social respect and recognition for the role they were occupying. They were also a way of distinguishing students from the 'hoi polloi' of the rest of the city and therefore constituted a demarcation between town and gown which persists in different ways today.

4. The Student Christian Movement existed to provide those students with a religious inclination with a group where they could test their faith and belief in argument and discussion. It's programme consisted of more or less equal amounts of theology and politics and it strongly emphasised social concerns which is why many members of the Student Christian Movement supported both the Labour Party and Christian Pacifism. It was a liberal religious group that was sharply distinguished from its evangelical counterparts on campus, and it was not so interested in bringing students into a church as in giving them a faith which they would find plausible (Davidson, 1991:67).
Because of this the Student Christian Movement provided an environment where social issues could be discussed and indeed during the 1930's, when the Christian pacifist debate was prominant, there was much talk on the topic. This would have served as yet another opportunity for Muriel to have consolidated her pacifist beliefs and also given her contact with people holding similar belief systems.
By 1926, there were affiliated groups in place nationwide (Locke, 1992:73).

5. Until World War Two, it was general practice in New Zealand for University theses and examination scripts at all levels to be sent away to Britain to be marked (Dakin, 1973:30).

This originated from New Zealand's deep sense of national inferiority and the belief that external examiners validated any academic degree that New Zealanders obtained.
This was abandoned during the war both for practical reasons such as the losing of examination scripts when boats were being sunk but also because it was realised that New Zealand needed to become more educationally self-sufficient.

6. The success Muriel had in running her own private kindergarten can in part be attributed to the fact that at this time the Government was not providing very much support for preschool education or childcare facilities (May,1993). In addition to this, the school age had been raised to six years (Ebbett, 1981:42) which meant that more children needed such facilities. Another factor in it's favour was that being called a 'kindergarten', thus primarily providing education for the children, it would not have contradicted the assumptions of the role of women as principal caregivers like creches did.
There had been several attempts in New Zealand at establishing childcare facilities such as the Creche Association in Dunedin in 1879, and the Free Kindergarten Movement in 1899, it was not until the 1940's that there was any real emergence of early childhood services (Cook in Codd et al, 1985:207-209).
The reluctance on the part of the state to accept such institutions, reflects their fear that by providing such facilities, the ideal of motherhood as a full time occupation, based primarily within the home would be disrupted.