

The Road In

If I am honest and I'm trying to be, my first recollection of 'the road in' was actually going out. We, the Leary family had had Christmas 1943 at our place, Kahuera, on the edge of Lake Rotoiti, and we were on our way back to Auckland, a very long journey in those days! Two days before this trip my Mother had taken me to visit Mrs Mapu Morehu whose eldest daughter Margaret was not at all well. I can't remember much of the visit except Margaret had a very pretty tabby cat with three kittens, they were much more interesting than a young woman in bed. But when we left to go home to Auckland and we drove up 'the long acre' as we called it, my Mother said, "the fires are lit" and I could tell by her voice it was serious. It is amazing how much stays in your memory just by sound and smell and I recall that smoke smell only too well. On reaching the gate below Te Mapu's house in front of the marae the fires were burning, and a huge black tent had been erected and there were lots of Māori people dressed in black talking very quietly – yes Margaret had died. Mum and Dad got out of the car and insisted I go with them. We were greeted in traditional manner and given the waiata. I did not understand why I had to be with my parents, but I learnt later that that is tradition that the eldest daughter accompanies parents to a tangi. We were taken to the steps of the Meeting House where Dad gave his koha and we were greeted by the Elders. You probably wonder why I remember this in detail aged six, but it was one of the few times I saw my Mother in tears.

Since that time a lot of things have changed. Firstly an eating house (whare kai) has been built so there is no big black tent and no fires – it's all electric – the grounds have been fenced and we, the public, do not enter these grounds unless accompanied by an Elder. Māori tradition, especially a tangi is a very sacred event as you can see by my story of "The Olds." As we drove our car through the edge of the marae it seemed to me, even then, of how insensitive it was to these Māori people, but it was the only way in then. The road went down the cliff edge into the village – it ran between Rangers and Erles Houses through gate No. 1 over the little stream and out to the main road now known as Highway No. 33. It was called the 15 mile peg in those days.

The name 15 Mile Peg was of great importance in those early days. The names Otaramarae, Houmaitawhiti and Whangamoa were never used – it was always 15 Mile Peg. Mum and a lot of the local people had weekly orders for meals and groceries with the shops in Rotorua which were

delivered by the daily Service Bus to the 15 mile peg, but you had to be there to greet the bus! In about 1947 – my memory is a little doubtful here – a Post Office was built in Otaramarae Bay – on a party line with Te Puke, Otaramarae, Okere Falls and Mourea to Rotorua. Betty Taiatini was the first post mistress and a ward of warning – don't be in a hurry to put a call through to anywhere else than Rotorua – it was a long wait! But the post office became a communal meeting place for all of Otaramarae – every day Mrs Manu Morehu, Mrs John Kennedy and Mrs Pui Taiatini would sit on the post office step with their flax, making baskets while we, the young played for hours in the lake and with whatever boats were available, bearing in mind that boats were in very short supply in those days! On the wet days, Betty would wind up her Regal Zonophone and play us Harriet with the Lariat and Big Rock Candy Mountain and all those really good records!

In about 1950 a general store was built beside the post office – it was an offshoot of the Indian store at Mourea and Babu was the storekeeper. I think that was in trade for about 3 years and then there was the Van Man. Where he came from, I don't know but I do know all his fresh food was fresh and he did a roaring trade. But then the advent of telephones arrived, so the post office closed and with petrol becoming more available everyone drove to Rotorua so the marae died. Now back to the road in!

When I was eight, I remember Te Mapu and Mr Vercoe coming to Dad to discuss moving the road to behind the marae so the Māori people could have their privacy. You probably wonder why the Māori Elders came to Dad, but he was a barrister of repute and believed in equality in matters such as this and the land on which the road was situated was Māori freehold land with many owners. So together with Sir Alexander Herdman who was a circuit judge and who lived in the next door bay to us, in the house T.A.N. (Talk all Night) Corson owns now, arrangements were made for the road to be altered to behind the marae. So at the top of the hill instead of driving straight past the marae you took a hard turn right and down the gully past the woolshed to the “long acre”- you can still see the old road before it was sealed – if you know where to look. After the gate at Blacks turn off the trouble started. The road was on the edge of the swamp and it was very ‘soft’ and driving during the winter months we often got stuck. In the week before ‘going to the lake’ I would say my prayers very fervently that we didn't get a puncture or get stuck in the mud. A puncture was bedlam – the boot had

to be unloaded to find the spare tyre – usually in a very dubious state, the packing was strewn all over the road – or so it seemed – the tyre changed, repacked, and Dad was a hopeless packer, and the journey resumed, fingers cross that we made it. This tale may sound very dramatic, but it was all part of “going to the lake” and we children had to live with these shortcomings as our parents constantly reminded us – “not everybody has a place at the lake!” Once through the mud Gate No. 5 was rather fun for us when we were younger. You opened the gate for the car and trailer – shut it and ran over a little hill that the car had to go ‘round – it was a race but I rather feel now that the driver had to be tactful! This all seems fun and as children we loved opening and closing the gates and standing on the running board but as we grew older it became a bit of a chore and about three days before the journey you would hear “bags not open the gate” which usually ended in a giant row which Mum had to step in and quell the battle and depending on the standard of our behaviour in recent days a gate opener was selected and “no further argument please.” From this gate it was plain sailing – no mud holes – and then the sight of the gate into Motorshed Bay “oh the relief – the long journey over.” I think I am right when I say this was the road for my first ten years.

In about 1946 Dad sold Motorshed Bay to Messrs Maltby, Griffiths and Deare and permission was given by the Elders to put a bulldozed road up the hill behind the bay commonly known as Leary’s Hill to Kahuera. Kahuera was originally 18 acres and Dad had very wisely put it into three title deeds and 18 sections on purchase and the time had come to start selling! This bulldozed road ended at Kahuera turn off. I have to confess I do not know the legalities of the road past Kahuera turn off but one would have to guess that an access track had to be provided to the sections beyond the turn off but you owners can argue over that.

I forgot to write, and I suppose it’s important to the Kahuera owners, Dad bought the property from the aforementioned Sir Alexander Herdman who lived with his wife in the White House. I think he bought the property in the early 1930’s. He planted a big belt of pine trees where Mr Bill Fowler’s house is, a belt of gum trees where Mr Noel Nicholson’s house is, and all the big exotic trees were planted by him including lots of blue hydrangeas. But it was Dad who planted all the native trees some of which are huge now and a nuisance! The property when Dad bought it was covered in fog grass and manuka on the tops with a few pungas and pohutukawas round the lake edge. Sir

Alexander's wife was not happy living there, she wanted to go back to England so in 1936 she sold the property to L.P. & D.L. Leary and he took his wife back to England. Alas she only lived for two year so Sir Alexander came back to N.Z. and settled in the next-door bay to Kahuera on a 10-acre leasehold block. He loved Rotoiti.

With the advent of the road and traffic increasing, so did the problem of the gates – there were six of them and it became obvious that many people including holiday makers and owners found it too arduous to open and close them. And of course stock wandered and became mixed and being a farmer's wife, only too well do I know the difficulties that can happen with muddled stock and it didn't matter how often you told the owners and friends to "leave the gates as you find them" – it never happened. So, it was another visit from the Elders to Dad to discuss this problem and this time Te Mapu was not so tolerant – he had had enough. So, they discussed what could be done and all agreed that you couldn't make people understand the gates, so an alternative had to be found. It was decided that you and your cars etc. would turn into section 1B half way up the hill from the Te Akau road turn off – the Fire Station end, drive round the side of the hill – across a very large paddock or it seemed large cos we called it the Sahara, down the canyon and across the top of the swamp to the bottom of the Leary's Hill. This route would entail 4-5 gates – not much less but it was worth a try. Of course, the canyon got muddy, so I think it was Thomas Corson Snr had two strips of concrete laid – they or parts of them are still there. And the flat paddock had hundreds of mushrooms in the season – I loved gathering them but not eating them! This was the road in for a few years- I cannot remember how many but it served us well until the entry became dangerous as the traffic on Highway 33 increased.

What happens now to this storey was inevitable with the sale of more sections beyond Kahuera turnoff and Blacks Bay.

So once again after much discussion with the many owners of the land involved and with their permission Dad, a barrister, Alister Linton, a registered surveyor, Bert Kingi, Clerk, William Vercoe retired, and Sonny Williams, Mourea, in 1964 approached Council with a view to forming a registered legal road. Now this sounds quite a simple idea, but you must understand that as I said there are multiple owners of the land over which the road was to be made – totally different from the

'canyon road.' But after many very long, detailed and complicated meetings permission was granted on June 5, 1965 for a road to be formed for the purpose of providing improved access to houses on Rotoiti Block No. 1 A No. 2. I can vouch for some of these meetings as they were held at the White House as Kahuera is now called and as I was a shorthand typist, I was often required to take notes. Permission was given for a road from behind Houmaitawhiti to the Kahuera turn off and I enclose a copy of this deed in case anyone argues. And here do I say, at the risk of offending that we, all of us who have the use of this road have a huge debt of thanks to those Māori Elders – now all dead – for giving us the use of a fair chunk of their freehold land.

Having obtained the permit for the road it now had to be motivated, the plan had been submitted and accepted – now the action. The road ran straight up the hill where we used to turn right down the "long acre," to where Cuff's used to park their cars below the urupa – from there there were two huge bluffs that had to be bulldozed round and the earth pushed down the hill behind Blaski's house to fill the gully below and care had to be taken that the pohutukawas growing on the bank below the road were not disturbed in any way which put a huge responsibility on the bulldozer drivers! This all sounds very complicated but I'm sure you'll figure it out when you next drive 'the road.' It took some years for the road to really consolidate and it was Ken Richardson and William Main who really looked after the surface of the road but only too well can I remember Dad in his 80's organizing working bees with all the young who used the road to bring their shovels and help put the road to rights with Dad leading the charge. Now that was the order of the day till about 1985 when Ken Richardson came to Dad with a proposal to have Blaski's and Leary's hills tarsealed as they presented many "stuck" vehicles during the winter months and the road was becoming very rough of surface. His suggestion was accepted, and the sealing was completed for \$16,555.10 paid for by the freeholders. It made a huge difference to all of us both then and now. But as time went on it became increasingly clear that a committee had to be formed to determine how the road was to be maintained for its future. The tractor, an elderly Nuffield which had been supplied by Dad in late 1977 had finally died – on the job maintaining the swamp – after many years of hard labour. For your information Dad aged 79 drove that tractor from his farm at Massey Auckland the 6 miles to Henderson railway station, consigned it by rail to Rotorua where he met it and drove it the 18 miles to Kahuera. He said

he had a wonderful time waving to all the truck and bus drivers! A meeting of the users of the properties was held, I think we had a 100% attendance of residents and a Road Committee was formed, Mr Bob Smith, head man, Mr Bill Fowler and Mr William Main the first committee. I must say it was the best idea possible – the road has now had more tarseal added and once a year a working bee is held to trim the ferns and weeds on the other side and generally maintain the high standard of the road. A meeting is held once a year to discuss what needs attention and general maintenance and all users pay a yearly levee of \$200. I must mention here that part of the reason the road is kept in such good condition is that Mr Bill Fowler is continually ‘mending’ the lumps and bumps etc that accrue. And it would be a great help if other road users had the intelligence to stop and put fallen branches and punga ferns over to the side of the road rather than just run over them!

Of course there are the usual complaints usually by the people who do nothing to help with the care of the road – one woman said “when are you going to grade the remainder of the road flat – cos it hits the bottom of my car.” The “old timers” like myself who have spent hours shovelling gravel etc. could hardly believe what we were hearing – the road is like the A24 in comparison with 70 years ago!

Now I hope I haven’t offended anybody with this narrative, there is probably a lot more I could have written but I think this is enough to portray the history of the road and believe me it is true!

Caroline Main

One last ‘things’ Dad did for Houmaitawhiti at large was to convince them never to freehold the sections. And you may wonder why Te Mapu first and then Te Mata later seemed to rely on Dad to help settle any major problems in the area, e.g. title, boundaries, jetties etc and they did come up periodically. Of course, there was no telephone until 1965 so one of the children was sent to our house to ask for permission for one of the Elders to visit and the order was usually like this.

“Mr Leary, we have a problem.”

“Tell me your problem?”

And the problem was discussed and if it was of a simple nature not involving court procedure the answer was “well Te Mapu (Te Mata) the law is” and it was explained in a simple manner and that

was that – no arguments and Māori and Pakeha would adhere to what was said. Of course there were a lot of incidents that required deeper legal advice and Dad was happy to help them – it was his way of saying thank you to them for all the privileges they gave us – and he never charged them – it was a very loving understanding between two parties. Is it still like that now!?

ORDER LAYING OUT ROADWAY
The Maori Affairs Act 1953
Section 418

In the Maori Land Court }
of New Zealand, }
Waiariki District. }

ROTOITI NO. 1A NO. 2

AT a sitting of the Court held at Rotorua on the 5th day
of June 1964 before Norman Smith, Esquire, Judge.

UPON HEARING the application that a roadway be laid out
under the provisions of Section 418 of the Maori Affairs
Act, 1953 for the purpose of providing improved access
to Rotoiti No. 1A No. 2

NOW THEREFORE the Court DOTH HEREBY ORDER AND DECLARE
that the land described in the Schedule hereunder is
hereby set apart as a roadway

AS WITNESS the hand of Kenneth Gillanders Scott, a Judge,
and the seal of the Court.



Allen
Judge

23/6/64

SCHEDULE

A roadway be laid off over Rotoiti No. 1A No. 2 containing
0 acres 0 roods 35 perches more or less as same is shown
on M.L. Plan 19902 deposited in the office of the Chief
Surveyor, Hamilton and more particularly delineated on the
diagram attached hereto.

*Sec 1421 Recommendation As To 127 perches
Issued Lot 142/03 of 27/3/68*

12.7 DECARED To Be ROAD

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