

So Many Memories

Edna (nee Bryan) Roberston



When I left school I went to work at Ellison & Duncan's, a wholesale merchant at Port Ahuriri.

My job was shorthand typist and book-keeping machinist. One day taking out orders for the store a workmate said to me –“Come and see my Brother – Norman!”

He had just come down from Tutira and was SINGLE.

When Albert told me that Norman worked in the country, I said “that was no good to me”, as he did not come into town that often.

I joined the Athletics Club and played indoor basketball for Williams and Kettle at the Drill Hall. One year later I was lucky enough to be chosen to play for the Hawkes Bay Team and went to the New Zealand Championships. That was a great time of my life.

A couple of years later I went to a 21st birthday party with a friend from the Athletics Club. At this 21st I met a guy called Norman Robertson. It turned out to be Albert's brother.

We had a number of dances together, but the friend I went with was not very happy with me.

The next day Norman and myself had arranged to meet. We found we had a great attraction for each other and 2 months later we became engaged and married a year later.

I went to live in a caravan as Norman was an Agriculture Contractor.

We lived where the work was, but it had to be near clean water.

We carried our water in Kerosene tins and collected firewood for our cute little coal range. It was green with a white fleck and stood on 4 legs. It was a great little stove, it warmed the caravan in the winter, cooked all our meals and even baked cakes in the oven.

Time marched on and one year later our first son Larry was born. What a night! It had been raining for over a week and the track was very greasy. It was midnight and I woke Norman to say it was time to head for the McCurdy Maternity Home.

Well, the Austin A40 truck could not get up the track. Norman rushed back and brought the crawler tractor. Hello, not tow rope! Back he goes again and cuts down my clothes line. By this stage the truck had spun around and was facing the wrong way. Norman coupled the tractor to the truck and I had to steer the truck going backwards, but we finally got to the back road. Of course in those days the back roads were just metal and I think we struck every pot hole. We arrived in Napier at Mum and Dad's at breakfast time. We stayed until about 12 noon and then went to the Nursing home. Larry was born soon after, healthy and well, none of the wiser of what had gone on before.

One day it blew a gale and the lean-to of the caravan came off it's foundation. Over went the chemical toilet! What a mess to clean up. We had a galvanized bath tub and whenever we could we had a bath, outside of course.

We lived in the caravan until Larry was about 1 year old and built a small house at Tutira. We had a bath, copper tubs and a room for our chemical toilet. We had a very large living area, a small passage and into the caravan, which we turned into a bedroom.

The electric power came through just after we built. What excitement. We bought an electric stove and a washing machine, which fell over on the back of the truck and chipped off some of the enamel.

We had a kerosene fridge and coming home one day the wick in the fridge had gone haywire and our ceiling was covered in soot that looked like cobwebs. The next trip to town we bought a fridge-freezer.

We used to visit a lot of people in the area and one day a farmers wife was icing a wedding cake. I was very interested in this type of such fine work. It made me twiddle a lot with icing.

We were now having our 2nd son Ian (We lost Ian at the age of 20 years. He was a beaut person who was taken too early in his life).

Norman now sold his business and we shifted to Waikoau where we built a house and bought 40 head of cattle, 200 breeding ewes, we had a pig, 2 cows, chooks and geese. This was a great life. We made our own butter and had a huge vegetable garden that was self contained.

We had a big vegetable garden at Tutira as well. We fed lambs and calves from time to time. After the calves grew to about a year old, one being a bull, he got out of the paddock and bailed the children up in the bus shed. We managed to get him back in the paddock and telling Norman about it later, he said what a lot of nonsense. On the Saturday morning Norman was clearing some blackberry out of the dam paddock. The bull came rushing at him, his eyes red. There was one only tree in this area and guess who made a new record climbing it! On Monday morning it was a trip to the works.

The school bus service was stopped at this time and by now Ian had started school. We bought a lovely horse called TipToes and the boys rode the 2 miles to school each day and home again at night. At the top of the hills near our house was a heap of saw dust. Each night the boys had to make a quick jump off, as Tiptoes would have a roll in it.

On going back over the years I forgot to mention when I was at the Napier Intermediate School some of us chose to have a pen-pal from Australia. My pen-pal was called Merle Wardle (her maiden name) and we are still writing today. It has now been 69 years. Merle and her husband Russell Steinhardt came over to New Zealand and it was great to meet them. A few years later we went over to their wheat farm in Australia and that made us even closer. Merle calls me her New Zealand sister.

I took in sewing and made dresses for farmers' wives and their daughters too.

Even a wedding dress for a friend. Dianne, our daughter was born about 8 months before we left Waikoau. Norman hurt his back, so we sold up once more and bought the Bay View General Store. The boys were still bus boys. Larry going to Napier Boys' High School, and Ian to Westshore Primary

School. It was hard work at the shop, and I was still trying my hand at making and icing cakes, plus working full time in the shop. At long weekends the baker would come at about midnight with a van full of bread. We then stayed up and did all the Country Peoples' bread orders. The next morning the trucks came and picked it up for their destination.

After 5 years we once more sold up and came back to Napier. Soon after Norman went back to the bush and bought a Logging business.

I finally took to icing and often baked cakes and was employed full time at Peros Umbrella Factory. I was a Floor Walker, designed and costed rubber dingies, back packs, tote bags etc.

The girls there often got me to ice their 21st birthday cakes. Some nights I would be up until after midnight icing. When our son got married I made our daughter- in -laws Wedding Dress and Bridesmaid Dresses.



I did the same for our daughter Dianne. I made all their cakes and iced them too.



(Dianne's beautiful wedding dress and cake pictured)

Sometime after we shifted back to Napier, we bought a batch in Taupo and a new boat we named "Big Norm". We caught many trout over the years of holidaying in Taupo of which we gave away a lot and bottled a lot. One year I won the prize for the best conditioned trout by a female and guess what, my prize was a 3 litre tin of oil for the boat.

The bookwork and men's wages for Norman's business was all done by me. Once Norman retired we knitted for the Red Cross for a few years as Norman had learnt to knit at France House as a young lad. (It was a home for boys without parents).

We also bought a Motor Home and for 20 years we did trips all around New Zealand. We did a lot of fishing using a Kon-Tiki, a wind one, an electric one and finally we bought a GPS one.

We caught Gurnard (my favourite fish), Snapper, Kawhai, Red Cod, Shark, Stingrays and lots more. We played golf at the Napier Golf Club for a number of years. Even in our Motor Home we took our golf clubs and played at courses all over New Zealand.

Well our son Larry and his wife Maureen had 4 children and they now have 6 grandchildren. Larry has his own fencing business in Taupo and employs 10 staff, plus runs their 120 hectares of land. Maureen is a practising nurse at Taupo Medical Centre.

My daughter Dianne and her husband Paul had 2 children, but they are a lot younger. Tiffany, their daughter is at Auckland University studying Electrical Engineering and their son Nathan is in the 6th form at Napier Boys' High School. Dianne is a Teacher Aide at Taradale Primary School working with Special Needs Children and Paul is the Manager of Electrotech (an electrical contracting firm).

We now live in Taradale and have had 62 wonderful years together.

Memories are forever and no one can take them away from you.

Edna Robertson