

Granddad's Earthquake Memories

GRANDDAD'S EARTHQUAKE MEMORIES

AS TOLD TO HIS GRANDCHILDREN ROBERT and NATALIE BALL.

Adapted from a talk given to the Rotary Club of Taradale on the 1st. of February 2001.

Several extracts are included in Helen McConnochie's book "After Words" published in 2004

Granddad was only 3 1/2 years old in February 1931 and the time was about the limit of my memory although I do have two memories prior to the Quake. The first one is swimming near where the Airport is now and the second is sailing on a yacht on the Inner Harbour where the aeroplanes land now. It was all covered with water then. The earthquake raised the ground 2 metres. My memories of the Hawke's Bay Earthquake which happened on the 3rd. Of February 1931 are quite vivid although somewhat disjointed.



Granddad
aged 4
in 1931

At the time of the quake we lived in the house at 68 King Street in Taradale, the house is now the Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten. When the earthquake struck I was watching my Mother working at the table in the kitchen and could only just see over the table. At the first shake the room filled with smoke and soot from the coal range, and Mum, (your Great Grandma Dine), grabbed me to make a dash outside, just as she reached the veranda the house moved on its foundations and we were thrown onto a concrete path. Mum was eight months pregnant with my Brother, (your Mummy's Uncle David), and in protecting him and me she sustained a badly grazed arm. It was in these few seconds that we became survivors because had the top of the kitchen chimney not fallen the way it did, into the laundry, we could have been crushed. We ended up under the walnut tree on our back lawn with the ground shaking, nuts falling all around us and watching water spout up about 600mm. from between the cracks in the concrete path and leaving little piles of sand. This water came from an underground stream (the aquifer) which is at about 40 metres below the surface.

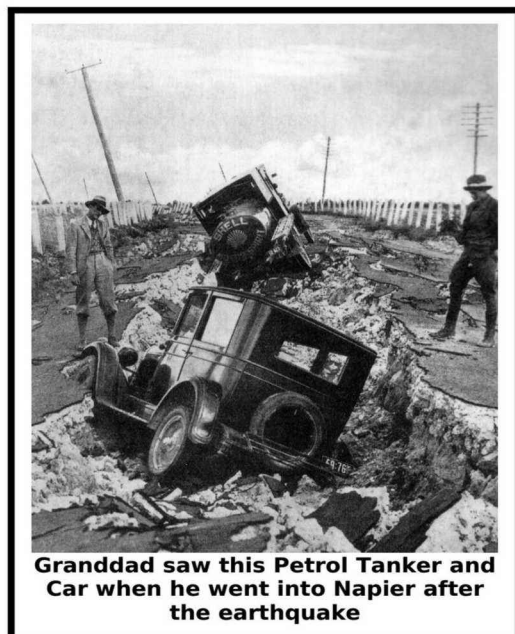
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The first quake lasted 2 1/2 minutes and it was followed by lots of other earthquakes some large and some small for several days. These quakes were and are called "after shocks". A man, who had been talking to my father, (your Great Grandfather Dine), only seconds before the quake walked down our driveway only to have the top of our lounge chimney fall six feet in front of him, whether from shock or the unstable ground he staggered back 50 metres and ended up dancing all over our lettuce patch. Dad on the other hand was able to keep his feet and after ensuring that Mum and I were O.K. walked round the side of the house in time to see the front path rise up 600mm. and crash down on itself.



The King Street Home before the Quake. You can see the chimney that fell on the driveway.

Later we saw the smoke from the fires the quake had started in Napier and it was then that it was realised that something serious had happened. It was decided that we should go into Napier and see that my Grand Parents,(your Great Great Grandparents Dine), and my Uncle's Bill's Family were safe. On the way into Napier there were 3 wooden bridges and the quake had caused the bridges to rise up leaving a gap of about a metre between the road and the bridge. To get across we, with the help of other people removed some of the wood from the sides of the bridges to fill in the gaps and then we drove our truck across. Between the last bridge and the road beside the hill, (Hyderabad Road), the truck's wheel fell into a deep crack in the road and to get the wheel out we made a jack out of a nearby fence and got going again. It was here that I saw a Petrol Tanker and a car stuck on a broken up road. A picture of them is in most Earthquake Books. Along Hyderabad Road I remember seeing



Granddad saw this Petrol Tanker and Car when he went into Napier after the earthquake

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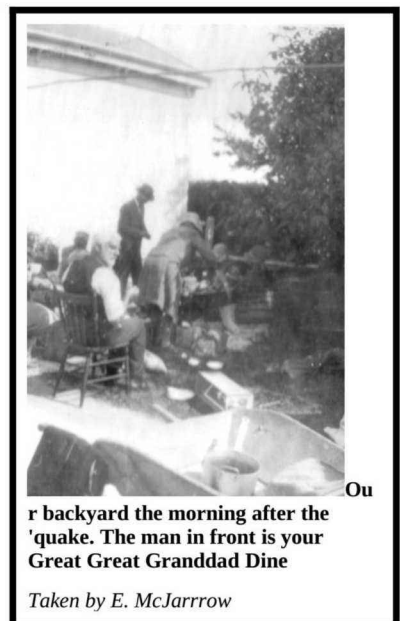
the people streaming out of the town like refugees from a war zone. Dad asked one person he knew where they were going only to be told that because with the uplift, (the ground had risen up 2 metres), the sea had receded and they expected it to come back in as a 'Tidal Wave' (a Tsunami), and that they were "Heading for the hills". Such was the confusion in peoples minds They didn't even realise they had a hill right beside them.

My Grandparents lived in Nelson Crescent and when we got there they were erecting tents in their back yard with the help of my Uncle. We told them about the 'Tidal Wave' and suggested they come out to our place to be safe, which they did. They set up two tents under our Walnut Tree and the fly from one tent was tied under the branches of the tree. We slept under this and I can remember the ground shaking with 'After Shocks' and nuts falling on our canopy. I was told our 2 cats had a great time with the tents during the night, climbing up to the top of the tent and then sliding down on their bottoms. My Grand Parents and my Uncle and Aunty were not very pleased because they couldn't get any sleep.

Early next morning about 4 o'clock I was woken by the sound of a motorbike, it was my Cousin Ernest McJarrow who had ridden through the night from Fielding to see if we were safe and well. He returned to Fielding later to report to his Mum and Dad and let our relatives in Christchurch know we were all O.K.

My Father was a Dairy Farmer and Milkman at the time so cows still had to be milked and milk delivered but in the confusion who to? Most of Dads customers were round at Port Ahuriri so on the day after the Quake and for about the next three months he gave the milk away. I have been told money meant nothing over that period everybody was either giving away or bartering.

One of the victims of the quake was my pet



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lamb, it was killed for fresh meat and cooked on the old coal range which had been removed from the house and set up on the back lawn. People were not permitted to cook or light fires inside houses. I was told my Mother couldn't bring herself to eat any of the lamb. I can also remember watching as my Dad shovelled up what was left of Mum's preserves and jams that had fallen off the storeroom shelves, I think I was told only one jar survived out of about fifty. It was an awful mess.

Mum and I were evacuated to Christchurch shortly after the Quake and lived with my Aunty Eva and Uncle Will in their house which was beside where the Styx railway over-bridge is now. My Brother David was born safely at Saint Helen's Hospital on 19th. March. We returned to Napier on one of the last Refugee Trains 3 months after 'The quake' and what I remember about this was being allocated seats in a 'Birdcage Carriage' on the train in Wellington. Now if you don't know what a 'Birdcage' carriage is, they were used on suburban lines in the early 1900s and consisted of 2 rows of seats facing outwards, separated by a partition and instead of windows on the sides you were protected from falling out by wire mesh sliding doors, they just looked like Birdcages. This arrangement certainly wasn't suitable for my Mother and 6 week old Brother, having to travel 200 miles in the open air. My Aunty Mack who was travelling with us as far as Palmerston North didn't think so either and I remember her, a very short lady lining up the big tall Guard and demanding inside seats. She must have been successful because we travelled back to Napier in forward facing inside seats, back to a Home fully repaired, tidied and with a New Electric range for my Mother to cook on instead of the Old Coal Range.

WHAT ABOUT NANA?

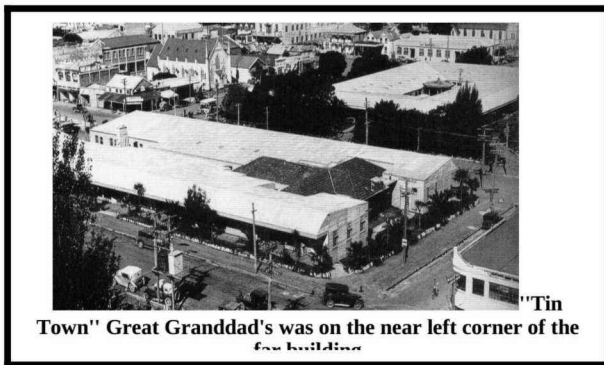
Well Nana wasn't 3 years old so she has no "Earthquake Memories" but from what she has been told she was going on a holiday to Wellington by train with her Mother and Father and baby Brother Brian, (Uncle Brian). The train was delayed at a station waiting for a train coming the other way when the quake struck. Had the train not been

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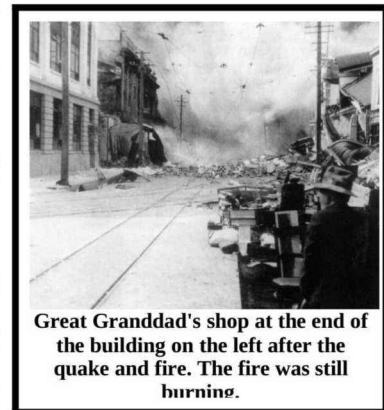
delayed they would probably have been crossing a Viaduct, (a very high bridge),and the train would probably toppled into the river below. So Nana became an "Earthquake Survivor" too.

All the woman and children on the train continued their journeys by what means we don't know and became refugees while the men returned to Napier to assist those people back in the town and to see what had happened to their property and possessions.

Your Great Grandfather Kivell came back to find his Hairdressing shop in Hastings Street



beside the Post Office collapsed and burnt out and



lots of things broken in the house that Nana lived in in Te Awa Avenue near Uncle Bruce's House. Nana stayed in Wellington until the house was repaired and woman and children were able to come back to Napier. Great Granddad Kivell set up his Hairdressing shop in a temporary building in Clive Square called "Tin Town" because it housed lots of the businesses that had lost their shops in the quake

Granddad Dine 2005