

1. This is such a big forest. The tall trees are like Silver Christmas Trees. The branches reach out wide near the bottom and get shorter and shorter up to the top. I like these long silver leaves and the little silver balls along the branches. Now what is this? A long, pretty green thing that moves. The front part is stuck on the branch, then there is a hump, then the back part is stuck on the branch. Goodness me the front part is moving, what looks like fat legs are moving along the branch and the hump is getting flat, now the back end is catching up again and the hump going up.

I look ahead, I'm so far behind the others, in this big forest.

"Wait for me" I cry out with a sob.

My father is holding my older sister's hand; she is a year and a half older than me. His right hand is holding the hand of the sister two years younger than me, her right hand is held by my Mother who has my eight month old baby sister held on her right hip. I must have been nearly four years old and this is my first real memory.

I've always needed to know what this is, why does it do that, what's it called, So many questions to be answered. I'm always by myself, everyone else is getting up to the house but they are not seeing all these lovely things. The tears are dropping down my face as I run to catch up. Dad turns to wait for me as I sob "aren't I awful for crying." I am not asking a question, I'm really just stating that I'm not really crying; it's just happening.

It was years later that I realized my glistening leafed Christmas trees were Fat Hen weeds with lime-green caterpillars living and feeding on them; they would become chrysalises for a period then emerge as white butterflies. Fascinating! And this was life; this was nature, doing what it was supposed to be doing.

It was 1936; my parents had bought this twelve and a half acre block of bare land and planted an apple orchard in 1931. The trees were only slightly bigger than the weeds at this time; I wouldn't have been able to see the trees from my height and probably would not have known the difference.

2. I believe me and my three sisters had amazing parents: they were born in the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they lived through the 1<sup>st</sup> world war, the disastrous 'flu epidemic of 1917-18, the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war, the world wide depression that followed and began their lives together during that period. They bought land to plant an orchard and built a 2 room dwelling which over time became a three bedroom home with kitchen, bathroom, large living-dining room, sitting room, a veranda, terrace and wash house. They built a large fruit packing shed and installed a fruit grader. This shed also housed the spray outfit, the orchard truck and their first motor car, an Austin Six deluxe. Mum and Dad had bucket seats in the front while us four girls sat in the back seat.

Dad had a fruit packing gang and a sheep shearing gang while the apple orchard came into production. Later Mum and us four girls became part of the gang after we had learned to pack apples in the wooden 40lb boxes Dad made during the winter months. These boxes were required for marketing local and exported fruit. Dad tipped the apples on the grader hopper for Mum to grade and also nailed up and stacked the packed cases of apples ready to be labeled for appropriate markets. We were all paid the contract rate for our work the same as employed labor. We all saved our money and were able later to buy our own BSA bicycles to ride the three miles to High School and our places of work, the tennis club, basket ball practice, piano or dancing lessons, Red Cross training, Bible Class or whatever.

Our parents bought a book on tennis and Dad laid a tennis court, made the net as he had made a fish hauling net with a shuttle and fishing line. We all learned to play tennis from Dad learning it from the book they had bought. We asked friends to come on a Sunday to play tennis with us all. Dad would pick the strawberries while one of us biked to the little shop for a half gallon jar of ice cream for afternoon tea. Dad kept a dairy cow in the paddock at the bottom of the orchard - which we all learned to milk by hand into the large milk bucket- the milk was separated and the cream used on our porridge and desserts, the skim milk being fed to the pig. So afternoon tea on tennis days was strawberries, fresh cream and ice cream. Much enjoyed by everyone. I became very proficient at tennis and gained runner-up to the secondary school champion. After we started working my elder sister and I joined the Hastings tennis club. I was chosen to represent Hawke's Bay as one of the Junior Team. We received coaching from Dan Smith who was a New Zealand Champion Player. I loved the game and went on to play A Grade for Hastings Club and after I was married the Havelock North Club. I played every Saturday afternoon for many years and when my children were old enough to play I coached Junior Tennis on a Saturday morning. After I retired and before I bought my Motor Home Bus at age seventy I was playing three times a week.

We often went fishing early morning and cooked our schnapper on the beach for breakfast then home to pick apples. Dad's clinker row boat was kept at Awatoto shingle pit where my uncle was manager. After hauling in the net Dad would tie one rope onto the boat and us four girls would row out behind the breakers and dive off the boat having a lovely swim before breakfast. We also went fishing round the beach with lines. We circled them round our heads several times then let it go out behind the breakers. We held the line over our fingers and when it jerked would pull it steadily in to shore, hand over hand. We made the sinkers from lead melted down from old batteries into a mold we shaped in the soil with a staple set in the top.

We all learned to drive the spray outfit for Dad to spray the trees. He stood on a board platform behind the vat of spray with the spray gun and sprayed as we drove between the rows of trees. I think we could all change a vehicle tire and mend a puncture, back up to the artesian well to fill the spray tank and crank the engine to start it. We had no brothers so simply accepted doing these things. I feel sure none of us viewed males as any different to ourselves. We just learned and did what was required.

3. The Hawke's Bay A&P –Agricultural and Pastoral – Shows were held at the Tomoana show grounds in Hastings each year. My father entered in the apple section. Mum in the baking, preserving and jam sections. I made miniature gardens and sand posies made on saucers, I think we all entered in the cut flowers for the most perfect blooms and flower arrangements, ladies sprays and button holes. I have award cards I received for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in these sections.

I would sit and watch the Highland dancing competitions for as long as I could. The family would go and see other things and leave me to watch coming back to collect me later. I just loved the music, the rhythms and the movements. My mother tried to find a teacher so I could learn. There was no one at that time so she talked with Jean Ballantyne who taught dancing and she suggested learning tap dancing. Mum enrolled my older sister and I. Mum with us 4 small children caught the bus that traveled between Napier and Hastings at the end of our road at Karamu into Hastings. We then walked to Miss Ballantyne's studio. I loved it. At the end of that year she had her annual dance recital in the beautiful Municipal Theatre in Hastings. We both danced on the stage in front of all the people in the stalls, dress circle and gallery. I enjoyed it as I did with anything I learned.

Miss Ballantyne suggested my next younger sister by 2 years could go to a ballet class, and me to a general class as well as the tap class as it would be on a Saturday morning and I would be taking my sister on the bus. My parents couldn't afford to pay for all that as the orchard was not in full production so Miss Ballantyne said I could go to that class without further payment. It was wonderful for me. From the age of eight when asked what "I was going to be when I grew up?" I would reply 'a dancing teacher or a hairdresser'.

My cousin who was much older, where I spent some school holidays was a hairdresser. She had taught me how to wash and set hair.

I became both of these after I finished school

I taught Royal Academy of Dancing Ballet, National Character and others for 50 years. I produced many dance recitals, Fashion shows, Large and small, Adjudicated at competitions, produced men's Ballets and choreographed many stage shows, Performed in shows and plays. A friend Tony Helpin and I opened the first Hairdressing salon at Flaxmere. Hastings when the suburb was first opened up. I did all the cutting, men, women and children while Tony did the shampooing, perming and colouring. I have always cut my own hair and still do at 79 years of age. I sat my Ballet examinations under Jean Ballantyne and gained Honor passes and was awarded a silver button for the highest marks in the studio. A horseshoe and anchor charms were added the following 2 years. I took my Major examinations under Constance MacDonald and then became a Tutor with her. I tutored classes in Hastings, Napier Clive, Marewa, Haumoana and Waipukurau.