

EARLY DAYS ON THE FARM

Joyce Rendle nee Leach – presented to Leach Reunion in 1989

My father owned a sawmill and had a partner. Unfortunately the partner got into deep debt. My father had saved money to buy an 80 acre farm but as the agreement between my father and his partner was a gentleman's agreement, nothing was signed, my father had to pay the partner's debts and in the end my father had only enough money to buy a forty acre farm. It was very disappointing and very hard work and he also had to take a day job, erecting river protection. Although farming was hard work and a seven day a week job, it has compensations: To look out over the fields, to have your own rivers to swim in. The togetherness of the farmers, especially at hay making time, was so enjoyable and something you never forget.

My father had a lovely big black cow called Blackie, and she held the NZ record for the biggest producer in New Zealand. She was like one of the family and we had as many photos of her as we did of the family. There were no milk separators in those days and the milk was set in large shallow metal dishes in the dairy. They were skimmed with metal skimmers about the size of a bread and butter plate and had holes in them and a handle. It was a most pleasant task to skim the cream off, to see the cream rippling the width of the pan. It was then put into a wooden churn which had a handle which one had to wind. That was also a pleasant task and the thrill one had when one felt the solid butter and heard the splashing of the water.

One of my chores was to feed the ducks at evening time. They were so cute, when they heard me calling they would hide in the rushes.

We went to school standing up between the milk cans in a horse driven dray.

One day I was out with my father in one of the paddocks and all of a sudden the animals went mad and ran round and round and tried to jump the fences and the next thing there was a large earthquake – the Murchison one. The animals were aware of it before it struck!

One of the loveliest things about living on a farm was that our Mother was always home when we returned from school. We had to face many a gale and often had to hold on to the wire fences to get along and when we arrived home we would be treated to hot soup or creamed rice pudding which had been cooking all day in a wood oven. Delicious!!

I used to like chopping wood and one day a piece of Matai flew up and hit me in the face and it gave me a real black eye and you can imagine the remarks I had to endure the next day at school.

They were good safe days –my parents never locked a door for fifty years.

THE LARGE PEAR TREE

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Trees...trees...trees...how I love them and what an important part they play in our lives with their shade and shelter, their softening and enhancing of our landscapes with their myriad of colours and shapes giving us a feeling of stability.

Trees remind me of the human race with the same qualities of variety, interest, beauty, strength, permanence and they are also a link between countries. My son has just returned from America where he visited five of the main cities. It wasn't the man-made structures he remembered but the thousands of trees in those cities.

The lovely song called "Trees" is one of my favourites and when it is sung and played it is like a benediction. I have been to two large gardens lately and have been filled with awe at the size, height and formation of the trees.

There was one particular tree that had a great influence on our family life. It was large pear tree and as well as providing us with lovely fruit, was the venue for large family gatherings in its shade. My parents had brothers and sisters with families living on farms in the same district and they would all arrive in horse driven vehicles. What elegance! One was a lovely gig upholstered in green felt and drawn by a dapper little horse. Another was what was called a dog cart. The driver sat facing the front but the passengers sat in the cart facing each other after climbing up steps at the back. Another was a black gig with silver embellishments, even the harness was black with silver metal trimming and it was drawn by a shining black horse.

Our aunties and my mother were all excellent cooks and they produced some wonderful food. Each one had their own specialty, sponge cakes six inches high and light and beautiful etc. My mother provided much of the food, home killed meat, bottled fruit of all kinds from our orchard, fresh vegetables out of the garden and home made bread and butter. If that tree could only talk, what an

interesting story it could tell of warm and loving relationships, sharing confiding, advising, praising and comforting.

This all happened eighty off years ago and went on for some years. I met a cousin recently who used to come to these reunions and she said how much it had meant to them all. She told me what I thought was a humorous incident....she and my sister were years younger than me, and they used to love to climb up the tree while everything was in progress until one day my older sister ordered them down as she said we could see their pants!!

I think how lucky we were in those days to have had such simple enjoyable times because now with so much overseas travel families are more separated.

Food for thought:

Do for others with no thought of returned favours.

We should all plant a tree we know we will never sit under.

WE BOUGHT A BABY AUSTIN CAR

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We bought a Baby Austin Car – one of the first shipment to come to New Zealand. We were on our way to a 21st birthday party in another town when we received word. The agent took us for a ride and we actually signed up for it by torchlight on the mudguard. We had previously owned a three seater, 6 cylinder Buick and the new Austin was only as long as the bonnet of the Buick.

Some time later the word Taupo was being bandied around as it was going to be developed into a tourist resort. We decided we would go and take a look.

We shoes to go through Napier and Gisborne. When we stopped for petrol in Gisborne, the petrol attendant asked us where we were going – when we said Taupo he smiled and said we would never make it in that car.

Undaunted we set off.

It was glorious country but the hills were so steep, the corners so short and the roads were corrugated. The service cars had to make two attempts to get round some of the corners. When we stood on the side of the road and looked down, it was so far down that the foliage looked like grass at the bottom. One part we had to go 16 miles in second gear with the bonnet sides tied up to let the air through. We had to ford the rivers because there were no bridges. The desert road was pumice full of pot holes we couldn't see but when we hit them we were covered in white dust.

This was over sixty years ago (in 1989) and the wild horses were there then, stampeding along beside us on the road and crossing over in front of us. Rather intimidating to us in our little car.

Nevertheless we traveled on, and then a small embankment appeared – and there was Lake Taupo glistening in the dusk. The joke of it was that we had passed through Taupo and not seen it!

There were only two small buildings – a boarding house and a general store. As it was getting dark, they had lit the kerosene lamp at the entrance to the boarding house and the whole front of the building was a black moving mass of insects.

Everything was three times as dear as we paid at home because everything had to be taken in by transport.

A few months ago I stayed at one of the modern luxurious motels and it was hard to realize what we had experienced in our first visit.

WHEN I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD

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When I was five years old we moved from Eketahuna to Woodville to live on a farm my parents had bought. We owned a Roan horse and gig and my mother drove us there, which was quite a journey in those days.

On the way we had to travel over a road and railway combined bridge, some feat as you can imagine, with the railway lines being a different width apart to the gig wheels. My mother was very nervous and we had to get out of the gig and walk over. The gig was heavily laden, even had a hen sitting on eggs under the seat!

It was great excitement arriving at the farm. There was a wonderful orchard, so many different varieties of every kind of fruit, some I have never seen since.

In one corner the ground was covered with blue periwinkles in flower growing in the shade of flowering wattle trees and with a stream running beside it and a beautiful weeping willow. I thought it was heaven on earth and spent many happy years playing there.