

So you want a new tennis racket.

This is a story about conditions for teen ages in the early 1940s

During the longer summer holidays, earning a few bob was a priority. It was wartime and luxuries were out. Mr Greening had a couple of glass houses full of tomatoes and occasionally there was chance of a job there.

All the land around Haumoana was owned by Mr Derek van Ash, he actually gave the paddock which became Haumoana Memorial Park. Harvesting rye grass seed was common. He had adapted a combine harvester to be self propelled, I got a job sitting on the front using a hayfork to make sure the pick up worked okay. All his gear was Allis-Chamers, some paddocks had not yet been mown, and there was a brand new tractor with mower mounted sitting nearby, he gave me some lessons and the next thing I was mowing the next paddock. What a thrill for me, I would have been about 14 or 15. I think I was being paid 2/6d an hour. But I thought it was one of my boyhood thrills.

During the war there was one episode that happened that was very unusual. One of the local lads Blake Scott was in the Air Force doing fighter pilot training at Ohakea base. He appeared over Haumoana one day and proceeded to shoot up the place. I can remember him flying low over the lagoon next to our place in his Kittyhawk and then shooting high into the sky. Sadly he was killed a few minutes later he clipped a tree not far from Taihape and crashed. I imagine those pilots had a lot of daredevil in them.

As we got older we got more venturesome. If the weather was good and the tides right we might decide to go out to Cape Kidnappers and camp overnight. We would bike along the beach when the tide was fairly well out and get there quite quickly. At that stage the cape was very rat infested and keeping your food intact was quite an operation, sometimes we would try fishing or going out on Black Reef looking for seaeggs, you had to be very mindful of the state of the tide when on the low lying rocks. In those days there was no such things as getting permits to go. On one occasion when returning from the cape, the family knew when we were coming back, they and some visitors walked a little way under the bluffs to meet us, there was quite a big earthquake and I will always remember one lady in her fur coat running into the sea to escape falling rocks.

Fishing at the Tuki Tuki mouth was a pretty popular thing to do. Kahawai were very common there, the little boys would fish for herrings, the older boys would be trying to catch larger fish. At certain times of the year shoals of Kahawai would form just off the river mouth, if you could get in the middle of the shoal in a boat, it wasn't unknown to stun a fish by just bashing the water with an oar. The keen types always dreamed of hooking a kingfish when the kahawai were shoaling. I think they are a great fighting fish when hooked on a rod. Artie Hay a well known fisherman used to go out further in his boat and hooked a large

thresher shark, they had to play it for hours before boating it. He used to sail in and out of the Tuki mouth

Flooding of parts of Haumoana were quite common before the flood banks were finished, in the big ones the water was not very far from the decking on the old wooden bridge. That bridge became a great problem as traffic got denser. It only had a passing section in the middle and jams and arguments followed. Eventually lights were installed years later and then a big new concrete bridge was built. Many a motorcyclist came to grief on the old wooden bridge on frosty mornings. In our secondary school days we biked from Haumoana to Clive and caught a Railway Services bus to Napier , leaving our bikes at Georgie Thornton' home, he had the drapery store at Clive. It was a great occasion when I got a new adult sized bike, my father bought two, one for me and one for Bob he paid the princely sum of eight pounds ten shillings each. They were the Phillips brand, I wanted a BSA!!! We eventually keep the concrete tennis court swept and I had a set of roller scates which were good on the court. We were a very lucky family somehow my family had a few bob during those depression years.

The war seemed to last a long time and it took a heavy toll on Haumoana community.