

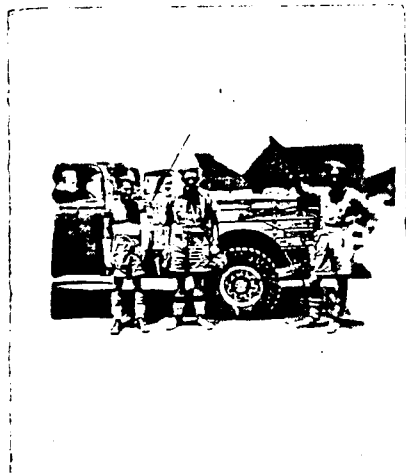
My First Eighty Years

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This is a photo of me taken after our return to Cairo from Tunisia after the end of the North Africa campaign. My weight at that stage was 13.5 stone and I was healthier than I have ever been. I was born in Napier on November 6th 1917 but to apply for the army in September 1939 I had to put my birth date down as 1916 and never thought about a correction later. My education finished just after my 14th birthday giving me 1 year and a couple of weeks of secondary education when I was asked to leave as the broken time I had, working for an electrician, was upsetting to the smooth running of the school



ME AND MY TRUCK AFTER 1 GALLON
OF BOILING WATER FILLED MY SHIRT
ALSO FREE FRENCH FLAG "LIBERATED"
FROM SOUSSE POLICE STATION BY
FIRST KIWIS ADVANCING AFTER
ROMMEL.



MY MUM AND DAD
RETIRED TO TAUDO



"KID" TERENCE HOWARD ELLISON
MY BROTHER 1Y + 2 WEEKS OLDER THAN ME
NOW DECEASED.

MY FIRST EIGHTY YEARS

MEMORIES

There was a time I loved the sea
And torpid blood would tingle
As tall waves crashed defiantly
Or crooned across white shingle.

There was a time I loved a hill
All Autumn-drenched or vernal.
With lofty pinnacles so still,
So close to the eternal.

There was a time I loved the towns
And crowded, hurried places.
The human pageant smiles and frowns
That filled a million faces.

There was a time I loved the sky
With passing clouds reflecting bright
When ready sunlight's passing by
Or twinkling stars through the night.

But nowadays those thrills are through
And fled their fascination
How loving memories do,
Only fade with Life's cessation.

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It will no doubt be recorded somewhere in the history of New Zealand that I appeared on the scene on November 6th. of 1917. There was no trumpeting or other fanfare to celebrate this momentous occasion because I was only another statistic at this stage. For the remainder of that year and the whole of the next one I was dormant, but shortly thereafter things must have begun to energise my memory banks as I can still picture the house we lived in during the first three years in Napier. The house was built at the bottom of Bluff Hill and a very steep, high retaining wall held up the hill at the back of the house. Down the face of this wall were cast steps descending from the top of the wall across the full width of the section to a platform about a metre square, then returned back to about half way to another platform from which half a dozen steps turned off at right angles down to the back door of the house.

In those days Mum had a tin bath in which we were bathed, the whole three of us "Kid" me and Shirley one after the other. I can still remember the struggle "Kid" (more of him later) and I had to wangle that tin bath all the way to the top of those steps up by the road. Kid climbed in to the bath and I had to give it a push off to send him off down those steps, bouncing all the way to the first platform. The noise was terrific. Mum heard it and came to stop our fun because there were no hand rails to keep us on the steps.

Years later in 1931 there was a disastrous earthquake in Napier and two weeks later we all went back to view the damage the quake left in its wake and to see one or two relations who still lived there. The tales we heard were horrific. The first shock came at about 8pm at night, then at 11am the next morning the the main after shock came and was as severe as the main shock of the night before.

Of course we went to see the old house we had lived in and the story we were told by neighbours was a very nasty one. The lady living there decided to do the washing in the old fashioned way; boil the copper, throw in the whites and away we go. The trouble was the after shock arrived too soon and the whole retaining wall came down in one piece on to the back of the

house , flattened that and chopped the lady in half on the edge of the copper leaving half inside the copper and the other half on the floor of the washhouse.

At the time of the after shock we had moved a couple of times and were living in Marton over one hundred miles away as the crow flies. I was playing cricket and heard this rumbling sound in the distance coming towards us . On looking up I saw the most spooky sight . The ground was coming towards us in waves like the waves of the sea two or three feet high while both ends of the school went upwards as the centre dropped to a lower level. The old Marton District High School was a fairly old building, built of brick with no reinforcing and resented that sort of treatment . Within a few days the powers that be had steel bars through the tops of all the rooms lacing everything together and it stayed like that until long after I left but the whole school has since been rebuilt and is now called the Rangitikei Technical College.

The next memory that comes to mind is of the shift from Napier to Palmerston North where we moved in to a very large house that was divided in two halves by a passage that ran from the front door right through to the back door . We moved into the **right hand half quite late one day**. A Mrs. Longstaff owned the house and was a widow living on her own. During the night a lot of the furniture was shifted into place but in the morning there was still a pile of gear awaiting attention, tables and chairs still were in a heap so Kid and I had to have our breakfast one on each end of the treadle sewing machine while we ate our Weet Bix . Many years later , maybe 60 years later I happened to pick up a calendar which depicted sketches of some of the old time prominent houses of Palmerston one on each page and lo and behold I spotted a familiar one . I pointed it out to Doris at the time . It was beyond her belief but I kept it and some time later when we passed through Palmerston I produced it , showed her the house and even pointed to the corner in the back fence we had to climb over to get into the College Street School grounds . It was in that house where Ngairi was born . I can remember kneeling on the floor with Mrs. Longstaff at my right elbow to be shown that new born baby.

It was in Palmerston that I had my first real illness. Well before I started school Kid used to bring home playmates with him and one day when there were a group of us playing , Mum did not like my appearance, pulled me inside , put me to bed and called the doctor . After examining me he decided I had a temperature of 108 and, after due consideration, that I also had pneumonia. Dad came home from work while the doctor was still there and was asked if there was any spirits in the house to rub me down to reduce the temperature . Dad said the only spirits in the house was a half bottle of whisky his father had given him for his birthday and was too good to be used for the wrong purpose but I do not remember it being used on me in spite of the fact that Dad said that I was the cause of such a heinous waste . Perhaps he had to share it with the doctor .

I eventually recovered from my pneumonia and started school for a couple of weeks evidently none the worse but I do remember being told I would always have to be careful about contracting pneumonia for the rest of my life .

We left Palmerston North not with fond memories at least with some sadness because we did have fun in the square as it was a wonderful playground if there was no fog. We moved to Marton to a large house only about twenty feet from the Marton to New Plymouth railway line. At first the noise of the trains worried us but it did not take all that long to become unaware of their passing. In fact it gave us another interest in our lives. It became a thrill to put a half penny on the line when the express was due to arrive and see the weird shapes they were after the train had gone. Shirley and I got into trouble on at least one occasion for putting some of the ballast on the rails for about one hundred yards. Odd stones would often make a loud crack and shoot sparks as the engine hit them. No doubt we expected a real Guy Fawkes display if we put a whole lot on at once. Just as well it did not work to plan or we might have derailed the whole train. Only a few minutes before the express was due to arrive, the man in charge of the surface maintenance crew came along on his jigger, found the fouled up line, threw his jigger in the drain, grabbed his shovel and started to clear off the shingle, by putting the point of his shovel on the line & running along with the shovel in front of him. Unfortunately the shovel slipped off the rail, the point of it dug into the ballast and the handle hit him the stomach causing him to rise through the air in an arc that must have been very painful. Of course both Shirley and I had had a painful time when Dad came home.

Marton District High School was a large school with in those days about 450 pupils drawn from the towns and farming communities such as Hunterville, Tutaenui and Bonny Glen. There was one girl from Bulls who rode her bike every day a distance of 9 miles each way each day and was known to have missed only half a day in five years. Her name was Vivian Beavis. Must be a record.

I can vaguely remember the headmaster of those days as Mr. Goldsborough and was there only the remainder of the first year and when he retired Leon Wilson took over and was still there when I left. I always seemed to be on one end of a bit of flat leather while he was on the other but even at this date I think he was a good headmaster. He had a pretty tough life as his wife was partially crippled who had to be lifted in and out of their model A Ford when they went away. He did everything for her.

The first day I went to school in Marton I was in trouble with Miss Wray a tall thin old maid who carried a 3 foot stick painted red white and blue and one inch square. I had arrived at school with a slate and a short pencil off Kid's slate pencil. We had to try to copy something off the blackboard on to our slates while Miss Wray wandered round peering over our shoulders to see what we were doing. I was unaware she was behind me until that red white and blue stick came crashing down on my knuckles and punched my hand through the slate breaking her stick in the process. It appears she did not like me using short pieces of slate pencil and she wanted to make sure I was unlikely to re-offend.

While I was at school I was just an average pupil but I always seemed to be judged by Kids photographic memory and the sick feeling I got every time I heard "Why can't you be like your brother at the top of the class in everything you do?" was enough to make me spit sparks until I did not seem to care. It came to the time when, after the tests at the end of std. 4 I was told by my man teacher that I would not be going on to std. 5. He had me all through the year and I thought I had got on well.

fairly well, as that bit of flat leather had hardly been exercised during the whole year. However he was off sick when school restarted at the beginning of the next year and a relieving teacher took his place for a couple of weeks. The new teacher hit the roof and said there was no reason why I should have been held back, so I was advanced to Miss Cartwright's Std. 5 class forthwith. I have often wondered if her class had been overcrowded at 80 plus and only one lady teacher and she had that class completely under control. Anyway I appeared to have done quite well and many times my essays were quoted to the class as being very good.

In std. 6 I went back to my trouble period no doubt because we had a weirdo for the teacher. That class was a very important one in those days as at the end of the year we had our Proficiency exam, which had to be passed before you were able to go on to secondary school. It was very like today's school C. so we were all keyed up. All the school's std.6 were transported to our school and the whole thing was controlled by inspectors. The teachers were allowed in the class rooms but were not permitted to say a word. The first subject was maths, a whole hour and a half of it. We had to do 8 out of 10 questions set. For some unknown reason I flew through mine and on looking around I was the only one who seemed to have finished. On looking at our teacher I saw him glaring at me so down goes my head to check my work. I did the extra two questions, looked up, that scowl was still glaring at me so my head goes down again checking every answer. No alterations needed and no other heads had been lifted. Panic began to invade my mind. What have I done wrong? Check everything again and don't look up at the teacher. Then came morning break at which time the teacher grabbed me and was almost spitting sparks while he lectured me. He told me I knew I was not very strong in arithmetic, why oh why, didn't I spend any spare time I had in checking my work instead of gazing around wasting my time? Lunch time came and we set off home and so did the teacher who lived only a couple of hundred yards from us and rode a bike. Instead of passing me on his way he got off his bike wheeling it with me. I thought he was going to vent his spleen on me again but was quite shocked when he apologised and said he did not know of anyone else who had got 100 per cent. Then he started to spoil it all by saying if I found it so easy why didn't I do better in my normal years work? I could hardly eat my lunch.

I had only one year at secondary school or nearly one year. The bad slump had already started and things were only middling at home. Dad had a cut in wages but could not get any reduction in the rent which left him only about one pound a week to feed five voracious kids. The headmaster kept on calling me to his office to persuade me to take a job with any of the many farmers who kept on asking him to recommend a strong lad to work on his farm. The jobs all involved hoeing up swedes and mangolds for my keep and two and sixpence per week. The last time he tried it he brought Dad down from the newspaper office to put some pressure on. The farmer offered the same conditions as the previous ones had but I got my stubborn out and a flat No! Dad just looked at the headmaster and said that once I had made up my mind nothing would shift it.

Over the Christmas holidays shortly after, our next door neighbour, Lloyd Williams who was a partner in an electrical business offered a job to help him in the wiring up of houses as not long before electricity had made its advent in the Marton district. All wiring in those days had to be put through conduit and it was going to be my task to cut and thread the conduit, screw them together and help pull the wiring through. I can remember two major problems in that job. The first was when my foot slipped off the ceiling joist and poked through the

plaster leaving an untidy hole. The second disaster was one that could have caused a far greater problem. I had been working in the roof of the Oddfellows hall when the boss said it was time to knock off for the day and that was always most urgent or he might miss that drink at the pub and in the rush I forgot the candle I had left burning up in the ceiling. When we got to work the next morning there was a great black patch in the new plaster ceiling that should not have been there at all. One other incident I recall. We finished wiring up a new milking machine very late on a very wet day. Old machines had to be taken out of the way, usually new ones installed, wiring tested and normally the power board inspector had to put the pole fuse in place before we could say the job was done. This day the inspector wanted to get away and left the pole fuse with my boss. When we finished the work it was just beginning to get dark. The ladder was too short for us to get to the pole fuse. I said ~~that~~ I would clamber from the top of the ladder only two or three feet to reach the pole fuse socket while clinging to the pole which was very slippery. When I got to the right height I found I was on the wrong side of the pole so felt round until I thought the fuse was lined up. Next thing I knew I was about eight feet away from the base of the pole with the fuse still in my hand. The farmer was almost doing a war dance waiting for the machines to start the milking so I had to have another go only this time I made sure that I could see what I was doing.

Another experience I remember was only a short while before they dispensed with my services because the firm was going down hill no doubt related to the drinking habits of the boss. I was only 13 perhaps 14 when we were asked to go to a farm where we had already put power in the house and they wanted the day worker, two roomed where wired up too about 80 - 100 yards from the homestead. The first part of the job was to remove some of the match lining to get the conduit in behind and out of sight. We pulled off the first two or three boards finding behind them some bottles with tied down corks. We began stacking them on the table when the old day worker arrived home for his morning tea. His eyes almost popped out of his head when he saw the bottles. He told us he had made some parsnip wine eight or nine years before and after bottling them he sampled a few. When he woke up the next morning there was no sign of those bottles anywhere. He presumed his boss had confiscated them so he said nothing about them and never made any more. Of course he and my boss had the tops off a couple of bottles before Mr. Williams woke up that I was still there so told me to go and wait in the car which he had parked in the next paddock about a hundred yards away. I went back at mid-day to ask about did he want any lunch so I had mine anyway. At 3pm I went back again but they were both about out the monk. I managed to get Mr. Williams out to the car half lifting and half dragging him and, feeling very nervous, started to drive the car (an Essex) back to Marton about 9 miles of hilly winding country roads. I had no trouble and parked in the driveway like any other expert told Mrs Williams the story. She said "Oh not again" and then asked if I would get Dad to help her. When I went next door to get Dad who had come home from work he looked at Mum and went off to help. Now comes the odd part. Not one of the people involved commented or asked or referred to the point that I had driven the car over that road and that I had done every thing that a dunce like me should not have done. The weird thing that puzzled me about the whole story is how did the old man pull off that match lining without splitting or damaging one piece of wood when he was in the state he must have been in?

While working for Mr. Williams I woke up that the work was only part time in that I was needed on the job when there was conduit to be used and the rest of the time I was only waiting to be needed. I did go back to school two or three times but in the

end I was told it was too upsetting for the class and I would have to stay home. and since I needed to work I would have to find a job. The first one a bakery assistant I applied for and got it but I did not realise until the first pay day that I only got seven and sixpence (75cents) per week. At first it didn't seem too bad but after a few days I also woke up to the fact I was having to do a man's job. At least I was strong enough but I had few clues about real working conditions. The bakehouse was a mile and a half from home so I knew I would need a bike and found I could buy one from the Farmers Trading Company in Auckland for fourteen dollars fifty or five dollars down and nineteen cents a week. The bike would be complete with lights driven by a dynamo that was driven off the front wheel. The brand was called a Monarch Special being assembled using B.S.A. parts and was a really good bike. I started work the next morning at 2am man-handling 200 pound bags of flour that needed all my strength to lift. I had no trouble with sleep patterns since I put my alarm clock on the other side of the room and had a horror of waking up any of the other members of the house and both. Kid and Reg slept in the same room I had only seconds to switch off when the clock gave one ding about 10 seconds before the main alarm rang so I think I did well for 18 months and they did not wake once. There was only once I made a mistake. The alarm did not ring. I awoke, looked at the clock, saw it in the daylight, broke all records getting dressed and was just opening the gate when Mum's window opened and Mum asked where was I going. I replied "I've slept in!" She said "Go back to bed it is Sunday!" I did feel foolish.

The work was heavy for a 14 year old but I managed to cope. The hours were long and every third week it was my job to set the sponge which meant going back to the bake-house, put three or four sacks of flour in the troughs and mix the flour with water yeast and sugar ready for the morrows start. Then more water, flour milk powder were added before the real work began. The dough was then chopped up into weights before being put into greased tins of different sizes ready for the oven. Of course if it was a long week-end coming up it meant there would be twice the amount of sponge to set and I can remember quite a few of the long week ends that seemed to fit in with my turn at making the sponge and there were many of them when I had no sleep at all because those times the sponge and the baking had to start a lot earlier.

I had been there for eighteen months when the owner came in at about 7am and told me that the van driver had broken his leg playing football the day before (Sunday) and I would be delivering the bread in the van. There was me, no drivers licence no knowledge of the customers, no experience and panicking from my shoes up, and worst of all no breakfast. The bread came out of the oven quite quickly that morning and by the time I had the first load in the van it was getting on for 8.30 am so I went round to the Council office and asked for a driver's licence. I knew the the traffic cops name was Ken Fowler as there were his kids at school either above my last class. He queried me about my age so I just said he must be thinking of my younger brother and we managed to leave it at that. Anyway I got my licence and in the confusion he made it out as a heavy traffic licence. So away I went out to Nga Tawa School which just about emptied the van. So back to get the next load and in the meantime they had made a list for me of all the customers. Only one chap at the bake-house asked me how I had got on about the licence so I just gave him a grin and a wink and that was all. At the end of the day the owner of the bakery was there when I came to check in and looked at the clock and said how well I had done and he had expected me to be an hour late. I did not tell him that I had stopped off at home for a cup of tea.

It was at this period that I managed to get something done about my teeth that had been worrying me for about three years. One day while still at school when we were playing cricket I bowled a boy out at which stage he was supposed to give me the bat. He refused to do it but he made a mistake in being unaware that the team captain was watching and he was also the senior prefect. He told the boy off and made him hand over the bat. He did so but smacked me in the face with the bat before passing it over. He had to appear in front of the headmaster and was away from school for a week. What went on in front of the head I don't know but I do know that my front teeth were impacted and within a few days I started to grow an abscess under my top teeth that were impacted and they gradually spread until an abscess a week in my mouth was not an unusual occurrence. We could not afford to have anything done although I had eventually been to a couple of dentists to find out what was to be done. They both said they would not touch them while there was an abscess in my mouth but how to cure that affliction they said they had no idea. One day while I was delivering bread I had to call at some people's place called Ingles. It was a Saturday and it was Mr. Ingles who answered the door. The important point is that he was the oldest dentist in Marton and in those days the business area was still open and Wednesday was a half day. Our discussion started off by him asking what was wrong with my face. I told him the whole story and he said to make an appointment and he would soon fix me up. The next step was to ask the boss for time off, for which I was turned down flat. I called at Mr. Ingles's rooms to tell him about it and asked him how long it would take, would it be possible to do the lot in my dinner hour. He said if you are that game he would do it. So I went in the next day and it seemed there were teeth flying all around the place. When I got up to go he asked me if I was ok. I just smiled at him and nodded my head and went back to work. I still stopped off at home for a cup of tea at 3pm. Mum took one look at me, raised her eyebrows and told me to come and sit down. Mrs. Gregory was there having a cuppa too. She lived across the road and had two sons in the same age group as Kid and I. She was an older retired school teacher and threw a wobbly when Mum told her I had all my teeth out in my dinner hour. I can still remember her saying "My boys are going to hear about this, they talk tough but they are just babies." The next Saturday morning Mr. Ingles was waiting at home, - I think for me. He asked me how I felt and when I said I was as good as gold he just took his bread, patted me on the shoulder, smiled and went inside. I had to do without teeth for 3 months until the gums hardened up and for me to save up some cash, and the whole bill dentures included came to 4 guineas or in modern money eight dollars and forty cents. Since then I have had only one abscess which, after being lanced, healed up in a couple of days.

Things in the bakery I found were getting tougher all the time as I was still working inside and delivering bread so I put in a claim for more wages and got my pay doubled for doing two men's work. But I was really getting tired enough when I came home from work to fall asleep with my face in the plate Mum had kept aside for me after the rest of the family had been fed. I did hear Mum say to Dad one evening that he should go and see my boss to find out if anything could be done but he said I had to learn what a tough world it was to live in. Other things began to catch up with me. I got measles, chicken pox, mumps and goodness what all within week or two and got sacked as the old driver had come back to his old job. Mum got the doctor in for me and the verdict was I needed a rest period, such as a couple of months by the sea. Mum and Dad thought of Grandma and Auntie Ethel at the entrance to Wellington Harbour so I was shipped off there.

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That period was a disaster. I was not allowed to smoke inside. That was O.K. because Auntie Ethel was an asthmatic and when I knew that, I agreed. I had to be in bed by 7.30pm. There were other things probably quite minor but annoying too. I spent some weeks carrying rocks from the hillside behind the house to make rockeries and garden walls in front of the house. Then Ted Raven put me in the way of a job working under him in a carpet warehouse. The big trouble was fifteen shillings (one dollar fifty cents) per week. For that I would have to deliver samples around the city with no allowance for my bike. The cost of living had at last caught up with me. I had to pay Auntie Ethel ten shillings per week board, my bike was not quite paid off, two or three months left on that, and to top it off Auntie Ethel would not be providing a hot meal at night as mid-day was the time for that. I eventually found a place on the water front where I could get a three course meal for ninepence. You can see that my wages would not stretch far enough so I had to miss one or two hot meals each week. On top of all that I had to ride my bike eight miles to work and eight miles home again as well as using my bike for delivering things for the firm. After about a year the warehouse union got us an increase in pay to two pounds ten per week with a retrospective pay for four or five weeks. It was quite pleasant collecting that week's pay. I used seven pounds ten shillings on buying my first motor bike. Auntie Ethel went off about it, said I should be paying board and the next thing I was told at work that they could not afford to pay my wages and I would have to find another job. They gave me a good reference so I could not really complain, so I applied for a counter job at Kirkaldie and Stains and landed it in the soft furnishing department. That job did not last long after Auntie May got stuck into the my department head when he said in front of her that no 1 salesman and no 2 also were both available and I was in the wrong in speaking to customers. I did not like the job and such restrictions. I'd had to invest in a suit that cost 12 guineas with a spare pair of trousers one of which I wrote off the first time I wore them when a tram pushed me into a hole in some road works by the Basin reserve. There was not enough room between the kerb the road works hole and the tram and me too. Anyway the staff manager suggested that I was too outspoken to be a good salesman.

In a few days I tried another job up behind Uncle Walters shop off Tinakori Road with a box company where they bought in used car cases, cut them up and made smaller boxes. We turned out 500 to 600 anchor nail boxes each day as well as a variety of other sizes. I was put on to a docking saw with a sliding table through which peaked a twenty four inch saw driven by a huge electric motor with 7 v belts to the saw spindle. It was revving far too high and when unloaded you could hear the scream of the saw at Uncle Walters shop two blocks away. After three or four months there, they had trouble getting car cases so being the last staff member employed I was the first one off which was quite acceptable to me as the scream of that saw for 8 hours a day sure got on my nerves. It was during this time that I went out to Lower Hutt to see Auntie Kate, Uncle Teddie, and their offspring, Colleen, Judith and Rosemary one day on my motor bike. After unloading my worries of living with Auntie Ethel they would have it that I must go and live with them. Their son, Purvis, had died a couple of years before and I wondered if they felt I was a replacement for him. Colleen taught me to knit as I found it cheaper to travel to Wellington by train but I begrudged the time just sitting in the train so I took my knitting with me much to the amusement of the other passengers as well as the guard who was always teasing me about when was I going to start on baby clothes.

Now I had to find another job and I settled for a farm job on the south side of Paekakariki hill which was a large farm divided into three units. The most northern unit was the homestead and that handled the sheep while the second unit southward was called the school farm and three or four day workers lived in the old Pauatahanui school while the old school house was the house for the farm manager. I was sent to the southern farm managed by Joe Craig a mad Irishman. It was a real mad-house too. The whole lot was owned by people called Mexted and the owner and his wife were away in England at the coronation of King Edward who abdicated. My most important job was to bring about 180 cows to the milking shed each morning at two thirty am. The first morning I was a bit late as one cow just refused to move while the others straggled up the road. I eventually got my odd one moving and when I told Joe about it he was most apologetic because he had forgotten to tell me that I was supposed to hop on and ride to the shed from that paddock as quite often if Joe had been on the grog he was not capable of walking all that way. Anyway as soon as I had all the cows at the shed I had to go to wake Joe who lived right next to the milking shed. What a scary scene it was. When Joe was asleep he slept flat on his back with his eyes wide open with only the whites showing. A sight like that at 2.30 is not a thing to welcome any new chum. We supplied all our milk from both units of the farm to the Wellington City Council Milk Corporation via Cunninghams Transport so cows were coming into milk almost every second day to keep up an even supply of milk. Joe had the job of killing the calves because I refused to stand over them and dispatch them with the back of an axe. The owners came back from England in due course and were not enthusiastic about my not killing calves even when I was being paid the princely sum of one pound and twelve shillings per month and got my keep as well.

Next I tried working for the Wellington Port Authority shovelling coal^{on} the wharf for the ships but I was told to remember that it would only be a temporary job. That was sure a tough job and after a couple of days my hands were in a fair mess but they did harden up slowly. The coal dust could not be dodged though and there was no way to keep clean.

When that job petered out I started with Kodak. They supplied me with a canvas bag for the back of my bike and I had to collect films from all the chemists in the southern part of Wellington making four trips each day. My bike started to fall to bits so I had to replace it. I was sorry to see it go because I learnt an awful lot from it over the twelve months I had it and the stories that have collected in my memory connected with it give me a great feeling. I sold it to Tolley and Spence, a motor cycle wrecking firm for four pounds and that helped to go to the cost of the Indian Scout for which I had to pay twenty five pounds. It was not an expensive bike but it never let me down and the work that bike did had every reason to play up. I tried to work out one night what mileage I had done on it and got the answer of 34,000 miles in seven months and all I had spent in replacement parts was one tyre and a couple of spark plugs. However I was getting fed up with the job, dodging trams and riding to and from Lower Hutt as well as being always short of money, so in mid 1938 I decided to go to try Hawera as Mum and Dad had just shifted there from Marton. They said what a quiet peaceful place it was so I packed all my gear into the sidecar which I had made during the time I had worked at Kodak. I did get a lot of help from the Jamiesons who had the biggest repair garage in Wellington. The Jamieson brothers were second cousins or something and were really good to me and my motor-bikes.

In Hawera it felt good to be back with the family again even though there were one or two things that were surprising such as there was no place to put my clothes. The old dressing table was gone and even though Kid had moved out to work in the Land and Survey Department in charge of paying all the men who were planting all the millions of pine trees through the Waikato and the Urewera country, there was nowhere to put things away out of sight so I commandeered part of the wash-house and started to make a tallboy which I still use. It is just as strong as the day I finished it and has been re-varnished only a couple of months ago in 1998 making it 61 years old. Shirley was away in Palmerston nursing, Ngaire was going to the Hawera technical school and Reg, was still in Primary school and I was out of work so applied for the unemployed benefit which meant that I would have to work three days a week and my income was subsidised by the social welfare but that only lasted for a couple of weeks before I got a job driving a bakers van. The work I had been doing was raking up the leaves in King Edward Park for the Hawera Borough Council as well as any other minor jobs the caretaker found for me like feeding the fish in the ponds. All heavy work for which I was paid two pounds ten shillings (five dollars) per week half of which was paid by the council and the other half by the government.

When I started the bread run I was quite happy to receive five pounds (ten dollars) a week and that to me was wealth. After a few days I was finishing work at about two thirty and to me that seemed a lot of wasted time so I gradually started to find more customers until I could finish at about four pm. which I think was fair enough as I was starting at 7am. I was not told that the firm was going to go bankrupt in five or six weeks and that was why I got the job because a son of the owners had been the driver before I took over the job. I only found that out nearly eighteen months later when they eventually closed up. The very old lady who checked in my daily cash was in tears when she said how wonderful it was that I had built up the business so early when I took over and that they had only had a bit more time they might have been able to get back on top of things. The closure came as a complete surprise to me and made me wish I had treated the van more gently. So I was out of a job again. The mortgagor who closed them down asked me to go round outstanding debts and that it was my responsibility to collect the debts as I was the one who had built the business up. They seemed amazed when I asked them how much they expected to pay me to be their debt collector. The answer was nothing as I was to blame for the debts. I couldn't do or say anything so I just walked out and left them to sort it all out.

After a couple of days one of Yarrows men from Manaia called at home to see if I could start a new run for them in Hawera. They would supply me with a van and some bread and same pay I had been getting while I did it. I got stuck in and within two weeks I had it up and running. I was tickled pink at the reception I got from our old customers and Yarrows seemed pleased I had done such a good job in such a short time. They put their head driver on the new run with a new van leaving me to do a run up around the mountain with the old van. That carried on for three or four weeks then one Monday morning I arrived at work to find that the van was in a different place parked right in the corner of the shed. I was a little late so jumped in, started up, selected reverse and started off. The engine stalled and thinking that the front wheel was in a hole gave it the gun and it took off like a rocket. When I looked round to see what the restriction was I saw the front mudguard hanging over a bag of wheat right in the corner of the shed and the bolts holding the should have been strong enough to tear the sack before the guard gave way so I'm sure that it was sabotaged on purpose. The boss was waiting for me at the loading bay on my side of the van and

would not have been seen from that side of the van as the bonnet on those Chev-vans are so high that he would have to move around to the front and he didn't, so it was a put up job. Anyway I was sacked on the spot. I said "How about my weeks pay for instant dismissal" His reply was that I don't get any as that would go towards paying for repairs. The wages were always paid by his wife in the shop part so I marched into the shop and told his wife I had been fired and I had come in for my pay. She opened the till and got my money out so I grabbed it said goodbye and bolted out the front door never to re-enter.

Another job down the drain. Well before the first bakery job expired I traded in my old Indian motor-bike on a whopping big Harley Davidson as I was finding the Indian a bit slow for touring the country side in South Taranaki. On the day I bought the Harley, Shirley was home on holiday so she wanted a ride on it. I took her out towards Normanby and opened it up a little bit and called to her over my shoulder "How do you like this?" Her reply was "It's great now go up to 60." I leaned over so she could see the speedo and I felt her hang on a little tighter as the speedo was showing 80 mph. The bike was not in all that good condition. There were two motors sent out from America to N.Z. champion rider called Percy Coleman and he normally raced Indians on the grass tracks and he was retiring from competition riding so he put these Harley motors (they were called JDH Specials) into standard frames and sold them off in his shop. One went to Gisborne where the buyer killed himself in the first week while the other came to Hawera where Jack Palmer used it for newspaper deliveries one in the morning and one in the afternoon. He came to grief on his, putting him in hospital for some months and the last I saw of him working in the motor-bike shop in Hawera he was partly crippled. I only paid 35 pounds (70 dollars) for it and it turned out to be a good bike for the money after I had made some new parts for it at the engineering night school. The speedo was unusual in that it showed a trip mileage and also the top speed on a trip. The top speed, I had it showing was, 128mph, which converted to metric is 204.8 kph. so it sure had some sting. Just before I started at Yarrow's I traded my Harley in on my first brand new motor bike. It was a 500cc New Imperial, not very fast, but low enough geared to give remarkable pick-up at any speed. Its top speed was only 80mph. (120kph) but it was much more economical than the Harley of course. When I traded in the Harley I got 45 pounds from the same shop I bought it from but they knew the work I had done on it and were more than happy with the deal. I traded it in on Friday night, a chinaman bought it on Saturday. He fitted his own vegetable delivery box, and came back on Monday morning looking for a smaller motor to fit as my one was too fierce for him.

During this period I went to night school so that I could make the parts required for my Harley on the cheap in the engineering section and it was there that I met both Trevor and Horace Crocker who were both working in garages and, like me, fiddlers with anything mechanical. One Saturday I decided to go to their place at the race course. I can not remember whether there was any special reason, I just went. It was Doris' 15th. birthday and I was told in no uncertain terms that I would have to stay as I was a freind of the two boys. I had seen Doris at the skating but did not really know who she was because after all she did not have a motor bike. It did eventually become a partnership between the Crockers and the Ellisons. It became quite a joke when Horace and Shirley would head off then Trevor and Ngaire would head off leaving Doris and I to head off. Ngaire used to say I was too mad on a bike as Doris used to say Trevor was not safe on the road and I think that these females got everything organised before we males knew what was happening but both groups of parents knew where we were if not at home we would be at the other house.

After Yarrows fiasco I took on the job of telephone operator for a group of taxis but the pay was terrible, so when Jack Fraser who was one of the Crocker's friends offered to get me a job on a dry stock farm at Tangahoe Valley, in the wop-wops about 16 miles out of Hawera on much better pay I jumped at it. We did have lots of fun with Jack and an Archie Heal. The farm was at the head waters of the Patea river and what rough country it was. We were isolated and our only exit was across a narrow swing bridge. Me being a new chum became the butt of all the jokes some quite dangerous but all three of us got on well together. They wanted to find out how good I was as we expected to live on wild pork. They took a 303 rifle off some nails on the wall of the whare, put a bullet in the breech and a cocoa tin lid in the bark of a blue gum tree about fifty yards away and said I could not go pig hunting with them unless I could put a bullet through that lid. I knew by the way they were grinning that there was a catch somewhere but when I looked across the sights I could see a bend in the barrel. I aimed about four inches to the right and pulled the trigger. Well what a kick. My thumb hit me on the nose and made it bleed and I nearly fell over. They thought it was great fun and said I must stay home while they went pig hunting. I said you can't judge by a smack on the nose, you had to judge by the hole in the lid. They agreed that was the ruling but no-one had ever hit the lid yet. I pulled the lid off the tree and tossed it to them with the hole so close to the centre that it did not matter. Then they took me out after pigs one day but my job was to stand at one of the tunnels through the manuka obviously in general use by pigs. Their instructions were to turn back any pigs that came out of that tunnel because they would be up the other end with the rifles. A porker came through the tunnel with half a dozen little ones with it. I had already broken off a bushy piece of manuka and selected a tree twenty five yards away and when that pig came out I yelled at it and charged it, waving the manuka. It quickly spun round back into the tunnel. I heard a couple of shots go off and in a few minutes the two of them came out. I asked them where were all the pigs I sent back to them. They thought that I would be unable to turn them back and I would have to climb a tree instead they were the ones who had to find a tree to climb.

Then shearing time came and we had to drive about a thousand sheep over the swing bridge and across country to another farm owned by the same farmer. We also had to drive some steers up to the other farm one day and they were wild ones. The notice on the swing bridge said we could put 10 sheep on the bridge at a time or I think it was 3 steers at a time. We had a problem with those steers. They would not go on to the bridge. In the end I pushed my way through them on my quiet old horse and led the way. The steers followed no trouble but Jack and Archie could not stop them. There must have been twenty steers on the bridge when there came a fit of yelling from underneath. The road man whose job it was to keep the road in reasonable condition was under the bridge having a snooze when the noise of the cattle woke him up and his job for the day was to adjust the tension on the cables that supported the bridge and we had to choose that time to over-load the bridge when he had one cable undone. Several times Jack and I, during school holidays went to New Plymouth to skating on my bike when Doris used to go to stay with Geoge Best's mother and I loved putting the windup Jack going back to the farm across that swing bridge on my bike as the whole thing swung sideways.

After the shearing of course I became redundant so off I go with one of Archie Heals brothers to work in a cheese factory at a little place called Meremere and when that season there ended I went to the Ohangai factory where the season was extended as they made butter too.

In the meantime war had been declared against Germany and the government had called for volunteers for the armed forces. Horace and I went together to put our names down. I could not see Horace being accepted as he had one eye that was almost blind. His number in the queue was 10 and I was the eleventh. Horace was accepted and passed as A1 but I was turned down as my mouth was full of dentures and I also had too much glucose in my urine sample. It looked as though you didn't have to be able to see straight to be a soldier. Of course I went to see the doctor who tested us for the army and was put on a no meat diet for a month. That showed no faults in that time so I was put on a diet heavy on meat for a month but that made no difference so he filled out a form that I took into the local army office. They said they would advise me when I was needed. I heard nothing until March when I was told that I would be part of the 3rd. echelon. While I was awaiting that advice I carried on for another season in the Changai dairy factory.

The next five years or so was typical army life being shifted from pillar to post in Trentham Military Camp the first step was being assigned to the Bren carrier platoon. We had the first three Bren carriers in New Zealand and even the instructors did not seem to understand them but they were going to be an important unit for the 25th battalion. Then after the first month just when we were getting on our feet the powers that be called for experienced motor cycle volunteers to form a special unit which was right up my alley. The next thing before even seeing a bike we were put on a train and set sail for Ngaruawahia. It took us 24 hours to get there arriving at about 5am the next morning and were unloaded to the side of the railway line and left there as the camp authorities wouldn't allow us in the camp as one of our passengers had developed measles on the way up from Trentham. At about 7am they produced a cup of tea for the poor weary travellers before we set off to march all the way down to Te Rapa racecourse a distance of about 15 miles. We arrived there at 3.30pm still waiting for breakfast. We had been told on the way that a team from Ngaruawahia would be sent down to lay out and pitch tents for us which turned out to be pure fiction and all we saw was green grass by the acre. Most of us hitch hiked on to Hamilton to buy something to eat and drink. Another five or six weeks went past and off back to Trentham where we stayed over night and things began to move - us! We went back on the train but this time we only went as far as the Wellington wharves where we boarded the old ferry Rangitira that used to go to and from Lyttleton. We thought it amazing that we were going to the Middle East in a boat like that. We set sail and were joined by the Monowai which was very slow but had been armed with a couple of guns and was now an armed escort ship with a top speed of 8 to 10 knots. Anyway someone must have known more than we did because about four days later we arrived in Suva. We hoped that we were in the correct place. After a few hours we had to pick up all our gear and set out on foot for Samambula army camp which was quite a tough trip as it was tropical heat and we were still in our winter uniforms and the load we carried amounted to eighty or ninety pounds in weight. Quite a few of us did the whole distance without cracking up but a large number were picked up by some engineers trucks. The engineers had been in Fiji for some time and had organised the camp with tents with wooden floors owing to the heavy rain each day that seemed to come at 3pm. Then out came the toads jumping everywhere. Many of the men had a lot of fun chasing them with bayonets as someone had told them that they were poisonous which is not true of those toads.

At last our motor bikes arrived. They were 500 cc side valve Nortons which were ideal bikes for army use. Our job was to repulse any attack if and when the Japanese came through the only two openings in the reef around the main island of Viti Levu and we had Lewis machine guns that may have been strong enough to pierce through a 44 gallon drum. To get to points that would reach those gaps in the reef we had to put a machine gun on our backs, one to every 3 men, hop on our bikes and ride between the rails, (two foot guage) and set off to sink those battle ships that were brave enough to try to sail into our range of fire. We had to learn to do the job on dark nights without using our lights which were permanently masked anyway so spills were a matter of course. The wildest shock to start with came the first time out was enough to stop our breath. Neither our two leaders, Lieutenant Dix or Sergeant Anderson had ever ridden a motor bike so we had to teach them before anything else. Another shock came when we came to load the magazines for the Lewis machine guns. When we opened the boxes of 303 ammunition we found that the boxes had been filled with lead head nails so there was an immediate investigation of all boxes of 303 bullets in the ammunition store. They must have been sabotaged in N.Z. before being sent to Fiji. It was a good time though as we were never sent out to practice as a complete unit with all bikes being out together at one time. I must mention one exciting incident at this time in which I was involved. The bridges were all of fairly short length and they had just bare sleepers across for us to ride on. We had to put the bike in low gear let the clutch out to bounce over the first sleeper then drop into the gap between the next two sleepers. Each sleeper had to be taken separately until we reached the other side of the bridge. One day it hit me that the sleepers were closer a little than the tops of the corrugations in a shingle road so I waited behind everyone else to give me a chance to try out my idea. The sergeant said he had to be the tail ender. I started off far enough back so that I hit the bridge at about 35mph. and all I felt was a fair vibration. The other men woke up to what I was doing and cheered. I called out to the sergeant to give his bike the gun but half way across he slowed down, lost his balance and went over the side, bike rifle, and him. The bridge was only about fifty yards from the sea and the water was quite deep. The sergeant came up and held on to one of the piles of the bridge and the sides were too steep to climb out so one of the others went up the line where we could see a factory house, for a rope and I dropped in the water to help if wanted. One of the men from the house came along with a rope on a jigger and advised us not to waste any time in the water as on the previous day an Indian was driving three or four cows over the bridge and one was bumped over the side into the water. The man in charge tried to drive that cow down to the beach to get it out on to the sand to get it out but the sharks got it before they were half way so it did not take very long to get the sergeant out on to dry land. However I dived down and tied the other end of the rope on the bike and while they were pulling that up on to the bridge I went down again and found his rifle and paddled down to the beach in the shallow water keeping a close watch on the water a couple of feet away from my feet. Anyway he kept his speed up after that. Everyone afterwards adopted my idea and it did save a lot of time every time we went out so I was some use after all.

There was about 9 months after that before we were replaced by another battallion and we came back to N.Z. in the Rangitira again escorted by the Achilles and it took only two days this trip. We were given a couple of week's leave. I went home and found that the army had commandeered my New Imperial. They allowed me 28 pounds for it and I still had 29 pounds to pay off at

five pounds per month. I had given Dad my power of attorney to look after my P.O.S.B. as my allotment of ten shillings per week out of my pay could have been straight into the bank but Dad said he would use it to pay the remainder of the original cost of my bike with that ten bob per week.

After that two weeks leave we gathered once more in Trentham and the instructors tried to get us to march in parade ground speed but having been in tropics in Fiji we had developed a longer slower pace and parade ground was not going to work on us so it was very soon that we were allowed to march at our own style. Next thing we were embarking on the Aquitania a first world war ship that was getting close to being pensioned off but was still fast and comfortable. on this ship I was lucky in that I was allocated a single birth cabin that seemed to cause some jealousy. One man even came in grabbed a handful of my hair, pulled me out of my bunk and after little tussle left with a toilet seat wrapped around his neck.

Leaving Wellington, we sailed due South for two and a half days then turned West for two days and at daylight the next morning there on our right was the Queen Mary and on our left was the Queen Elizabeth with out in front was H.M.S. Adelaide as escort. That day a violent storm started and the troughs between the waves were so deep that the Queens were bath disappearing from our sight and the Adelaide was just a ball of spray all the time. She had to go into dock for repairs before we arrived at Fremantle. It surprised us when the two Queens went right in to Fremantle but the Aquitania had to stay out in the open and the crew told us that our ship was a lot deeper draught than either of the Queens were even though they were longer and a lot heavier than we were. After twenty four hours we all set off again without any escort and the speed we put on made us feel like speed boats all the way to the naval base in Trincomalee on the East coast of Sri Lanka where we had to stay outside the boom across the harbour entrance once again. A beautiful sight there was the millions of pink jelly-fish in the water around our ship. The water was as clear as crystal and we could see the jelly fish about twelve layers or more deep and almost touching each other on each side. We stayed there for four days before setting out for the Red Sea and Suez where we disembarked and were trucked to Maadi camp which is only a short distance from Cairo.

The camp looked very good, well laid out and the huts made of white lime-stone blocks. We found that the huts were not as good as they looked though as every tiny crack in the walls was riddled with bed bugs and every night before we went to bed we applied heat in some form such candles or cigarette lighters to any place that just might harbour the little brutes to bring them out when they can be flattened for a while. If you do too many at once they smell horrible. We found that wherever the English troops had been they always left their bed bugs behind. Normal life for a few weeks until we settled in became the usual routine and one memory sticks in my mind and helped me to get used to Egypt. I was on guard duty one night on one of the large water tanks and in the early hours of the morning I felt something start to crawl up my leg. I could not even guess what it could be. It was no insect. I was wearing puttees and when the animal or what started to get to my bare knees I gave it a wild swipe

sideways with my bare hand and heard it hit the concrete water tank. I had nothing to light it up so I waited until daylight before I could see it was an enormous yellow scorpion. Thank goodness it didn't get a chance to sting me. It was only a few hours later when I was relaxing on my bed after an all night on guard duty in stead of going on church parade when some officers came in and blew me up for not going on church parade and did not consider my all night shift being a valid reason for my loafing on my bed and said I must report to the Orderly Room with all my gear in 10 minutes. That is how I became a military policeman. Some other men had been caught in other huts because there were about eight of us loaded on to a truck and sent to Helwan where Divisional H.Q. was. It seems that they had not filled up all the full numbers to bring up to normal the numbers needed for the Provost company to come to full strength after losing so many in the Greece and Crete campaign. I heard that 120 men went to Greece and only 9 came back. I was issued with a stripe for my sleeve, another sixpence a day and another Norton motor bike. That was great punishment for not going on church parade.

Shortly after we were off into the desert to have a look at the enemy. We were broken up into our sections and each one was given a different type of job to do, such as sorting out routes for artillery to be guided where they were expected to go over the pass to Sollum, head for the relief of Tobruk, find ways to bypass Benghazi and nobody knew who or what was over the next dune. One day about ten Gerry armoured cars appeared over a dune and just looked at us. Of course there was a mad scramble for us to get out of there and my bike refused to start so I kicked it over and took a flying leap on to the last one of the few trucks with us as it went past. It was my sergeants truck and he was usually the first one off but in times like that beggars can't be choosy. I had to stay with that truck until we broke into Tobruk and things became quite quiet. While we were there I was taken to a vehicle park about 90 miles behind us and came out with a 15cwt truck, a 6cyl Dodge with an open tray and only a single axle drive. and no canopy on the back so you could say it was a bare pick-up

We spent several days in Tobruk mostly to prevent ships being pillaged or goods already unloaded and left on the wharf, being removed but evidently that did not apply to our cooks who found a one gallon jar of naval rum which pours like treacle and has to be broken down about 50 to one and then broken down again before being issued. When we arrived back at camp next morning there was no breakfast ready. The corporal cook in charge of the cookhouse was unconscious and his helper was dead, and all on rum.

There were a lot of prisoners both German and Italian being held in Tobruk waiting for shipping to take them back to Cairo so the first two ships having been emptied were filled with prisoners and some of the guards included three men from our company who were due for base. One of those was our sergeant major a most unpopular man. Well they hit a mine outside Tobruk harbour and our sergeant major was lost as well as a number of prisoners. There was no real loss except shipping was at a premium.

We were eventually pulled out of Tobruk and went back to Maadi for a rest period which did no harm as I had to join with patrols on the streets of Cairo, but, being a driver I was only needed when there were bad boys that required transport back to jail in Maadi. It was not always possible to avoid trouble though. One night some Kiwis were playing up and I had to take them back to Maadi. Somewhere along the line I had picked up a canopy for my truck and this night I loaded up my baddies and as I bent down to close the tailboard one of them swung on the canopy frame and booted me in the forehead splashing blood everywhere.

It looked worse than it was but the photo used in his trial did not help him in the least.

After a few weeks in Maadi we were shifted to Syria where we had some fun . At Beirut I was temporarily attached to a Pommie red cap unit (English) outfit but under the control of an Australian group who were also on attachment . What an outfit they were ! Two brothers there adopted me and they were supposed to be nephews of Winston Churchill and nothing worried them even when we had to go into a fight between the Foreign Legion and the Free French. Knife work was the order of the day and it was most exciting. The Poms stood back and let them go but we Colonials got stuck in with batons and it took only a short while before they took to their scrapers and left us to it and there must have been over a hundred of them and only twelve of us without the Poms. Our pay was done through the Poms, but I guess that would be transferred from our own pay office. On one Pay Parade the Pommie officer commented to me when he called out my name that I must be the man who complained that I did not like the way the Poms cooked our N.Z. mutton so I asked him how he knew that. He said that he had to censor my letter home. Our sergeant was standing behind the officer at the time so I looked at him and winked so when we were released I wrote a report about the comment made by that officer I stated that the sergeant would have heard the comment as well as the remainder of the parade. Of course the officer should have known that it was a no no to refer to anything in a private letter in a public place. A month or so later I heard via our sergeant that an enquiry had been held and the officer had been transferred out of the English Police and put in the Infantry. The mutton I had referred to in my letter was stamped in purple ink Al. Canterbury lamb and had been boiled, allowed to get half way cold and was just a greasy mess. It was rather amusing to know that we kiwis had to eat bully beef and yet the Poms could be fed on the best meat in the world and had never seen any front line action.

When I left Beirut I was shifted to Aleppo only about 40 miles from the Turkish border and seeing there was quite a lot to see, I applied for four hours leave. I went to the Orderly Room to pick up my leave pass and found that four Free French officers were there. One of our officers was talking to them and said "Here is the man you need" and explained to me that the French men were Intelligence and were chasing a fifth column man who had stolen a Humber staff car and they wanted something that would catch him. Well we took off with a hiss and a roar heading for the Turkish border. Not having been that far North I began to worry, after about three quarters of an hour later, that the quarry may have got across the border into Turkey. I knew my truck being a straight civilian model could do 80 mph whereas the Humber being built for the army was lower geared would only do about 60 mph but we just got him in sight and caught him up with the concrete barrier in sight when he turned off into the desert. He evidently saw us almost up his exhaust pipe and may have failed to watch where he was going because he suddenly swung the wheel over to dodge a dried up shallow river bed rolling the car over the bank in a cloud of dust and out of sight. I pulled up about thirty yards behind and we all bailed out making a straight line and walked towards him when his head poked up over the bank and fired a shot. Why he had to pick me to shoot first I don't know but I thought a mule had kicked my left leg out from under me. I still don't know whether the bullet hit or if it was a ricochet off a boulder in front of me. I think it must have been either part of the boulder because it was not deep enough to be the bullet. Anyway one of the Frenchmen flattened him with a bullet in the shoulder. We put him in the truck and took him back to Aleppo where I went to hospital and I didn't care too much what happened to him. I only spent two or three days in hospital as it was not very serious but I was shipped out by ambulance and

just as well because the whole division had been called on to stop Rommel as he had broken through the Poms lines and was heading for Cairo and the Suez Canal so the Kiwis were called in to stop his funny tricks. Our troops met him at a place called Minka Quaim somewhere about Mersa Matruh and after being surrounded broke free. That is where George Best and Ted Raven were taken prisoner as were many others. Anyway we stopped Rommel who thought we had brought in another division that did not exist as, in his reports he says that it was impossible to move a full division over a thousand miles in two days and still be fit to fight the Germans. I'm glad I missed out on that one. When I got back to our base I was shifted into the quarter-masters store as they didn't know what else to do with me. I got into an argument with the Quarter master sergeant who turned out to be a homo and set his sights on me and the ensuing clash was heard by the officer in the Orderly Room which was separated from the store by very thin walls. The next morning our C.O. (Commanding Officer) called me in and said with a grin on his face, "I hear you don't get on with the Quartermaster so I am going to send you back to your own company as they are missing you too." That to me was as good as a pat on the back and I asked him how soon. He said "As you get your gear packed I will have some transport organised." It was about that time I began to think that Someone on high had His eye on me. I missed Greece and Crete and there were lots of other things which should have scuppered my chances of coming back in one piece.

We reformed at El Daba and General Montgomery took over the Middle East Forces and prepared for all the attacks originating in El Alamein . What a dusty hole that was. After several weeks the sand on the tracks, laid out in a grid, and named , was like talcum powder by the vehicular traffic. Every sign and intersection had to be lit at night which was one of my jobs. The lights were old type hurricane lights that were painted black with a diamond shaped relief on one side in red or green and were on steel standards . The standards were hammered in the ground with the lights facing back to our side of the front line . I even had the job of painting the lights, repairing them and keeping them full of kerosene.

Then came our first major attack from El Alamein which was, I think, on October 23rd . On the previous night we got our positions to dig our slit trenches in which we would have to stay out of sight for the whole of the daylight hours of the 23rd. without poking our nose above the sand level for Gerry to see . Our position was right under the muzzles of the artillery. What a blast that night when all the big guns began to fire at once and the barrage lit up the area for miles round. Our immediate job was to make the lanes through the minefields for the engineers to clear the mines so that tanks and other vehicles could move forward as we forced the enemy back. There was a temporary hold up and the Poms closed up together in their vehicles until you could not walk between them in spite of the standard rule that all stopped vehicles should have 50 yards to the next one in every direction. There were spotting planes flying round looking for something to plaster and they found it. They told us afterwards that one Pom decided to have a smoke until the hold up was cleared so he lit up and the whole cab of his truck looked like a beacon which was accepted as one by the German pilot who dropped a stick of bombs with devastating effect. Tanks Bren Carriers , trucks all caught alight and the explosions, screams of Poms on fire and the panicked drivers fair caused havoc. I was in line with the bombs that came down and if there had been a sixth one I might have been unlucky. When I heard the bombs coming I dived in my slit trench and in a few seconds I was flattened with about fifty Poms looking for somewhere to hide. Other spotter planes came over to have some fun too so everything became blocked and we had to build a track around the tanks, trucks Bren carriers that were

burned out and still not to touch. I did not really see very much of this disaster as one of the blasts got to me and when I woke I found I was talking to a couple of Pom red caps (Military Police). I managed to talk myself away from them and seeing a great fire in the distance, walked to it and found it was my fire all right. I looked round but there was no sign of any of my lights or my slit trench. so what ever sent me off also sent off the place where I was supposed to be too. Any way while I was away Carl Palmer, my corporal, had been down to find me as he thought the fire was close to my point and he was the next point on the end of the line. He had reasoned that I had been skittled and reported that I was missing presumed killed in action. I was picked up next morning by on of the other trucks and apart from a nasty headache was OK at the end of the day. I put the head ache down to a mild concussion did not report to the first aid post.

A couple of days later (making it the 25th October, Kid's Birthday) we had another go at breaking the Gerry defence line and this time succeeded thus starting a 1500 mile chase through the North African desert after Rommel who was getting short of supplies owing to increased attacks on his shipping by the navy between Italy and Tripoly. The Americans had made a landing in Morocco which was almost a disaster as they just about got wiped out because we lived for weeks on American cigarettes and Spam canned meat that we had not seen before.

We rested and regrouped at Bardia where I was given an extension to my old job to being, in some ways, a pilot with N.Z. Tactical Head Quarters which was a small unit but highly mobile consisting of two Honey tanks, an engineers three ton truck loaded with explosives, an ambulance, and my Dodge pick up which was rated at 15cwt but carried three tons of mostly lights and diamond signs to mark the routes we expected the division to follow. One of the Honey tanks was General Freyberg's mode of transport on the front of which he used to sit and our main task was to maintain contact with the enemy as they retreated westward. I had two men on my truck to hammer in the signs as, at this stage most of our work was daylight stuff and went on until about 3pm when Gerry's rearguard would lob a few shells at us as if to say keep your distance or else ! Then Tiny Freyberg would radio an artillery battery to come up to us, lob a few shells back and as they were doing that he would call for some planes to come and drop a few bombs to warn Gerry that we were still on his tail and could afford to sling a bit his way. Quite often Tiny would call, "send up my Provost" and I would have to probably try a tricky looking patch of sand to see if I thought the Division could get through. He used to maintain that if I could get through with only two wheels driving the whole lot could do it as most of ours were 4wheel drive vehicles or ones fitted with proper sand tyres. I had track grip tyres that broke through the surface and really made for mud. But I rarely got stuck and once it took both Honey tanks to pull me free.

An interesting side story crops up in my memory each time I think of those days in connection with the bombing. For several days on end the Yanks sent over some planes that dropped their bombs anywhere and usually half of them finished up on us. One day the artillery unit sent up was Kid's battery and I looked for his truck. I found it and recognised it by the numbers painted on it. While I was looking at it the Yanks came over and dropped a load of bombs and from where I was it appeared that Kid's truck had a direct hit but in the huge cloud of dust it was a little uncertain. I was only a few yards from Tiny's tank and I said to one of my men that it looked as though my brother had a direct hit. Tiny said "Go and have a look". So I did. I talked to Kid for a few moments and he told me that the bomb had landed 50 metres away and he had heard it coming and was hiding under the

front wheel of his truck. When I got back by Tiny's tank I told them it was O.K. after all. Then Tiny got on his radio and told someone that if they sent any Yanks over us in support we would have no hesitation in shooting them out of the sky. We moved away for a cup of tea so I don't know what else was said. The next day when we called for support it became a little confusing as we fired off our few rounds of 25 pounders but there was no reply so we moved on for another five or six miles and the planes were in the air, in fact they were just beginning their dive but they took the time to identify their target first and a green flare was sent up by their leader and they then returned to base. They were South Africans and had every reason to bomb us as we were almost on the target spot we had given them to hit. If the South Africans could do it, why couldn't the Yanks?

That job lasted until we arrived in Tripoli. Tiny Freyberg wanted us to find a statue of Mussolini which was thought to be in the centre of the city but after searching from about 4.30am we could not find it. Tiny wanted us to tie one of our diamond signs in Musso's hand. That sign would mean something to the troops as they had been following it all the way from El Alamein so they would know that another stage of the advance had been won. Just before 8am we decided that it was breakfast time so we pulled up in the main square and set our fire alight in the gutter half way down the square. Some, just a few, civilians poked their noses over the rails of their balconies to have a look at us, so we just gave them a wave and carried on. At 8am we could hear some tanks coming up the coast road. The leading tank came around the corner and stopped when they saw us, and their anti-tank gun swivelled to cover us then nothing more happened for two or three minutes. We carried on with our breakfast then eventually the lid of the tank went up and some field glasses eased over the edge followed by a head with an officer's hat on it. Still another couple of minutes went by while the glasses surveyed all around the square. Then a voice called out for us to identify ourselves. Now how could we do that with mouths full of food? We just waved our cups of tea and ignored them. If we had been the enemy they would have been dead long before then. After all the history books say that the First Armoured Regiment took Tripoli, but it does not note the heavy casualties they lost. Nobody mentions the fact that we had been all round the city since 4.30am either.

We had about a month in Tripoli where we were eventually called Tiny Freyberg and his 40,000 thieves because we unloaded the ships in one quarter of the time that was allowed for the Poms Labour Corps to do the job. It still suited them that the larger quantity of stuff that went missing meant a far quicker turn round for the shipping. The same thing happened in Tobruk and made a lasting impression on the Middle East Command. Anyway while the work was going on I had to patrol at night between the wharves walking about three quarters of a mile backwards and forwards and listening to the Gerry spotter planes patrolled overhead. Around the waterfront there were bays sticking out from the footpath about every 50 yards, and in each of these bays they had anti-aircraft guns. One night I heard a bomb coming down complete with a screamer which is a nasty invention as it screams all the way down and it is impossible to say just where it is aimed. It seemed to me that it was all mine so I stretched out in the gutter looking for all the protection I could find. Well that bomb eventually landed just outside the concrete sea wall penetrating deep into the mud before going off. The road gave a heave and threw me half way across the road and left the tar seal with a dip about a metre deep where I had been. The next bay where the anti-aircraft gun was appeared to have got a lot of the blast and the four men were all dead. Then I went back to look at the other gun

and found them dead too. How come I was nearer the centre and got away unharmed ?

I was given a lob one day that was unusual. I had to go to the airport and be a body guard and pilot for Winston Churchill and General Montgomery and escort them into H.Q. in Tripoli. From then they changed my job from the water front to a road patrol from Beni Ulid to Tripoli. I still do not know what we were Supposed to find because all we could see were small groups of sheep usually looked after by a young boy. There was about 60 miles each way every day sometimes with one passenger and just as often with two. There came a day when an Arab stood at the side of the road when we were returning to Tripoli and I still don't know why I stopped. He spoke perfect English and wanted to be taken to any allied Intelligence office which I thought was an unusual request. I asked him who he was and he said his name was Colonel so and so. I can't remember what his name was but he had a card to say that he should be helped with any request he made. We spoke to him quite a lot on the way home and he said he had been living with a Senusi tribe for over three years in the desert. He offered to buy a sheep for us on the side of the road. We skinned it before handing it to our cooks and I made a waistcoat all woolly lined for the winter. I had that coat for about three years until it started to smell too strong as it had not been well cured properly in the first place.

After our break in Tripoli I was given back my old job with Tac.H.Q. This meant that a lot of the smaller towns on the coast were "liberated" by the military police as quite often they thought it too dangerous to use the engineers truck because of the explosives on board. We drove on up the coast through Ben Gardane where the poppies grew wild on the plains as far as you could see right up to Medenine and Gabes Gap where we were held up for a week or more and the Gurkas were used to drive a wedge through the Germans using a silent attack where they crept up at night and used their kukris to drive through while the Germans were asleep. Nasty work but very efficient. Then on to Sfax and Sousse then on to Takruna which was our last fight in North Africa and we were only about 100 miles from Sicily in a straight line which was to be on our way to the next step. In the meantime I was sent on to Tunis to check the main road for blown bridges and for the possibilities of mines. There were no blown bridges but there were obvious signs that mines had been tucked under the edges of the tar seal. The Yanks were thick in Tunis and had done nothing to attack on the last stronghold from the other side of Gerry's last stand to save a few Kiwi lives.

Our division returned to Maadi a distance of something like 2000 miles to reform, replace casualties and generally reorganise in preparation for our invasion of Italy. We eventually loaded our vehicles on the ships and set sail across the Mediterranean Sea with about seventy ships some of which were very small looking as they should not be allowed out of the bathroom but we all carried blimps on cables in case enemy planes attacked us. On the first morning after leaving Alexandria a great storm hit us and stayed with us all day and into the night when it abated until it became a flat calm when I counted the number of ships and we agreed that there were five of the original number missing. They could have returned to Egypt I suppose but I have some doubts. Anyway we arrived in Bari to unload our trucks our ship being the first one at the unloading wharf and we were put in charge of the trucks as they came on to the wharf where we had to sort them out into units and park them in separate groups where the drivers collected them. Our convoy took about five days to clear them and the next convoy was waiting for access to the wharves. This went on for nearly three weeks before we could say we could now take all our spare men back to Division Headquarters now in

my truck up to Div. H.Q. as they were running short of men. Well what a trip! As I got near the Sangro area where Div. H.Q. was a lot of the roads had been hacked out of the sides of the cliffs by the engineers who did the job probably while under fire and the bulldozers had left as the dozers had gone on to other tasks. All the bridges had been blown and Baillie bridges (single lane) had replaced the original bridges and most of that part of the journey was under fire from Gerry's artillery. Any way I got where I was supposed to get delivered my men, had a cup of tea and turned round to go straight back to Bari. I had my sergeant with me as well as a one pipper who had been a traffic cop back in N.Z. and was a new reinforcement. Half way back I asked them to give me a break from driving but they turned me down and went back to sleep. I had been working all the previous night on the ships and when we arrived back in Bari I did some working out. As I said I'd had no sleep the previous night, I'd driven the truck 560 miles, and been driving for twenty three and a half hours and the one pipper said I should go back to working the ships after all that I had done in the last 36 hours. He knew what I had in mind when I suggested that if he was ordering me to do what he wanted I would like to see it in writing first!.

Having cleared all our ships of our Division's vehicles we went off to our company headquarters. By this time we had forced the German army to retreat towards Rome with Monte Casino on the way. The famous monastery was situated high on the end of a ridge that controlled the Liri valley and the Yanks had tried to break through this valley but gave up at a hill just before the monastery. They tried to take that hill with a whole battallion using about ten thousand men but that many men were so packed together that ten German machine gunners could shut their eyes, pull their triggers and cause a huge number of casualties which is what happened so the Yanks gave up. Next night the Kiwis took over and took that hill with only about six hundred men. We lost one casualty and he fell into a slit trench and broke his leg, but we took the hill with fixed bayonets. That left the whole valley exposed. The Yanks retired and left us to carry on. There are lots of things I could tell about this section of the war in spite of what the history books say. This was the middle of the winter and the winter there is not very pleasant at all. The snow can be three or four feet deep and when we were outside living in the open in full view of the enemy as I was, it was a case of being very careful all the time. My job was just being at the cross-roads making sure ambulances and supply vehicles did not clog up that cross-road as can very easily happen when the drivers were on edge and afraid of being clobbered if they have to stop. It wasn't so bad in the daytime as the drivers put their foot down and kept going but for us on point duty it was not funny but someone had to be there. When dawn came I would be picked up and dropped off just over the brow of the hill and I would have to run down to my little bivvy that I could see the enemy with the naked eye from and that meant that he could see me too so it was not safe to show my nose out in the daylight. I had to stay inside my little tent which was just a piece of canvas stretched over a trench in the snow with snow sprinkled over it and the opening pointing away from Gerry. I had made a little brazier out of a dried tin of potato from the cook-house to supply a little warmth but my clothes and blanket were wet all the time with no chance of getting them dry so it was a miserable life for five or six weeks. Then one night I could not breathe without getting mighty pains in my chest so I got my sergeant to take me to the doctor who said I had fibrousitis and all I needed was to keep warm for a couple of days and it would cure itself so I did my work that night feeling worse as time went on. The next night when the sergeant called to pick me up he could see the state I was in so picked me up and carried me over the brow of my hill and found another doctor who spent about a minute checking me and said to

the sergeant that I would be going to hospital as soon as possible and he would not be seeing me again for a good long time. Then he gave me a morphine injection and sent me off in an ambulance. The injection took away most of the pain but sure made me feel sleepy but I do remember getting another injection when I got to the CCS then I switched off and the lights went out for two weeks. The waking up point came when the ground was heaving and loud explosions were felt. There was an orderly stretched out on the floor with his hands over his head between my bed and the next one. I said to him when things quietened down "What is the noise all about?" He just about jumped out of his skin and replied "That is the Yanks bombing Monte Casino". I asked him where were we. He said "You are in the CCS 15 miles behind our front line!" so I was sure the Yanks still hadn't learned how to aim a bomb or were too chicken to go near their proper target, but why they had to pick a hospital area with red crosses all over it I do not know. Two or three days later I was shifted to the 2nd. General hospital in Naples and interviewed in the ward by a Dr. Robinson who I recognised which brings me to a story that I have not told of yet. It goes back to the days shortly after landing in Hawera.

It all happened on Labour Week end in 1937 when I took a trip to Hunterville to see my old scout master, his wife and two daughters. They had always made me feel welcome and were great friends. I had no worries that my old Indian motor bike would break down as it was still reliable. The weather was terrible on the way home and I did not leave there until after dinner that night and I could not go fast as the rain and hail were in my face. I came up the Wangaehu hill and not very far on the flat. the road to Ratana branches off to the left and that is supposed to be 11 miles South of Wanganui. I was just beginning to increase speed to about 25mph when I realised there were car lights coming towards me from quite a long way off and at the same time I saw there was something dark in front of me. I jammed on my brake but being external back brakes they were full of water and not working so I swerved out and was just starting to pull back to my own side of the road when the first car hit me. The impact shot me up in the air and my bike too but the thing that stays in my mind is turning over in the air while seeing headlights passing under me. Then I hit the road again only to see a third car coming at me and I was wondering if he could stop before hitting me. I didn't even think of rolling over out of his way. Nothing more happened for a while until the driver of that car got out and looked down at me only about two feet in front of his front wheel. I said "Thank you for stopping in time". He was dressed in a posh suit but got down on his knees and said "You should be dead. You came down through my lights head first!". He didn't do anything else just looked at me in amazement. Another car pulled up and that driver was sent up the road to ring Wanganui for an ambulance. but after about ten minutes he arrived back with the story that the ambulance had just left. Again nothing happened and we stayed put for nearly an hour. The man who had been talking to me said he was Dr. Robinson from the Wanganui hospital and was on his way to have his annual holidays with his wife and daughter and he could see no alternative, he would put me in his car and take me to hospital himself which he did he also put me back together and sewed up my ankle, put my knee and my hip, both being disjointed, back in place He came to see me early the next morning and told me that the ambulance's non arrival the night before was that they had a call involving a motor cycle accident 11 miles North of Wanganui at the same time and they thought they were both the same accident. The police came to take a statement from me and told me that the dark shape I had seen was a car broken down and left 6 feet out in the road and he would be the only one charged.

So that is the story of how I recognised him when I landed in his hospital in Italy six years later. I must say that he did not recognise me but he did remember that his wife gave him a rough few days for putting a motor cyclist in the back seat of their car with their teen age daughter while they went back to Wanganui and staying there while he sewed up a patient. Anyway I got to know him all over again in Italy as he always seemed to be bringing American doctors in to give me the once over. They would ignore the rest of the ward when I eventually got out there so I asked him one day if there was something special in my bed that he wanted to show off. He said there was and that was the virus I had and they could not work it out. They even thought at one stage that I might have had contact with a new German nerve gas on top of my pneumonia, pleurisy, & carbon monoxide poison but they all admitted to having no idea what it was. For the first few days all I lived on was champagne and a lovely flavoured one too. I asked why I couldn't have a decent feed because my weight had gone down so far and so fast. The reason was that I had two weeks without fluids and was sadly dehydrated. My weight had gone down from 13 stone to about 8 stone in a little over three weeks.

After about 11 weeks in that hospital they said I was well on the road to complete recovery and all I needed was some exercise like going for walks around the city. They had military police on the gates at the hospital gates. They were called regimental police and did not have our powers of authority and for some reason there was always friction between the two types of police, so when I went on my first walk I stopped at the gates and had a little natter with the man on duty at the exit, had my little walk around the hospital and was arrested for being absent without leave when I came back in. The police sergeant made as big a story about it as he could but I was so disgusted with them that I made no effort to tell the officers the whole story and I only lost a days pay which was, in those days equivalent to 75 cents in today's money but I always hoped that I could catch them out in some illegal situation where I could pay them back. The only trouble was that I was supposed to go to a convalescent resort on the banks of the Suez Canal for a month or two but I got sent back to my own company head quarters where they took pity on me when I explained to my captain the whole story and gave me a new job of jeep driver instructor which was jacked up on the spur of the minute for me.

It was a great disappointment to find that my faithful old Dodge pick-up had been allocated to someone else and all the personal treasures I had collected and packed under the seats were now missing. There were a couple of Italian ceremonial swords as well as hundreds of photographs I had taken over the years, all gone. The swords were sold to an American officer for an awful lot of money and many of my photos were shown to me at some of our re-unions after the war, as their own snaps, that I recognised as my own, such as a group showing samples of my sign writing road signs that I had painted standing against my truck in Syria taken before the new owners had even arrived in the Middle East.

Many of the towns in Italy are built on the top of hills and the only access is, usually, up steps cut out of the basic rock and have practically no vehicle traffic into them. I soon found that I could drive a jeep up these steps and, to start with, if there was any trouble in those towns, I would have to load up with three or four men and drive up the steps to get to the trouble spots. The new chums would be most excited at this and meant we could get there quickly.

I remember one time we were called out to tend to some Yanks in a private house who were getting pretty nasty and we drove up, three of us, in the jeep, and one of the Yanks said to me that we must have been in the town and would not believe me when I said we had driven up the steps. He changed his ideas eventually and said he had heard that the Kiwis were pretty tough. The Yanks were all armed with pistols and he said he could see I had a revolver and he challenged me to have a go at him. I said "Let us go down in the street and find out." Just then a woman came out of another room only half dressed carrying a carving knife and made a bee-line for me, why me I don't know. So I grabbed my gun and rapped her knuckles with it to make her drop the knife which she did. One of the Yanks said to the Yank who wanted to have a go at me "You haven't a hope in Hell of beating a draw like that. You had better back off." So while I had my gun out I said, "I think you all had better back off and be quick about it." There were five of them and thank goodness they all went quietly and I still do not know why I was the one to be the spoil sport unless there was money behind it all.

I stayed in Italy doing these sorts of jobs until we reached Forlì and Faenza where we were held up for some time in the middle of another winter. I had a lot of spare time on my hands so made myself a pair of ice skates and learned to skate on odd bomb craters and on the huge arena at Faenza the centre of which was frozen over. In no time at all there were dozens of skaters on skates made out of "T" angle iron screwed on to spare army boots flying around bomb craters. By this time army life was beginning to pall and all I could think of was home after five years away and there were rumours of another batch of men to go back to N.Z. on furlough. It was evident that once we crossed the river Po and we took Bologna the war in Italy would be finished. I would have liked to have gone on to Venice but home was calling mighty hard in those days. Eventually the new reinforcements came and we knew that we would be going home very soon. We went all the way back to Bari then across the Mediterranean Sea and then Maadi Base Camp. I have no memory at all of that trip to Suez where we embarked on three beaten-up old Liberty ships and set sail to Colombo. I do remember that one of our ships had engine trouble and the convoy Commodore transferred to our ship not long before Colombo where he shifted back to the "Highland Princess" after repairs in Colombo. Then the next stop was to be Fremantle but I think another breakdown came our way and two ships carried on to Melbourne where we waited for the third to catch up. George Jacobson and I got leave off our ship and roamed around Melbourne for three or four days acquiring a couple of nurses somewhere along the way who showed us around quite a lot. They were good company and what their names were I just don't know..

Then the final step to N.Z. One ship went to Auckland, one to Wellington and the third to Christchurch. I can't remember going back to Trentham but I do remember signing off there and buying a three seater Model A Ford for seventy five pounds and getting issued with ten gallons of petrol coupons and getting around Wellington to see a lot of relations in old "Gert." before running too low on petrol and putting it on the train for Hawera. I collected four hundred army pounds as a grant for deferred pay which I think was a grant of sixpence a day for overseas service so that money was very handy then as later I was not as wealthy as I thought I was going to be. Old "Gert" had a padded dicky seat behind the canvas three seated part and after experimenting I found I could run on power kerosene so I put an eight gallon tank between the canvas hood and dicky seat, and kept it filled with kerosene through a pipe and a two way tap so that as soon as the engine was warmed up I could then switch off the petrol and on with the kerosene which I found was more economical than petrol. I also found that I could get some tyres second hand but usable too. That made me mobile to go up to Rotorua to see Ngaire

who was working in the fishing hostel at Lake Okataina. I did not know exactly where the lake was and being quite late in the day I decided to stay overnight in a private hotel in Rotorua. Of course I forgot to switch off the kerosene so I could have petrol to start on in the morning. After parking in front of the hotel the night before a couple of old dears had parked their car close behind me and came out to get in their car. Mine started to fire on a dual mix of fuel blowing clouds of white smoke under their car causing them to squeal that their car was on fire so I got out of that parking spot quite quickly and left them to the smell of kerosene. After buying a map I soon found how to get to where Ngaire was and about 40 minutes later I was there. being introduced to Mrs. White who looked a bit of a battle axe, but she turned out to be not too bad but she asked a lot of questions about what I was going to do with myself. Then Beamish, her son, came in. He had been out in the boat, a long skinny passenger tub that seated 28 people that worked with the Tourist Department taking tourists for a run around the lake. I went on the afternoon trip with him and could see that the mechanical part of the power plant and the gear box were sadly in need of a tune-up which I offered to do for him after the trip around the lake. Beamish thought that was a wonderful idea as did his mother when we suggested it to her. It took nearly an hours work but I could see it really needed a lot of new parts not a patch-up but it did seem to be going better than it was before. Beamish took it for a short run and was quite happy. I heard him telling his Mum about it. After tea that night Mrs. White asked me if I would like to run the launch while Beamish had a holiday for a couple of weeks. I thought it was a bright idea since Ngaire backed her up and I forthwith became the commodore of the fleet. I did not know the stories Beamish told the passengers and had to make up my own as the time went by and no-one ever called me a liar out loud. That two weeks holiday for Beamish gradually enlarged until I woke up one day and decided that six weeks was long enough so I handed in my notice. I do not know if Beamish came back on time or not.

Then back to Hawera I went and tried to find something to do for the rest of my life. The first thing that cropped up was started off by an elderly man who had a cycle and pram shop who was nearly in tears telling me how he had kept his business going during the war so his son who had been in the Air Force could move in and take over straight away but it was not good enough for the son. I sympathised with him and said it was the sort of thing that would suit me. We got talking about it and he said that if I could get a grant from the Rehabilitation which had been set up to help soldiers find their feet. So I went to see the the man who was in charge of the Rehab. in Hawera and believe it or not I had known him for many years from Marton. His two daughters had been friends with Ngaire and Shirley in Marton and I had been in the Scouts with his son and still was as the son was working in a barber's shop in Hawera. I filled in some forms there and then but I had to get a letter from a commanding officer as a statement of my mechical abillity which was fantastic when it arrived together with a personal letter from him as he was the head of the Auckland Rehabillitation Centre saying that I was an ideal ideal applicant for a grant. I took both the letter and the reference to the Hawera Rehab office and was told that it would be three or four weeks before the application results would come through from Wellington and I would be advised in due course. Six weeks went past then I went in to see him. He told me that I had been turned down. I told Mum and Dad about it after tea that..

night and Dad asked me the name of the man I was dealing through. "Harry Ormand." I said. Dad laughed and told us we wouldn't get any help from that man as he and Dad had had an argument in a school committee meeting about 8 years before and Ormand had said he would get back at him some day. Well he couldn't get back at Dad so it looks as though he was going to take it out on me instead. I didn't feel happy that Dad thought it a joke and said "I guess it will be soon I will have to see what money I can call on. I might be able to swing it another way by way of a mortgage and cash together." It turned out that there was no cash as all the money I had sent home had been spent as soon as it arrived. Dad was supposed to have put anything not needed into my POSB account. When I went into the army my savings showed thirteen shilling and four pence. I went to the Post Office in Hawera and after a bit of trouble they gave me a new book showing exactly the same total so all the money, ten shillings and sixpence per week for over five years was gone plus all the money I had loaned a wealthy sheep farmer in our company which was sent with exchange added through his accountant to Dad thinking it was being added to my savings and now didn't exist. I worked it out roughly and it should have shown a total in the vicinity of three thousand pounds instead of thirteen shillings and fourpence. It fair hit me between the eyes.

I carried on my friendship with the Crocker family and used to go to the Normanby Garage quite often and I think that it is at this stage that I should introduce as another subject that helped to knock my dreams of a happy future out of kilter. While I was in Te Rapa just before going to Fiji, I used to go to the roller skating almost every night and there met two girls who seemed to spend all their spare time there too. They were June Signal and Connie Ritchie. They took to writing to me quite often. About half way through my period in Fiji I received a letter from June and one from Connie and another with a Hamilton post mark. The first one I opened was from June and was just the usual affectionate letter then Connie's letter which was the same so I went on to the third letter which turned out to be from June's mother with the news that June had used the Sunday morning to write to me, had gone to the Post Office to post the letter, returned home and went to her bedroom and died within minutes and the family didn't know she was even not feeling well until they called her for lunch only five minutes after posting that letter to me. Even Connie did not know of it and her letter was written the same day. Of course I wrote to them both immediately. But it was a shock. I did not know that meningitis hit so hard and so fast but I carried on writing to Connie. One day a couple of years later when I was depressed, I guess, I said in a letter to Connie that it would be nice to be able to spend the rest of our lives together and before long we were engaged. I even found a ring, probably a stolen one from an Arab shop in Cairo. Shortly after the first lot of soldiers from the first three echelons were sent back home on furlough and Sam Livingstone was going to stay in Hamilton and knew all the Ritchie family and asked me if I had anything that he could take home with him for Connie. As it happened I had some table cloths and a bedspread that I had acquired in Italy and I was very grateful. That must have been before the battle for Casino. I am glad he took them home with him or those things could have been stolen too. Anyway I thought I could trust Sam to deliver them as he had been the first friend together with George Jacobsen I had made in the Provost Company. Connie wrote to me and thanked me. When I arrived back home "Gert" was not safe to drive that distance so I hired a car in Hawera for the trip to Hamilton and wrote to Connie saying I was coming to see her and was only mildly surprised to see Sam there too. Connie's mother made a great fuss of me and was in tears when she said that it was not a happy day for her. I thought

it was a funny thing to say but overlooked it in the general excitement of the occasion. I soon woke up when I saw Connie and Sam together when I was not supposed to be looking. So that was another thing to add to my woes and did not stay over night when it was suggested and being a bit chicken hearted left it until I got home to write and say that my dreams of the future were just dreams and hoped that they would be happy together. They were married shortly after but I did not get an invitation.

Next day I went out to the Normanby garage where Ash Hill, the owner promptly offered me a job as he had found that the trade had picked up and he needed another mechanic to work with Trevor Crocker who had been overseas for a couple of years in the Air Force and seeing we got on well together so he thought we would make a happy team. The first thing I had to do was to go back to the Rehab and apply for an adult apprenticeship scheme and a grant for tools of trade to the amount of twenty five pounds which had no conditions attached to it. Needless to say I was turned down for both. While I was on the job of trying to raise money I went to the secretary of the R.S.A. and applied for a twenty five pound grant donated by two wealthy women who had established a fund which was administered by the RSA. When I went into the secretary's office I had to wait for a few minutes as he was dealing with another man. When that man came out of the office I was horrified. The man was a mess. He was rolling drunk his fly was open and he had recently vomitted down his front and stank. Then I was called into the office and asked what I wanted. I said I was getting desperately short of cash and was starting a new job for which I had to supply my own tools. I was told. "You saw that poor man who just walked out? Well that is the sort of man we are trying to help to get on his own feet". I replied "You are not telling me that he gets the money to spend in the pub or the RSA Club and I don't get anything.?" The answer was "Yes." I was so disgusted that I just got up and walked out. I wonder what the two old ladies would have thought of the way their money was being administered. I told Ash Hill about my lack of success and he said not to worry, he wouldn't see me stuck and he didn't. I learned an awful lot in a very short time there and when Christmas time came round he said that he was going away for a couple of weeks holiday. Look after the place and he hoped I wouldn't sell the place while he was away. What a wonderful boost that gave my ego after all the knock backs I'd had. When he came back he just commented that if he'd known what it was going to be like that he would have stayed longer. In the meantime Doris had her 21st birthday and she decided it was time we got engaged so it was a real party to be enjoyed by all.

Shortly afterwards Dad applied for a job in the Dominion Newspaper in Wellington. In a short while he arranged to take over a flat in Seatoun and Mum stayed in Hawera until that flat became vacant and Doris and I got married on 11th May 1946. Some of the furniture was left in the house for us to take over which was very handy. Then I started to look ahead to our future as I hated the thought of having to pay rent. I kept my ears open and heard that the Normanby Town Council owned 3 sections and were thinking of selling one. This was a golden chance for me so I put in for it and won and all it was going to cost me was a total of 36 pounds including all costs. It became mine and then I started to draw up house plans and decided to build it myself in my spare time. No money left, no knowledge of building, but a builder who was thinking of doing the same thing for himself offered his advice and there were a lot of things in which we could save costs would help us both. Wonderful ! I set to and drew out on paper every bit of timber that I thought I was going to need. The

offers of help from the locals fair rocked me back on my heels. The old chap who ran the Egmont Box Company, the biggest timber yard in Hawera gave me tips on how to choose quality timber while the timber yard across the railway line from the garage offered me the choice of his timber, provided I picked it and re-stacked it at 75cents per super hundred feet. I had never mixed concrete before but I put all the footings down by hand in one week-end. That was the first step. Then I had to think where the cash was going to come from for the next step. I was just lucky that Morris trucks were suddenly becoming available but all the body builders in Hawera were all flat out and booked for months ahead so I had a talk with Ash Hill and he thought it was a wonderful idea for me to build trays for the local farmers who could buy the bare chassis and now they could get the tray made locally. After the first one I found I could make one each week end and show a profit of 60 pounds. Over a period of four months I must have made ten or eleven and do the normal breakdown work and overtime work and still work on the house as well. I know that on some days I didnt stop until one or two in the morning. We moved in just eighteen months after starting and some of the floor boards in the lounge were still waiting to be nailed down so I think we did very well.

Pretty soon after moving in, I think it was in 1948 it came time for the local body elections and one man who was invalided out of the army had his name put in as standing for election. I opened my mouth too wide saying that he was a hopeless case and even I would stand more chance. That started an argument and I was told to put my name down to prove it. I was scared but I knew I would have to do it. I was shocked at the result as I doubled the votes of the next highest votes and became the chairman because of the vote numbers. I continued to top the votes for the next twelve years and in spite of the occasional arguments consider that I did a good job in that 12 years.

I still continued to work in the garage for the next five years. During that time Trevor had left to take a job in Urenui. Then one day Ash Hill said out of the blue that he was thinking of retiring and he would hand over the garage to Fred Wiley (who ran the bowzers) and me. I had a talk with Fred and asked if he thought it could happen and he said it could not. Fred and his parents had spent all their lives in Normanby and I got the feeling that he knew more than I did so I said no more and nosed quietly amongst the older residents of the area and found that Ash Hill did not own the garage at all as it was in his wife's name and she had died a few months before this subject had cropped up and the property had been left to their daughter who had no time for me or any other man and was a real weirdo as was her mother. So that was another dream down the drain.

Now on to the next step in my life was a complete change to anything I had done before. There was an advert in the paper calling for a manager for a proposed clothing factory to be built in Normanby. I remembered that the catholic church had bought another one of the three original sections. I had bought one, the second could not be sold as our water supply had the water pump on it to bring the artesian water to the surface so that left the remaining section next door but one to mine left to sell and that was the only other section owned by the council. So I applied for the job and got it. I spent six weeks in Wellington learning a new trade, came back to Normanby, picked out a nucleus of staff, five of them and took them to our Inglewood factory each day as they were making the same things we would be starting on. We started off with our first five and 15 others when the builders were finished and all the machinery installed. I was very careful to pick the staff as half Maori and half Pakeha and away we went.

In a very short time we had increased our staff to 36 and were going well. Everything was going well and I had a staff waiting list of up to thirty, so our name was good or there would not be so many waiting and that is spread by word of mouth. The owners in Wellington were always screaming for more production as time went by and they made a serious mistake at one of our monthly managers meetings when they quoted one of our weekly production figures. The Inglewood factory was making the same sort of garment as we were and the manager from there picked it up and flew into a rage. His staff was in the high forties, about ten more than we had. He asked me if that figure the boss had quoted was correct and I said it was just an average figure for us. Well he got off his bike in a hurry and told the boss that with his extra staff he had no hope of reaching that figure. He wanted to know how the boss had the cheek to demand more production when we were only a new factory without the experience that his staff had. Then he asked me what did I put it down to. I said that I kept my staff at 50% Maori and those were mostly young ones with only three or four older ones who kept the younger ones dampened down when the young ones started to get too noisy but I found that it did not pay to be too strict and as long as they were happy they could work as well as anyone else and still keep the weekly bonus figure in the back of their mind. The only trouble I had was maintaining the machines in tip top order as some of them were second hand and pretty well worn, I had several of the plain sewing machines revving at 5000 stitches per minute which is about 1000 more than the makers recommend but they were keeping up to the work provided I watched who the operators were and they realised that it was a pat on the back to be allowed to use one so they were another form of competition that helped production figures. I got on well with the manager from Inglewood but it didn't always help if his machines broke down as he would call me instead of the firm's mechanic from Wellington. The Inglewood man was a Lebanese and I suspect he had shares in the company as he was not afraid to tell the boss what he thought and the boss took it like a lamb. We did have another branch factory in Foxton run by the owner of the building but he got on the wrong side of the boss who refused to renew the lease of the building when it fell due and in two or three days we had taken over the type of work which had been done in Foxton. The new work was making women's underwear which meant different types of machines such as overlockers, flatlocks, both 3needle and 4needle machines and elasticaters. Then there were button sewers and button holers. They sent a couple of women from Wellington who gave us an indication of what had to be done. They were amazed at the way the Maori girls picked up the new type of work and went back to Wellington at the end of the first week instead of staying the two weeks that had been allocated by the boss who arrived on the Monday to check up and could not fault the work he saw being done.

The boss must have thought I had too much spare time so he decided I would take two days off each week to drive the new truck (a 10 ton Austin) to Wellington pick up the finished work from Inglewood, Normanby and Wanganui then deliver it in Wellington. Then go back to Head Office load up with the next week's work and deliver it to the branches on the way back. After the first trip they wanted a report on how things went while I was away for those two days. The head lady was a real bully type and when I chipped her about some of the things that went on such as a stand up fight between two girls she told me that I could not sack her as she had been told that I would not have that authority when the boss took her on. I rang up the boss in Wellington, told him the whole story and said that if I had not the power to sack her it would be either her or me. After a few days they rang and told me they would ask her to leave so I just sat tight.

We managed to keep going and our production figures on a level until something else cropped up that gave me cause for concern. The boss advertised for a new head lady and chose one who was most unsuitable. When I met her she smelt unclean and the greatest shock or the lot was that she was a cousin to Doris. I had heard of her but only in a half hearted manner although I knew her mother well and she did not have much faith in her daughter but I put that down to the fact that before the war the son had died on Mount Egmont and he had been the family favourite leaving May out in the cold as well as being married to a no hoper Pom who only liked one person in the world, himself. However she was selected by the boss in Wellington and there was nothing I could do about it. When she asked who would give her basic training they told her that I would be the ideal one as I had complete control of the staff and though I had some weird ideas I was making them work very well. Everything I asked her to do she came up with what she thought was a better idea and I had to find reasons why for it all. I still had to drive the truck to Wellington and in fact there was one occasion they asked me to drive with a full load down and then when I discharged that load I had to load up again and turn round to head home again making a total of about 450 miles plus some delivery around Wellington. They were surprised to see me at work next morning.

That came up to my last Christmas holidays when I had arranged with a married couple to meet them at Takapuna motor camp and then we would go to Russell and have a day's deep sea fishing and hopefully come home with a world breaking marlin. I had arranged with the man who ran the cream run to take us deep sea fishing which would cost us eleven pounds between the three of us. We travelled up there in my Oldsmobile and pitched my tent in the Russell motor camp for two nights. Of course the wind came up during the night and the sea was not the flat calm we had hoped for. By mid day my freinds were both seasick and were worse when I pulled out my herring sandwiches so the boatie and I ate it all sprawled out on the cabin roof and while there saw a huge sun fish drift pass. I had not realised they were so big. At about 2pm we went back inside the Bay of Islands where the water was quite calm, had a cup of tea and when the other two started to feel better got out the rods and trolled up and down two or three times and they caught a kawhai each which made their day. I was quite happy with my day and started to feel more relaxed than I had been for the whole year. Next morning we packed up our gear and went back to Takapuna camp where their tent was still pitched and secure and being only lunch time when we got there I thought I would carry on to Ngakuru where "Kid" would be half expecting me. At 1pm I set out and started to cross Grafton Bridge when I felt a bit dizzy so I pulled over against the kerb and stopped which is of course is a very definite NO-NO. Everything looked dark and hazy but I was only there for a couple of minutes when a traffic cop pulled up on his bike, stuck his head in the window, no doubt to check my sobriety and asked what was wrong. I don't even remember answering but he pushed me over in the passengers seat and took me up the road only about 50 yards beyond the end of the bridge, hauled me out of the car into a doctors surgery then ran out no doubt to get back to his bike while it was still there. The doctor gave me the once over and asked me a few questions about what I had been doing and I told him about the three days going to Russell and back. He said I had started my cure already and gave me a prescription to get filled at the first chemist I saw and take two tablets straight away. I must have told him that I was off to my brothers place for a fortnight because he said I needed 3 months not two weeks but he said he couldnt tell "You young blokes anything and expect them to sink in".

I carried on to Ngakuru taking it easy and arrived well before tea time to pitch my tent on their front lawn feeling much better. Perhaps it was due to the tablets that I had taken. I stayed there a couple of days and decided that I would have to give my notice in if I was going to obey the doctor's orders so I went back to Normanby, stopped at the Post Office to have a cup of tea and tell Doris about it all. She hit the roof and I had the feeling that she did not believe me, but it was nothing like the problems that faced me when I went to the factory. I was told that I had been fiddling the staff social fund and also that I had to give three months notice. The man who had taken over while I was away was the second to the boss and a very nice man. I took the problem of the social fund first and had to show him what the running total was and the book showed it every time an entry was made. He did not seem to understand what I was getting at until I asked him if he ever looked at his bank statement. At last he began to see what I was getting at and apologised. Then I talked to him about giving my notice. I said "How many times have you heard the boss say I wasn't to think that I couldn't be done without at a minute's notice. Now is the time for him to prove it" I asked him to stop the machines and tell the staff that their money was safe after all and that it was only that my style of entry that was not normal and that one of the senior women should be shown what I had shown him. He didn't want to do that so I went out and switched off the master switch that stopped everything. Then I told them what had happened, how sorry I was to have to leave them and that the social fund was quite safe and I would like someone like Mrs. Toro to come in to the office and have a look. They all clapped and yelled their heads off. Mrs. Toro came in. I dragged out a bank statement and showed her the original balance then pointed out on the next line a withdrawal and showed her the amount left in the right hand column. Then I picked up the social club book and pointed out the deposit and withdrawal columns and how the running balance was affected each time. I said to Carl that the last figure should be the exact amount that the bank shows in credit and that I would like him to ring the bank while Mrs. Toro was here. In the end he did as I had suggested and the last figure was what the bank showed too. Mrs. Toro went out in the work room, gave a wave and a beaming smile and the noise the younger ones was enough to show on whose side the staff were.

Things were not at all pleasant at home so I went back to Roturua where I was offered the job of running the bowlers as a temporary job as the man who was doing it was in hospital and they thought he would be there for a couple of months so I accepted it and stayed in the motor camp only half a mile up the road. It was a good fill in job and at least I had nothing new to learn. I kept the Oldsmobile with me as I had left the 1950 Chevrolet for Doris so that she would not be stuck without her own transport and I went out to Ngakuru to give some help on the farmlet just week-ends pottering around. I still remembered what the doctor said about getting away from all my worries but that was easier said than acted on. The bowler manager came back to work so I decided it was time to go back home and the first time I went down to the garage for petrol Ash Hill asked when I was coming back to work for him at the same pay I was getting at the clothing factory which would be quite a big jump in pay from what I was getting before I left him. I started next morning and had to look through the work lined up waiting to be done. He had taken on a couple of juniors after I left and neither had learnt much in 5 years so the first thing was to get them organised in night school in Hawera Tech. then get the place cleaned up. When the local farmers heard I was back the new work that came in smothered us and I had to start working overtime. There was a lot waiting for me in the Town Council too.

I had the Hydatids Council waiting for a meeting and the South Taranaki Urban Fire District waiting to be organised as well as some contracts for water tables and concrete footpaths in the main road needed organising so with everything piling up I felt like going back to Rotorua but I gradually got on top of things. On top of all those things we had the problem of no kids. At long last we seemed to have got to the basic reason which was Doris and her Rh. negative blood had built strong anti-bodies against Rh positive blood groups and we would be among the unlucky ones who just couldn't and that was that. It took almost 4 years to make up our minds, contact church groups, and welfare agencies and everywhere else we could think of to get our names on the waiting lists. At last a hospital in Wellington rang to say they had some babies available so we hot-footed down there and selected Patricia. We stayed overnight with Mum and Dad who were both as excited as we were. We ran into Maureen O'Dea and her mother on the way home. I don't remember whether it was by appointment or a fluke but it was fun to display our new baby to them and the horse they were towing back to Hawera. That was very early in May of 1960 as Patricia's birthday is May 2nd. so I must have correct dates right in my mind for this tale.

The next problem was what label were we going to stick to this ~~loud~~ child. We were happy with the first name but we felt a second one was needed and the discussion carried on while a friend, one Julie Kara who had worked in the clothing factory, had been instrumental in starting our tennis club and our Youth Club and our Indoor Basket Ball Club said we had a lovely horse called Dawn Flight so why not give her as second name, Dawn so that was how the baby became Patricia Dawn Ellison.

With the upheaval caused by the arrival of Patricia I thought it was time to think about the future again so I asked the boss if it was time to look again at his future which he did not want to do. Then to top it off I received a letter from Harry Linn whose father had left his farm in Normanby area to be divided between his three sons but Harry sold his share to his next younger brother and had taken over the lease of the garage in Maraetai Beach and wanted me to work for him as the mechanic who worked there was a dead loss and wanted me to go into partnership. We exchanged letters two or three times then Harry offered us a bed for the Labour Week-end to have a look at the proposition so we did just that. It looked good to me although Doris was not so enthusiastic. We talked it over on the way home and decided that Doris would stay in Normanby to sell the house there and I would shift to Maraetai and start working for Harry at a very increased wage until I reached a decision re the partnership deal. At that time we had only the one car, a 1956 Mark 2 Zephyr souped up to make it an eye opener and as Harry had a Bedford van I could use Doris could take the Zephyr back home with her after dropping me off at Maraetai. That is what happened and I landed in Maraetai on 5th November 1960 which happened to be Harry's birthday and Guy Faulk's day and the day before my birthday so we started the party at tea-time and wound it up after breakfast the next morning which was a Saturday and on Sunday Doris set off back to Hawera to pick up Patricia from Hawera where we had left Patricia with Doris' Mum as we knew it was going to be a hectic trip and I would be starting work on Monday morning which would leave me Sunday to find somewhere to live, which was no trouble and I slept in the house that night in the house across the road from the shop at Omana on the top of the hill. It did not take me long to realise that a partnership would not work as Harry and ~~Nobeline~~ were more interested in playing golf than working in the garage.

I can remember the first job I did in the garage which was on the Tuesday. I pottered around tidying up in the garage on the Monday. There was no work planned for the Monday so I had an extended lunch hour spent in the water and I was introduced to the local headmaster of the local school which was only a one room school at that time and Matt Gould was the only teacher, who drove a Hillman Super Minx. While talking to him he mentioned that his brakes needed relining so I said if he could spare the car in the morning next day it would be no trouble starting on it then. He hesitated a bit and then said O.K. so as soon as he left I rang Motor Specs. and got them to put a set of brake shoes on the bus which would arrive at Maraetai at 6pm. The car arrived at about 8.30 next morning. I drove him back to the school and told him I would ring as soon as the job was finished. At 10.15 I rang to tell him the job was done and would he like me to deliver it in his morning tea break as I would like him to try the brakes out straight away and I could easily walk back down hill if he thought everything was right. I could hear him gasp. He didn't want to believe it but he agreed. He tried the brakes out and said they were better than original then went on to say that when he first mentioned the brakes needed doing the old mechanic wanted the car for two days. I said to him that I had adjusted the carb, because I noticed that it would not keep idling but it was such a small job it would not appear on his bill. He thought that was absolutely wonderful and said he now knew the stories Harry had put around about me were not just a load of bull. Well I thought that he was my first satisfied customer and being a great mixer and popular, I had made my first job a great advertisement.

As I said earlier I soon realised that playing golf interested the Linns more than the work in the garage and I could see no great future in that garage, especially when I saw the way the jobs were charged out. After all I was the one who caught the flack first and had to smooth down quite a few customers who were grossly overcharged.

The situation worried me quite a lot and wondered if I had bitten off more than I could chew but in a small area like Maraetai which really included Beachlands for mechanical work, where there was a large garage and panel shop with four workers, things did not look too good to me. Then I had to recognise that my eyes were not as good as they once were, so I came to the conclusion that I would have to look for something else. On week ends I had noticed that a number of people who lived on School Road and Maraetai Heights Roads used to walk past the local shop, across the road from me, going down to the beach where there were two shops supplying groceries. Then one day I heard that Doris had sold the house for 2200 pounds which was just double what it had cost us to build it. Then the local post office rang me to say there was a telegram waiting for me to pick up. I did not tell them I already knew. Roy Ross owned the shop, where the post office agency was, happened to be having a cup of afternoon tea in the garage with us, as he quite often did, and a customer came in to pay for his petrol and when he saw me there he said "I hear that your house has been sold for 2200 pounds. Are you going to retire now?" I asked him where he got good news like that from. He said "Theres a telegram down at the post office for you". Well poor Roy took off like a streak of lightning because his wife was the only one left in the shop while he was away and for her to comment on telegrams is of course strictly forbidden. I'm glad I wasn't in her shoes because Roy did everything by the book. A fine man to the day he died.

It took only a couple of weeks for all the legal formalities to be done and Doris wanted a couple of weeks to stay with Maureen Drylie at Okato before coming up to Maraetai with the baby in the back seat. Then we were into the Easter holidays so I told her of my thoughts about the shop. She thought it was a reasonable idea and I suggested that she watch the shop every opportunity she got. She had a talk with Mrs. Seabourne whose husband officially owned the place and spoke to some of the locals. Mrs. Seabourne was a very popular lady but the other half of the marriage was regarded with no respect at all from anyone. Some of the stories we heard made him out to be a real rogue. We had a look through the building when we told them we were interested in buying and found a lot of faults that showed that a real amateur had done most of the building but I could see it would not be too expensive to strengthen it up. The centre of the lounge in the house part floor moved like a trampoline and on going down in the basement I saw that an RSJ was only half the strength required but a post under the middle of it was all that was needed but a concrete footing would have to go under it. The basement was a horrible mess. There were no concrete floors, there was half rotten timber piled up at one end of it and taking it all round it was a real mess. Anyway we agreed we would buy in at a maximum price of 6,000 pounds. Doug Seabourne agreed to leave 4,000 pounds in as a mortgage to be paid off at 5 pounds a week for the first year and increased to 10 pounds a week until it was all paid off. I intended to carry on working at the garage for about four years to safeguard ourselves against failure and went to see L.D. Nathans the biggest grocery warehouse to see what help I could get and they were most helpful. I ordered a lot of stock from them and priced it all when it arrived three or four days before take over day and our house looked as though it was going to be the shop. Take over day was going to be a wednesday as that was the only day the shop had to close. Well what a tangle. Doug Seabourne had a whole lot of maps spread out on the floor as he had chartered a plane for a flight the following day and to hang with the shop changeover. His poor wife and another lady were flat out wrapping their crockery and I had a truck full of furniture waiting outside the door. We unloaded our stuff, and loaded their furniture on to the truck while he kept on planning his trip with his maps. He wanted to know what we were going to do with his furniture. I said we would put it where mine was coming from. There was an argument when he saw all the new stock being brought into the shop I said that the agreement was that I took over on the 17th of August and he said he had control of the shop until midnight and was going to have a shower before he left. I told him that I was not arguing about that and made things as awkward as I could by saying that all his towells were already across the road and that he had better go and get them. He said that I could lend him a couple to help him out. The reply to that was my wife had a baby to look after and was not having to wash dirty towells added to her work as well as us having to supply hot water as the power had already been read by the Power Board. He asked me how much of the hot water had been used in our place before we had vacated it. I said that he must have realised that we had spent all day shifting his stuff out and had not had any time to use any of his precious water. He eventually went over the road and brought back his own towells for which action his wife apologised the next day when she came in to thank us for the help we had given them. I was beginning to understand his unpopularity in the area. I had arranged for a couple of the younger married women to come in and arrange the stock. I had also arranged for an elderly lady Min Cox to come in to help Doris with Patricia or help in the shop if necessary so I thought every thing would go smoothly for the first day.

The Linns must have thought I was going to leave even though I had talked over each step with them because Harry arrived at work about 8.30 am with a pair of overalls on and wanted to

know where he was going to start. He was supposed to be the boss and even after ten months didn't know anything much about the working part of the garage. He could see, I hoped, that he had to learn about mechanics and I was the one who had to teach him. After a couple of years he arrived one morning and told me he had sold the lease and the new owner was coming in later in the day to look the place over. I looked him over and did not like the look of him and was not at all surprised when he said there was going to be room for only one mechanic. and that I had about ten days to find a new job. That night Norman Kelly who ran the Beachlands Garage came to see me and said there was a job waiting for me working with him. Well I must admit that I was surprised. I asked him how he knew I would be available. He told me that Maurice Tracey who actually owned the Maraetai Garage property had been to see Norm Kelly and told him that the Linns were going under and would be sorry to see a mechanic like me lost to the area and as I had just overhauled his pre-war Citroen and made a wonderful job of it and that he had helped me with it was more than happy with the care I had put into it in spite of the fact there was no book of instruction available for that early Citroen. I started in Beachlands a week later and had the job of training an apprentice as well as doing normal work. The lad was a Maori boy and was keen to learn which was good. He came to work ~~one~~ morning and tested my knowledge about a fault they had with a Ford car on which the left lights wouldn't work. They rewired them and still they would not work properly. What was my idea? I said it sounded as though the earthing was at fault. I said forget the crook light and clean up the earthing on the good light and see what happens. They were doing three nights a week at night school so he told me that they did what I had suggested and the dud light was as good as gold. I asked him what he had learnt and what did the instructor have to say. Well the instructor ~~couldn't~~ tell them and the lad himself was no better off so I drew a diagram on a piece of paper and explained the fault to him and he understood it. I said that it would be a feather in his cap if he could show the instructor. Being morning tea break all the others were there and only the boss had understood what I was showing the lad and said to me afterwards that my knowledge was fantastic. To which I replied that it wasn't always knowledge that counted but it was the ability to reason things out.

Well I worked there for almost a year and things were not too good at the shop as Doris seemed to have trouble all the time with anyone working with her and in that period I had to find three or four different girls to work with her. In the end I gave in my notice and made my life in the shop a living for the future. By that time the trade there had built up and we were paying the mortgage off at 10 pounds per week and had been doing that for several years. Then one Saturday morning the next door neighbour came in and started to natter about Doug Seabourne and said that he presumed that Seabourne had included the driveway from the main road into our basement in the change over as it had a separate title. It seems that when Seabourne built the shop he just started driving across the corner of the neighbours section to park his car under the shop and Mr. Paul threatened to take him to court unless he got the whole lot surveyed and paid all expenses. Seabourne never said anything about it to me so first thing Monday morning I rang our lawyer and told him the story. He said I'd better go in and look at the whole picture. I did just that. We discussed the problems it could have caused then he rang up Seabourne's lawyer and abused him in a most ungentlemanly manner complete with swear words and told him that we would pay Seabourne the sum of one shilling and all other expenses such as rewriting the Mortgage would be a charge against Seabourne. It was a real eye opener to me the way they abused each other, but we got our way. In due course the new mortgage came through and I had to go in to sign it. We checked each paragraph and it seemed to be the same as the original so we signed it and I thought that

was the end of it. But it was not was it? The following year a letter arrived from Seabournes lawyer reminding that the end of our agreement was due in a couple of weeks and I had until that date to pay the 600 pounds to close the mortgage. I knew that the agreement stayed at 10 pounds a week until the agreement had nothing left to pay. I looked at the original agreement and the new one and the last paragraph on the new one had the words changed from the original to state that the final date would be 31st, March at which time the remainder shall be paid in one lump sum. I remembered that when we checked the new mortgage the first two pages were identical and we checked the remainder, we just checked that they both started off the same. Just shows, you can't trust lawyers even when they are dealing with others. The amount did not worry me as we had half of it in the bank but that was the time of high interest rates but I did not want to borrow 300 pounds from the bank and pay interest on it. My time was almost up when one of our old customers came in with a whole wad of notes in his pocket and told me that he was selling out and had 600 pounds from some of his stock he had sold but he did not want his wife to know what he had or she would blow the lot. What he wanted was for me to hold the money and just dish it out to him at 20 pounds a week to him. I told him it was too big a responsibility and my advice to him was to start a bank account but that was too chancy for him as he thought she was bound to find out about it. Every suggestion I came up with he had already thought about and I was the only one he could think of that he would trust to do it his way. I showed him the lawyers letter and told him the whole story and said I could put his 600 in to pay the account then it would be out of sight. Then I showed him our last bank statement that had more than enough to cover his "loan" I grabbed a notebook out of stock and wrote on it SHAREHOLDER, OMANA BAY STORE and inside I put on the top line Capital 600 pounds. He thought that was wonderful. All I had to do was pay him out what he wanted each week, get him to initial it and alter the total left. I thought he was going to throw his arms around my neck and quickly stepped behind the counter as he had come straight from the cow shed. I thought too, how wonderful it felt to be trusted like that because I knew just how unsafe his wife was with money. Each day when I balanced up the books I made sure that there was sufficient cash floating around in the shop somewhere in case he wanted the remainder all at once.

I often think back to those days and the amount of work I had to put into it and the amount of money too to get it on its feet but there was one bright light that came our way and that was the arrival of Rex. We had put in an application after Patricia arrived and after coming to Maraetai we reapplied in the Auckland area for a boy and had to wait a whole year before the phone rang to tell us that he was waiting to be picked up in Auckland. The timing was good because the mad rush over the Christmas period in the shop was beginning to slacken off a little and we only had as far as Auckland to go so Doris and her mother went to pick him up and, as soon as I saw him, I said that's going to be Dad's fair head boy. Doris went off crook ably abetted by her mother but as it was said half in jest I had to shrug it off. We couldn't keep Nanna away from him and I was glad when she went home. I have not said in this story that Doris' Mum and Dad had sold out in Hawera and bought a nice Keith Hay house just round the corner in Campbell Road so old Pop had another section to break in after the string of them he had to do in Hawera. They would no sooner build a new house and Pop would break in the section for gardens and lawns then Nanna would be dissatisfied and sell it making sure that a profit was substantial each time but it was always poor old Pop who did the hard work while Nanna managed the dough. I used to feel so sorry for him but I had to keep my nose out of their business. He was such a kindly, good-hearted man that one day

when the three of them went to Auckland Doris saw something she wanted and did not have enough in her pocket to pay for it and he gave her 100 pounds. I did not know about this for three or four days until I heard Doris telling someone else about it. I knew that Pop was not all that well off and grabbed the money probably out of the till knowing that I could replace it as soon as I did the books that night. I went to Pop with the money and told him I had just heard about it. He said he knew I would not overlook it and had drawn another hundred out of the bank and wanted me to bank 100 for each of the kids. That is the man he was.

One day when I had to take some papers in to our accountant I asked him "is there any simple way we can get a rough idea of whether we are doing reasonably well?" "That is easily answered" he said. "By the honest answering two simple questions. The first one is are you paying all your bills and the second question is - does your bank credit build up from month to month?" I told him that the answer to both questions was a definite "Yes". At that time he had just finished the figuring of our annual balance sheet but had not printed it all out. He said that he had a number of similar business accounts to ours and said off the cuff that our account was very interesting because we were showing a gross profit of 18% and 11% on our net profit, both figures streets in advance of any others in our range of business. This was a source of great pride for attacking something completely new and being so successful in such a short time. When I think back of taking only seven pounds across the counter in the first week we were in the shop and now it was amounting to something like seven hundred over the same period and still improving.

In this period Horace Crocker, Doris's brother died of a sudden heart attack with no warning and was a shock to everyone. However his style of living made it inevitable as there were times when he used to come out and stay with us over the week-end and both he and his wife, Betty, would not even get out of bed until they had sunk a half gallon flagon of beer and Horace had grown fat and pasty which his job driving one of the heads of the naval department around as a chauffeur ~~that~~ would not burn off the carbo-hydrates in the beer. Doris' father did not want to go to ~~the~~ funeral and stayed at the shop all day and had his first stroke a couple of days later which was only a mild one.

About a year later Doris' mother suddenly decided she wanted to go and live in Selwyn Village where Mrs. Petley, who had been a great friend before she left Maraetai, had gone to live. This hurt Pop very deeply. He did not say anything as he was always so calm and quiet but underneath he was an emotional person and bottled up his personal feelings when they were likely to conflict with anyone else. Two days later, he had a massive stroke and could not walk or talk. Neither Doris or her mother realised how serious he was and even tried to force some Christmas trifle down his throat. I heard him choking and rushed in to stop them and told them straight that they were only trying to kill him and that I didnt think he had much longer to live. Well in no time they had him organised to go into Hospital where he died quietly only three or four weeks later. I missed him greatly as he was always so happy to help in every little way he could like weighing up potatoes or sugar or stocking up the drinks chiller. In his will he said he would like to be cremated and have his ashes spread over the A&P Show grounds in Hawera as he had done so much to get them built and been a member since their beginning. The undertakers held his ashes for a very long time and no one wanted to pick them up and spread the ashes as Pop had wanted. Trevor and Dot had moved to Papakura and used to go to see Dot's mother in Hawera fairly often so one day when they told me that they were going to Hawera I said to them it was time they picked up the ashes and did the deed as Pop had wanted and at last we got it done.

A total of 10 years passed without too much friction or wear and tear on me but the work load was still pretty heavy even if the income did seem to be building up steadily. Then I noticed there were little niggly comments coming from Nanna and then Doris started to get the same bug and I stopped to think that maybe it was time to get out. The super markets appeared to be getting more common and getting closer although the main grocery in Beachlands as well as the two shops down on the beach front in Maraetai were complaining that we were putting them out of business. Gerry Weston in Beachlands sold out first and moved to Waiheke Island then Bill Burch on Maraetai water-front sold next and the buyer there turned it into a fast food take-away then Roy Ross died and his son and Roy's wife got the T.A.B. agency. But they were not too happy and the Post Office came out to have a look at the situation and built a brand new Office and Savings Bank across the road from us thus turning our corner into the shopping centre for Maraetai which brought in a lot more business for us. The extra trade made our next balance sheet look wonderful & taking everything into account it was a wise move to put our shop on the market too. I thought I was being greedy with the price I suggested but the people who bought in a week later borrowed the total price from L.D.Nathan which indicated to me that I had under valued everything. However the new owners did not last long. They thought that they were on a good thing without having to work for it and when they used up the basic stock they had to sell out. Then after them came a succession of owners who seemed to have the same ideas - reduce the range of stock and so the work will reduce too. Now each owner who comes in can't understand why they can't make any headway.

When we sold out we moved in to Doris' Mum's house in Campbell Road. In all the years we had been in the shop Nanna and Pop whenever they were off colour they would come round, both of them, and stay with us until they felt better and they would then toddle off back home feeling refreshed. When Pop died you could tell straight away that Nanna was still having the thought in the back of her mind that she was going to stay in a Selwyn Foundation Home. She tried to get in with Mrs. Petley but was told she had no chance for several years because of the long waiting list so she settled for Selwyn Oaks in Papakura and a lot of the time her house in Campbell Road was empty. Whenever she got down in the dumps she would ring for us to go and get her and quite often we would have to re-organise our times to go and pick her up. I was horrified when we told her we would like to stay in her house while our house (I spent many hours planning it), that was O.K. she said and she would come out when we moved in to talk about the rent we would pay. Well she did come out because Doris went in to pick her up and three months later she went back to Selwyn Oaks because the other old dears in there would be missing her.

We had, while we were in the shop, bought a section as we could see that some time in the future we would need somewhere to live and section values were getting more and more expensive so it was a case of buying early. That is what we did. We paid 1750 pounds for it and now the valuation on it is 156,000 which is a hair raising increase caused by the ever increasing demand in the area. When the time came I had endless trouble with the council inspectors as they would not take my measurement of levels as correct and demanded that registered surveyors be called in who bore out my calculations. When I asked the drainage inspector why he refused to take my figures as correct he said he had walked over the ground and had no reason to believe I knew how to use a dumpty level and on top of that he would not pass

the drainage plan and thus the building permit would have to be held over. Anyway they were only minor things and I went ahead to organise a builder. In the end I chose an elderly man who was trying to retire. He used to live next to the shop when we first went in and became a close friend. He thought the plan was good and quoted a price of 21,000 to build the house. It was most amusing when the council had a revaluation for rates purposes and altered the land valuation to 35,000 and the improvements value to 35,000 too and the house was only a quarter built. The storm water drain on the council map showed it to be under the footpath and the drainage inspector made me shift the house 10 feet further back from the road in case there was any seepage from the drain but when I came to excavate under the foundation I nearly got washed away because the drain was actually under 2 metres of the end of the house. In the end I knew so many things that were wrong with the council plans that we went ahead and made provision for them as we found them. Anyway I dug out a complete basement by hand where we built a flat of three bedrooms and a large lounge 19 ft. by 22ft. and a kitchen that satisfied several families that have lived in it at different times. The top soil and clay were delivered all around Maraetai but what a job it was digging it out by hand.

Having got the house in a finished stage I then turned my attention to other things that were required like building a horse float to take Dawn Flight all over the place to attend shows and Pony Clubs. Then I bought a 15ft. caravan in which we did some touring from Kaitaia to Wellington. One night going to Taupo the left caravan wheel hit a log on the side of the road but carried us on to Shirley's place in Taupo where we had to make a U turn at the intersection next to her place to park the van where we needed it, and the wheel fell off with a mighty crash but I managed to get it parked in the right place on one wheel only. I got a new stub axle made in Taupo the next day. Shortly after I was offered a launch with an inboard motor for 600 dollars which I thought was a good buy even if the trailer was rusted out. I made a new tip trailer for it and got it galvanised and then we towed it to Taupo to do some trout fishing but decided the Consul motor in it was too small as its top speed was only 11 knots and that hogged the petrol so I picked up a 3.3 Vauxhall motor and put that in the boat and even that showed me that it was not quite suitable so I took a half inch off the screw and reduced the pitch as well and at last met with success. Now I could get 35 knots and go to Waihiki Island and back instead of using four and a half gallons I only needed a half a gallon. Also at Taupo on the first trip trolling on the lake I used four gallons over five hours but with the new set-up we spent 6 hours trolling we used less than one gallon. A huge saving. I could not find any company to go fishing with me although Rex did come with me several times but one day we ran into some really dirty weather and the water tore the front hinges off the hatch so Rex gave up fishing. Eventually I sold the boat and didn't lose anything ~~much on what it had cost me but I did learn~~ a lot.

The next problem I tackled was running an Automotive Electrical business in Panmure. The owner wanted to go back to Hungary to look at the country since he left ten or twelve years before and to show his three kids where he came from. He only intended to stay away for a month but it took him three months and left me to fend off his bank manager who was frothing at the mouth over the state of the business overdraft. He also had no faith in "jacked up" auto electricians to use his own terms as he had just got his car and caravan back from the other Auto Electrician where it had been for a week to find out why the fuses blew every time he turned his flashers on when he had the caravan hooked on to the car. He called me one day to go in to see him to have a

talk over the state of the overdraft. I thought over his problem with his car and caravan and suggested that he bring the vehicles in to me the next morning and he could pick it up at lunch time. He goggled and stammered a bit and asked me how I knew I could live. up to that when I hadn't even seen the car and caravan. So I said to him that he wouldn't expect his office boy to take over his job with no training. I said that I had seen several jobs done by the other firm and being only office boys in my grading I thought that there could only be a couple of reasons why the same reasons for the same fault recurring and neither would be hard to find and rectify. He duly arrived next morning and as I walked round behind the car I saw he had installed extra lights in the back of his car and had extra tail lights on his caravan. I pointed out that all the extra flasher lights were too much drain on his flasher circuits and overloading the fuse and the only thing to do was to put in a heavy duty flasher and another extra five amps on his fuse. He said "How much is that going to cost me?" I said that seeing who he was I would let him off with five dollars but to make sure we will put the parts in and prove what I have said. While I was talking I unclipped the original flasher unit out and put the new one in its place stepped back and said now for a heavier fuse a ten amp one will do the trick. I said that was all that is needed now try it. He turned on his flashers on one side and walked round making a couple of circuits around the car and caravan then switched to the other side, went around again and said he would not be going back to the other firm but would bring his electrical problems back to our place. I said that Ted, the owner who was still in Hungary was not even in the office boy class and winked at him. He smiled and paid me the five dollars and went off quite happy not knowing that the five dollars was the right price anyway. When Ted came back from Hungary he brought his mother back to NZ with him and I believe she tried to rule the roost in Ted's house that turned out to be his wife's house and she was a Maraetai girl from a very wealthy family and did not agree that she should be bossed around in her own place so they all decided to go to America where Ted had an older brother who should have looked after his mother in the first place. After a year or so, Anne, Ted's wife and one or two of the kids came back to NZ and seemed quite happy without Ted. He has come back over the years two or three times but only stays a few days and then back to America.

When Ted arrived back from Hungary he thanked me for looking after his business for him and a few days the apprentice we had working for us got mixed up with a pack of no-hopers and before we knew what had happened he had been arrested for murdering a Maori girl as she left a night club in Auckland. Nobody seems to know the whole story and all those who knew him think he was no cold-blooded killer. He may have been on drugs and had no idea what he was doing because the other youngsters were known to be addicts. However he has served his eleven year lifetime sentence and I know not where he has gone.

After I left Ted to his own devices I just pottered round for a while until I got tired of myself and answered an advert for an assistant storeman working for Fram NZ Ltd. who made oil and air filters for cars which job I thought would last me until I was ready to retire.

About four weeks later, it was a Friday afternoon I heard the general manager talking to the head storeman who said, "He is wasted here. He has got more brains than anyone else in the factory and not knowing who they were talking about I pricked up my ears because the other men in the factory were strangers to me as my work was in the stores and not in the manufacturing area. Anyway as I was leaving to go home

the General Manager bailed me up and said "We have got a new job for you on Monday morning. The leading hand on the oil filter assembly line went home at lunch time and died this afternoon, and it looks as though you have been chosen to take his place." I asked if there would be anyone on deck to start me off and was told that the floor foreman had already been instructed to set me going before 8am when the main staff would arrive. I said O.K. I'll be early Monday morning. I forgot to ask how much my wages would increase but I guess we might sort that out later.

Monday morning came with me a half hour early but no floor foreman on deck and he did not put in an appearance until 10.30am which failed to help me in the least. I got all the women operators in a heap at one end of the assembly line and told them that I would be running the line but I didn't know where we started and I would like them all to teach me everything as we went along so that we would make a team that would be the best in the whole factory. That must have been the right approach as they all smiled and away we went. On Friday morning the general manager came to me and said what a great job our line was doing and in his guess would be up to 1000 filters in one day which must be a factory record I said "Thank you for letting me know. Is there any chance of getting a daily total before we get to the end of the day?" He said that should be one of jobs the foreman is supposed to do. At the end of that Friday as we were approaching the door to go home the general manager walked over and asked him if he was aware of how many filters came off our line and he said it was just on 1,100 but he said in a loud voice that every-one was meant to hear, they cleared 1400 today. The gen manager said how wonderful it was to see record figures like that. He had been going through the daily output figures and the highest he found were 720. On Monday before our oil line started up I put a large box of chocolates at the starting end of the line with a large notice stuck on it saying how the management had said what a grand effort the ladies had put up the previous week to break all the records twice in one week. One of the women sang out that it was not from the management but she would guess that "young Ronnie" was to blame as Fram never says anything good to the staff. They were a wonderful team never a whinge from any of them.

We had five different assembly lines on the main floor and they all had their troubles that seemed to re-cure without any warning. Several times the lead hand on the air filter assembly line asked my advice because the plastic the pleated paper was held in gave trouble in that tiny pin holes went right through the plastic when they were supposed to come out of the cooking oven completely sealed I experimented with it when nobody was looking and found that the plastic varied from batch to batch. I suggested to the lead hand that each time a new drum of plastic should be tested as soon as it was ready to be used. This was very important as a drum of the plastic was costing us over 1,000 dollars. There were other faults sent to try us but none as important as a batch of plastic wasted. Somehow that story got to the boss' ears and he went out of his way to say thanks. In a very short time I became the fix-it man.

In a very short time the elderly man who was supposed to be the floor foreman decided to retire which was reasonable as he never arrived on time and his memory was unreliable so nobody knew where he was supposed to be but I will say he was a good turner and fitter which had been his lifetime trade. Of course I was given his job which did not worry me unduly as by that time I knew the machinery and the staff and the stock room too. One day the managing director asked me something I had not thought of before. He asked "how is it that you make so many decisions that always turn out to be the right ones?" I replied that when he was

away was to pretend to myself that the place was mine and react to the to the situation as if it really was mine.

A year later I found myself in an office upstairs in charge of production planning with only the general manager and the managing director over me in the running of the whole plant. My new job was to assess the production for the next three years as well as organising the day to day planning of making the filters so they could be delivered on the correct date. That gave me a lot of trouble as I found that the previous planner had left some production orders up to two years out of date and filed in the rubbish bin. I had to contact the clients who wanted those orders to see if they were still required and if they were to organise them as priorities and give the clients a new delivery date. In the end I had to supply the bosses with a report on the whole production situation which did not make pleasant reading. It took four to five months to straighten that part out as well as keeping the orders of daily running of the assembly lines up to scratch. In some cases I had to alter the planned specifications of the filters with parts not in stock or changed to later models and could be adapted. The Managing director said the present Purchasing Officer would have to be fired as so many parts had never been ordered and asked the General manager why he had been unaware that the orders had not been sent to our suppliers. The reply still sticks in my memory was this. "He was more interested in his wife swapping club than doing his job for us" I thought that if that was true the General manager should have been fired too. I found that many of the parts that were missing could be made in N,Z and there were a couple of manufacturers keen to make parts for us and after a bit of "negotiating" got them made and at a lower price than overseas ones were costing us. I ran a comparison chart one night at home and found that I had in this one action had saved the firm my wages for two years. I was so pleased I took the chart to work the next day and showed it to the boss. He wanted to know how I could organise that so soon after taking over a new job when men who had been in the job for so long had missed it. Of course I then told him that I had saved another years wages already by getting three firms who printed thousands of labels for us competing against each other and, they between each other, had saved the firm all that money. He said then that what I had done was really part of the purchasing officers work. I said I had been thinking that over and had come to the conclusion that we had no need for a Purchasing Officer or his three offices as so much of his work was already being done by the Planning Officer when he assess the quantity of filters he automatically assesses the quantity of the parts that go with that filter. "Why has no-one ever thought of that before? He asked. I said it looked like the old story of get the most pay for the least work.

It was shortly after that when one afternoon tea time the order came down stairs that the tea break would be extended and all the staff would be assembled in the tea room at the end of the tea break. Nobody knew what it was all about and rumours were flying around but nobody was any wiser than anyone else. Tony Taylor the owner of the Factory eventually arrived and started his little speech and said that this afternoon was a very special one as he had a special presentation to make authorised by the president of the firm in U.S.A. which was over and above the normal service certificate for long term employees. This firm has been blessed by this person working here for the past ten years and put life into each department he has been associated with. He has also saved the firm many thousands of dollars which will be shared among all the staff at the end of the financial year in the form of a special bonus. By this time I began to suspect that it was aimed at me and I think after a quick look

that only one other person had the same thought and that was Nan Millen who had been with the firm since they started in Howick and was well known being the mother of the motor racing driver. She put her clasped hands over her head waved them and with a wide grin looked at me. Tony handed me my 10 year certificate and then a gold Biro and a gold tie slide then left me to make a hash of the thanks speech. It surprised me the fuss the staff made of me when I had to pass through the factory floor later on that day. Perhaps it was the thought of that bonus that caused it.

It was at that stage that they decided to computerise everything in the factory. Wages, invoicing, stock and every thing they could think of went into the computer. It began to confuse me particularly when they said I was the one who had the manufacture of the filters at his fingertips and special instructions for special filters and I found I was working until midnight most of the nights of the week as the computer installers did their work when the factory was empty. At the end of a year the job was done which according to the installers was a record as other jobs compared on a level with ours always took two years. It was not so bad when we got the printer in action but we found that its speed was not up to our requirements as sometimes we would set it going at the end of the day but when I arrived at work the next day it was still firing out sheets of paper as fast as it did the night before so we had to install a lot faster model that did the job much better. Then we found that the memory banks were too small in capacity and we had to put in a back up system as a reserve memory store. I had the job of designing a special filter for the Christchurch air port that when finished weighed 11 tonnes and had an automatic pressure control on the feed as if it was let go at maximum feed it would blow out the other side of the tanks in the aircraft. My age was creeping up on me and I let the boss know that my retirement was coming up before Christmas leaving him about 4 months to find a replacement. I was just the same age as the boss and he said he thought about retiring too but it did not seem so important to him as he only spent half a day at the factory and could not understand how I could take the pressure of a full days work as well as organising a twilight shift from 5pm to 10pm four nights a week. However he talked me into staying on for another year when I would be 67 years old. When that time came I still had to put my foot down firmly as they still wanted me to stay on for another year again but I really was starting to feel my age and did not want to peter out on the job when things were going well. Anyway the firm organised a party for me and shut the factory down at lunch time and presented me with a glorious crystal drinking set that still has pride of place in the crystal cabinet.

Quite often I go past the buildings where I worked for 12 years and always feel proud of the success I made of that job. I also feel sad for the fact that Tony Taylor died within a year after I resigned and left the business to his son who sold off everything as quickly as he could and put all those forty or fifty staff out of work. The trade name "Fram" is also gone from NZ although someone is at present trying to import them direct from U.S.A.. There have been a few floating around recently so it looks favourable for the future.

Doris retired too shortly after I did and I feel now that the first year of my retirement has gone from my memory. I know that I helped Rex in the tomato hot-houses which was an expensive failure but was worth a try. Patricia was working over on the east coast and I had just bought a 1000 shaft drive Suzuki motor bike that was the pride of my life and took it for a run to Wellington then back home through Taranaki to see George Best.

I do remember that, being late getting from Hawera to Okato I opened up the throttle and had to slow down when the speedo showed 250 kph which was the fastest I had ever been but the thrill was well worth it.

With Doris having retired we toyed with the idea of taking a trip together on our bikes. Doris had been riding a 250 cc bike to work. Over the years I had built up her confidence and experience as much as I could. She started off on a step through Honda 90cc that we picked up under a hedge in Whitford. After a clean up and a few minor repairs I had it running well. We sold that one and picked up a 125cc Suzuki two stroke that after a half hours practice down at Te Puru park on the grass she was quite happy. Then the next step was a 200cc also a two stroke on which she had to have some training at Te Puru too. Then came the 250cc four stroke Suzuki also needing the training at Te Puru although she really did not need it.

Then came the parting of the ways between me and my 1000cc pet, I traded it in on two bikes both Suzuki 400cc four stroke machines and got two bikes and 500 dollars for my pet. At least we were both on the same sort and power range of bikes. Our first trip was over to Thames where we stayed with Connie and Sam Livingstone just ten kilometers north of Thames for a couple of days and then headed off to Coromandel which was obviously too wild for Doris but if she wanted to do a bit of touring I thought she would have to learn as soon as possible. From Colleen and Charlie Waters place we headed for Whitianga which is a wilder trip still. We stayed with the Harts who had a booksellers shop in in Whitianga and after a couple of days break set off northward to make a loop ride back to Coromandel. That put the wind up Doris properly. She did not like the loose metal at all. I just could not get her to push the bike through the loose metal and in all her riding never lost that fear of loose metal causing her to fall off many times when she slowed right down to below a walking pace. Many times I had to go back and pick her bike up as it had fallen over on her and was just a little too heavy for her to pick up if she knew I would come back to do it for her.

Even so we had an enjoyable trip and I'm sure Doris absorbed a lot of experience that would help her in the future. Our next trip was up to Kaitaia and homeward through the Kauri forest where I had to pick up Doris's bike several times. It used to amuse her when we would stop at a garage for petrol and I would take off my helmet and the attendants would spot my white hair. A lot of the remarks were quite humorous and Doris loved to collect them. A lot of times she would mention some place we had stopped and if I could not remember the place she would say "That was someone said and quote what was said and I would sometimes "Oh yes that's right and I probably had no memory of it at all.

Then came the time for our trip through the South Island which started off on our trip to the Gisborne Reunion where we created a lot of excitement by arriving on our bikes and being bailed up at the entrance to the motel there by a reporter who wanted our photo as something unusual.

At the end of the reunion we went to Napier and stayed at the Youth Hostel just the one night then on to Palmerston North where we were made welcome at Nick and Kays for the night then next morning set off to Tawa where we had organised a stay with Reg and Muriel to give us a chance to book in the ferry to Picton. We did not need to reserve a booking for motor bikes as there were plenty of odd places they could fit the bikes but they had to be tied down and how secure they had to be we did not know but they were more than secure to finish up with and on the return trip it was much simpler. However we had a great trip around the southern part of the South Island staying at the

hostels and seemed to meet the same people wherever we went. Down in Queenstown we were approached by a young chap who said he had seen us before on the ferry across to Waiheke Island on my 1000cc Suzuki which must have been at least two years before. I said I remembered him too and after he had gone Doris asked me how I remembered him and I told her he was the young chap on the dirt track bike who had accelerated too hard on the wet steel ramp when going off the ferry and fell off his bike when the bike went for a nasty slide. Then there was a Gibbs bus from Warkworth which we had seen two or three times and the driver wanted to know all about us so that he could pass on the information to his passengers as another item of interest and we found that several of those people made themselves known to us for all the world as though we were all travelling together. We had great weather except in Dunedin where it blew hard, it rained hard, and the hail hit hard. We left Doris's bike at the hostel that day and toured round on my bike with Doris as the passenger. Next day the weather cleared and we went down to Invercargill and Bluff so that we could say we had seen Stewart Island and the following day set off homeward up the East coast and eventually arrive at Kaikoura where we stayed an extra day as if I remember correctly, we met Brent there as he was organising something to do with Telecom. From there we made it to the ferry at Picton to tie our bikes down again. On the ferry to Wellington and then to Tawa again. This time we travelled up the west coast stopping for three or four days at Patea with Gertie Jones and Allen and visited Roy in the home in Hawera and stayed overnight at Margaret Crompton's before going on to see George Best at Okato. I think that we stayed there for two or three days before coming home all the way in one hop. Apart from that dirty day in Dunedin we struck no rain while riding together on our bikes. Many people asked us how much rain we struck after we came home and I always took it to mean while we were riding together so told everyone we only struck twenty three and a half drops of rain as we left Gertie's place, which was pretty true. A most enjoyable trip of 7000 kilometers overall and no breakdowns in 6 weeks of travelling.

The following year we had the reunion in Picton. We left a few days early that year on our bikes again and concentrated on the Northern part of the South Island as Doris had the idea that she wanted to attack the Arthur's Pass from the Southern end so that we could say we had done that route both ways. It is not bad really but I must admit that it needs a little care to negotiate particularly in wet weather. She was heard to say several times when the subject of Arthur's Pass has cropped up that she had been there and done that both ways and launched into a rigmarole about how it appealed to her.

I think that I enjoyed that trip around the Northern part of the Island than the trip the previous year. We could not help smiling at some new chums trying to tie down their bikes on the ferries with ropes here there and elsewhere when I had got it down to a single rope on each bike while they were still looking at their ropes. I couldn't help commenting to Doris how much better we were doing after only three or four trips.

At the reunion there was a lot of discussion as to whether we should stop having any more reunions as old age was making it hard to travel the great distances some of us were forced to do and there were so few of us left to make it worth while. I had mentioned to Doris that there were only two or three of us left who were part of the early echelons the remainder being 14th to 17th reinforcements making a total of sixteen to twenty men left.

Eventually we decided to have one more reunion and make that the final one and that one was to be of all places to be held at Hawera for our last gathering. The next year came quite quickly and the motel we chose was right next door to Gordon and Frona's house where we used to go most Friday nights for supper after the shops had shut. There was only one difference to what used to be and that was that Gordon had died of cancer but Frona was still living there and when we called she really made a fuss of us. Doris has called on her a couple of times while on her trips to Patea and Frona and Gerty are only about 20 kilometers away from each other but that Reunion trip for me was the first time I had seen Frona for about 33 years so there was a lot of talking done.

On our return home after our Hawera trip we both had to admit that long distance trips on our bikes were getting a bit much for Oldies like us but local pottering around were O.K. Doris wanted one more trip to see Gerty so the following November I persuaded Doris to go in the car so I could drive to Taupo and Doris could take the car on to Patea and pick me up on the way home again. It was a most restful trip for me.

After about three or four months back home Doris started to feel off colour and was examined by one of the doctors in Beachlands who arranged for her to have a series of tests done and after a much ducking and diving, Xrays, scans, and blood tests we found that she had developed cancer of the liver which was very bad news. Doris only lasted five or six weeks after that and died quietly at 11pm. 21st. July 1995 which was a very short time after the original diagnosis. The funeral was the biggest we have ever had in Maraetai and the church was packed as was the lawn at the front of the church. She was buried in the church cemetery at Clevedon.

Up until a few months before Doris died my health hit a few low spots that led me to think that I would be the first one to pop off. The first alarm I had was a heart attack that put me in hospital for about ten days then I had a minor stroke that left me with a slightly weakened left ankle that gave me no trouble. Then a new one cropped up called Myeloma which means that the marrow is churning out too much calcium in a fine powder form that floats round in the blood stream and tends to block up the spleen, kidneys, gall bladder and anything else that works like a filter. I have to have a flush out every six weeks with a fluid called Aredia and takes about four and a half hours each time and also take a plaster of tablets that seem to get changed every time I go to Middlemore hospital as though they are still experimenting to find what suits me best. They call the tablets chemo-therapy but say they have no relation to cancer treatment. I often joke about the number of tablets I have to take and I should start a second hand chemist shop to get rid of the the rattle of tablets in my stomach.

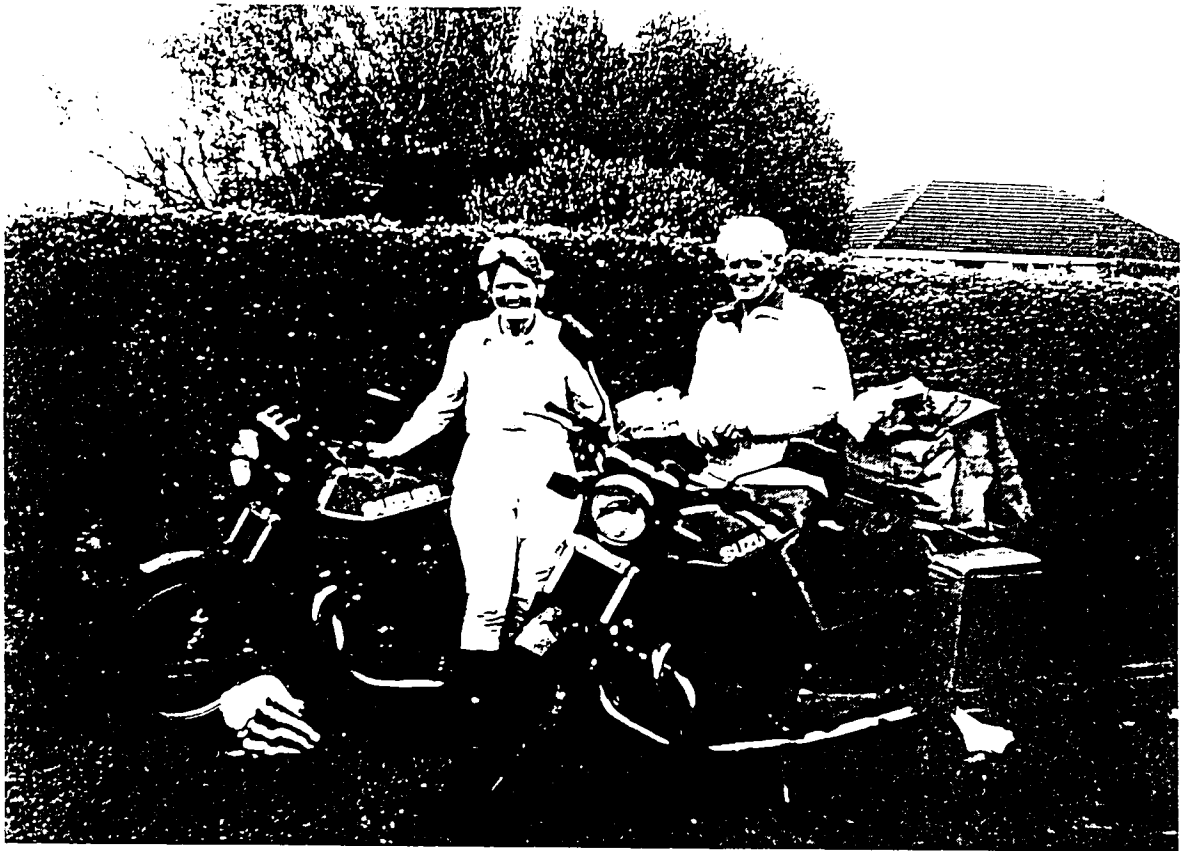
The treatment is going to last as long as I am so I will have to get used to them but I am coming to the end of telling you about my first 80 years. How much of the second 80 I will be able to tell of I do not know. We will just have to wait and see.

There are quite a few things of small interest I have not written of that I have done or have been done to me that are unimportant and the number of mistakes I have made are also reasonable for an inexperienced typist like me. I would like to have you excuse them. May be the next instalment will see some

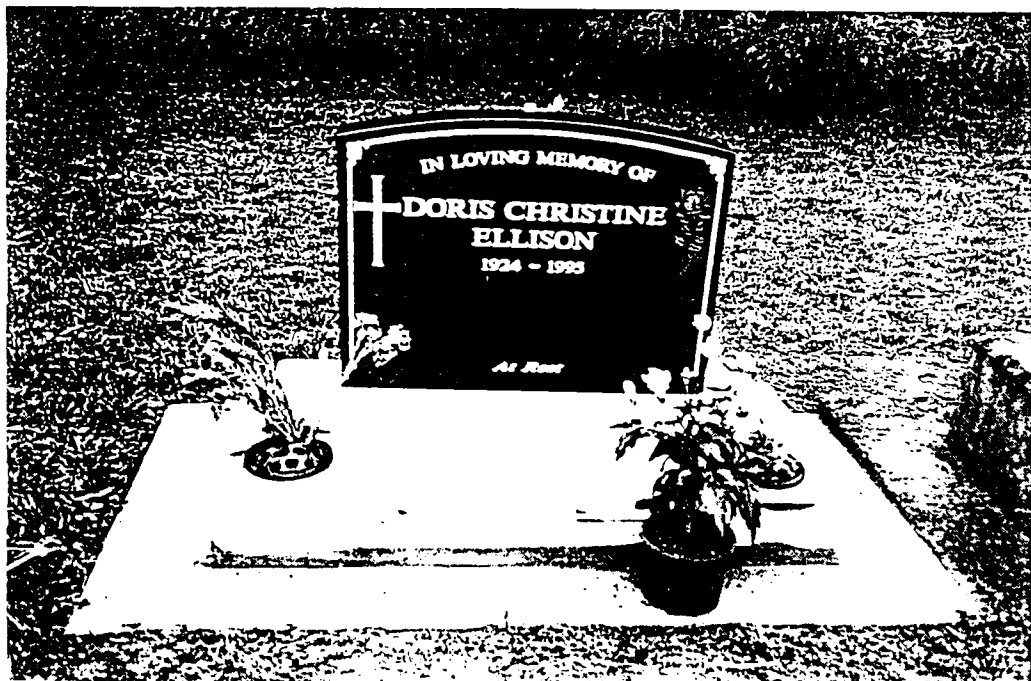
improvement. Now that I have reached the end of this I can't help thinking back over the years and now consider I have had an interesting life. There has been a mixture of all sorts, some good and some bad but the best has been the 49 years Doris and I have spent together. It has been a pity that it could not have been a bit longer but we are not able to choose our going.

The preceding pages have brought to mind many memories where they are off-shoots of the major points already written about and to include them with this would make it into a tome of much bulk and weight. All of us in my generation have known the pleasure that the country and farming areas gave to Doris and the plot in which she is interred would in many ways be like a home to her, so I will close with a short verse of which I think she would approve. Again I regret the errors and general amateur typing that you see before you.

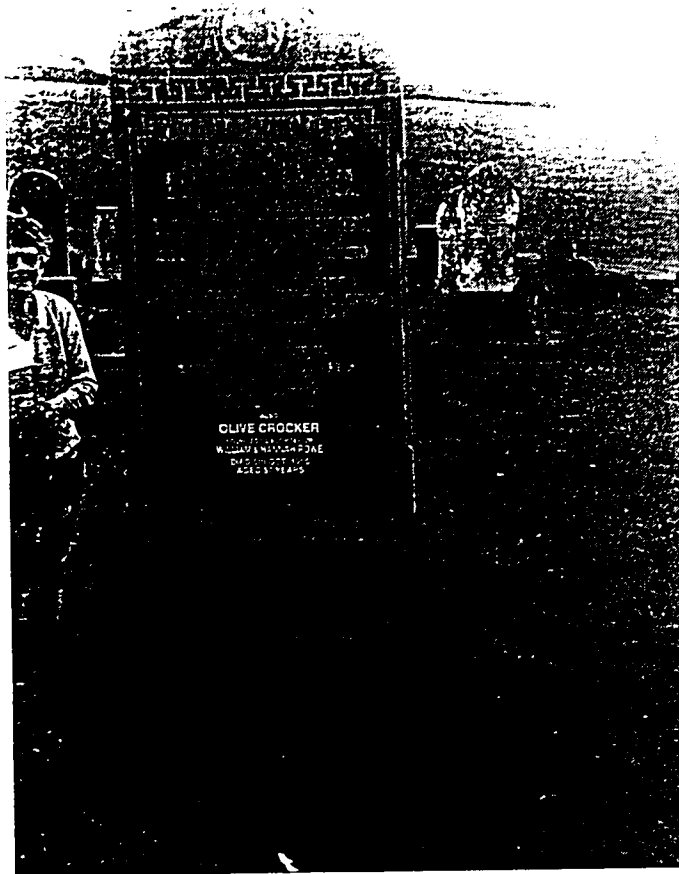
Beneath the trees
The years have swiftly flown.
The trees are bare
And I am all alone.
I'll close this book,
My book of memories
Of the one who sleeps
Beneath those trees.



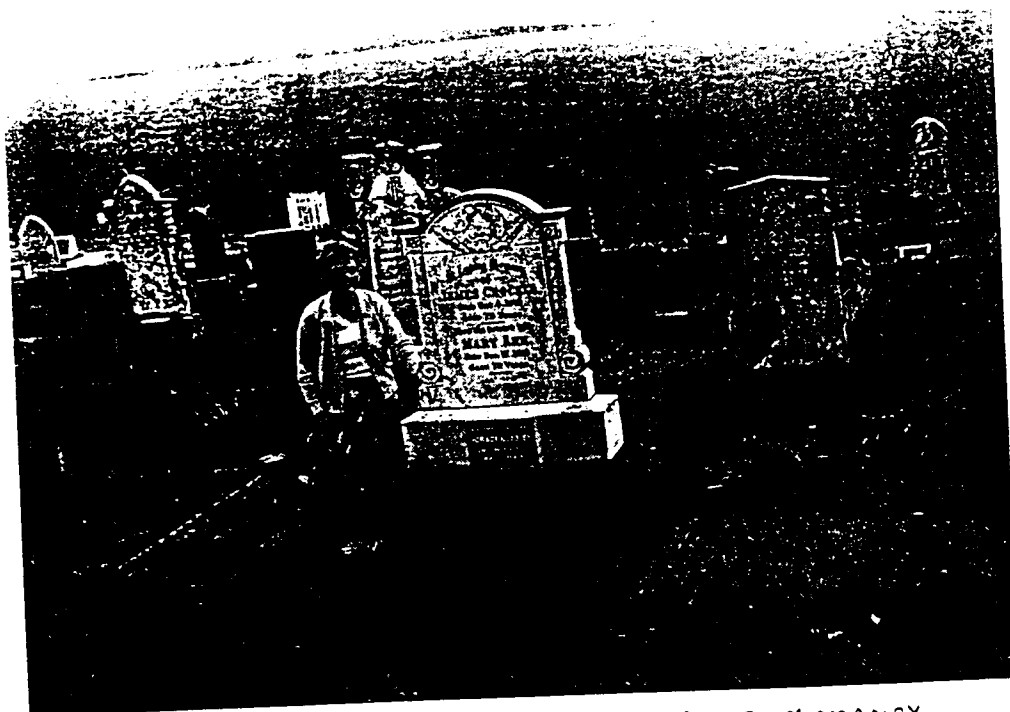
DORIS AND I RETURNING FROM SOUTH ISLAND TOUR 1985 JANUARY



DORIS AT CLEVELDON CHURCH 1995 JULY



DORIS AT HER MOTHER'S HEADSTONE, NORMANBY
ALSO HER GRANDMOTHER AND GRANDFATHER AND SOME OF
THEIR FAMILY



DORIS AT HER FATHER'S GRAVE AND HEADSTONE, NORMANBY
ALSO HER GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER