

Claudia:

*Uncle Bert; so many memories, so much farm content; so glad you are bringing him back to Hinuera for his final farewell.*

*Growing up with strong family connections, we knew of his departure for war, when he told our Dad; "I'm going to do my bit." Then we often heard the story of his ordeal in Belgium; the kind people who sheltered him; the waiting time in NZ when no one knew if he had survived the crash or not; his much later return to NZ with Auntie Gloria and the pride we all had when he was presented with the DFM at Hamilton, probably at a theatre there. We went to see the evening presentation. Pam and I must have fallen asleep, because I clearly recall being awakened to see Uncle Bert on stage receiving his medal; probably presented by the Governor General of the time.*

*On the farm, the brothers often worked together, sorting out problems of roading, water supply to paddocks; putting down bores and maintaining fences. You'd see them pacing around, scratching their heads and working out what to do next. The mannerisms were very similar.*

*When Ann came into his life, Uncle Bert was excited and proud. He met Pam & I at the Hinuera Store one Friday night and greeted us with great enthusiasm, telling us he was engaged to be married. We were fascinated, then later delighted when we met Ann and found that she was exactly the right match for him and that she fitted into the family extremely well.*

*Farm life became highly social, with visits back and forth; along with a busy farm life. Ann joined in readily, taking farming in her stride.*

*In latter years, Uncle Bert's maize field was legend. We all admired his crops, well tended and providing good return when harvested.*

*The orchard near the homestead was always full of pears for plucking in the autumn. The bounty was shared around; likewise the walnuts from the huge trees lining the driveway to the homestead.*

*Uncle Bert was always ready to help when things went wrong; he'd lend his car if ours was not roadworthy; he'd be ready with a tractor to pull out a stranded or mud-bound vehicle. All this was done with a generous spirit; and a smile or a joke along the way.*

*We loved him as "the perfect uncle" really without knowing or acknowledging it; he was always there; approachable, cheerful and accepting. Driving to the farm in quite recent times, I'd see him on his tractor; we would both stop for a chat at the end of his drive or at his maize field where he worked a lot. Later at the Mount when we visited; he'd be keen to know what we were doing in our lives and always a great host, along with Ann's hospitable welcome to all comers.*

*The era has passed; the good memories remain; we cherish those years of our knowing Uncle Bert; we honour him and his work in our world. It's right that we journey back to Hinuera to do this.*

*Diana Pond Burslem 2017*