

EDITED VERSION OF THE ADDRESS GIVEN BY RAY HAYCOCK, OF THE UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO MR.AND MRS. SHAW, AT THE ESKDALE MEMORIAL CHURCH, ON THE 1ST JUNE 1980.

REV. PYEWELL, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, EX. BOYS OF FRANCE HOUSE, MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION. THIS IS SUCH A SPECIAL OCCASION,I WILL TREAT YOU ALL AS ONE FAMILY.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO ADDRESS THE BOYS.

NONE OF US SHOULD EVER FEEL INFERIOR, OR THAT THE WORLD OWES US SOMETHING.

JUST BECAUSE YOU WERE BROUGHT UP A "HOME KID" DOESN'T MAKE YOU INFERIOR TO ANY MAN,

YOU ARE AS GOOD AS THE BEST, AND CAN ASPIRE TO THE HIGHEST STATIONS IN LIFE. IT'S ALL OVER TO YOU.

MY HUMBLE THANKS FOR ASKING ME TO MAKE THIS ADDRESS ON YOUR BEHALF .I STARTED OFF WITH SEVERAL ROUGH DRAFTS, AND FINALLY, SOME WRITTEN SHEETS, WHICH I TRUST YOU WILL FIND INTERESTING. I WILL TRY TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE I KNOW IS IN YOUR HEARTS, BUT BEFORE THIS I MUST THANK THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS DAY, IT MEANS SO MUCH ,TO SO MANY OF US.

A SPECIAL THANKS MUST GO TO MISS DOROTHY KIRKHAM, WHO WILL OFFICIATE FOR US AT THE "UNVEILING CEREMONY".

THE RECORDS SHOW THAT FRANCE HOUSE OPENED IN 1924, WITH AN INTAKE OF 19 BOYS FROM GORDON HOUSE, IN NAPIER. ONE OF THESE BOYS WAS A YOUNG 9 YEAR OLD, BILL NANT. I UNDERSTAND BILL IS PRESENT HERE TODAY, A GREAT DAY FOR HIM. FOR THE FIRST 11 YEARS , THE PHILLIPS FAMILY WERE IN CHARGE, AND WHAT STALWARTS THEY MUST HAVE BEEN, COPING WITH THE FLOOD IN 1924, AND THE EARTHQUAKE IN 1931 .I AM TOLD MRS. PHILLIP'S DAUGHTER, MRS. E KIRKHAM IS WITH US, OUR THANKS, FOR WE ARE INDEBTED TO HER FOR MUCH OF THE HISTORY OF THOSE EARLY YEARS.

THE ORIGINAL TWO STORY STRUCTURE, WAS DESTROYED IN THE EARTHQUAKE, AND REPLACED BY THE BUILDING WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH, IN 1933. FROM 1924, UNTIL IT'S CLOSURE IN 1973, THE BOYS AT FRANCE HOUSE CAME UNDER THE

CARE OF SIX DIFFERENT FAMILIES, THE LONGEST SERVING OF THESE BEING MR.AND MRS . SHAW, FROM 1937 TO 1956.

OTHERS WHO SERVED THERE WERE MR AND MRS MORGAN,56 TO 67,

MR AND MRS BAXTER, 67 TO 71 .

MR AND MRS MEAGAN, 71 TO 73.

AND MR AND MRS RHODES, UNTIL THE CLOSING, THAT SAME YEAR.

EACH OF THESE FAMILIES PLAYED THEIR PART IN THE MOULDING OF THE BOYS LIVES, THEIR WORK AT FRANCE COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT THE SELFLESS DEVOTION OF THE OTHER STAFF MEMBERS. FOUR OF THEM ARE PRESENT TODAY. THEY ARE MISS DOROTHY KIRKHAM, MISS BARBARA TYLER, MISS MAJOR, NOW MRS IRONSIDE, AND MRS DOROTHY GOLDSACK.

NO MENTION OF FRANCE HOUSE CAN BE MADE WITHOUT ASSOCIATING WITH IT, THE NAME OF SKIP ABSOLUM, OUR SCOUTMASTER. WHAT A MAN, A DEVOTED SCOUTER, SO PATIENT, AND RESILIENT AS THEY COME. A SPECIAL BREED OF MAN, HE WHO COULD COPE WITH SO MANY, FOR SO LONG, AND SURVIVE TO BE WITH US TODAY. REMEMBER THOSE CAMPS, RISSINGTON, TUTIRA? AND IF ANYONE RECKONS THEIR PATROL WAS BETTER THAN THE TUIS, THEN I WILL TALK TO THEM LATER.

OF THE STAFF I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION ONE SPECIAL NAME, MISS ANDERSON THE COOK. SHE USED TO MAKE US WHISTLE WHEN WE ENTERED HER PANTRY, HUH, THIS DIDN'T STOP US FROM PINCHING THE DATES THOUGH! WE ROLLED THEM IN OUR SLEEVES! USEFUL THINGS TO A BOY ARE SLEEVES; GOOD FOR WIPING YOUR NOSE, OR TO SPIT THAT HORRIBLE RANCID COD-LIVER OIL INTO, ONCE THE MATRON'S BACK WAS TURNED. A FEW BITTER TURNIP TOPS WENT INTO MINE AS WELL. I REMEMBER SOMEONE MUST HAVE SPAT THEIR'S ONTO THE FLOOR, AND MRS SHAW SLIPPED AND GOT A BLACK EYE! WE DIDN'T HAVE TURNIP TOPS FOR A LONG TIME, AFTER THAT.

NO HISTORY OF FRANCE HOUSE CAN BE COMPLETE, WITHOUT MENTIONING THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, PARTICULARLY THOSE RESIDENT IN THE VALLEY, AND MORE PARTICULARLY, THOSE FROM " HEDGELY" EVERY BOY SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO THEM, AND I TRUST IS SHOWING IT BY HIS Demeanour, AS HE TRAVELS THROUGH LIFE.

THESE NOTES WILL HAVE PROVIDED SOME OF THE STATISTICAL HISTORY OF FRANCE HOUSE, BUT THE TRUE HISTORY OF FRANCE HOUSE , THE REAL LIVING HISTORY OF FRANCE HOUSE, IS CONTAINED IN THE HEARTS AND MEMORIES OF THE MANY HUNDREDS OF BOYS, WHO HAVE PASSED THROUGH IT'S DOORS. MANY

OF THESE BOYS ARE HERE TODAY, TO BEAR WITNESS TO THIS IMPORTANT EVENT, AND I AM PRIVILEGED TO SPEAK ON THEIR BEHALF.

WHAT I MUST MAKE PERFECTLY CLEAR, IS THAT THE PERSONAL STORIES I HAVE TO TELL, ARE SIMILAR TO HUNDREDS OF STORIES THAT COULD BE TOLD BY OTHER BOYS, EACH TALE REVEALING THE REAL HISTORY OF FRANCE HOUSE, THE ADOLESCENT LIVES OF THE BOYS THEMSELVES. AND TO WHAT FRANCE HOUSE ,AND THE STAFF ,MEANT TO THEM, THROUGH THE DIFFERENT DECADES.

WHEN I DRIVE THROUGH THIS VALLEY, IT BRINGS BACK A KALEIDOSCOPE OF MEMORIES, CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF THIS VALLEY, IT'S PEOPLE, THEIR WORK.

I RECALL THE SMELL OF LUCERNE HAY, THE SWISH OF THE SCYTHE, THE NOISE OF SHEEP BEING MUSTERED, THE BITING FLIES AT MILKING. I THINK OF ALGY THE DRAKE, ARCHIE AND GILBERT OUR BULLS, LOFTY AND JEAN OUR HORSES, AND THE SALTY TASTE FROM SWEATING, WHILST STRAINING TO KEEP THE PLOUGH UPRIGHT, BEHIND A HEAVING HORSE. I HEAR THE LAUGHTER, THE CRIES, AND ALL THE MYRIAD NOISES OF BOYS AT PLAY. I THINK OF THE PEOPLE THAT LIVED HERE, NAMES WHICH COME EASILY TO MIND, ARE BEATTIE, CLARK, BLAIR, SMITH, KIRKHAM, GOLDSACK, YULE , ELLIS, AND OLD WAIKATO, WHO SEEMED AS OLD AS THE VALLEY ITSELF, TO US YOUNG BOYS. THERE ARE MANY MORE, EACH CONTRIBUTING TO THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY,

VISITORS TO THE VALLEY WOULD HAVE NOTICED TWO PROMINENT FEATURES, THIS CHURCH, AND THE WATER TOWER , AT FRANCE HOUSE. THAT TOWER WAS ONCE A SYMBOL OF FEAR IN THE HEART OF MANY A BOY, LATER TO BE A MONUMENT TO HIS COURAGE, AS HE CONQUERED IT'S HEIGHT. I REMEMBER MY OWN DESPERATE ATTEMPTS, AS A 10 YEAR OLD BOY, TO HIDE MY PARALYZING FEAR, AS I MADE MY WAY TO THE TOP.

THIS CHURCH FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN THE LIVES OF THE COMMUNITY, IT IS A MEMORIAL CHURCH , DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE BEATTIE FAMILY, OF HEDGELY. IT IS HERE THAT THE FAMILIES OF THE VALLEY CAME TO WORSHIP, ANGLICANS ONE SUNDAY, PRESBYTERIANS THE NEXT. I WONDER IF THIS IS STILL SO? A LARGE PROPORTION OF THIS CONGREGATION, WAS MADE UP WITH BOYS FROM FRANCE HOUSE. THEY WERE EASILY RECOGNIZED BY THEIR SHORT HAIRCUTS, AND THE DISTINCTIVE TIES THEY WORE.

IN AN ENDEAVOUR TO PRESENT A SHORT HISTORY OF FRANCE HOUSE, AS I KNEW IT, AND OF THE TWO PEOPLE WHOSE MEMORY WE CELEBRATE TODAY, I WILL RELATE TO YOU SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THESE TWO PEOPLE, AND MY 14 YEARS , IN THE CARE OF THE HAWKES BAY CHILDRENS HOMES.

IT WAS IN 1929 , AS A THREE YEAR OLD BOY, THAT MY SIX SISTERS AND I, WERE TAKEN FROM ELSTHORPE, TO NAPIER. MY SISTERS GOING TO THE GIRLS HOME, RANDALL HOUSE, AND I TO THE BOY'S HOME, GORDON HOUSE.

APART FROM THE FRIGHTENING EXPERIENCE OF THE EARTHQUAKE, SOME HAPPY MEMORIES OF THE TWELVE MONTHS SPENT ON MOTOUHI ISLAND IN AUCKLAND WHILST THE HOME WAS BEING REBUILT, I CANNOT REMEMBER ANYTHING OF GREATER IMPORTANCE HAPPENING, BEFORE THAT WONDERFUL DAY IN 1936, WHEN I WAS OLD ENOUGH TO BE TRANSFERRED TO FRANCE HOUSE IN ESKDALE, THE DREAM OF EVERY BOY IN GORDON HOUSE.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS OCCASION IN MY LIFE, CERTAINLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY 21ST. BIRTHDAY, WHICH I CELEBRATED WHILST SERVING WITH THE ARMY, IN JAPAN. I HAD AT LAST ATTAINED THE ASPIRATIONS OF EVERY BOY AT GORDON HOUSE, TO BECOME A FRANCE HOUSE BOY, A MILESTONE THAT HAD TAKEN EONS TO ARRIVE.

THE MASTER AND MATRON AT FRANCE HOUSE WERE MR AND MRS TURNER, A KINDLY ENOUGH COUPLE, BUT WHO HAD, UNFORTUNATELY, LOST DISCIPLINARY CONTROL, AND WITH THIS, THE RESPECT OF THE FARM BOYS. NEWS SOON SPREAD THAT THEY WERE TO LEAVE, AND BE REPLACED BY A MR AND MRS SHAW. WE WERE TOLD THAT MRS SHAW HAD BEEN A NURSING SISTER , AND THAT MR. SHAW, WAS A TOUGH EX SOLDIER.

I REMEMBER THE DAY OF THEIR ARRIVAL, IT WAS IN 1937, AND EVERY VANTAGE POINT HAD BEEN SAVAGELY FOUGHT FOR, EACH BOY ANXIOUS TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THEM IN THEIR FORD 10 CAR, WITH THEIR DOG TOBY, A SCOTCH TERRIER, LEANING OUT THE WINDOW.

SHE DOESN'T LOOK TOO CRABBY, SOMEONE SAID, AND, HE'S BIG ALRIGHT, FOLLOWED BY RAUCOUS LAUGHTER, AS WE SPOTTED HIS BALD HEAD AS HE DOFFED HIS HAT. FROM THAT DAY ON HE WAS AFFECTIONATELY REFERRED TO, AS "OLD BALDY," BEHIND HIS BACK OF COURSE.

IT WAS SOON EVIDENT THERE WOULD BE A SHOWDOWN, WITH THE OLDER FARM BOYS. MRS SHAW BACKED UP HER REQUESTS FOR OBEDIENCE, WITH A QUINCE STICK, OF WHICH SHE SEEMED TO HAVE AN UNENDING SUPPLY, AND WHICH SHE COULD WIELD VERY EFFECTIVELY. MR SHAW ADMINISTERED HIS PUNISHMENT WITH A 2"STRAP, WHILST HOLDING YOUR HEAD IN A VICELIKE GRIP, BETWEEN HIS KNEES. I CAN HONESTLY SAY, THAT EVERY STRAPPING I RECEIVED, I FULLY DESERVED, AND LAUGHED AT THE ONE'S I GOT AWAY WITH.

INEVITABLY THERE WAS A FURTHER CONFRONTATION WITH THE FARM BOYS, WHICH ENDED WITH THE FARM BOYS RUNNING AWAY, INEVITABLY TO RETURN, AND TAKE THEIR PUNISHMENT.

UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES ,EVERY HEALTHY YOUNG BOY CAN THINK UP AND PERFORM, ENOUGH MISCHIEF TO TRY THE PATIENCE OF A SAINT, BUT TURN YOUR BACK ON 30 ANGELIC FACED BOYS, AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS, IN NO TIME A SEETHING MASS OF BODIES, PUNCHING, SQUEALING, AND KICKING. IT'S REALLY HARD TO IMAGINE, ISN'T IT, THAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY ENJOYED, LOOKING AFTER THAT LOT!!!

SOMETHING OF THE CHARACTER OF THESE TWO PEOPLE, WAS THAT THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL IN MOULDING THE LIVES, AND CHARACTERS, OF SO MANY BOYS, AS WELL AS , WITH THE BOYS, MANAGING THE 50 ACRE FARM UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES. YET, WE THE BOYS RESPECTED THEM, AND THE DISCIPLINE. I SUPPOSE THIS RESPECT WAS HELPED ALONG BY THEIR PHILOSOPHY, THAT A PAT ON THE BACK BUILDS CHARACTER, IF DELIVERED LOW ENOUGH, AND HARD ENOUGH.

I CAN REMEMBER A CERTAIN INCIDENT WHICH HELPED WITH THE BUILDING OF MY OWN CHARACTER. I HAD BEEN WRESTLING AROUND WITH AN OLDER BOY, AND WAS BEING HELD ON THE GROUND BY HIM SITTING ON MY STOMACH, AND PINNING MY HANDS ABOVE MY HEAD. I SUPPOSE I CALLED HIM SOMETHING NASTY, I DON'T REMEMBER, BUT I DO REMEMBER HIS FIST SMASHING DOWN ONTO MY NOSE, BRINGING FORTH A GUSH OF BLOOD, AND A FLOOD OF TEARS. I MUST EXPLAIN HERE THAT WE WERE TAUGHT NEVER TO HIT ANYONE, WHILST DOWN. MR SHAW WAS QUITE STRICT ON THIS.

I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT PUNCH, NOT ONLY FOR THE BLOOD NOSE, BUT FOR BEING TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF, AND BEING HIT WHILST DOWN. MY LOUD YELLS OF PAIN AND, SEEING SO MUCH BLOOD, SENT MY ANTAGONIST RUNNING, THIS BROUGHT MRS. SHAW QUICKLY TO THE SCENE. I Poured OUT MY TALE OF SORROW IN THE MOST HURT MANNER IMAGINABLE, FULLY EXPECTING HER TO CATCH THE CULPRIT, AND GIVE HIM HIS JUST DESERTS. YOU MAY IMAGINE MY DISAPPOINTMENT, AND MY SELF PITY, WHEN ALL SHE SAID WAS: YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LET HIM GET YOU DOWN!

I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT DAY AND THAT SAME NIGHT. I WAS LYING AWAKE TOO HURT IN BODY AND MIND, TO SLEEP. FROM ACROSS THE RIVER, ECHOING IN THE STILL AIR, CAME THE INIMITABLE CALLING OF A STEER, TO BE ANSWERED BY ANOTHER, PERHAPS ON THE SLOPES OF MAGOG. IN THE STILLNESS I COULD HEAR THE BREATHING OF THE OTHER BOYS. AWAY IN THE DISTANCE I HEARD THE CHALLENGING BARK OF A DOG. I SEEMED TO LIE AWAKE FOR HOURS. FINALLY, SLEEP CAME WITH A DREAM. I CLEARLY SAW MRS. SHAW, FLITTING THROUGH THE WILLOWS, ASTRIDE A LARGE QUINCE STICK, AND SHOUTING DOWN AT ME: YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LET HIM GET YOU DOWN!

1938 CAME AND WITH IT THE SECOND FLOOD. I WAS IN HOSPITAL, IN NAPIER AT THE TIME, HAVING MY TONSILS REMOVED. I'M NOT SURE THERE WAS MUCH WRONG WITH THEM, PERHAPS EVERYONE WAS LOOKING FOR RELIEF FROM MY MISCHIEVOUS WAYS, OR MY WAGGING TONGUE! I'M AFRAID I LET THE SIDE DOWN THEN,. WHEN THE SISTER BROUGHT ME NEWS OF THE FLOOD, I STARTLED HER BY REPLYING- I HOPE THE BLOODY QUINCE TREE WENT!

THE WAR CAME WITH THE FRANCE HOUSE BOYS PLAYING THEIR PART, DIGGING TRENCHES ,WINDING BANDAGES, PICKING ERGOT FROM FESCUE, AND ROSEHIPS FROM BRIARS. WE WERE TAUGHT TO KNIT. SOX WITH DOUBLE HEELS ON FOUR NEEDLES, MITTENS AND BALACLAVAS. WE WERE VERY COMPETITIVE, AND COULD KNIT VERY FAST. THEN THE HOME GUARD, AND HOW WE ENJOYED IT. MR. SHAW WAS MADE A CAPTAIN, AND INVOLVED US BOYS FULLY. WE BECAME SKILLED SIGNALERS IN MORSE CODE AND SEMAPHORE, AND CRACK RIFLE SHOTS. I ONCE SHOT 24 OUT OF 25 AT 200 YARD RANGE, TOP SCORE FOR THE WHOLE HOMEGUARD. MR SHAW WAS VERY PROUD OF THIS SKINNY 15 YEAR OLD. I WAS THEN MADE A LANCE CORPORAL.

SKINNY! THAT WAS ME. MY MATE WAS CALLED FOOZLE!! IMAGINE THAT DEAR MOTHER, GIVING HER SON SUCH AN ARISTOCRATIC NAME, AS ELWYN , AND US CALLING HIM FOOZLE!

WE BOYS RECKONED MRS. SHAW HAD THE SHARPEST EARS IN THE VALLEY, AND THAT MR. SHAW HAD EYES IN THE BACK OF HIS HEAD. HE ALWAYS SEEMED TO CATCH US OUT WHEN UP TO NO GOOD. OFTEN WE WERE SAVED BY THE TIMELY APPEARANCE OF TOBY HIS DOG, OR BY CATCHING A WHIFF FROM HIS PIPE, WHICH HE SMOKED INCESSANTLY,

THIS CHURCH RELATES TO AN INCIDENT WHEN I WAS SURE HIS ALL SEEING EYES WERE WATCHING. IT WAS A DARK NIGHT DURING THE WAR, AND THE SIGNAL TO START THE BLACKOUT PRACTICE WOULD BE THE RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELL. ANOTHER BOY AND I WERE GIVEN THIS JOB, AND WE DULY RANG THE BELL AT THE SET TIME.

I HAD ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO STAND IN THE PULPIT, AND WHILST WAITING, I HAD HALF A MIND TO CLIMB THE STEPS AND SEE. I WALKED UP THE AISLE, PLACED ONE FOOT ON THE BOTTOM STEP, BUT COULD GO NO FURTHER. I WAS SURE THAT EVEN IN THE DARK, MR SHAW WAS WATCHING.

I'M UP HERE NOW THOUGH, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

ON ANOTHER OCCASION, SOON AFTER THIS, I WAS GLAD AND COMFORTED TO IMAGINE HE HAD BEEN WATCHING. THE SECOND IN COMMAND OF THE HOME GUARD, WAS A MR. BELLAMY, A LIEUTENANT, WHO FARMED IN THE PUKURATAHI VALLEY, WHICH HAD NEITHER TELEPHONE NOR ELECTRICITY AT THE TIME. MANY

TIMES, WE OLDER BOYS HAD BEEN GIVEN MESSAGES TO DELIVER TO MR BELLAMY, AND THOUGHT NOTHING OF THIS, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS MANY MILES AWAY OVER SOME HILLY COUNTRY. ONE NIGHT, JUST AT DUSK ON A SUMMER EVENING, I WAS CALLED INTO THE OFFICE, AND ASKED IF I COULD DELIVER AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO MR BELLAMY. I SUPPOSE THE SHORTAGE OF PETROL PREVENTED MR SHAW GOING BY CAR, AT ANY RATE, I ASSURED HIM I COULD FIND MY WAY, AND WITH A "TAKE CARE" RAY, FROM MRS SHAW, AND THAT "I'LL BE WATCHING" LOOK FROM MR SHAW, I TOOK OFF. NO MESSENGER EVER FELT SO IMPORTANT, PAST THE SCOUT DEN I SPED, AND THROUGH THE GATE BY THE PUMPSHED. I WAS PAST THE WELL, AND HEADING FOR THE RIVER, BEFORE I HEARD THE GATE SLAM BEHIND ME. I WAS REALLY BURNING UP THE GROUND, SURE IN MY YOUNG MIND THE JAPS WERE ABOUT TO LAND, AND THAT EVERY SECOND COUNTED.

I CROSSED THE RIVER BELOW THE SWIMMING POOL, MY DIRECTION WAS FOR A CERTAIN FENCELINE, THAT WOULD GUIDE ME TO THE TOP OF THE RIDGE, WHICH ROLLED GENTLY DOWN TO THE SEA TOWARDS TONGOIA. I REACHED THE TOP AND FAR TO MY LEFT, I COULD MAKE OUT THE DARK SMUDGE, WHICH WOULD BE OHISH BUSH. WHAT A HAVEN THAT PLACE WAS FOR VENTURESOME YOUNG BOYS. TUIS, NATIVE PIGEONS, WILD PEACOCKS AND FANTAILS GALORE. WE USED TO BRING THE PEAHEN EGGS HOME, AND HATCH THEM UNDER BLACK ORPINGTONS.

TURNING TO MY RIGHT I HEADED DOWN A RIDGE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SEA, MY BARE FEET DODGING THE THISTLES, AND THE WILD CAPE GOOSEBERRIES, WHICH WERE BARELY VISIBLE IN THE TWILIGHT. CATTLE, SPOOKED BY MY APPROACH SCATTERED IN EVERY DIRECTION, ONLY TO COME RACING BACK, INQUISITIVE, SNORTING. STRANGELY, I WAS UNAFRAID.

AS THE DISTANCE TO THE SEA BECAME LESS, I KEPT A WATCHFUL EYE FOR THE BOWL SHAPED DEPRESSION ON THE OPPOSITE RIDGE, WHICH WOULD TELL ME IT WAS TIME TO CROSS THE VALLEY BELOW, AND CLIMB TO THE TOP OF THE RIDGE.

ON REACHING THE TOP I PAUSED FOR A MOMENT TO REGAIN MY BREATH. FAR BELOW ME IN THE VALLEY ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE RIDGE, I COULD FAINTLY SEE THE KEROSENE LIGHTS OF THE BELLAMY HOMESTEAD, AND TO THEIR LEFT, THE HOUSE AND FARM BUILDINGS OF RIMU SUTTON. THE DISTANT BARKING OF A DOG TOLD ME I MAY HAVE BEEN SPOTTED ON THE SKYLINE, OR EVEN SMELT! HEAVEN FORBID!

I WAS FEELING ELATED THOUGH A LITTLE HEADY, AND BREATHED DEEPLY OF THE NIGHT AIR. I COULD FEEL THE BREEZE ON MY FACE, IT WAS REAL ALRIGHT, BUT THAT SMOKE, WAS IT PIPE SMOKE? WAS I IMAGINING IT? AS I DROPPED TO THE VALLEY BELOW, I REMEMBER THINKING, I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT I'M SURE HE WAS WATCHING OUT FOR ME. I NEVER FOUND OUT WHAT THAT MESSAGE CONTAINED, ALL I KNOW WAS THAT I HAD DONE MY BEST AND DELIVERED IT SAFELY. I THOUGHT

HOW STRANGE THE SECRETS OF GROWN UPS. WOULD THEY NEVER UNDERSTAND A BOY, HIS FEELINGS?

CAME APRIL THE 5TH. 1943. I AROSE FROM MY BED AND TURNED MY MATTRESS, AND PLACED MY BEDDING TO AIR ON THE WINDOWSILL. I TOOK MY LAST VOLUNTARY COLD SHOWER, EVER! THIS DAY WOULD BE MY FAREWELL TO FRANCE HOUSE. I HAD A BRAND NEW SUITCASE, A NEW PAIR OF LONGS, AND A SPORTSCOAT. IN MY POCKET MY LIFE'S EARNINGS OF FOURTEEN POUNDS. WE USED TO GET 4PENCE A WEEK, A PENNY FOR CHURCH, A PENNY FOR SCOUTS, A PENNY FOR OUR P.O.S.B. AND A PENNY TO SPEND AS WE WISHED. AS A FARM BOY WE RECEIVED 10 SHILLINGS PER MONTH. I ALSO HAD THIS BIBLE. IT WAS PRESENTED TO ME IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE LATE ROBERT FRANCE. I ALSO HAD THIS. TWO PENNIES HANG FROM THIS MOMENTO, AND THE WORDS WRITTEN ARE:- REMEMBRANCE, PETER---RAY. SURELY A TRUE MEMORIAL TO FRANCE HOUSE? FOR TWO PEOPLE, ANYWAY.

AT THE STATION ,I PUT ON A BRAVE FACE, SWALLOWED DEEPLY, AND WAVED MY FAREWELL FROM THE RAILCAR, WHICH WOULD TAKE ME TO NAPIER, AND THEN BY TRAIN TO PALMERSTON NORTH, AND EVENTUALLY TO AUCKLAND. I WAS TO START WORK AS AN APPRENTICE MOTOR MECHANIC.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY, FOR AFTER 14 LONG YEARS I WAS LEAVING, BUT AS THE RAILCAR PULLED AWAY FROM THE STATION, I FELT IT WAS PULLING MY VERY HEART APART. MY BRAVERY LASTED AS FAR AS YULE'S CROSSING, A MILE DOWN THE LINE. THEN THE TEARS STARTED, AND CONTINUED, TO NAPIER, TO PALMERSTON, TO AUCKLAND, AND A VERY LONG TIME AFTER.

I HAD NEVER KNOWN SUCH QUIETNESS, NEVER KNOWN SUCH LONELINESS, HOW I MISSED FRANCE HOUSE, THE BOYS, MR. AND MRS. SHAW, AND ALL THEY MEANT TO ME.

THIS WALL PLAQUE WILL BE A FITTING MEMORIAL TO MR AND MRS SHAW, AND THEIR WORK AT FRANCE HOUSE, BUT WE WHO ARE LEFT ARE LIVING MEMORIALS, AND SHOULD BE PROUD OF AND FOREVER GRATEFUL TO ROBERT FRANCE, AND THE WONDERFUL CHANCE IN LIFE HE GAVE US.

MY TRAINING AND UPBRINGING AT FRANCE HOUSE, QUICKLY ENABLED ME TO ATTAIN COMMISSIONED RANK IN THE ARMY, EQUIPPED ME WELL FOR MY BUSINESS LIFE, AND HELPED WITH THE GUIDANCE AND UPBRINGING OF MY THREE BOYS, THROUGH THE DIFFICULT YEARS OF ADOLESCENCE, AND INTO MANHOOD.

HAZEL AND LES SHAW WERE JUSTLY PROUD OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS, AND FOLLOWED THE CAREERS OF THEIR BOYS, WITH UNDYING INTEREST.

FRANCE HOUSE PROVIDED THE MEANS BY WHICH THEY WERE ABLE TO DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO THEIR LIFE'S WORK, THEIR CARE OF THE BOYS. NOT TO THEM, ORDINARY UNDERPRIVILEGED BOYS, BUT SPECIAL BOYS, VERY PRIVILEGED, FRANCE HOUSE BOYS.

THEY HAVE BOTH PASSED ON TO THAT GRAND LODGE ABOVE,

MAY THEIR MEMORIES BE FOREVER CHERISHED, BY THOSE WHO KNEW THEM,

AND BY THOSE WHO READ THIS MEMORIAL PLAQUE.

ACACIA COVE,

JANUARY 2010