

A Bank Manager with a Heart



CHEQUE
ACCOUNTS



*Lawrie Cooper's
Memoirs*



A Bank Manager with a Heart

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Memoirs

Edited and published by
Nigel Cooper and Robyn Cooper

Editors' Notes

Lawrence John Leslie Cooper (Lawrie) was born in Ashburton, New Zealand, on 23 May 1908, and died in Brisbane, Australia, on 12 October 1998. He married Roslyn Agnes Sherman in London, UK, on 4 August 1934. Roslyn was born in Toungou, Burma, on 20 February 1911, and died in Christchurch on 10 July 2001.

From 1923-1966, Lawrie worked in the Bank of New South Wales, which later became Westpac. His memoirs were written by hand, mostly in 1991 and finished in 1997, typed by Katrina Harding and Sarah Carlson in 1998, and edited by Nigel Cooper and Robyn Cooper in 2020-21. We have rearranged the text to make it chronological. Except for adding punctuation, a few words for clarity and correction, or an explanation added in italics, the text is all Lawrie's words.

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Other books by the editors

Ngāti Māhanga: A Pakeha family search for Their Māori Ancestry, by Nigel Cooper, 1990, 2nd edition 1993, 58 pages. This was the book that linked all the descendants of Pourewa and Charles together. It is out of print.

Ngā Uri o Pourewa: A Pākehā Family Discovers its Māori Ancestry, by Nigel Cooper, 2005. An updated version of *Ngāti Māhanga*, revised and enlarged with 84 pages and over 70 charts and photographs, many of them in colour. Sixth printing 2021. Copies from nigelmcooper@gmail.com

Bullock Carts and Balichao: Roslyn Sherman's memoirs and other stories of Burma. Compiled, edited and published by Roger Cooper and Robyn Cooper, 2012. 74 pages, 53 colour photos, 52 black and white photos. Copies from robyn.cooper@outlook.co.nz or nigelmcooper@gmail.com

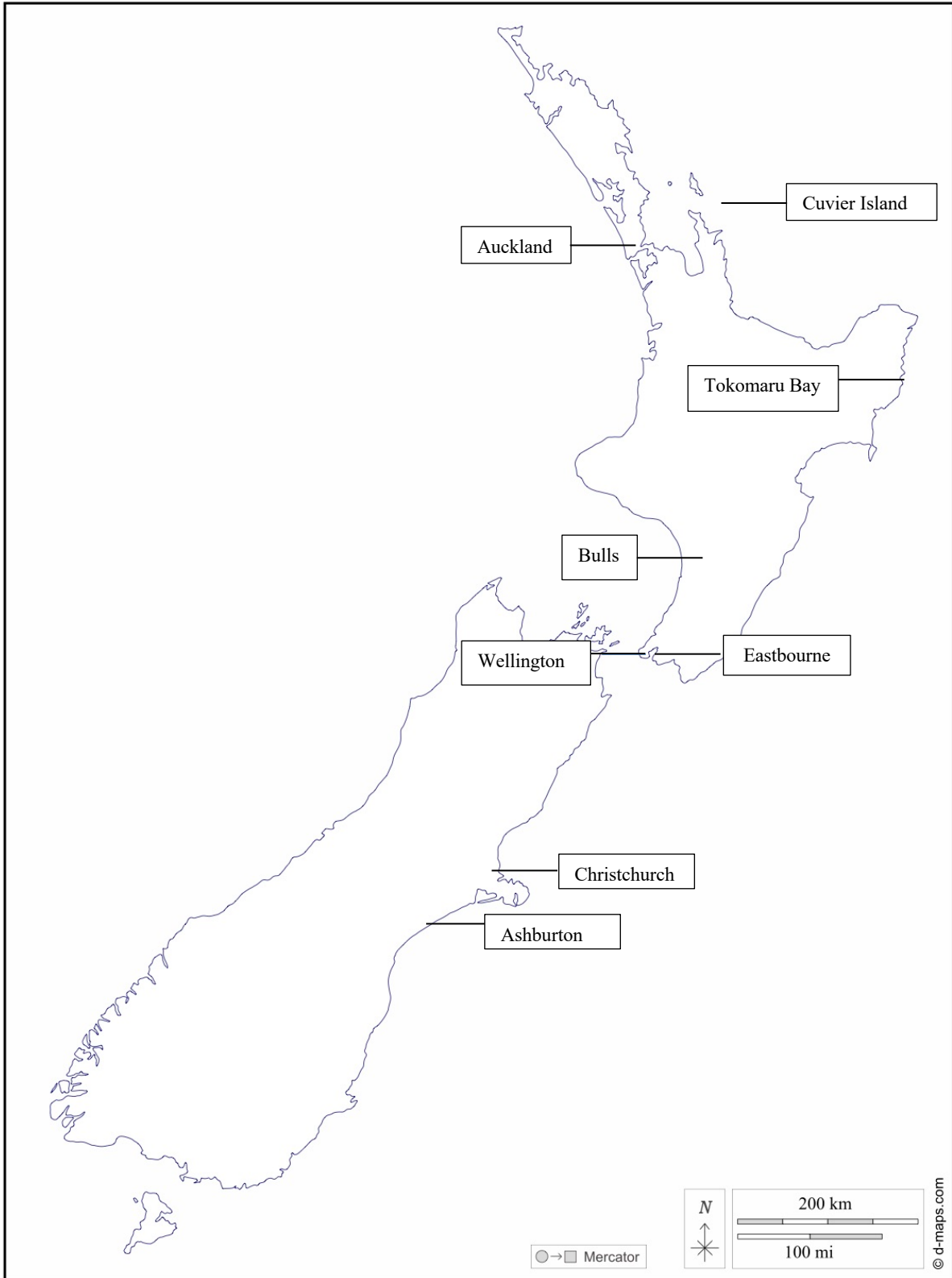
The Bougainville Land Crisis of 1969: The Role of Moral Re-Armament, by Nigel Cooper, 1992, 60 pages. Published by the MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch. Copies from nigelmcooper@gmail.com

Front cover photographs: Upper L to R: Lawrie Cooper in plus 4's, Lawrie aged 20. Lawrie Cooper and Roslyn Sherman's wedding day. Bottom left: Cooper family—Lawrie, Rossie, Nigel, Pat, Roger, Murray, Roslyn, 1952. Bottom right: Lawrie, Roslyn, 1987. Background photo: Bank of New South Wales, Tokomaru Bay, photo© Nigel Cooper 2020.

Back cover photograph: BNSW Tokomaru, courtesy Frenzy, New Zealand

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New Zealand

Lawrie Cooper's Memoirs

Prologue

An old school friend challenged me to write my memoirs. "You must tell us what you were like as a boy," he said. "You would give your grandchildren a lot of pleasure." In January 1991, I began writing. Over the years, we have had thousands of people through our home from all over the world. What an astonishing development especially for my wife, Roslyn, who was brought up in Burma with servants doing all the work. She was never allowed in the kitchen. When we got married, she hardly knew how to boil an egg. I didn't know much more. How come we could entertain the Indian Olympic hockey team with a delicious curry and rice meal? We did. But let's start at the beginning.

Pre-1910

Grandmother on Mother's side was Mary Leslie, daughter of a Māori woman and a Pākehā trader, Charles Cosell (later Cossill).

Mary was married three times and no wonder. She was a very good-looking wahine. Her third husband David Leslie, my grandfather, was secretary to the Canterbury Trotting Club. His claim to fame was his one bottle of whisky a day. He was always the gentleman, with his long white beard and his bag of peppermints (no doubt for his breath) which he shared with us grandchildren. He was driven to work daily in horse and trap by either of his daughters, Mabel or her sister Ida. The same horse and trap with candle lamps the girls used to go to dances in. Thereby hangs a sad story.

The girls being one quarter Māori used to be ostracised at dances and this made them conscious of their colour. Mabel, my mother, never liked to talk about their Māori background and brought us up as Pākehā. But two things she did tell us were that her grandmother was a Māori 'princess' and that she married an Englishman by the name of Cosell. They signed their wedding certificate with crosses as they were both illiterate. Their surname took

Ancestry



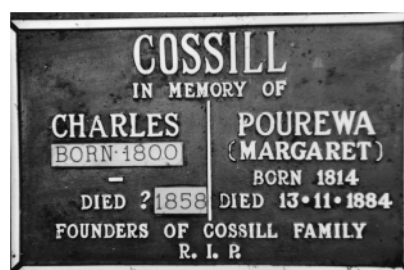
Mary Leslie (née Cosell)
daughter of Charles and
Pourewa

various spellings over time: Cossill, Costle, Castle, Copele, Cossell. It did not mean much to us young ones then, but it meant a lot to my own children.

In 1977 at a Cooper family reunion, my children Rossie and Roger, assisted greatly by Roger's then wife Dorothy, began the search for our Māori ancestry. Through a distant cousin, Jan Chilvers, and a Mangonui historian, Neva Clarke McKenna (mother of 'Fred Dagg'), they discovered that Rev. William Williams conducted the wedding of a Māori girl Pourewa and a British trader Charles

Cosell in 1836, at Waimate North as recorded in the Bay of Islands Anglican Church Register. It may have been the first Māori-Pākehā church wedding in the country. But no one knew who Pourewa was, nor her tribe or ancestry.

Then our son Nigel, studying Māori at Canterbury University, did a remarkably good job in 1990 in tracing our family tree through the woman's father, Chief Pourewa of Ngāti Māhanga, all the way back to Hoturoa, captain of an early Māori canoe, the *Tainui*. The chief's daughter 'Pourewa' had been captured by Hongi Hika and taken north. She took the name Margaret after her wedding. Their gravestone shows she lived for 70 years.



The gravestone for Charles and Margaret (Pourewa). This was erected in 1993 by descendants of the 'Cossill' family when Margaret's grave was discovered on Paewhenua Island, near Mangonui in the Bay of Islands, Northland



Ida Leslie's (Lawrie's aunt) wedding to Dave Todd. L to R: Rear: Ida Cooper (Lawrie's sister), Stan Judd (m. Lily Hill), Adele Hill (m. B. Meyer), unknown Leslie, Minister, Ida Leslie (bride), unknown, J.W. Barraclough (m. Dulcie Hill), Stella Hill, George Hill. Sitting: Mabel Cooper, Lily Judd (née Hill) holding daughter Pat (m. Drewery), Dave Todd (groom), Dulcie Barraclough (née Hill), Jane (Jinny) Hill. In front L: Unknown boy, Dulcie Judd (m. Davenport), R: Douglas Robertson (adopted by Grandma Leslie)

Grandma Leslie was a practical and capable mother. She ran her farmlet home alongside Dudley Creek on the corner of Banks Ave and Coopers Road, Shirley, Christchurch. She had two daughters, Mabel Margaret (my mother) and Ida who were fully occupied in helping in the usually full house, which included some of Jinny's (half-sister to Mother) family of five. The Leslie's productive property had gardens, fowls, vegetables and a large orchard.

Mabel married George Cooper in 1900 and had three children, Ida (1904), me (1908) and Maurice (1912). My sister Ida and I enjoyed helping in the orchard picking the apples, Cox's Orange, Irish Peach, Russets and Ribston Pippins. And the pears, cherries and walnuts. I



Grandma Leslie and her family

can still see Grandma, picking a fowl for the pot and with a quick flick of the wrist, wringing its neck. She took in washing, had a large laundry at the back of the house which the girls largely ran, and no doubt collected and delivered the laundry.

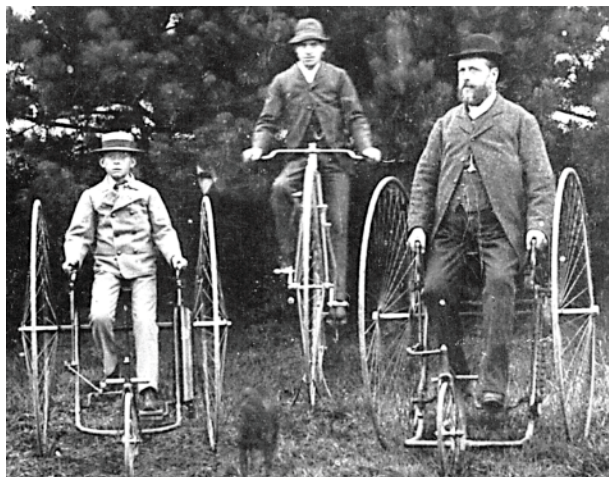
Grandma was a good no-nonsense cook and turned out two hot meals a day, which Mother said contributed to her very good health. No 'in-betweens' in those days. Outside the front gate Dudley Creek provided endless fun for battleships and war games with Douglas Robertson, an orphan adopted by Grandma.

Across the way in Coopers Road (no relation) I would watch the old Chinese men going round and round a big market garden all day long just hoeing the plants. No irrigation

then—the constant hoeing was enough to retain the moisture in the soil. When I was about seven, I arrived, I know not how, just as a professional photographer was taking a photograph with Grandma and family all in their Sunday best and I was told to join in. I was not in my Sunday best. So, our photo in the family archives shows a very shabby little boy looking scared. The Leslie family details are all recorded in the registers of the All-Saints Anglican Church, Burwood, Christchurch, including my own birth.

Mother never complained about the hard work—she appreciated the value of it when one is young. A recent (1988) article in the Reader's Digest reported on a survey of young folk who were brought up to enjoy the value of hard work: those who worked outside school hours in jobs like delivering papers or running a milk round found that they turned out more mature and better citizens than those who didn't.

On my father's side, I never knew his father, John Cooper, who died at 48. He was a blacksmith from a small village of Cam near Dursley in Gloucestershire, the eldest of 12. He married Sarah Baglin in England and they emigrated to New Zealand with four young children. What courage they had and what an indictment of conditions in England around



George, Frank (rear) and their father John Cooper

1870. Knowing virtually nothing of this country to set out halfway across the world in one of those little ships—and they were little. Granddad's diary of that adventure records the vicissitudes of the journey, including the fact that the ship's doctor drank all the brandy from the ship's medicine chest. *[Lawrie must have*

seen that diary but where it is now, we do not know.] He was a keen cyclist and won races on his Penny Farthing bicycle. Its front wheel was five feet high, back one 18 inches.

My father George was a good father who enjoyed playing cricket with us boys and taking his family out for picnics. He often took us to Lancaster Park to watch rugby and cricket. One Christmas Day when New Zealand were batting, a sharp earthquake shook. The Englishmen all sat down on their hands and knees while the two NZ batsmen just stood waiting for the game to resume.



Annie Dunn, George's sister



Marjory Cooper, George's niece

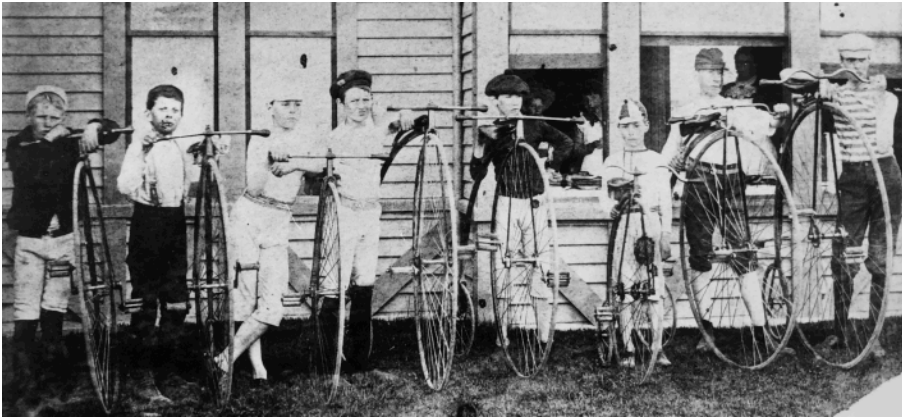


George Cooper



Harry (George's brother)

[Penny Farthing cycles were all the rage at the time. In 2005, Jonathon Kennett of Kennett Bros. Outdoor Recreation and Restoration, Wellington, wrote us: 'These machines were the equivalent of today's sports cars. Tricycles were generally owned by the upper classes (Queen Victoria is said to have owned one, which she rode around Hyde Park). I have only seen one in New Zealand... The Penny Farthing in the centre of the photo (left) has been specifically designed to lower the rider about 15 cm from the normal high perch, so the rider is less likely to fly over the handlebars if the front wheel should hit a rock. The tricycles look like Starley's Coventry Royal Salvos, invented in 1881.]'



Penny Farthing cycles, George 2nd from left



Mabel and Ida Leslie (sisters)



George and Mabel Cooper's wedding, 12 March 1900. L to R: Emmie, Jane Hill (nē Bushett), Robert Hill (Jan Chilvers' grandparents), George Cooper, Mabel Cooper (née Leslie), Ida Todd (née Leslie), Frank Cooper (George's brother). Seated: David Leslie, Mary Leslie (daughter of Pourewa), Marjorie Cooper (Frank's daughter), Sarah Cooper (nē Baglin)

Dad, the youngest of six, was born in NZ. He started work as a striker, i.e., a blacksmith's aid, at P&D Duncan's big engineering shop. He used to tell of the pranks the older hands played on the rookies, sending them around to the opposition to borrow the round square. *[Lawrie told us later how he as a new junior bank officer was asked to go to another bank to ask for a 'long weight'. He waited for 45 minutes before realising he had had the long wait!]* He hated pushing the firm's hand cart and soon realised that if he wanted to get on, he needed more

education. He decided to go to Canterbury University to study engineering.

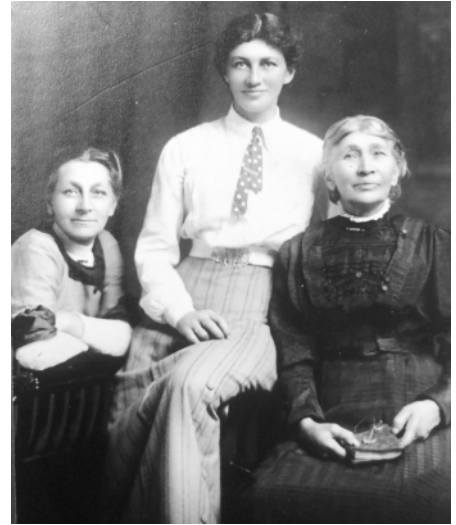
Soon after Dad finished at Canterbury University, he and mother moved to Timaru where Dad's sister Emily had married another blacksmith, George Wallace. Dad and George formed a company in Timaru, Wallace and Cooper Ltd Engineers. The company is still operating today in quite a big way, but no family are in it now. Dad's other sister Annie married Fred Dunn, a jeweller, whose family kept the business going (up to 1979) father to

son, father to son. In the family they were known as 'old Fred, young Fred and young

Fred's son Fred'. Mother and Dad then moved to Ashburton where I was born (23 May 1908).



Annie and Fred Dunn's family home in Timaru



Jane (Jinny) Hill (née Bushette, also spelt Bushet and Buskett), Ida Todd (née Leslie) and their mother Mary Leslie (née Cosell, Lawrie's grandmother)



Cooper and Duncan Engineers Picnic, Christchurch 1916. The firm was started by Lawrie's uncle, Frank Cooper. George Cooper took over when Frank retired. He stayed until the firm was taken over by J.J. Niven & Co., a firm that began in 1891 and is still operating today in Palmerston North. In this photo are Maurice, Lawrie, Ida, George, Mabel and her sister Ida.

[Sheila Catesby, granddaughter of Alfred Thomas Cooper (we assume he is the brother of John Cooper b. 1838), wrote to Rossie Cooper in 1997, "My lovely grandfather Alfred Thomas Cooper had seven brothers and seven sisters, seven older and seven younger. He was born in 1848 or near, at a small village of Cam near the small town of Dursley, about 15 mins from Gloucester. When his father died the authorities had him buried in quick lime as they wrongly thought he had died from a virulent form of disease. His sons dug out the grave and got rid of the quick lime. This was so heinous a crime that they left the country for New Zealand where they prospered and were joined by their sister, my great aunt Hannah."]

I was three when Dad left his company to come to Christchurch and join Cooper and Duncan Ltd Engineers, the Cooper being his brother Frank. Dad became manager on Frank's death. Dad had the use of a car, a Scripps-Booth. On more than one occasion the rear left wheel would come off and race ahead of the car which would subside on the brake drum, and it was always my job to tear off and retrieve the wheel.

An early recollection: Christmas morning 1912 and outside my bedroom door was a bright red trolley! What a thrill. It was too big to get through the door but was no less a thrill for that. It became the envy of my young friends. We were then living at 443 Hereford Street, still occupied today. A three-bedroom weatherboard cottage with an outside loo. Ida liked to show me off as her young brother and coached me up for the Sunday School concert. I was to recite my catechism. The result was a total disaster, a bad case of stage fright. I was tongue-tied and had to be prompted from the wings every word. There began and ended my stage career. Ida was not so proud thereafter of her protégé. In later years she took up elocution and did very well—she had the assurance that I lacked. In her teen years she mastered the art of china painting, and we still have some of her much-admired pieces.



Ida and Lawrence

There were four years between Ida and me and between me and Maurice. Four years was a bit too long for children to have a close relationship with each other. Years later I learnt that Mother had lost a baby either side of me so I must have inherited stronger genes. Certainly, I have enjoyed good health.

As well as being a good cook Mother made all our clothes on her Singer sewing machine. Hand-me-downs were converted, shortened or lengthened to suit. She made our short trousers, no zip fly but a hinged flap instead.

We were members of the Avonside Anglican church and Sunday School. On the

way there we had to pass Johnson's fruit shop which was closed. They had a Nestlé's machine on the pavement however which gave out a chocolate slab for one penny. Alas for the Sunday School collection until the vicar persuaded the Johnsons to lock the machine until later in the day.

I was about eight or nine when Mother put me in the church choir. We had a big organ pumped manually by two choir boys. My mate and I would go flat out and build up a good pressure so we could then have a rest. Sure enough, we would overdo the rest and the notes of the organ would go flat and the organist would bellow "Wake up there!" much to the amusement of the congregation. I was no Caruso and gave up, or more likely was given up, after two years.

A popular outing was a picnic on which we would invite another family. Riding on the top of a double-decker tram or trailer to New Brighton or Sumner was a real treat. Another was to take the tram to what is now the Sign of



the Takahe and walk over the hills to Governors Bay or Lyttelton. These walks inspired Jack Penlington and me when we were about 13 to walk over the hills to Akaroa, a 40-mile trek—no maps. All we knew was the general direction and if we got lost, which we

did once, to walk down the hill till we found a stream and follow that. I can't imagine now how our parents let us go.

It was a comfortable home. Mother cooked on a coal range and we had kerosene lamps and candles. Gas lighting came in later. I was four and a half when the doctor came to visit, and Dad told me that he had brought me a baby brother in his bag. His middle names were the surnames of his grandparents—Maurice Costle Baglin Cooper. What a mouthful! I was luckier; I got their first names and mother's maiden name—Lawrence John Leslie Cooper. It was customary to give children three or more Christian names.



Ron (son of Arthur, Lawrie's uncle) & Dorrie Cooper, Frank Cooper (Best man)



Leslie Family at 7 Coopers Road, Shirley, Christchurch, 1916. L to R: Standing: George Cooper, Dulcie Barraclough, Adele Hill; Seated: Lilly, Jinny (mother of these 4) (née Bushette), Ida Leslie (Lawrie's aunt); In front, Lawrie Cooper, Douglas Robertson.



Stanley and Lily Judd (née Hill)'s wedding, 1910. Stanley Judd (seated, centre), Lily (standing, centre). Stan's parents are seated on his far right. To the left of Lily Judd (seated) are Dulcie Hill (aunt), Ginny Hill (mother), John Leslie (godfather) and Mabel Cooper (John's daughter). Behind Ginny is George Cooper. To his left are Ida Todd and Stella Mantell (née Hill). The children in the front row are four Hill children then the children of Mabel and George, Ida, Lawrie and Maurice (on Mabel's lap).

Next door was an empty corner section in the corner of which a neighbour stored an old motor car. Yes, a real old timer. Such temptation: Jack Penlington and I loved to get under the cover and 'drive' all over the world. One day we spotted the owner approaching. We were out and over the fence in seconds. While

we watched through a hole in the fence he came over and although he could not see us gave us a dressing down. We had nearly set the car on fire, he said. How did he know we were there?

Around the corner in Stanmore Road, Worcester Street was our local shopping area. I vividly recall one day in 1918 when I was

buying some fish for Mother at Yates Fish Shop (still operating in 1960) and Mr Yates excitedly telling me, “The war is over, go home and tell your parents the Armistice will be signed today.” I flew home, the bearer of good tidings for which no doubt my folk and many others had been fervently praying. Here we are, 73 years later still praying for world peace.

About this time the influenza epidemic hit the country and people died like flies. I recall seeing open deck trucks with 20 or more coffins passing our home on their way to the cemetery. The authorities established inoculating centres and everyone was urged to have a jab. But the seriousness of the tragedy did not communicate itself to us children.

While this epidemic raged, Grandma Cooper became ill and we decided to take her in. This required a bigger house. She had lived alone in Armagh Street for many years. We moved into 188 Linwood Avenue. Dad had the happy thought to put the name ‘Dursley’ on the gate, the village in Gloucestershire where the old lady originated. When she lived in Armagh St, it was near East Christchurch School where I was in Primer 1. I recall calling on her because I had wet my pants at school. The dear old thing took my pants and dried them—after all she had had four sons.

Jack Penlington and I had a lot of fun together. Norm Kellaway was another. Behind his front fence in Stanmore Road, we used to hide from passers-by. Someone’s trinket box yielded a medallion, like a 20-cent piece with a small hole, through which we threaded black cotton and laid the ‘coin’ on the footpath. When an unsuspecting pedestrian stooped to pick up the ‘coin’ it disappeared under the fence to hoots of poorly suppressed laughter. Of course, we tried it once too often and a man wiser to the ways of boys quickly jammed his foot on it and had the

last laugh. But we were equal to the occasion. We got a piece of concrete and when someone approached on the footpath, we dropped a penny on it. Through our peep holes we enjoyed the sight of them searching to retrieve the coin. Again, our laughter got the better of us and our victims would mutter imprecations before departing. Reminiscent of a recent BNZ television advert when they stuck a 50-cent piece to the pavement outside the bank with superglue. Also, we used to climb the tree that grew over the footpath and hang black cotton threads down about face height. Good fun to watch the passers-by trying to wipe the ‘spider webs’ from their faces.

One winter we had a bad snowstorm. The trams had snow ploughs fitted and would charge the banked-up snow at speed sending great showers of snow up on either side. Quite spectacular and fascinating for a 10-year-old.

We had no mechanical toys and made our own fun. Jack liked electrical things. We wired up a battery and threaded the leads through the bottom sheet of his brother Cedric’s bed. Then we waited in the cold outside his window for him to go to bed. He eventually got into bed, but something was not right. He started to feel about with his hands spread and got a hand on each wire then bingo. He let out an oath and leapt a mile. Again, we roared laughing. We were soon caught and chastised though he took it better than we deserved.

The Penlingtons lived in a big house in Stanmore Road. It had a cottage where Jack’s three older brothers slept. Our enterprise did not disturb his parents. The well-built house still stands today. I am sure my parents did not know I was out at such a late hour. I must have got out my bedroom window. And we talk today about parents not controlling their children!



Jack Penlington and Lawrie



Ron Cooper (Lawrie’s cousin, Arthur’s son)



Lawrie rabbit-shooting.



George Cooper, a keen bowler, front row, second from left



Mabel Cooper opening a bowls tournament, 1918. Her husband George, standing behind her, was the president of the club.

Schools and Sports

I was 11 when Jack, I and Alan Moore used to go to Alan's house after school for a smoke—his parents both worked. We would wrap newspaper round pine needles and puff away. They were awful; we were not sick but often nearly so. We 'graduated' to women's cigarettes later. How we stuck the newspaper round the needles I can't remember, but I most certainly do remember the day when our Standard 6 teacher wanted to light the potbelly stove in our classroom. He quite innocently asked "Anyone got a match?" "Yes sir," up piped his nibs and the teacher, looking me in the eye said, "Ahaa! A smoker, eh?" Oooh. For years I wondered how did he know?

fumes before the scoutmaster arrived. Dad suspected that the gun was not appropriate for his rascal son, so he buried it in a vacant section next door. I had liked to take early morning rides on my bike and take 'pot shots' at anything that took my fancy, so Dad was right.

On one of our picnic outings, Dad hired a rowboat from near the New Brighton bridge and rowed us down to Pleasant Point, about a mile. When it came to pack up, Jack and I started to run down the jetty towards our boat tied up at the end. The run developed into a race and as we turned the corner I slipped and went into the drink. Jack, close behind, caught my foot and went in too. Two soaking wet and



Picnics were dress-up occasions. Mabel seated middle row, is second from right, in a white hat.

About this time Dad's cousin Archie Finch gave up driving his taxi—a Hudson Six. To protect himself from bad types he used to carry an unloaded revolver. Then having no use for it, he gave it to me! What a stupid gift for a boy of 11—especially me—and was I proud. I took it to scouts one night and Ralph Dunnage brought a live bullet pinched from his father. We tossed to see who would fire it. He won. Pointing to the floor in the small vestry room of St Chad's Church where we met, he pulled the trigger. A colossal explosion and a lump of plaster fell from the ceiling. The bullet had hit the floor, ricocheted to the skirting board, and caused the ceiling to fall on the floor. No one was hurt, but we had to work hard to clear out the cordite

subdued little boys. But that wasn't the end of the day. Dad started rowing upstream, but no one had thought about the tide which was running out fast. We soon reached the stage of nil progress and we were wondering if we would ever get home when along came a motorboat that took us in tow. What a relief!

Before I leave my early days a few thoughts about home. Grandma Leslie ran a frugal home. Mother and her sister Ida were well schooled in the art of thrift. Nothing, repeat nothing, was wasted. Paper, string, nails, wood—all might have further use one day. Every penny had to be looked at twice before parting with it. They lived in an age conditioned by the early pioneers whose most material needs had

to come from England by ship. No wonder they were careful and not surprising that some of this rubbed off on us children. Even now, I find it hard to throw away something that I might later need. The throw-away age is not for me.

I have no recollection of ever being hungry although Mother had to manage on Dad's weekly wages of £1.10/- (one pound ten shillings) when they married. Mother was proud of a bicycle she saved up for when she was 21. It cost £1.10/- and she rode it until she was over 70. We used to have bread and milk or porridge for breakfast followed by bread and dripping which we much enjoyed. Plenty of fruit and veges and eggs from Grandma Leslie's. We kept well and happy. Always tripe and onions for Sunday morning. Mother prepared it beforehand and we heated it up for breakfast. She and Dad stayed in bed and we took them tea and toast.

On the fourth Wednesday of each month Mother was 'at home' and her lady friends

would call for afternoon tea. They each had one day a month and the same group would gather. Years later these days became bridge parties. We boys always looked forward to the fourth Wednesday for the leftovers, especially the thinly cut bread and butter. Once a month we biked into town and bought from Aulsebrooks a big bag of broken biscuits for 1/-.

Ida complained that always all the chocolate fingers had disappeared before we got home.

I used to spend much time at Keith Milne's place across the road—they had a big section at the back, good for cricket and football, also a very good orchard with a huge Japanese plum tree with great big yellow fruit, absolutely

delicious. We would feast on these, only later to regret our gorging.

The holidays before I started at CBHS (Christchurch Boys High School) I spent a few very happy weeks on a farm at Lauriston near Rakaia, belonging to a friend of Dad's, Herbert Caruthers. Then perhaps because of something I said in a letter, I do not know, but Dad got the idea I was being worked too hard. He wrote for me to come home as he was planning a bicycle trip for us both to the West Coast.

We sent our bikes by rail to Arthur's Pass, pushed them over the pass and set out for Hokitika. We stayed one night at Kumara in a small pub. It was an old mining village. Shortly before our arrival, the publican's wife had a near fatal accident. She was hanging out the washing on the back lawn when the ground under her feet suddenly gave way. She fell but had the presence of mind to hang on to the clothesline and scream. Her husband saved her. The back lawn had covered an old vertical mine

shaft of which there are many on the West Coast. With the years, they get overgrown and are a constant danger. We were glad to move on.

Nearing Hokitika, Dad's front wheel collapsed. I had to ride six miles into Hokitika alone to buy a new wheel. I felt very responsible in a strange land alone and on an important mission, but after six miles no sign of a town. I reached a small cluster of

houses and one large building which bore the inscription 'Hokitika Library', so I had found it. You have to turn right off the main road to reach the town. Had I not spotted the library I guess I would by now be near the South Pole.

Another good holiday I remember, I was sent off alone—I'd be about 11—by train to Blenheim to go to Jim Samuel's farm in the



The Cooper Family, 1928. Maurice, George, Ida, Mabel, Lawrie

Waihopai Valley. From Blenheim station, I had to go by mail coach. Sitting up top with the driver behind six steaming horses was a great thrill. Going uphill they walked but going down they wanted to gallop; the driver had to apply the brakes—great wooden blocks which gripped each wheel. Jim's two sons Gus and Bob gave me a grand holiday, harvesting and shearing and all the associated jobs on the farm.

From Linwood Avenue, I went to Linwood North School for two years and then to CBHS, i.e., the old school—now part of the Arts Centre. I needed a bike. Dad and I went to town one Friday night. Found a beauty for £5 and joy of joys it had Diamond Outrigger handlebars adjustable all ways: up, down, in, out, forward, back. I was the envy of my mates. One day pedalling against a head wind with my head down, I went slap bang into a baker's cart and fell off. Neither the bike nor its rider was really hurt—only my dignity. I was lucky. I think I must be a survivor because that was the first of a number of accidents that I have had over the years which could have put me in a wheelchair, or worse could have been fatal.

The baker's cart was really a box on wheels drawn by a horse. All bread was delivered in those days and not only bread. The butcher would call, Mother would go to the gate and choose her fancy, have it cut and weighed on the spot. Likewise, the milkman delivered your milk to the back door. How times have changed.

One day about then we had a real pea-soup fog. Dad's friend Henry Burson had run out of gas nearly. Could we help him? Mother and Dad were out but his nibs, ever the helpful friend, said "Sure, I'll give you a tow." By then Dad had another car, a Dodge three-seater. With Henry walking with one hand on the front mudguard we set out and soon jammed the other guard under the rail protecting the river. A nasty dent. Dad was not impressed even though I was helping his friend. I towed him home. Did I have a licence to drive? Hardly—I was only 13.

We had a new home built at 220 Fitzgerald Avenue. It became the home for Mother and Ida from 1923 until they died in the 1960s. While waiting for it to be finished, we rented a house in River Road, Avonside, Christchurch. One

fine summer evening I had the 'back to nature' urge and decided to sleep outside under the stars alone. About 2 am I woke with the rain coming down. No more urge.

My subjects at CBHS in my first year were English, Maths (including algebra and geometry), Latin, French, Geography and History—what a difference to primary school and, of course, plenty of homework. Algebra like some of the others was completely new to me but it came naturally. I got my one and only first in it. French, I did not find at all easy especially the irregular verbs. In my second year we were to sit a French exam, and I got the bright idea to write the verbs out very minutely on a single sheet of paper which I could interleave between the cover and the blotter of my pad. I was pleased with my minute writing and showed it to Dad. He said little. All went well in the exam until the supervisor turned back the cover of my pad to expose my perfidy, and I got the greatest shock of my life. A cheat! I had to report to the headmaster. Cheating in an exam—there was no worse crime and I thought I was in for a good caning.

The headmaster lectured me for half an hour. He was most disappointed in the son of his school friend. He and Dad had been mates in the same school 40 years before. He sent me off with a warning, "If it ever happens again..." That shock has stayed with me all my life.

Years later it came to me that my being caught out may not have been accidental. When Dad saw my French verbs all written out so small, he must have guessed what I was up to and passed a word to the headmaster who told the supervisor. Dad no doubt thought that the surest way to cure me of such dishonesty was for me to be caught in the act. If so, he was a very wise father, because never again was I so tempted. I had been in the bank some years when I wrote to the headmaster, then retired, and said I realised how important it was that I had been exposed as despite ample opportunity in the bank I had not even contemplated any dishonesty. He wrote a warm-hearted reply and wished me well.

Another friend was Jack Francis who made a hobby of things electrical and liked making crystal wireless sets. No trouble to sell. Made in an old cigar or chocolate box with the crystal

whisker one could sell them for 7/6 (75 cents) and another 7/6 for the headphones. Soon most of our relatives had them. They were delighted. And now we can see and listen to astronauts on the moon! A year later Jack and I had a grand camping holiday somewhere in the country. With a tent, two pea rifles and some food, we found a suitable riverbed and shot and skinned 30 rabbits and came home proudly with our loot ponging aplenty. Mother made us burn them promptly—more pong.

Mother and Dad rented a house on Marine Parade for our holiday from a Mr Simpson who was a retired boxer. Later when George Lancaster the CBHS headmaster was looking for a boxing coach Dad suggested Simpson, who then coached the school boxing teams for some years.

An apt pupil was Jim Burrows who later became NZ Universities heavyweight champion. One night, Jim and the coach were sparring when Jim with a right hook knocked Simpson out. Jim was dumbfounded.

I was in the school boxing team and part of our training was skipping to make us light on our feet. Off and on I have kept up skipping for most of my life until about 10 years ago.

Dad had always encouraged us boys to be good at sport with the thought that wherever we went in life, if we could play a good game, we would always have friends and, more importantly, we would learn to take a licking with good grace. I played both rugby and cricket at school. At football practice one day I got a nasty kick on the head behind the ear and was knocked out (Accident number 2). The master put me on the sideline till the practice finished, but I was only semi-conscious and the next thing I knew, I was home in bed and the doctor was examining me. I had ridden home alone three miles but was quite oblivious of the fact. Three weeks to return to normal.

Accident number 3 soon followed when I took a nasty fall off my bike, on my left elbow and chipped the bone. I was acting smart

showing Jack how I could take a sharp corner at speed. Painful for some weeks but recovered.

High school was a happy time. The annual school picnic to Corsair Bay in Lyttelton Harbour was much enjoyed and must have given some concern to the masters. 600 boys in high spirits on a train. Returning through the tunnel in the dark, some would open the windows and gather soot from the outside and then try to smear the faces of their friends. You can imagine how they looked on disembarking at the Christchurch station.



Lawrie, aged about 20

It was a big change, High School. I was a very small pea in a very big pond, but I had a few friends from Linwood—Jack and Keith among them. We were lucky in that our Senior Monitor in our first year was Curly Page, a good fellow, captain of the First XI and the First XV, later captain of the NZ Cricket Team. In my second year our senior monitor was the aforementioned Jim Burrows, later South Island representative cricketer and All Black hooker, likewise a hero to all small boys. Curly was First Lieutenant in charge of Number 1 Platoon in A Company in the School Cadet Corps and I was in his platoon. On the first parade inspection he lectured us on how to clean our brass buttons on our uniforms with an old toothbrush, which I did at home. On the next parade inspection, he had me stand out in front and face the whole platoon as an example of how to clean our buttons. I was on top of the world. Just a little thing, but it meant so much to me.



Gate allowing one person through at a time.

Dad used to tell of an incident in his CBHS days. At the Hereford Street back entrance was a gate to allow only one through at a time. The gate always squeaked “Hee haw! Hee haw!” When the whole school was on parade one day, a young boy sitting on the gate made it squeak to the annoyance of the school Sgt Major. Exasperated, he bellowed at the lad, “What the devil do you think you are, making that noise?” Without a blink the lad replied in full voice, “A tom-tit Sir,” and ran for his life, with 300 boys roaring with laughter.

Into the Bank

I was in my third year at CBHS when Dad's bank manager suggested Dad put me into the Bank of New South Wales. I was happy, at 15 years and three months, with the thought of earning a wage. My application approved, Dad took me in, in my first long pants, on my first day. Seated outside the manager's room, the assistant accountant came up and I still recall his first words, "So this is our new officer!" Me, an officer! It was all so very different to school. I enjoyed learning my new job. This was 1923 and the depression was approaching. Dad was pleased to get a good opening for his son.

In those days each of the five trading banks issued their own notes. On Monday afternoons notes were exchanged for cheques which were cleared through Wellington. In my third week, I took £1600 in notes to the Union Bank and £5000 to the BNZ, equal to about \$120,000 today. I was 15 years four months old, with no escort. The BNZ notes were £100 short. I had to take them back. Consternation! No one could account for the shortage. Next morning the manager asked me if Dad was coming in to see him. He thought I would have told Dad but the Declaration of Secrecy I had signed on my first day was still fresh in my mind. Dad came in and was advised to pay up the £100, but after two payments of £5 per month the debt was wiped out. Some months later one of the tellers was caught stealing and jailed. They thought he also had my £100.

To get me into the bank Dad had to get two guarantors for £500 each to vouch for me. Years later, when I worked in London, the boys then had to pay £500 to join and work without pay for six months. One job for the junior at the Christchurch bank was to post the mail which I did each night. After my first month I was asked for the receipts for the registered mail. I did not know what they meant. All the outward mail including that with a blue cross on it I had sent down the chute. No one had told me how to register a letter. Fortunately, nothing was missing. Had there



been, on top of the £100, I would probably have had to find another job.

My salary on joining was £75 per annum; after six weeks a bonus of 5% was declared for those on the staff at 30 September. As I was then only a probationer of three weeks I did not expect anything, but the manager, bless him, said, "We'll pay the lad and if the bank objects he can refund it." They didn't. With the £3.15/, I bought Mother a bunch of flowers and myself a tennis racquet.

I was 16 and with the other lads we would take a ticket in Tattersalls on pay day. It was a Hobart run sweepstake, tickets 5/-. We had won nothing for a year, so I took a ticket on my own and won £100. I was the envy of my mates.



Ida Cooper, left, and in her and Lawrie's Perry.

With £50, Ida added another £50, and we bought a little three-seater car—a Perry in which we had a lot of fun and quite some expense. Crank-starting and with a folding hood, it was essentially fresh-air motoring. We sold it after two years for £80. Harry Anderson, another banker, and I used it to go to tennis at the United Club (in Hagley Park), 36 grass courts, still operating.

One morning we arrived at work to find the main strongroom door one inch open with a piece of stamp-edging stuck over the open gap. Tom the caretaker had found the door with both bolts shot but not locked. Asked about the sticky paper, he said he thought it the best way to tell next morning if a burglar had been into the strongroom during the night.

Tom, a dithery old fellow, was in a permanent state of semi-sobriety. Hence, his ingenuity!

Over a year, at irregular intervals, we would be audited by a team from Head Office. The first job always was to count the cash, my postage box, the tellers' cash, and the treasury. The latter was held in the vault underground. Two boys had to go down and heave the heavy bags of sovereigns about. One bag burst and shiny golden sovereigns went everywhere. What a sight! On counting they were short, we searched every nook and corner and eventually found it in the turn-up of the manager's trousers. Sighs of relief all round.

The ledgers were huge bound books of 960 pages about 20 inches long, 14 wide and six thick and quite heavy. The boys had to stack them in the strongroom at night. The idea was to stack them spines to the wall, they would then stay put. But when there was a new chum around, they would be stacked spines out so were bound to fall over. Next, one boy would stand with his back to the pile—about six feet high—keeping it up. The new chum was inveigled into the strongroom. The boy holding the pile stepped smartly aside while the new chum—his nibs of course—to avoid being buried under the pile, had to hold it up. The only way out was to take the ledgers down, one by one and rebuild the stack. I was caught only once but was ever watchful.

I did some relieving from Christchurch. Twice to Ashburton and once to Greymouth. At the former branch I relieved a very meticulous lady ledger keeper. Unfortunately, I left an ugly ink blot on one page. She must have been mad because on my next visit I found a conspicuous ring round the blot and my initials LJLC inside.



Lawrie the golfer. Lawrie enjoyed many sports.

So posterity will forever have evidence of my time in Ashburton. It was there that I took up golf and quite enjoyed it. The accountant (handicap eight) coached me. I bought my first set of four clubs and got an 18 handicap.

The manager was a *very* nervous man. When driving me out to the golf links, we reached the parking area. He was heading for the back of a parked car when he took his hands off the wheel and his foot off the brake and shouted, "Oh my God, oh my God!", then bang. End of

story.

In Greymouth, the manager, Mr Mabin, was a real old-timer. He had a gold assayer's licence and a family of 12. The bank had a small laboratory where the gold miners would bring

their gold. The boss would assay and weigh it and pay out on the spot. Other banks were keen to get the gold but had to send it away for assay, so we had a big advantage. Mr Mabin's predecessor was quite a character. He would ride horseback round the gold fields and buy at the mine-head. A risky business. Stories of his adventures have appeared in many books on the West Coast. Overnight in the hotels he would sleep with the saddle bags of gold under his mattress and his revolver under his pillow. Life was very rough and tough. Many men thought about waylaying the old boy and his loot.

Another job for the junior was to cancel the dirty and torn notes with a big 'cancelled' stamp, tie them in bundles of 100, then wrap bundles of 500 in scrim and thick brown paper. I was shown how to tie the parcel with three strands one way and two the other, with one length of string and only one knot. Then seal with sealing wax. The bank in Hereford Street would have been 50 years old, two storeys, and in earlier times the manager lived upstairs. To communicate with his wife and vice versa, he had a speaking tube in his



Lawrie the businessman

room. Eventually the manager's quarters became storage rooms, virtually unused. The junior before me was tidying up the storage area. Seeing the speaking tube he picked it up and blew into it. The manager was interviewing a customer at that moment. He was deluged in dust. That junior was almost sacked.

When the branch needed notes, they would arrive by mail and had to be signed by two officers before they could be issued. Sometimes when we were hoping to finish early and get off to tennis, the accountant would give us a bundle of 500 and say, "Sign these before you go." One felt quite important to think one's signature was going into circulation, but that feeling soon passed by the time you had signed 500 notes. It was quite a job. No fountain pens, ball points, or quick-drying ink and your signature must not be smudged.

One day when relieving at Ashburton I was asked to sleep on the premises so the manager could go duck-shooting. Around 2 am I was awakened by someone trying to get in. There was a scraping sound coming from the back door. Was I frightened! I crept downstairs nervous and shaking-scared stiff-with a big .44 revolver in hand. Petrified, I flung the door open ready to blow the bandit to smithereens when in jumped the manager's cat! He will never realise how close he came to execution.

I would be about 16 when Mother and Dad got interested in something called 'Practical Psychology' and attended lectures by Rev A.M. Niblock from Auckland. I do not recall that God was particularly mentioned but the teaching was largely from the Sermon on the

Mount. One of their beliefs was that if you wanted something badly, if your request was unselfish, if it was for your own good, just believe that you had it and it would come to pass. By then I was 18 and starting to go to dances. One Saturday night, Mother and Dad were out, and I was dressing for a dance. I had by then a dinner suit, dress shirt and black bow tie but could not find my cufflinks. I started to panic but then remembered what I had gleaned from my parents' new faith. I sat down quietly and concentrated. "Please God, if you want me to go out, please tell me where my cufflinks are." As if God would be bothered with such mundane matters. However, the thought soon came, "Go look in your mother's knitting basket." There at the bottom under the wools and the socks awaiting darning lay the two cufflinks! Such an experience at 18 was shattering. When later I told Mum and Dad, they were dumbfounded but grateful that some of their faith had rubbed off on me. Neither my parents nor anyone else had any idea how they got there.

This form of prayer we have many times adopted in later life and have been ever so often surprised at the result—that although we expect an answer as a natural result of our faith, it is still a surprise and a pleasant one to know that there is a power beyond our understanding that cares for each one of us, even rascals like me.



Jack Penlington, Maurice and Lawrie



George and Mabel in their garden

Bulls and East Coast

At 19, I was given my first transfer as second officer in a two-handed branch in Bulls, near Wanganui. Manager A. J. Law and his wife were very keen, good sports people. Tennis and golf were the 'in' sports—suited me fine. Most days in the winter, the boss would have his car parked at the door of the bank by 3 pm and we would throw the cash into the safe and tear out to the links, a nice little nine-hole course. Back about 5 pm to balance the money and post the mail. In summer it was the same routine with tennis. The 'better' houses roundabout had regular tennis afternoons. Of course, the local bank people were considered acceptable seeing we could play as well as, if not better than, themselves. I would go to work after lunch in my creams to save time. We would arrive at the party about 3:30 when the earlier guests were at afternoon tea, so we went straight on to the courts and when the guests emerged we were let loose on the goodies. Some life! Beautiful grass courts, lovely homes, sumptuous pavlovas, I was in heaven. The same routine as after golf followed.

I was standing on the front step of the bank one day when I 'saw' an earthquake coming. Not many have. Like an approaching wave, it quickly travelled towards us—the telegraph poles were swinging and the wires pinging as they tightened and slackened. A most queasy feeling with a fear of sinking. Another day I was working at the counter with my head down when a footstep sounded and there before me was a cow—it was that sort of town. I got it outside without too much trouble, but I have since wondered, "What if it had been a bull?"

Typewriters had not reached the smaller branches, so the manager wrote his letters by hand in a special ink. They were then placed in a bound book of very flimsy sheets, a greaseproof cardboard underneath and the flimsy was brushed with water, the boss's letter laid face down and the book placed in a big screw-down clamp. After a few seconds it was opened and we would look anxiously at the results. Too much water and the ink would run, too little and you could hardly read the flimsy. What a business! We didn't write many letters.

Coming home on a motorbike from a country expedition one night, I hit a cow and fell off on my right shoulder (Accident number 4). The doctor recommended massage for which I had to go 18 miles to Palmerston North (PN). One appointment must have been on a holiday because there was no transport, so I decided to walk. Treatment over I set off home again and was picked up by a couple who had been in to PN to see a show and remembered seeing me on my way in some hours earlier. I was young and fit and thought nothing of such a hike.

I was grateful for Dad's encouragement to us to play sport. In my first week in Bulls, the local tennis champion invited me to a match which I won, to my surprise. He used to hook every shot across court either forehand or backhand, so it was dead easy to anticipate. At



F. Fenwick and L.J. Cooper, Champion and Runner-up, Rangitikei Golf Club Championships, 1930

golf I had to play the Club Champion, my boss on a handicap of 8, in the semi-final. With my handicap at 18, I was getting thrashed after 12 holes (only six to go) and I was five down. Stymied on the 13th I putted to finish beside the hole but the ball hit a worm cast and went in for a win. Eureka! It's my lucky day!

I went on to win every hole and the match. The boss was not at all pleased. Reality came in the final when I was swamped over 36 holes by another banker from the BNZ 10 and eight. This means I was 10 holes down with eight to play, so could not win.

We had fun fishing for eels by torchlight in the Rangitikei River. For three years I boarded (30/- or \$3 per week) with Mr Flower—outside loo and iron bath once a week.

From Bulls I went home for a holiday. The family by then had moved to Invercargill where Dad had taken a job with a big engineer Jimmy Macalister. Mrs Mac had us all to dinner one night. We had just sat down while Jimmy Mac was carving the joint when he was called to the phone. We waited for a few minutes, so I moved into his place and completed the carving. What cheek! I still remember Mrs Mac's comment, "That young man has initiative," when she could have said, "What darn cheek!"



Bank Staff at Tokomaru Bay, 1932

Three years in Bulls and then to Tokomaru Bay, near Gisborne, to take over the job of produce clerk, which involved the financing of farmers shipping wool and meat to the UK. I had two hours with the produce clerk who was leaving on the same coach which had brought me in, but he talked so fast about so many aspects of the job that I was completely confused. No one else on the staff knew anything about the job so I had to study everything about the job from the bottom up: Marine Insurance, Invoicing, Shipping and Bills of Lading. We had a big freezing works there which entailed learning a lot about shipping frozen meat to London.

The manager was Athelstan St John Huddleston, a look-alike for King Edward VII; beard, figure and all, and a grand old man, one of nature's gentlemen. A bachelor, he regarded us as his family and every so often had us all to

dinner which his housekeeper prepared with Huddy's instruction, "No expense spared." We deeply respected him. The climate was ideal all the year round and we swam in the sea every day of the year, wet or fine. We played tennis, cricket and golf. It was there I learnt that you cannot swim and play a ball game afterwards—no sense of timing.

I had not been there long when the local Japanese hairdresser Joe Chino invited me to join him and three other bankers to take and furnish a home. So, with £10 each we got a few necessary items together and set up and put in a housekeeper. It was good—we lived well and inexpensively. Joe was meticulous about absolute cleanliness. He would clean his teeth after every meal and not allow us to sit on the table—we ate our food on that. He was a natural handyman. We had a big open fire and would gather driftwood. The big logs we would drag up the beach and then blow them up with blasting powder. Good fun, a huge bang and clouds of smoke.



Joe Chino and Lawrie

One day a strange unpleasant smell invaded our Shangri-La that led to the discovery nearby of a dead horse. No one owned it of course, so we had to bury it. Have you ever had to bury a horse? You'd be amazed at the size of the hole

needed. Four of us took two days with crowbars for the clay, and shovels with handkerchiefs over our noses before the job was done.

Nothing old Joe enjoyed more than his game of poker every Saturday night. Short of a player one night, I was roped in. I won £12 with

beginner's luck and wanted to resign but was hounded to return to the table a few times till my winnings were down to £5 when I definitely declined. I was not a gambler by nature.

Next to our bach was a paddock owned by an old Māori named Sugar who worked his land



Tokomaru BNSW. Photo: Greg Rose

on a decrepit tractor. No one could resist a smile to see Sugar in top hat and tails (of which he was immensely proud) sitting on his tractor with coat tails flying. He grew good corn, so now and again after dark, when the mood took us, we would raid his crop. The old Māori would not go out after dark. A midnight feast with new bread and butter and sweetcorn was everyone's delight. I could easily eat four big cobs then, now one is all I can manage.

We enjoyed our golf on a very hilly, small course. In the club championship it was customary to have a caddie and mine was a young Māori named Operation Piper, Opera for short. So named because his grandmother had an operation at the time of his birth and his mother liked the word so much that he was christened Operation. Reminds me now, a few years ago, a young Māori father calling his son who was playing with Murray's son Oliver, "Come along Porterhouse, time to go."

We used to have good tennis tourneys at Ruatoria and Tolaga Bay. The former was held on a croquet quad, perfectly flat, usually on a weekend and concluding with a dance.

We did not smoke at work during open hours but now and again when we thought Huddy was out or engaged, we would light up. One day we were well alight when he unexpectedly came in. My cigarette went into my drawer which I quickly closed. He came over to me and chatted with smoke starting to rise between us. He did not mention the smoke which I expected to burst into flame any moment, but just kept on talking while I was suffering the tortures of the damned. Eventually when he could hardly see me for smoke, he departed smiling benignly. I never smoked in banking hours again.

The East Coast was a rough and tough place. Shortly before I went to Tokomaru Bay [see photos on front and back covers] the local Māori in Ruatoria got so worked up with a wild west film that they rode their horses into the picture theatre



Lawrie the golfer

and fired a few rifle shots through the roof accompanied by shouting. When leaving the pictures, the locals had to watch out as the 'cowboys' galloped four-abreast down the main street again whooping and yelling.

One morning we had a sharp earthquake—a real beauty. The bank was a brick building and it shook so badly we were really scared. Later that morning Huddy took a telephone call in the main office and we could hear him, "Really, how awful—how many?", and so on. He turned and told us that the earthquake had struck Napier destroying the business area and many people were killed. Next day we learned that it was a 7.9 shake. 250 people were killed and hundreds injured. The worst ever in NZ. We were about 180 miles north—no serious damage.

When I was in Christchurch branch, we had an annual revolver practice organised by the police, but no one had thought of it in Tokomaru Bay, so with a mate we decided to have our own. We took two guns and some ammunition and blazed a few rounds out to sea from our bach, but they made such a deuce of a noise we were scared the neighbours would come running and object and maybe tell the boss. So ended the 'practice'.

For lighting in the bank and the manager's flat we had kerosene under pressure. Our job, i.e., the young boys, was to pump up the tank to 30lbs pressure and NOT BEYOND! We did this three times a week. Six months after I left Tokomaru Bay, Huddy was moved to Masterton and replaced by Mr Bowen, a fitness addict, immensely strong. Apparently one weekend the gas pressure was low and he decided to pump it up. A terrific explosion resulted and he was found decapitated. Apparently, the pressure gauge was stuck on 25 and he was pumping to get it up to 30. To think that I had used the same pump for three years!

[Tokomaru Bay is now a 'ghost town'. The bank closed down many decades ago. A local fish and chip shop owner told Nigel in 2020 it is occupied by squatters.]

The freezing works in Tokomaru Bay would ship their frozen meat to the UK in NZ Shipping Company ships, *Rangitane*, *Rangitiki*, and *Rangitata*, which would anchor half a mile offshore and were loaded by lighter. Looking at these lovely ships one day in 1933 I thought

how good it would be to sail off to the UK in one. Remembering the cufflinks, night after night, I pictured myself on board and sailing off around the world. I did not tell my flatmates of my dream. After a week the thought came, "Speak to Huddy about it." I did and

can see him now looking at me over his glasses, saying, "That's a damn good idea, Cooper." He helped me write a letter to himself, asking for the transfer to London and giving the reason, that I wanted to study the disposal of our exports in London—his idea not mine. It took nearly a month for head office in Sydney to reply (no air mail then) to Wellington where my friend Frank Goodenough was stationed. His telegram said, "You lucky blighter." That was enough. What a thrill. I was 25 and on my way to the UK. The *Tokomaru Bay News* had a headline 'Lawrie for London'. You can imagine there was not a lot to fill the local rag in our wild town of only 500. Again, I had found that God or some supernatural power had answered my prayer.

That was June 1933. The fare from Wellington to London—six weeks on the boat, the Royal Mail Ship *Otranto*—was £55 for a tourist-class cabin.

Four days in Sydney was great. I was mightily impressed at its great size. In the BNSW head office I was something of a curiosity in that I had initiated my own transfer. I was shown all over the 12-storey building including the 'holy of holies'—the Safe Deposit Vault which required 12 separate key holders to open



RMS *Otranto*

it. Many asked me how I got the transfer. The *Otranto* left Sydney for Melbourne, the first of 12 stopovers. There again the staff asked how I had secured the move. One chap, Fraser, was keener than most. He later copied me and came to London where he stayed and rose to be a manager. And so, to Adelaide with its wide streets and big parks—so like Christchurch. Then on to Perth and oh the flies! So hot.

Ten days later we were in Colombo. Shopping there was quite an experience. The

system of bargaining was quite new to me, but we Kiwis soon caught on. There were about 20 from NZ on board so one never felt lonely. Rickshaw rides to Mt. Lavinia and the museum, being intimidated by a group of *rickshaw wallahs* who demanded more than the previously agreed fare and being rescued by two Indian Gurkha police to our immense relief. Good fellows.

When we returned to the ship, we found a family of four had occupied the four-berth cabin next to mine. I was not overjoyed until one day I met them: a mother, two daughters and a young son: Mrs Sherman, Roslyn, Maisie and Norman. Also in their party was Alan, the oldest sibling, who worked for Burmah Oil and was going to England on home leave. The family came from Maymyo in Burma. I was most attracted to the elder daughter, Roslyn, and saw a great deal of her.

Ship life was now extra good. Lots to do, plenty of sunshine, swimming, food, many games. Ships concerts at which Roslyn sang *The End of a Perfect Day*. I was enraptured. A fancy-dress dance, Roslyn was in Eastern dress. A Kiwi, Mrs Jennings, enjoyed

decking out a fellow Kiwi—me—as a slave girl in loose skirt and bared from the waist up except



Lawrie and Ros on board ship

for a bra. I stuck my cigarette case in my bra, much to Roslyn's horror. She still shudders at the recollection. My skinny brown near nakedness did not do much to boost my romantic prospects.

The many stop-over ports made for great interest. In Port Said we anchored a little distance out and came ashore along a floating causeway. Four of us went to a night club and danced. On returning to our table, Roslyn was sitting with her back to heavy dark curtains. When they parted a little, I saw a huge Egyptian standing with his arms folded looking most forbidding. I thought how easy to whip her out from under our noses and we could do nothing. I couldn't get her out of there quick enough. We had a short walk along dark streets to our causeway and were pestered by hawkers with every kind of bargain: "Special for you, Mr MacGregor." They were quite a worry as they stood in front of you. I feared a mugging but again was thankful for the Gurkha police, two of whom came up behind us and escorted us back to our ship. Interesting that twice I should be so grateful to the Gurkhas and that Eastern

countries should find them so reliable. We visited Naples, Toulon, Gibraltar and Plymouth before arriving at Tilbury Docks, London. As we disembarked, I told Maisie that Ros and I would be married within a year. She replied, "I bet you won't." "How much?" I asked. "£10," she said.

London was all and more, much more than we expected. I stayed the first night at the Overseas Club in St James Street and went out for my first stroll, full of wonderment and very excited. Can you imagine the thrill when I saw a signpost



'Big Ben', London

'Scotland Yard'? Not a policeman in sight but several squad cars in view through the big gateway. I could write a book on London!

I was not long at the Overseas Club before I was invited to have a room in the Sherman Flat by the Paddington Recreation Ground in Maida Vale. I did not need a second invitation. Alan was good company and enjoyed the same sports as I did. I was delighted at the chance to see so much of Roslyn. The long twilights were great: tennis until 10 pm. On weekends the two of us would take a Green Line bus into the country and amble through the many country

lanes of which there are legions, and about which one could buy illustrated guidebooks. We would catch a different bus back home.

It was 1933. Slump time in the UK. The Welsh miners in groups of 20 would sing on the streets of the West End. Glorious voices. Also, the buskers; often just a man and his wife who would push a piano on wheels and sing outside our flat. On 1 November, policemen, postmen, etc. all put on darker helmets and uniforms which were laid aside on 1 May—back into whites. The gas lighters on bicycles rode on their rounds with a long pole with which they turned up the gas lamps for street illumination.

Although stage shows were cheap, only 1/- and 2/6 (two shillings and 6 pence), we felt we needed to 'do something' so Roslyn and I entered night-school nearby and studied French. One night we were out walking and had a slight tiff. Roslyn walked off alone. I thought

she would soon look round for me, so I ducked into a doorway and was peeping out to see if she was coming back when a policeman came from nowhere and asked me, "What are you up to?" My explanation



Bank of New South Wales Head Office, 29 Threadneedle Street, London. The main banking hall. The office was opened in 1911.

sounded weak, but the situation was saved when Roslyn returned, much to my relief.

Regarding the London shows, for the cheaper seats we would go to the theatre after work, say 5:30, to 'buy' a stool. Our name was pinned on it and we would go off for a meal. Come back at say 7:30 and take our place in the queue. No one ever moved your name or your stool. With Alan I went to Wembley with 90,000 others to see England play Scotland (football or soccer) and to the Oval and Lord's (cricket). I well remember my great surprise to find the Lord's ground was anything but level—one side being noticeably higher than the other.

Cricket was a continuing interest. I got a thrill out of rubbing shoulders, so to speak, with the famous. Alec Bedser, Jack Hobbs, Patsy Hendron and Denis Compton. One evening when the Aussies were playing the MCC at Lord's, word reached us at work that Bradman was going into bat at 5 pm. We tore down to Lord's and were very lucky to see him knock 100 runs between 5 and 6 pm, an unheard-of event. He hit Hadley Verity, England's top slow bowler, for 24 in one over, six boundaries. I had taken my cricket boots to England so one Saturday afternoon I walked over to the Paddington Rec. I got a game and enjoyed it though I made only two. I joined the Overseas Banks Cricket Club and played for two seasons.

In England, even with the limited number of parks, cricket is not played on rugby grounds. The grass does not recover quickly enough in the

spring. Even the smallest clubs have their sightscreens, although the Holy of Holies,

Lord's, has screens only at one end. The other end, the members' stand, where the members do not move a muscle as the bowler runs up to bowl. If one does, he's shot at dawn.

Stewart Richardson, an Australian friend from the bank, invited me to join him on a weekend trip to Holland and Belgium. Leaving London on Friday, we sailed to Antwerp and visited Amsterdam and Brussels. Lasting impression of Holland was its spotless cleanliness—not a butt, not a leaf in sight. Also, the huge dykes holding out the sea which was 10 feet higher than the land on the inside. Quite uncanny.

We saw the Notre Dame Cathedral, very impressive, 400 feet high and the only church in the world with seven aisles. The little ship was a joy, only 40 passengers and everything possible was done for our comfort. Three nights aboard, all found for £5.

Another trip was a weekend in Northern Ireland to see relatives of my godmother, Jeannie Bell. Left Harwich by ship, one night aboard, one night in Belfast and one night aboard again all for the special price of £1.10/. The family I visited were very small holders on which they scraped a living from fowls and taters (spuds or potatoes) which also was the staple diet. They kept warm by a peat fire burning in the middle of the kitchen floor, no chimney but a hole in the roof. I slept in the parlour which was their show room, all lace and trinkets, never used.



Lawrie relaxing at cricket in Medburn, Herts. 1934.



One pound note. The currency in use throughout Lawrie's career was pounds, shillings and pence.



The towers of Notre Dame were built between 1220 and 1250. Photo: Peter Haas

Banking, Courtship and Marriage

I was on the same salary that I was drawing in NZ, £275 per annum, i.e., £5.6/- a week. I was happy; I did not need more. Everything was relative. Newspapers were 1d (one penny) each, Woolworths stores had only two prices, 6d and 3d. We bought a box camera for 1/6, i.e., 6d for each part (which you could buy separately). I bought a three-piece grey suit for £2.10/- from the 50/- tailors. Cheapest tickets for 1st grade soccer 1/-. Lunch in a little underground dive near the bank for 8d—two egg and tomato sandwiches, a ginger cake and hot milk. Hire a rowboat on the Serpentine for 1d. 3d to climb the 202 feet high 'Monument' near the Bank. Dinner and dancing in Old Bond Street for 5/- each.

One day on the tube, when the man opposite put down his paper, I recognised Stewart Misson, an old school classmate from CBHS, amongst all the millions in London's rush-hour.

Dr Reay Mackay from Tokomaru Bay called one day at the bank with tickets for Wimbledon where we saw Fred Perry, Bunny Austin and others. I had happy days at the bank in Threadneedle Street (what fascinating names the English use—I'm sure they would approve of Rockinghorse Road, my future address). The Produce Department (only two of us) would get strange consignments from NZ and Australia to sell on behalf of customers. One stamp album I took to Stanley Gibbons and learnt that the value of a stamp depended on its rarity and condition. If the number of unused stamps was less than that of the known used, then the unused were more valuable. A parcel of jewellery I took to a big dealer in Hatton Garden and was given red-carpet treatment. They probably thought I had the crown jewels of some eastern potentate. That lot turned out to be paste.

Shipments of frozen meat went to Smithfield Market and wool to the Wool Exchange. It was quite a fascinating job and my boss, Mr Kempson, gave me a very good run. He was a most typical London businessman. Bowler

hat, newspaper under arm, tightly rolled umbrella which he never, repeat never, opened out even in rain. The bowler reminded me of the London office audit. A firm of public accountants, six of them similarly garbed as my boss, invaded us. One accountant checking our department was working under an open window; rather than ask us to close it, he went off and got his bowler hat. He looked a real oddity in a city office with his bowler on.

What was claimed as the very first milk bar opened in the ground floor level of the Mansion House and was very popular. One day a strange mist descended on the city. Clear on the ground, though somewhat dark and clear above the third storey, but a heavy mist in-between. Quite uncanny. It was called a suspended fog.

New Year's Day, to my great surprise, we had to work, but as all the City worked it was no hardship. One friend in the London office took pleasure in taking me to all sorts of places for lunch. The City is full of little

hide-outs which provide lunches. I remember going down East to Shoreditch, a very poor quarter. Lunch for 1/-. When the big economy drive started, Ros would make me sandwiches and with a bottle of soft-drink I used to wander alone along the embankment, or round the Tower or over London Bridge and feed the birds, so tame they would sit on your shoulder.

My boss at work, Mr Kempson, he of the rolled umbrella, was very good to me. One trip he arranged was to the bond stores of the lower London docks. I saw the wine vaults covering 3.5 acres underground and of course I had a wee snort. The tobacco store, where £60m in tobacco was stored, the ivory store. The ships tied up against poles which were 25 feet from the wharf so unloading proceeded three ways, two into lighters and one onto the wharf. The water level was kept even by the dock gates as the tidal movement in the Thames below was 20 feet.

Our office was at 29 Threadneedle Street. It was not at all uncommon to see gold bullion in



Courting days for Lawrie and Roslyn

bars about 12" (12 inches) long, 4" wide and 1" thick being moved in and out of sundry banks, our own included, not a gun in sight, only a group of uniformed bank messengers. The bullion movement was frequent as we bought and sold according to our surplus cash on the day. Each bank had their own messengers. We had six who did all the running of messages and wore dark blue uniforms and black silk top hats.

Reminds me of the Lord Mayor's Show Day and the big parade. How well the English handle pageantry. All work stopped as we gathered at windows and verandas with families and friends brought in specially for two hours. The bank put on a spread, cakes, eats and soft drinks and after the show families went home and we picked up pens and put our heads down again. As on my first day in the London office, I again had the keys of the strongroom as I was working late. Next morning, of course, I slept in, not arriving until 9:20 with everyone looking for me. The public were not admitted until 10 so it could have been worse.

Working in the Overseas Department was fascinating, especially when our dealer was operating. He would know by the dates of ships arriving with wool or meat, for example, when we could expect to receive some millions in cash from the sales and he would ring around other sterling dealers offering to send so many millions, 30 or 40 days ahead. He would get three or four dealers on the phone. He had six direct lines and got a quote from each and took the best.

One evening Roslyn and I were invited out to supper to arrive about 7:30. So we had a meal in town first. On arrival we had short drinks and



Roslyn and Lawrie walk the streets of London.

then to our horror sat down to a big four-course dinner. We had not been long in England and no one had told us of the custom—high tea at 4 pm and main meal supper at 8 pm. We made it okay but only just. We'll never forget it.

One annual holiday I bought a bicycle and pedalled right up to The Wash through Suffolk and Norfolk. Staying at bed and breakfast homes for 2/6 a night, it was the best way to see the countryside and meet people. I was warmly greeted wherever I stopped. Another holiday, Roslyn and I went and stayed at Brighton with her family friends. When a test match was

being played at say Manchester, you could take a seat on the promenade at Brighton and watch the match, or rather a representation of it, on a huge 20-foot board. The wicket was shown as a green strip in the middle of the board and the ball was represented by a white light. As the ball was bowled the light moved up the wicket and then shot out to the field and a voice would say, "Jolly good shot to square leg." No radio or TV. The voice belonged to an announcer who sat with a telephone and a little mallet and a block of wood. He made the appropriate noises and we would sit

enthralled for hours. Today with colour TV and instant replays, what a difference!

That pre-wedding period was filled with new experiences—the King's birthday, opening of Parliament, Horse Guards

Parade, Lord Mayor's Show, a weekend trip to Holland, Maundy Service in Westminster Abbey, our first and only ice-skating attempt ('nuff said!). So much happened in our first six months that I must leave it to come to the day when I asked Roslyn to be my wife—or she asked



BNSW Head Office Boardroom, London 1911

me—I'm never too clear what happened. The main thing was we decided to marry in six months. I was none too flush of funds—earning £275 per annum with no promise of a return transfer to NZ. However, with such a target it's surprising what you can accomplish. The date was fixed, 4 August 1934. A good friend from work, Ron Freeman, was to be my best man. (I called on him in 1985 on our last trip to the UK, 51 years later.)

Ros and I were very conscious that we needed to save hard to get married. If we could save £10 a month by August we would have £100. Our outings were mainly on foot.

We went out every Saturday for a tramp—either to the country or round the heart of London—every corner of which would provide a surprise. One typical day I recorded a four mile walk to Hampstead Heath—a wander all over the Heath, on the way home a stop for tea and a movie, 2/10 (two shillings and 10 pence) for both. Oh, yes! And 2d for chestnuts. It was always a cheerful sight, the chestnut man with his brazier of red-hot coals. Another occasion we went to a Kilburn theatre to see two films with a band and three stage shows for 1/6 each. On Boxing Day 1934, we walked to the Prince of Wales Theatre in the West End to see a show, four tiers of seats, naturally we were on top for 1/3 each.

From my diary I see that we got the greatest pleasure from our weekend trips into the country: the birds, the picturesque, thatched cottages, roses round the door, the fields of bluebells and buttercups, the sunsets, the sheer goodwill of the many folk we met. All so very peaceful and our only expense was the bus fare to get out there, 1/.

One day we took Roslyn's four-year-old brother Norman, a lively young man, to Regent's Park Zoo. We lost him in the huge crowd. I saw him at some distance and gave the Cooper whistle which I had taught him. I was very pleased to see him stop in his tracks and come straight toward the whistle. *[Nigel has used this method to keep in touch with his children in crowds.]*



The Wedding Day of Lawrie Cooper and Roslyn Sherman, Paddington, London, 4 August 1934.

Occasionally we pretended to be 'someone', Ros in evening dress and white fur coat—it was a real beauty from Burma, with a Chinese tapestry figure lining—and me in bow tie. Walking through Piccadilly it was a rare thrill to see the heads turn and hear the remarks. We were only going to a show for which we had been given free tickets.

Ida Mills, a friend of the family from Burma days, who often stayed with the Shermans, was an inveterate bridge player. On one occasion a vacuum cleaner salesman knocked on the door. Before he could give his spiel, Ida asked him did he play bridge. When he said, "Yes," he was grabbed by the coat collar and dragged inside. "You'll do fine. We are one short for a four." No more sales that day. They did, however, give him dinner.

On a walk with Ros to West Wickham we came on a small village called Down in some of the prettiest country Kent can produce. On a small hill stood a very old oak tree, the branches held together with wire ropes. Under the tree a stone seat held the following inscription from the diary of William Wilberforce dated 1788, "At length, I well remember, after a conversation with Mr Pitt in the open air at the root of an old tree at Holwood, just above the steep descent into the Vale of Keston, I resolved to give notice on a fit occasion in the House of Commons of my intention to bring forward the abolition of the slave trade." The oak was old then, over 140 years older now. On our walk home we saw an old house in which Darwin lived. Also passed Padgham Golf Course where Henry Cotton won the British Open.

It did not take long for the £10 a month to build up towards our intended marriage date of 4th August. I had to get leave, for Saturday was a workday. I saw the chief clerk and he agreed for me to have the day off but not for Ron, my best man, so I went to the accountant and asked for Ron, not saying he had been declined, and the accountant agreed. Soon after I was summoned to see the accountant and asked, "Did you know Freeman had been declined when you saw me?"

To my great shame now, I told a deliberate lie. "Of course not, Sir." I don't think I was believed. It was one of those blots on one's life you do not forget. London office staff gave us a lovely set of stainless-steel saucepans. Quite a gift.

The wedding was a quiet affair. Maisie (Ros's sister) was bridesmaid. Kid Tilly (Ros's stepfather) gave Ros away. As Ros walked up the aisle to get married, 11 months since we arrived at Tilbury, I looked at Maisie, put out my hand, and said, "£10, please."

Kathleen Tilly (Ros's mother) prepared the lunch with help from Mrs Wootten and Kitty, an old school friend of Ros's from Burma. We set off in a hired car (£10 for two weeks) for Devon, Cornwall, Stonehenge and Aldershot. Car broke down in Lostwithiel for two days. We saw innumerable castle ruins while it was being repaired. We got right down to Land's End along through many miles of beautiful countryside. In the Cornish Riviera, we stopped at Athelney where King Alfred 'burnt the cakes'. I had forgotten to cash a cheque so prepared to sleep in the car but first needed food for the morning. We knocked on a small village home and asked for milk and two eggs. They were humble village folk and warmly welcomed us in. They could barely take in that I came from the other side of the world. They had never been more than 10 miles from their home. They lived by cutting withies, i.e., young willow branches used for basket-making.

We parked the car in a side road and settled down. Awakened by a bellow, there was a cow looking in our window. One such night was enough. I did not forget to cash a cheque again. Another stop was in the Cheddar Gorge. Ros did not feel hungry, so I parked the car close to the window and went in for a meal. What I couldn't eat I simply passed out to my wife for her later enjoyment.

In Devon we stopped at a small pub for a glass of cider and promptly fell asleep in the car. Just as well as we had no idea how strong the cider was, and it could have been risky had we started driving. In the evening, we drove into Swansea and checked into a hotel. After dinner we went to a movie. As we came out, we looked at each other but neither of us knew the name of

our pub. Did we feel foolish? We found a cop and explained our predicament. He asked from which direction we had come and what turnings we made and soon told us where the pub was.

We settled down in a small three-roomed flat in Beckenham near Ron Freeman's. It was the first floor above a fish shop. Our £100 monthly rent provided beds, four chairs, table, linen and blankets. We had a gas fire and were quite comfortable.

Our neighbours shared a common stairway. They were Bob and Madge Russell. Their weekly library books were a mixture of love and mystery stories. We wanted to grow things so got six orange cases from the fruit shop and soil from a nearby empty section and grew tulips, lettuces and runner beans up the iron stairway and lattices. It was not long before all the other flats (12) were doing the same thing.

We had some bad fogs in our first winter. One was so dense that we could move only by touching the shop windows. It was quite an eye-opener to us just how helpless you are in a fog. A well-remembered outing was to the Aldershot Military Tattoo. Left by bus about 6 pm and home again by 12. Most impressive, especially the big guns and the Royal Horse Artillery.

A very heavy snowstorm in January and we had a walk in the snow quite ill-equipped for it. Just the tops of the trees showing. Absolutely no traffic. Ros in light shoes was frozen. Home to a hot bath. Norman was not well one time and came to stay. A light relief for Ros who was alone all day. I left for work by electric overground trains at 8:50 and home again by 5:45. A good service.

When Rossie was born our world was complete. A beautiful, happy, bouncy little girl. I loved to take her out in her pram. Ros's family used to come and stay one at a time and I used to have friends from work come for meals. Stewart Richardson taught us how to play *Battleships*. Ron Freeman and Duke Sutherland were frequent visitors. They lived nearby.

The two years there slipped by quickly. It was 1936 and Hitler was starting to rattle his sabre. Not a healthy future in which to raise a family so we thought about applying to return to NZ. Rossie was about 18 months old.



Roslyn holding Rossie.

Home to NZ and Babies

It was no small decision, especially for Ros, to decide to leave mother, brother, sister for goodness only knows how long and sail off halfway around the world to a strange country. But she was brave. We prayed about it and told the bank what we would like to do. I said I had enjoyed my three years in the London office and thought I had acquired all the knowledge I needed (the cheek of it) to return to NZ and apply it back home. The fares would be £13 on a 12-passenger ship, the Port Hunter, and we would appreciate it if the bank would assist us. They did. They paid the lot. It was not easy for me to say goodbye to so many good friends at work, but we set sail from Tilbury Dock in good heart. We were delighted with our four-berth cabin and the spotless conditions on board. We had a



The Port Hunter, which was later torpedoed and sunk by a German U boat, 12 July 1942. Of the 91 crew, gunners, and five passengers aboard, only three crew survived.

steward to ourselves who also waited on table. First thing we noticed on board was that all the promenade deck had been enclosed in wire netting. The company were not taking any risk of young Rossie slipping through the rails. Being such a small group, only 12, we were soon on first name terms with the other passengers and officers. We all ate together, and the food was very good. Among the passengers we had a doctor, Dr Hall, returning to NZ so that relieved us of some anxiety. Into the tropics, the captain, officers and crew all changed into whites and a swimming pool was erected on deck, a godsend.

I should refer to my earlier comment that I think I must be a survivor. Accident number 5 occurred on the Port Hunter coming back to NZ in 1936. Again, thinking I was a clever dick I dived into the ship's swimming pool with my hands at my side and struck my head on the

bottom with some force. I came up dizzy but none the worse.

We stopped at Kingston, Jamaica to refuel, our first stop. The chief engineer invited me to his cabin for a chat. After an hour when I returned to our cabin it was to find Ros in tears. The other passengers had asked her to join them onshore, but she couldn't leave young Rossie and had to decline. I felt horrible. To think I had stayed away so long, had been so thoughtless. I then and there decided that I would be more thoughtful in the future. After all, her future happiness was entirely dependent on me. No family for her to run to now.

The Panama Canal next and we spent all day on deck watching the mules, electric locomotives pulling the ship through, and the interesting countryside. The ship was raised or lowered 18 feet by the locks. It was an engineering masterpiece all right.

A week out from Panama, we got a telegram from Maurice from Auckland where the family were now living. It said, 'Dad seriously ill in hospital.' A real shock: we had just had a very happy letter from him at Panama. The next day we got another, 'Sorry to tell you, Dad passed away.' Later when we arrived, we learnt that Dad died from a duodenal ulcer caused by a fall before Maurice sent the first telegram. The family felt the fatal news would have been too much of a sudden shock. Poor Dad had so much looked forward to seeing his first grandchild.



Mabel in mourning, late 1930s.

Mother, with a new daughter-in-law and grandchild to think for, bore up well. She had rented a house in Challinor Street, Pakuranga, by the Tamaki River in Auckland for us all. It had a view of Rangitoto Island. It was cream with green window sills and shutters and a red roof. Very pretty.



Challinor St bungalow, Ros and Lawrie's first NZ home, 1936.

I reported to Wellington and started looking for a flat for my family. Found a furnished house in Wadestown and Mother, Ros and Rossie came down in the *Matua*. A two-day trip in a very nice little ship which had a regular run to the Pacific Islands. I was placed in the Foreign Department. The produce job (my specialty) was well held by Dr Ross, so I obviously would have to wait.

Next, we rented a small house, corner of Buchanan St and Pitt St, Wadestown, at the beginning of 1937. I inherited Dad's Model A Ford Tourer three-seater in which we had many happy outings. The section sloped downwards from the street frontage so I scrounged clay from somewhere and built a ramp so that when I parked the car in backwards, it could run downhill for 1/4 mile, so save the battery. Young Rossie was growing apace and needed constant watching so Ros scouted the locals and started the Cooper Kindergarten; six kiddies, 2/6 each per week, mid-morning tea. We did not get rich on this, but it kept Miss Muffet occupied.

My old godmother, Mrs Jeannie Bell, came to stay while Mother also was with us. She was something of an old tartar and liked things done her way. She was in her 70s but still stuck to the rules. Come Monday morning and Mother suggested that Ros boil up some soap on the stove. The smell would permeate the house and the old lady would be content that Ros was doing the wash on 'Monday'. When young Rossie wanted to go out she would say "out on deck".

Ros was seven months pregnant with Roger when we felt like a break, so we loaded the old Ford and set out for a camping holiday on the beach at Paekakariki. It was over Christmas '38 and I had to work the days between Christmas and New Year. I would walk to the railway station, buy a paper, read the headlines and then

as the train passed our campsite, throw the paper out to Ros. We were forever stretching our pennies and enjoyed doing so. Sometime before this, in October, we took our annual leave and taking Ida drove up to Matamata to enjoy the hot springs. We lived in a cabin.

The keys and the combination of the main strongroom at Wellington branch were held by two men for a month at a time. One morning when I held the combination, the main lock would not budge. Several, including the manager and accountant, tried to no avail. Come 9:30 am, near panic stations. The duplicates held by other banks in their treasuries were sent for and the Chubb agents called. Still no success. Some thousands in cash were ordered from other banks so we could let the public in at 10 am. The Chubb agent, Mr Cameron, ordered in a gang of men with very heavy wrecking equipment and were about to break through the two-foot-thick concrete and steel wall of the strongroom when he said to me, "Try once more." Eureka, it opened! A miracle. The combination lock was sent to Sydney. The report stated, "Lock faulty but we cannot trace the cause." A mystery. A new lock was supplied.

Over a year we had a team of auditors from Head Office. Among their duties was to check on the revolvers. They were assembled in the assistant manager's room for the purpose. He was a rather absent-minded old boy and when handling one, couldn't resist pulling the trigger. A terrible explosion in the small room, a lump of plaster falling from the ceiling and the manager, T.B. Heath coming through the door, "What the devil are you playing at Ebsworth?" Poor old Ebby with a gun in his hand looked so helpless.

A variety of jobs in Wellington followed and eventually I landed on Produce. I was delighted because no one else knew anything of the work so I was virtually my own boss. One thing it involved was distributing some millions in cheques to various wool selling firms. Buyers had to pay for wool purchased at the wool auctions within 14 days, i.e., on Prompt Day. That day, the money would arrive by telegram. I would ring the firms, tell them the amount and they would draw on us by certified cheque. The job also entailed advancing money against wool and meat shipments to the UK, often into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

1940s

Growing Family and War

After two years in our Wadestown house we started looking for another and larger home. We found it in Miramar, a three-bedroom stucco home. Roger was born before we left Wadestown and Ros had quite a tough time beforehand.



50 Camperdown Road, Miramar, rented home, 1939

At Miramar, Ros had an attack of asthma. It was a worry to see her struggling for breath. I had sinus trouble and the local doctor told me if I wanted to get well without drugs to buy a case of oranges and eat 10 to 12 a day. Also, put on three pullovers and go for a long run in the evenings. Home to a hot shower and bed. Rather drastic measures but they worked. Now after 52 years I have had no return of the trouble. Roger had whooping cough, so we decided to try to get near the sea.



Ros and Lawrie, mid 1940s

Three years in Miramar and Ros pregnant again so we were on the search again. One of the passengers on the *Port Hunter* coming out was a wool buyer, Charlie Carlton, who kept in touch. He liked what he saw of NZ and next trip out brought his wife, Bertha, and son Arthur and daughter Sue. They were established in

Days Bay, Eastbourne when we wanted to move so Bertha helped Ros look for a house. A long search resulted in our finding just the right home on the seafront at 14 Pukatea Street, Eastbourne (later renumbered 20), but alas we could not afford it. However, remembering earlier times when our prayers had been answered, we pictured ourselves in that house and the children—Rossie and Roger—enjoying it. We did that for a week when the owner rang and asked if we were still keen; if so, would we like to rent it for a year? Would we?! After the year we were able, with a 3% bank loan, to buy it and we had 18 happy years in it.

These were war years and we were losing many young men to the Forces. My brother Maurice enlisted and I longed to go away with him, but the bank laid down that senior staff would have to stay to keep the bank afloat.

I was 32. Petrol of course was short. The Eastbourne bus went only to Petone where we had to transfer to a train. In the early days, there were two ferries running, the *Cobar* and the *Muritai*, the latter being the one we 9 am starters used. We sat in a large covered open deck, long seats facing each other. Yes, we all read the morning paper. One morning a practical joker put a lighted match to the paper being read by the man opposite. It was blazing well before he realised it and with a yell threw it away to the great amusement of his fellow passengers. The captain was not amused, “Any more such behaviour and ...!”



Rossie, Nigel, Pat, Roger 1944

In 1941, Rossie was asked what she would like for her next birthday. She replied, “A baby

sister.” “We’ll see what we can do,” replied Dad. Two months after we went to Eastbourne, Rossie got her birthday present. Pat was born, on 9 April 1942, right on Rossie’s birthday. Ros went to Bethany Hospital while my mother came to stay, and Roger went to Iris Penlington’s. When Pat was born, we had not decided on her name. We registered her birth certificate alright and had six weeks in which to notify authorities of her name. But it went right out of our heads. We forgot. Years later when listing our children’s birthdays for Social Security they replied that they had no record of a Patricia Margaret Cooper being born on the 9th of April. They did, however, find a female child born to Lawrence and Roslyn Cooper on that date. So, poor Pat. Her birth certificate reads simply ‘a female child born to...’. It does not seem to worry her, but I felt terrible about it at the time. It only affected her when she applied to get married. An appropriate correction was made to authorise her wedding.

Ros and I had been married in a Roman Catholic Church in Paddington, London, but she now thought to change her denomination to Anglican, as I was. Our local vicar had not had any similar experience. It took a while for him to consult the bishop and hierarchy. All was arranged and a ceremony devised. Ros became an Anglican in a simple service. I later realised how significant this step was in the interest of family unity.



The Home Guard was formed, and the Eastbourne Company was given the Harbour Coast to patrol. We used to patrol in pairs with loaded rifles and six rounds in the magazine. It was a serious business. Submarine landings in the dark were a possibility. I was made sergeant of a platoon of 70 men. We had weekly night parades as well as our patrols, and permanent staff sergeants to instruct us on essentials. Yes, we had the usual scares and occasionally one of



Growing family 1944, Roger, Roslyn, Nigel, Rossie, Lawrie, Pat

the men would shoot off a round, but no one was hurt. Dad’s Army brings much of it back.

The annual camp was much enjoyed. At one such, a wag at 5 am rattled his tin mug and shouted, “Wakey wakey, hot coffee on, bring your mugs.” An ‘officer’ stirred at the far end of the woolshed we were using. He turned out in a bright-blue silk dressing gown and to jeers and laughter of 100 men went looking for his coffee only to find that the call out was a joke.



Eastbourne Home Guard marching. Days Bay wharf behind



Lawrie and Ros met Guide Rangī, the renowned Māori tour guide, at the geothermal attraction Rotorua. Guide Rangī is pictured above (third from left) with Maurice Cooper (far right) in Whakarewarewa, about 1940.

The authorities feared a submarine attack on the harbour so to counter this possibility started constructing a boom from our beachfront out to Ward Island. It consisted of a double row of 12-inch piles eight feet apart and braced with 10-inch stringers which had to be squared with adzes and axes. The work was all done outside our gate. It became a ritual to see the local housewives grabbing for the large



The boom from Eastbourne to Ward Island. Photo: Fairfax NZ

chips almost under the swinging tools. Jolly good firewood. A mined net was built from Ward Island to Point Gordon to complete the defensive barrier with a gate to let sea traffic through. As each ship either entered or left a tug would swing a big wire rope net to cover the gap. Gun emplacements and forts were armed at five points around the harbour and on Somes Island. The threat was real. Japanese and German submarines were in NZ waters from 1940 to 1945 and sunk several NZ ships including the *Niagara* off the northeast coast in 1940 en route from Auckland to Vancouver.

My brother Maurice, staying with us, decided to take Rossie for a long walk. It was forbidden to walk on the boom, but they walked over to Ward Island. When they got home, Ros was definitely not pleased.

Thousands of Americans trained in NZ before the USA battles of Midway Island. When it was time to leave, they assembled in Wellington and left for the Pacific, a sight never seen before or since.



Aquitania in Wellington Harbour, 1940

Eighteen large troop transports and 18 warships moving out through the gap in the boom. What a sight! Little did we know what was ahead for those men. They had enjoyed their time in NZ, especially our milkshakes and ice cream to say nothing of our whisky. They were good spenders, too. Their pay was more than double what NZ could pay our men.



Eastbourne War Memorial lists the fallen in two world wars. Photos: Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

War time still and NZ was given some Meteor jet fighters. They gave a demonstration over the harbour, clearly in view from our waterfront home, and we were astonished to see them travel at great speed across the water and then shoot vertically up some thousands of feet.

Challenging the Boss then I'm Boss

Whisky was rationed in the hotels, but the Americans would gladly pay black market price if they could get it by the case. One such hotel banked with us—I was now accountant at Courtenay Place branch—and this hotelkeeper was selling his whisky on the black market to the Americans. He was accumulating thousands in cash and wanted to hide his profits from the tax people. He discussed it with my boss before I joined his branch. They conceived the idea to open bank accounts in fictitious names. Then the hotelkeeper died suddenly. Wow! My boss was on the spot with several phoney accounts and the fictitious principals dead. He got the hotelkeeper's widow to cooperate and converted the accounts to joint accounts, quite illegally. I soon spotted this and challenged him. He explained his predicament and asked me not to do anything hurriedly. I then was on a spot and could not sleep at night. I went back to him and asked, "Is there anything else not right in the branch which I do not know?" He assured me nothing. I was doubtful so had a good search and found quite a few things. So, after more sleepless nights, I reported it all to the chief inspector, top man in the bank. His comment was, "You've done right, Cooper, and now you'll be able to sleep alright." Was he aware I couldn't sleep?

An audit followed, and it all came to light. I was sorry for my boss. He had treated me well and having done my distasteful duty, I wanted to ease his burden. I invited him to the movies and he accepted. I worked under him for another two years. He was not sacked but severely reprimanded. He bore me no ill will. Years later when I came to manage High Street branch, he was manager of Christchurch branch and we had to cooperate frequently. Strangely he had audited Tokomaru Bay when I was on Produce there and reported me as 'above average intelligence'.

One Saturday morning I had a ring from the Courtenay Place manager to come in and open the strongroom. We had been burgled. The intruders had tried to blow open the safe with gelignite. What a mess. They had lowered the explosive into the strongroom down a ventilator and the blast had shredded masses of paper, but the door had not yielded. A Chubb's man came

and opened it quickly. Apparently, he held a plan of every Chubb safe in the country from which he could see exactly where to drill to release the bolts. His records of course were in code so that if the bandits opened his safe, they would not have 'open sesame' to every other Chubb safe. We were given £5 for our holiday callback.

From Courtenay Place branch, I was appointed to my first management, to open a new branch at Petone. [At 38, Lawrie was the youngest manager in the BNSW.] With another Eastbourne lad, Dave Houghton, we were given a few thousand pounds in cash, a set of new books, a revolver and some furniture. We set up in the front shop of our good friend Bob King. Quite an experience. I was very surprised to find there was nothing in the rules to guide us in opening a new branch. You had to feel your way forward. The public did not rush in to open accounts. After three weeks I realised that I would have to sell myself before I could sell the bank. Thereafter it got under way and grew like topsy, and business brought business. When I moved from Petone 10 years later we had over 1000 accounts.

In Petone branch it was my pleasure to advise each officer what their annual rise would be. I told our teller, Jim, "You have got a rise of £25 dated from last month." He replied, "Thank you, Mr Cooper." After all, it was what he had expected. A week later Head Office commented on an overdraft return we had rendered, which Jim had set out and typed. "The manner in which your return was rendered was much appreciated," they wrote. When I showed the letter to Jim he was over the moon. "Whoopee!" he shouted. "Fancy that. Boy, that's great." Just another case of the great value of a little word of praise. It meant more to Jim than his £25 rise.

In my early days in Petone, I was keen to see the business grow. We were approached by a fruit-shop owner to lend him £500 on fairly risky security. I was tempted but first decided to seek guidance on it. The thought came clearly to read Mark 4:5. *Some fell on stony ground where it shot up quickly because it had little earth.* I took that to mean our customer was of little substance. We declined his proposition. Three weeks later he was in court for burglary.

Life in Eastbourne

In 1942, the year Pat was born, we had a big earthquake in the middle of the night. I was walking down the passage to the children's room with both arms extended to stay upright. Very scary. Hopeless to get to sleep again so we threw mattresses on the floor and all five of us piled into one big bed.

Eighteen months after Pat, Nigel arrived. Mother was getting a bit too old now to look after three young ones, so we got a Plunket nurse, Nursie Tucker, and she was a jewel. A country girl with a strong arm and a big heart who took her job seriously. Not only did she care for Rossie, Roger and Pat, but the new baby, its mother and also the feeding of all of us. She even did the washing! She it was who started the children on cleaning their teeth with baking soda peppermint. She was in great demand and could stay with us only two weeks. We were ever so grateful to her and kept in touch long after.

When Roger was four he developed scarlet fever and was taken into isolation at a temporary hospital at Trentham Racecourse. No visitors. Must have been frightening for the little fellow. When I went to collect him after six weeks, he was quite shy to my surprise.

That same year I was drying myself after a shower when I found I was out of breath. Most surprising. All I felt was a slight discomfort in the chest. Old Dr Paterson came and puzzled over me for a while and then said, "I'll try the coin test." I had to hold a penny against my chest. He put his stethoscope to my back, and I had to hit another penny against the one on my chest. "That's it," he explained, "You've got a collapsed lung." Next morning, he took me into Hutt Hospital where I stayed for six weeks until the lung expanded. The doctor could not ascribe any reason for the collapse. Eventually he went into Courtenay Place branch to see what kind of ventilation there was. None at all. My room was part of a shop next door that the bank had taken over. He was satisfied that was the cause. Years later I figured that my cigarette smoking—no

doubt increased during the time I was worrying about reporting on my boss—had a lot to do with it. The doctor did not comment on my smoking but then he was a heavy smoker too. He later died from cancer of the throat.

After my spell in hospital I needed time to recuperate so went over in the ferry to Tom and Nance Taylor's home in Cherry Bay, Queen Charlotte Sound, a most delightful and restful spot. The bank treated me well. I had six weeks off on full pay.

Ros's teeth were by now giving her trouble and the dentist recommended 16 fillings, which she could not contemplate. For one thing she was nursing Nigel, now five months old, so she decided to have the lot out. Bertha Carlton accompanied her to town via bus and train, teeth extracted under gas, and train and bus home again. Quite a day. I had had all my teeth out years before in Tokomaru Bay.

Something we have found in our marriage:

so many times we have had to turn to God. On one occasion Roslyn, with three children under five, said to me, "What we really need is a washing machine," but we did not have the £50 to buy one. So, we did as we had done so many times before and since. Every night for a whole week, we prayed and pictured the washing machine in the laundry with the motor humming away. On the Saturday, a friend of Ros's called with a cousin. The cousin looked in our laundry and saw a washboard and a tub with a fire underneath to heat the water. "I see you

haven't got a washing machine," she said. "I'm moving into a house three doors away from you but there's nowhere I can put my machine. Could I please put it in here and bring my wash down here and you of course can use it too?" Roslyn and I looked at each other and thanked God for a miracle. There is no other word for it.

Three years after Nigel, Murray arrived. Ros stayed with friends in Lower Hutt for her last two weeks. Out walking for exercise one evening she was followed by an American GI whom she thought had evil intent. She had to run the last 100 yards home at almost nine months pregnant!



Electric washing machines were invented in 1908. Photo: Jason Karasch

Perhaps that brought on the mumps because they developed as she entered the hospital. Put into isolation with only one nurse who did everything. No visitors, except me. It was a lonely 10 days. And the mumps meant that Ros had to bottle-feed Murray from the start. A fine, sturdy baby. When Ros came home again with Murray it was to be welcomed by Nursie Tucker. We were so very fortunate to get her again.

Having five young children in our three-bedroom house was quite something on a wet day. How to keep them out of mischief? I got an eight-foot plank and sanded and polished it and set it up in the lounge as a slide. The best thing I ever did. They would play for hours taking turns, and mercifully tire themselves out for bed.

Christmas was a happy time. On Christmas eve a big red bus would tour the village with Santa inside. Nigel remembers sitting on his knee and telling him that he wanted a yacht for Christmas. He was amazed when next day a beautiful homemade red yacht was under the tree with his name on it.

The older ones liked taking Murray out for walks in the push chair. One day Pat took him round to Foley's store and returned without him. He was not missed for some time when Ros asked, "Where is Murray?" (What was one among five?) Panic stations. Pat ran back to the store to find him calmly sitting in his push chair admiring the scenery. Other times, if the groceries were within reach, Murray would burrow his way into the soft end of the new loaf of bread. Three children under five!

We had an old friend of mine from Tokomaru Bay come to stay and she kindly offered to look after the family while Ros and I had a few days off. We returned at 10 pm one night to a peculiar noise. As we got near the backdoor there was Nigel, aged three, standing at the open casement window serenading the full moon. Mrs Wilson was fairly deaf and spoke quietly. It was most unusual to find the children going around all whispering. It did not last for long. Might be something there for today's young mothers with boisterous young ones.



Nigel was by now due to go to kindergarten. When Ros took him on his first day he did not want to stay and clung to her until the teacher produced a jig-saw puzzle. That was all it needed. He was hooked, and still is. He finds it hard to resist any sort of puzzle and ended up studying maths and physics at university.

On 6 February 1947 we looked out of our front window, which faced the harbour, to see the *Wanganella* coming in through the heads from Sydney. A little later we looked again. She was still there, obviously stuck on Barrett Reef, a major stranding. She was stuck fast for 18 days before tugs were able to drag her free. The weather was amazingly calm throughout. There was no loss of life.

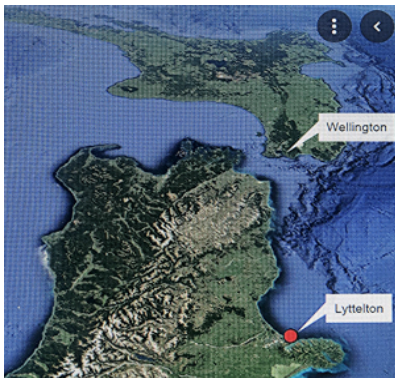
A very different outcome happened in 1968. The Wellington ferry *Wahine* became NZ's worst maritime disaster in the 20th century when it also hit Barrett Reef at the harbour entrance. Many crew and passengers were blown across the harbour to Eastbourne beaches. Altogether, 53 people died as the ship succumbed to one of NZ's worst ever storms with winds up to 270 kph. [A film about this disaster can be seen at the Wellington Museum on Queens Wharf.]



Wahine sinking after hitting Barrett Reef 1968. Photos: Top: Ian Mackley, Evening Post, Bottom: Barry Durrant, Dominion Post



Left: 19-year-old Kate McGibbon (now Watson) and her rescuer Eroni Vakacegu on the shore near Eastbourne, 10 April 1968. Photo: Kate Watson, Ministry of Culture and Heritage



The Wahine, travelling from Lyttelton to Wellington, struck Barrett Reef, near Pencarrow Lighthouse, 1968. Top and Above Left Photos: Ministry of Culture & Heritage. Photos of Pencarrow lighthouse and Ward Island and Wellington harbour on a clam day, Nigel Cooper



Alexander Turnbull Library and Historical Society of Eastbourne black and white photos depict storms in the 1950s which demolished the original seawall. Our home is about four houses away from the photo above. One wave reached our front doorstep. The decision was made to build a stronger seawall. Begun in 1956, above right, it enabled a sandy beach to build up as the waves hit the groyne, left. Right: The seawall in 2020 with the shingle build-up. The seashore is now about 100 metres away to the left.



Our harbour frontage was subject to erosion if a big sea was running so the local council sought assistance from the government and were given a £100,000 free-of-interest loan to build a 2 km reinforced concrete wall. Most effective. At high tide, the boys could stand on the lower slopes and cast their lines into the sea.

Murray had caught two or three tiddlers—to him no doubt like whales—when he turned to see a seagull stealing one. Hell hath no fury like a fisherman robbed of his catch. He grabbed a stone and let fly, missed the seagull, bounced off the top of the sea wall and crack! The sound of



The new seawall being pounded by high seas, 1977

breaking glass and our neighbours' front window was broken. To say nothing of Murray's morale. He came in, said nothing to anyone, emptied his money box and took the pennies into the Sixsmiths. They were a kindly old couple and would not accept his offering, especially when they were told the circumstances. I repaired the window. Murray never left his fish on the wall again.

The Sixsmiths had another problem, blue penguins. They came from Matiu/Somes Island at night to sleep under their house, making quite a noise. No matter what precautions were taken the birds would find their way in night after night. Quite harmless—only 10 inches high. When they came under our house and made the same raucous noise, I lit some firecrackers and threw them under the house. The loud bangers scared them away. Two such episodes and they never returned. The Sixsmiths were grateful.

Our next-door neighbours on the other side were the Sherrys. Kevin Sherry was a born natural fisherman and every time he went out he would make a catch. He had a boat but could not lift it alone over the sea wall, so our labour force was frequently called on and of course participated in the catch. They were good neighbours.



Russell and Val Lyon 1968

We had much pleasure from a 10-foot rowboat we were given by a grateful customer who had given up fishing. A friend, Russell Lyon, and family of six came over one

Sunday. We could see by the way the seagulls were behaving that the kahawai were running so we took out the boat with a couple of lines with single hooks but no sinkers. On each hook a small white rag which we trailed behind the boat and the fish could not resist it. We caught 18 lovely fish and supplied several neighbours.

In Pukatea Street there was a bunch of young ruffians all about Murray's age. He called them his gang. He was their leader. Come Saturday mornings, shoe cleaning time, before he could go out to play, shoes must all be cleaned. The gang hopped in and the job was done in no time. When the local volunteer firemen

took youngsters for rides on their fire engine Murray's gang got their fair share of rides. One of his friends was Anthon van Opdorp who lived opposite. Mrs van Opdorp told us when Murray had said one day to her, "I'll have to go now as our father will be coming home," Anthon went and looked up and down the street but saw no one with a halo.

One day, I had started painting the back of the house when Murray came out, saw me and asked, "Could I help?" Fearing he would make a mess, I said, "Thank you but you first run along and play." As he turned the corner of the house, I saw his chin on his chest. I felt terrible—he had so willingly offered to help, and I knocked him back. I prayed, "God, please send him back." A few minutes later he returned, "Are you sure Dad I can't help you?" I replied immediately, "Yes thanks, you can. Here's a brush and paint to start." Result—as the children came out, one by one all five of them, they each wanted to help, and I had a brush and paint for each. And we all had a happy time and no mess.

Roger was by now a Boy Scout, and Ros and I were invited to a special evening at which the district governor would be entertained. The boys were practising their many skills for the big night. It all led up to the breaking of the Union Jack. A roll on the drums, the salute and the flag unfurled. Only, it wasn't the Union Jack but the Russian flag. Red faces all around.

On the home front I have happy memories of Pat in white cap and apron baking scones for her hungry brothers. She won a cooking prize at school. Ros always encouraged both girls to cook, and later the boys too. Pat and Rossie took up ballet-dancing and Ros used to take them by bus into Wellington for lessons.

I think now of the very active part she played when all the children were taking cut lunches to school—what a job. Some we would prepare the night before and keep in the fridge. Other times it was a big scramble to put them together. Nigel once ate both his and my lunches while playing chess without realizing he'd taken both to school. Once when Ros went for a week's break we had to manage on our own. When she returned, lo! we had a bread slicer. Strange.

One of Ros's great joys was singing. She really did have a glorious soprano voice. She was delighted when Maxwell Fernie, an English-trained singer, came to live in Eastbourne and started a choir, the Lyric Singers. They practised a lot and gave an annual concert. Sadly, she has not been able to persevere at that level but even now in her 80s she still causes heads to turn in church. Pat has inherited her love of choral singing.

With five active children some redecoration was due. I decided to paint the lounge using the spray gun attached to the vacuum cleaner in reverse, so it blows out instead of sucking in. All went well until the glass jar holding the white paint blew off the hose and crashed on the carpet. What a mess! We used turpentine on the carpet, then took it to be dry cleaned. When we got it back it had shrunk so we had to put up with a six-inch stained wooden border.

One thing we all enjoyed was a walk to Pencarrow Head Lighthouse. We rarely got to the lighthouse, about six miles away. There was too much of interest on the way. As the tide went out it left so many pools among the rocks and there was enough left in those pools to satisfy any curious young Kiwi. Weather did not stop us. In fact, I think we enjoyed our

walks in the rain most. On one walk we came on a young man practising the bagpipes in a quarry. Murray was fascinated and we could not drag him away. With several Scottish ancestors, some long-forgotten genes must have been stirred. At home, too, if the bagpipes came on the radio he would march up and down in time to the beat. Years later he had his own set of drums and played in several bands.

As the children grew up our walks developed into bike rides. Rossie riding Ros's bike, Roger with Murray on the bar and me with Pat on the bar and Nigel in the carrier. We had a 'secret posse' round the beach and up a small hill where we hid a biscuit tin with tea and sugar and matches. It was always a great joy to have a 'boil up'. A big part of the fun was to find it still intact. These expeditions were a great relief to Ros. She enjoyed a peaceful few hours with the house empty. Six of us out. Another walk we loved was over the hill to Butterfly Creek. Such a pretty spot and only an hour from home. Of course, in the summer we were into the sea which was only 30 feet from the front gate.

Colin and Jessie Woodward lent us their Model A Ford when the children were small. We pitched a tent on the beach past the bus barn and had fun. With Ramsay Southward and his father Charlie we tramped round past Pencarrow and camped on the beach in Cook Strait. The boys wanted to swim but there was no safe sloping beach. The current had cut in and there was a sudden drop, so we roped each boy round the chest and let them out a few feet into deep water.

I was now getting a few relieving jobs. Nelson, Waipukurau, Palmerston North. It was difficult for

Ros. Mostly I could get home at weekends, but she was on her own most of the week. However, it meant we could save more as relieving managers got a good allowance. We bought our Kenwood cake mixer and our first refrigerator. The family well remember the excitement the night the fridge arrived, and the scrumptious ice cream Ros made. Prior to that we had an air-cooled safe for our perishables.



The road from Eastbourne to Pencarrow Lighthouse

In 1950 I read in the paper about a Moral Re-Armament (MRA) [now known as *Initiatives of Change*] play that when performed in Wales in WWII had brought about a dramatic increase in coal production. This increase had been vital to the British war effort. Called *The Forgotten Factor*, the play was



Ros and Lawrie, late 1940s

staged in the Concert Chamber of the Town Hall. Out of curiosity I went and was very moved by the play. It showed what can happen when the forgotten factor is brought into a very difficult industrial situation, that factor being God. I met the cast after the performance. They were a humble, sincere group who were performing without salary and depending on God to provide all their needs. I said to Ros when I got home, "This play contains the ideas I have been searching for all my life. It will help me put my Christian faith into practice."

An early visitor to NZ when we were just making contact with MRA was George West, former Bishop of Rangoon, Burma. He was on a world tour in 1952. Ros was delighted to chat with him. He knew some of her school friends. He had had an operation for cancer of the throat and spoke with some difficulty. Another early visitor was Loudon Hamilton who had contracted shingles. He stayed six weeks with us to recuperate. Others to do likewise were Mick Lennon with vertigo, Lindsay Cartwright with asthma, and Bill Coffey.

One winter evening when we were all around the fire we were listening to a visiting American priest, Father Green, whose theme was family unity. "The family that prays together, stays together," he said. "I beg you families that are listening to me now to get on your knees and pray together." Rossie said, "Let's do that." So, we all said the Lord's Prayer together and I was so grateful that Rossie had the courage to do that.

The more we saw of the MRA group, the more we liked. They were a caring group and believed that God could guide us in everything, provided we asked and believed. Their beliefs were in line with the practical psychology of my youth and we had no difficulty in following their precepts. It was a transforming experience for me

that gave me hope and a new direction. They believed in absolute moral standards (honesty, purity, unselfishness and love) and the guidance of God; and that when people listen, God speaks, and when people change, nations change. The morning Quiet Time was new to us, but we soon found that it kept us on an even keel. The first time I tried it I had the thought to be honest with Ros about something of which I was much ashamed. I just couldn't for some weeks pluck up the courage. Eventually I did and the burden of it left me at once. We used to go into Wellington to meetings and would leave Rossie to baby-sit. However, we never thought that she might resent the frequent baby-sitting.

Ros and I had been blood donors ever since my brother Maurice had had an operation in Invercargill for a stomach ulcer some years before. He had many transfusions and when I sent down a cheque to Blood Transfusion Service in gratitude it was graciously returned to me as the service could not accept donations. So, we thought the best we could do was to become donors. We had donated for some years when a nurse discovered we were both well over 60 and we should not be donating. We were also surprised when a close friend received a blood transfusion and the reported never named donor was described exactly as me!

I had retained my golf clubs from earlier days and although I did not join a club, I enjoyed an occasional game. Four of us businessmen in Petone had a very enjoyable week in Rotorua. As the children were growing up, I soon saw that playing golf was selfish of

me as I put this before the needs of my growing family. I sold the clubs. I have never regretted it.

Home brewing was the order of the day. We used to brew in the washhouse, 18 gallons at a time. Bottling day was ‘all hands to the pumps’. Children helped to bottle but not drink. We had such a lot of friends. It lasted about a year until Ros and I looked at each other and asked, “Do we want our children to grow up like us?” The answer was such a clear no, that we stopped all drinking there and then. Even at work and bank parties and that wasn’t easy.

Nigel had had a lazy eye from young which we knew would one day need an operation, but which we hoped would improve with time. However, by the time he was nine it was becoming an embarrassment. His school friends were calling him ‘cross-eyed Cooper’. We had to act. The eye specialist put him in hospital with three others of the same age. They were operated on the same day and then blindfolded for three or four days. They were a sorry sight but strangely were in good spirits, all talking and laughing together. I used to go in on my way to work to help feed him his breakfast. I left him one morning feeling darned sorry for him. I parked the car outside the GPO intending to go into Head Office and drop my bank keys off and then come back to park the car elsewhere. I forgot. When at 5 pm I suddenly remembered it, I found it with the windscreen covered with stickers. What a sight! I was on a five-minute park and I must have been checked every half hour. I am pleased to say the traffic warden had a heart when I told the story of being so worried leaving my little son blindfolded that the car went right out of my mind—no charge.

That same year Roger and Nigel both had sore throats. Swollen adenoids, the doctor said, and he wanted to whip them out right away. Hold on, I said. I could not see why these two should have to go through the trauma of hospital and doctors. Ros and I prayed about it and the thought came to write to Dr Ulric Williams of Wanganui, well known for his opposition to the knife, preferring holistic healing, though it was not called that in those days. He replied in very warm terms and said, “On no account have them out. The adenoids are swollen because they are doing their work.

Change your lifestyle. No white starchy food, no white sugar, plenty of fruit and vegetables, wholemeal flour. The swellings will come down in six months.” They did, almost to the day. Dr Williams was also against inoculations and injections, his theory that a healthy body did not need such aids. Needless to say, the medical profession was strongly opposed to him and ejected him from the NZMA. That move to change our lifestyle was a real turning point in our lives. Our children have had a wonderful, healthy run and none have had any inoculations. *[However, some of the children have chosen to have inoculations as adults.]* We had faith in this man and his theories.

Maurice, Ida and I had been cigarette smokers for 30 years. I knew it was no good for me so gave up—for a few weeks. Soon back smoking in the garage, as though Ros couldn’t smell it on me. But when I had a permanent cough, and wanted a cigarette before breakfast, I was worried. One Saturday night, I decided. I got on my knees and said, “Please, God, you’ve got to help me. I can’t do this alone.” I burnt all the tobacco and butts I could find. I went to bed with a peaceful heart. Sunday morning, I woke up, had breakfast, worked and played with the family until lunch. After lunch I craved for a cigarette, but God said to me, “Hold on, Cooper. If you can resist now, you’ll be safe for the rest of your life.” It really was a miracle that I had gone 16 hours without thinking about it. I was not going to have one now. I never smoked again.



Maurice Cooper family, late 1960s. Maurice, Coogie and son Garth Cooper (now Professor of Proteomics and Biomedicine, Auckland University). Inset: Mark Cooper (now a judge in the NZ Court of Appeal).

Both Maurice and Ida died at about 70 years of age from lung cancer. Both were heavy smokers. I could have died about that age too. I did nearly die in 1975 from a burst stomach ulcer like my father. The doctor who saved me asked, "How did you relax so much when we were operating?" I replied, "I have faith that we are allotted a span of life, and nothing we do can lengthen or shorten it. If my time is up, I'm ready." He was very thoughtful. "Well, that is what saved your life," he said. So, here I am at 89 (1997) still alive and enjoying my 13 grandchildren!



The Cooper Clan in 1952: Lawrie, Rossie, Nigel, Pat, Roger, Murray, Roslyn.

Christmas morning in 1953 we had a visit from an engineer customer, Darby O'Connor. The Queen had arrived 10 days before. Her itinerary included many visits to provincial towns and an enterprising entrepreneur conceived the idea of providing portable viewing stands to move ahead of her visits. A bright idea because the individual towns could not afford to provide such stands for a 'oncer'. He asked Darby to fabricate these in steel. It was a tempting order running into £150,000 and would have set Darby up for greater expansion. However, Darby had some doubts about the fellow's *bona fides* and came to me for advice. I rang the home of the fellow's bank manager explaining the position and asked his opinion.

He very decently said, "If I was your customer, I would be very cautious." That was enough for Darby. He turned it down.

Three weeks later when the entrepreneur went into liquidation, Darby was so grateful he had been saved from bankruptcy himself that he arrived at Pukatea Street one evening with a set of parallel bars which he immediately set in concrete. The boys got great exercise from playing on the parallel bars. Darby also brought a swing seat which has been very much used. In fact, it is still in use at Murray's home now.

Soon after this I brought home a rusty, old

typewriter from work on which most of the keys worked. Nigel fell for it right away and loved using it. He thought he'd start a school newspaper. In no time he co-opted his friends to write articles and the local shop keepers to supply some advertisements at 2/6 a time.

Circulation rose

rapidly into the low hundreds. Nigel would type it all out on the old machine, then cyclostyle it on a Gestetner, collate and staple it together and deliver it. It was the first of many such efforts throughout his life—including this book.

One Saturday afternoon, the sky darkened and there moving up the harbour was a mini cyclone with the darkened central core clearly visible. Never had we seen anything like it. Two days later there appeared in the *Dominion* a letter to the editor describing this unusual event and signed 'Nigel Cooper, Editor, *Eastbourne Express*.' [*The archives of the Eastbourne Express are lost, but if anyone could lend Nigel an original copy, please let him know!*]

Primary School Days

The children all attended Muritai Primary School in Eastbourne. Rossie did very well. She and her friend Helen Dobbie were alternately first and second in most things in Standard 6 (year 8). Both were prefects.

Roger, Pat, Nigel and Murray were fortunate to be included in composite classes started by a new teacher at the school, Bill Renwick. He had up to four standards in one class. He was a natural with children and could inspire them to considerable heights. Particularly did they enjoy the projects he set them which they worked on at home. Pat, I remember, took great pride in her work. Each year, the children moved up but stayed together as a composite group, Roger becoming head boy. When Roger's age group went on to High School, Pat and Nigel were in a double composite class, and when they moved on Murray joined Bill Renwick's class. After a term, Bill Renwick told Ros and me that Murray found arithmetic difficult. We would have to help him, but how? Buy a dartboard and play crib with him we were told. We did and it worked wonders. So much so that years later he taught maths at School Certificate level. Another tip for someone like Murray who might have had difficulty with words and reading—play Scrabble, i.e. learning through play. Bill and Merle Renwick later looked after all four children for a week while Ros and I went to Auckland to see Rossie off to the UK. Bill later held the top education job in the country, Director-General of Education, for 12 years.

Muritai had a cricket team which played inter-school matches. At one match in Lower Hutt, I was watching Roger batting and the man next to me said to his neighbour, "Why wasn't that boy in my practice squad?" I looked and it was John Reid who coached the Hutt Valley schoolboy reps and later captained the NZ

team. Was I proud! My son to be noticed by a New Zealand representative.

We were 40 minutes by car from town. But we did not have a car for the first six years in Eastbourne. Then we bought a 1939 Super Deluxe V8 Ford, quite a big car. Apart from needing such a car for the family, it was ideal to take Roger's school cricket team to Saturday morning matches, mainly in the Hutt Valley. The whole team in the car.

This reminds me of one match when we turned up with 12 boys, and the opposition, a Catholic school, had only 10. The priest in charge would not accept our suggestion of taking one of our boys for 11-a-side, so I had to shed one player. I asked for a volunteer. I was very grateful when up spoke our captain and fast bowler, a real hard shot, Ronnie Connell. "I'll stand down, Mr Cooper," he said. His courage and unselfishness have stuck in my mind ever since. That was over 40 years ago.

A similar gratitude when a car pulled up at our gate at 5:30 pm and Roger unloaded his bike from the boot. He had a puncture and the motorist returning home had given him a lift. My heart went out to him. Result—I have since offered a lift to any kid I see pushing a bike.

Rossie taught Nigel to play chess. He took to it like a duck to water. He even played 'blindfold chess'. This soon developed into playing 2-3 games simultaneously. He would do the washing up while the others would each have a board he couldn't see and he would call out his moves to each in turn. It really was a great feat of memory.

Nigel was also keen on tennis when young. He still is. The tennis club was very handy. He would spend hours on the volley board or playing against one of his friends, Michael Barnett. He never seemed to tire. He had a good slice of stickability, no doubt associated with his penchant for jigsaws and chess.



Bill Renwick taught four Cooper children.



Michael Barnett tennis player aged 17, 1960.

One day when he was playing rugby for Muritai School against Petone I mentioned to Bob Scott, All Black fullback, that I was taking an hour off to watch the game. "I'll come with you," he said. [Bob was described by South African rugby test captain Hennie Muller as "the greatest player I've ever played in any position".] Bob was always interested in boys' rugby. It was a good game, except for the fact that the Petone boys were much bigger than our boys. As we left Bob said, "He'll do. Nigel has got it. I liked the way he stopped those forward rushes. It is not easy to fall on the ball when eight pairs of boots are flying round your head." Proud father—two sons complimented by NZ players. Bob was right as proved when we later moved to Christchurch. Nigel was picked to play fullback for Canterbury Juniors.



Bob Scott, All Black fullback (1946-1954).



Lawrie's long-time friends Bob Scott, Jim Coulter.



The Playroom built by Lawrie and Roger at 20 Pukatea Street photographed in 1990s by Roger. In front: Robyn Cooper

Roger was proving very useful with his hands. He loved taking old clocks and radios to pieces and was very good working with wood. He worked one holiday with a customer, Clench Bros. Cabinet Makers. Old Mr Clench was one of the old school, trained in England. He was very good with cabinet work and French polishing, and generous with his knowledge. Roger enjoyed putting in a full day and earning £5 a week which I paid the Clenches unbeknown to Roger. Bob King, another customer and good friend, also employed both Nigel and Roger in his Clorogene factory in Petone. The boys enjoyed the pocket money.

Our growing family meant more room required. So we had a local builder add a room to the home and we decided to build a playroom. Roger and I planned a 20'x10' room,

sufficient to take a full-size table-tennis table. We had much fun in building it. Wooden frame, asbestos sheeting and malthoid roof over close sarking. One of the best things we

ever did. It provided no end of fun, plenty of room for boisterous young bloods where they could make as much noise as they liked. All their parties and games and often sleeping beds were covered.

When we had finished it, (it took some six months) we started on the fence between Sixsmiths and ourselves which was rotten. It

was 120 feet long. That took another four months. I was very lucky in that Roger seemed to enjoy the work. He was a natural handling tools. Although only 12-14 he was an ideal workmate. Among other things he made a very good spear gun for

fishing. A hammer I gave him then he still uses, 40 years later. Part of the fence is still standing today.

One day when doing some woodwork, I hit my thumb with the hammer. It was very painful. Hoping to stop the nail going black I said to my workmate Roger, "Quick run over to Mr Young (a carpenter) and ask him what I could do to stop my nail going black." He came tearing back and breathless said, "Mr Young said, 'Buy a rubber hammer.'" I could have hit Arthur Young on the head with a real one.

Later I bought two large motorcar cases and we planned a good fowl house. Roger and his friend Graeme Wilson stripped the cases down and built the fowl house, about 12'x6'. In addition to six chooks, we had two tumbler pigeons. They perched above the chooks. The tumblers were always an attraction as they flew back from a flight. They would come in 30 feet

up and then fold their wings backwards and dive vertically onto their house. So, we had our own eggs when for other people they were rationed. We also built a large trellis fence to cut the long back yard in half and afford some wind protection for the vegetable garden. This latter soon gave way to football, soccer and hockey. Exit the vegetables.



Canoe rebuilt by Roger, Murray, Nigel and Roger canoeing, Eastbourne, early 1950s. The boom was built to prevent Japanese submarines entering the inner harbour. Remains of the boom, now gone, are to the left.

Our neighbours the Sixsmiths had made a canvas canoe which was now derelict. They gave it to Roger who worked hard removing each rotten piece of the wooden frame and replacing it with a new one heated in a steam bath to make it pliable. When rebuilt, he fully re-covered it with new canvas. It was light and could easily be lifted over the sea wall. It would take two or three paddlers and gave us no end of fun as it would enable us to see fish and kelp. Neighbourhood children loved it too.

One weekend, four Danish gymnasts came. After lunch we inquired what they would like to do and they said with one voice, "Sleep." They had found the performing and travelling a strain. We tucked them into beds. They enjoyed a two-hour sleep and were most grateful.

Another weekend, the Chinese Consul, Dr Daniel Lew, and family were over and his two big boys John and Anthony asked to take the canoe out. We watched them for a while as the wind came up until we realised that they were dangerously far out and still paddling. Then we saw them turn to try to paddle back but the choppy sea tipped them out. The tide then was on the ebb. They were losing ground and drifting towards the heads. We all prayed like mad. Ros ran up the shoreline and waved to a friend, Phil Bothomley, and a mate fishing from a dinghy. They couldn't hear her but had seen

the canoe heading out. They pulled in their lines and headed after the canoe. It was reached a long way down towards the open sea. They towed it ever so slowly back. What a relief. It could easily have been a tragedy unfolded before our eyes. Later John Lew told us Anthony left the drifting upside-down canoe and started to swim for the shore, but John wisely yelled to him to return to the canoe. He might otherwise have drowned. Anthony said later he felt God had saved him for a purpose, which he sought to find and fulfil.



The Lew family. John, Daniel, Yalan, Brian, Anthony 1958.



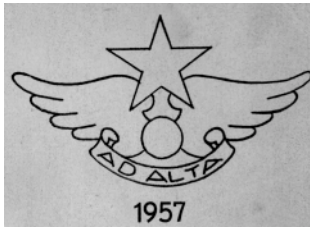
L to R: Standing: Hillas MacLean, Maurice Hodder, Lawrie, Dr. Yu-Tang Daniel Lew (Ambassador for Taiwan to NZ), Leslie Armstrong, Arthur Bingham; Seated: Joan Armstrong, Margaret Hodder, Yalan Lew, Margaret Bingham; In front: Brian Lew. MRA meeting Cooper home, Eastbourne, 1958.

High School Years

Rossie and Roger were both now at Hutt Valley High School (HVHS). At the school swimming sports Rossie won the 33-yard under-water swim. Roger won the life-saving cup and played rugby. Ros and I went to watch him play. He scored a try and we called out, "Curry and rice for tea tonight!" He then scored two more tries. Great day. He also took part in the school annual play. He was on lighting and sound effects. We sat with our good friends Percy and Mary Dowse. Percy was mayor of Lower Hutt from 1950 to 1970). Their daughter Nora had a part in the play, but the play progressed and no sign of Nora. She came up to see her parents and explained that one of the cast had skipped a page of the script in error and she and others had missed out.

The Dowses liked to come to our home on Sunday afternoons. Within five minutes Percy would be asleep. We considered this a compliment and would not let him apologise. It showed he was completely at peace in our home. When we would take folk to see him in Lower Hutt, he told us we were the only people who came to see him who did not want him to do something for them.

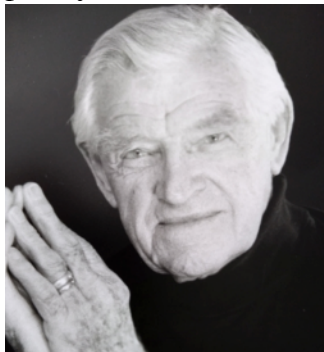
Roger was in a Crusader group run by a teacher, Stan Utting. They were coming around for a picnic and Roger wanted to have them home, so we bought a 40 lb. case of sweetcorn for them and it all disappeared. I can't imagine now how we cooked it all. The Crusaders were going over to Picton for an annual camp. They left on the ferry the same day as School Certificate results were to come out. When I got the newspaper in town and saw he had passed I had the bright idea to send a radiogram to the ship and Roger heard over the ship's loudspeaker, "Would Mr Roger Cooper please report to the purser's cabin." He said later he had a good idea what for, but that did not lessen the importance he



HVHS Motto: To the Highest



Percy Dowse



Cyril Phelps, 'Mr New Zealand'

felt as he reported to the purser, and to the family.

A friend we had known for a few years, Cyril Phelps, was a chiropractor and owned a gymnasium. He was a weightlifter and immensely strong. Cyril suggested our boys could benefit from time in his gymnasium doing weightlifting exercises. They rapidly developed physically. I have always been grateful for the few months' exercises he gave them.

One day Cyril rang me at work saying a young boy patient was very ill. His parents had taken him to Hutt Hospital. But the doctors held out no hope for him. Cyril suggested that he and I might be able to help. If each of us, when we put down the receiver, was to get on our knees and pray for him then he might recover. I responded to that and did as Cyril suggested and I said, "Please God, if you need to take anything from me to help—my vitality, my strength—please do so." Whereupon I was violently shaken and left feeling very weak. I went back into my office and continued working. Some days later Cyril told me the boy recovered much to everyone's amazement. We both felt very humble.

Roger in his fourth year at HVHS in 1956 was doing well. He was captain of the cricket Second XI and showing promise as a batsman (First XI the following year). He was blossoming out in many ways. He and Nigel spent time in Cyril Phelps' gym doing weight-lifting exercises. Roger was made a school prefect, and Nigel a transport prefect, but they did not enjoy having to use their authority with their schoolmates.

Pat did well at hockey, playing for the A Grade Hockey team at HVHS for two years. She started work after she got her School Certificate pass in 1958 and joined a public accountancy firm in Wellington. Two years later, Murray was in the third form and Nigel in the sixth form at HVHS. We were very grateful

for the good grounding that Bill Renwick had given them. They all handled their schoolwork without difficulty. It was greatly to the family's benefit that we had the same home for 18 years which meant schooling was uninterrupted by transfers. So many families in the bank find transfers difficult.

How those years slipped by with the family growing up. Ros was ever busy cooking, baking, knitting jerseys and socks, and so on to keep them warm. She kept the tins full as we were meeting and giving hospitality to increasing numbers of MRA and other folk. The outside playroom-cum-bedroom was a great boon. Two Melbourne couples who came several times were Jim and Rita Coulter and Wing Commander Eric Roberts and Jean. Their son Neil Roberts became one of Nigel's lifelong friends, both being keen on chess, maths and teaching.

Once a year the Eastbourne Borough Council asked the residents to put out rubbish not suitable for the weekly collections. On the day before the collection, it was a common sight to see folk going through their neighbours' rubbish for any loot. One evening Ros and I were visiting friends before they left on transfer. When we were leaving, they gave us a dressing table which was surplus. As we walked home with it at 11 pm past all the sundry piles of rubbish at the gates, we ran into two old friends who greeted us with, "Nice pickings, eh?" We could only grin and bear it.

We asked the children if they wanted us to get a TV set when they first became available. The vote was unanimous: "No!" As a result, we never had TV while the children were at home. We were also concerned that the children were missing out on the entertainments in the city. The 45-minute bus ride home ruled out evening entertainment. So, we asked would they like us to move into

the city. The answer was another clear "No!" They did not want to leave Eastbourne.

There was one occasion when we did go to a show, and on returning to the car could not get the key to turn in the lock. We puzzled over it and called a nearby taxi driver to help. He was about to take some drastic measure when a man came along looking much displeased and demanded what were we doing interfering with his car! Our car, a twin of his, was 20 feet further on.

Roger wanted to go to university and tried it from Eastbourne. The travelling proved too much, so he moved into Wellington and stayed with his friend Ken Johnson's parents for a year, then took a flat with two others. He was on a teaching bursary which helped, but not enough. So, he worked in a bakery and so provided for himself. No mean effort. When receiving his bursary the following year, he was told he must take a subject he could teach later. He was given the option of two, neither of which he liked. The alternative was to pay back the bursary and make his own choice of subject



Gurdial Singh, seated, from Malaya, and Ba Yin (R) from Burma visiting the Cooper family, 1957.

to major in, which was geology. He realised quickly that this was the right choice. He took all his degrees up to PhD and has made it his life's work. He gained a DSc and was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand. He's travelled round the world more than three times. He is one of the lucky ones in that his work is also his hobby.

Visitors and Holidays

Our Visitors' Book, given to us in 1956 by Oala Rarua from Port Moresby and John Cheeseman from Adelaide, is still in use. Two hundred pages are filled with photos and names of thousands from all over the globe. So many happy memories. How we accommodated them all is now a mystery. The evident appreciation of our visitors of our hospitality was very heart-warming and we made friends for life. Sulaiman bin Haji Daud, a student from Sarawak, became a cabinet minister in Malaysia for many years. Another was Kean Aun from Penang. Nigel met up with each of them in Malaysia in 1975. *[It was through Kean Aun that Roger Cooper met Robyn Shaw in 1978, marrying her in 1991.]*

he put 20 or 30 four-inch stones on top. They got really hot, then he added a good sprinkle of water and flax leaves, then the food and covered this with a sheet and then wet sacks and then sand on top. It was left for three hours and then opened among the great expectation of 20 hungry mouths. Absolutely scrumptious and completely novel to Sulaiman and the other Asians with us.

Dr Adam Harvie, whom we had met through MRA, rang one day saying he would like to bring over for tea two Indonesian students who were staying at the Colombo Plan Hostel and were feeling homesick. They came and had a happy day. They asked to return the next weekend. A happy band of six young men



A special occasion which remains clear in our memory was when Mick and Kahu Jones (parents of MRA friend, Rei) came over and made a hāngi in our backyard. We had gathered the stones and we had pork, pumpkin, potatoes, kumara and chicken. Among other guests were a grand old Māori lady, Wikitoria Bennett, and her family and the above-mentioned Sulaiman: his first day in NZ. Mick first dug a three-foot wide circular hole and about three feet deep. In that he set a large wood fire. As it burned down,



Mick Jones (top left, holding shovel), heats the stones, lays the food on them (above), covers them with flax and cabbage leaves and sacks (above right), then sand, and leaves the food cooking for about 3 hours. Below left: His wife Kahu Jones and Lawrie dish up the food and everybody enjoys eating the traditional Māori hāngi food.

all about 20 years old came. I was honest with them and told them I had to get the atlas out to find out where Indonesia was. They asked to return a week later. Two busloads turned up with 40 students in them! That was the beginning of many more overseas visitors.

The Colombo Plan Hostel in Wellington was home to many Asians. We had two good friends there, Mary Dalziel and Dorothy Matthews, and they were pleased to help their boys enjoy hospitality in an NZ home.

Occasionally in the city, if I saw an Asian looking lost, I would take him home for a meal. Ros would take such visits in her stride. One such guest was a Pakistani, Dr Ananta Krishnan, a three-time PhD in dairy science, dairy technology and bovine science. I had rung Ros, so she had a good curry prepared. As we approached the house he said he was sorry, but it was his fast day.

However, when he got inside and smelt the delicious curry he smiled and said, "I think I'll ring my Imam and ask him if I could postpone until tomorrow my fast day." This he did and so enjoyed a curry meal.

It was a joy to invite home these young Asians. They did not have much opportunity to enter New Zealand homes and they were always so appreciative. We crossed out the word 'Remarks' in our visitors' book and replaced it with 'Phone No.', but still they wrote. Some comments: 'The happiest day of my life', 'Grand curry', 'Hāngi Day, Wonderful kai'. While most of our visitors were boys from the Colombo Plan Hostel, we also had Asian girls. Charlotte Loh from Malaysia



The Cooper family entertaining Colombo Plan students from four Asian countries.



Camping holidays with the Super Deluxe V8 Ford, early 1950s.



'Normanvale', the Hayes family farm in the Hakataramea Valley, South Canterbury.

and Isje Tobing from Indonesia were two whose names come to mind. People of every nation under the sun came and we always had enough to feed them. How, I can't imagine. A neighbour asked Ros one morning, "What outfit are you having this weekend?" We certainly gave the neighbours lots to talk about.

Holidays were a rarity, mainly because of the cost to take a large family away. However, we did get away once with a caravan, up to Rotorua (where we met Guide Rangi), Matamata and Katikati, both hot springs. Rossie's friend Yvonne Turvey came with us.

We off-loaded them both along the way. They wanted to hitchhike and join us further up, their first experience which went off well. At Katikati there was a large hot pool which we all loved. Caravan life, good food, early bed. Rossie and Yvonne joined up safely with us. It was a perfect holiday. Another trip was with Rossie and Roger and three bicycles. We took the ferry to Picton and had a happy week exploring the Sounds.

In 1957/58 we had two memorable holidays in the South Island. In May we hired a caravan and drove south to the farm of MRA friends, Alpheus and Anna Hayes, at Hakataramea. We parked the caravan on their lawn and woke next morning to a colossal heavy

rainstorm. The bridge over the Waitaki River to Kurow was impassable which prevented us from moving on to Queenstown. The caravan sank into the lawn and couldn't be moved for 10 days. The Hayes were very good to us. They had an Auckland Cooper family (no relation) staying as well. Twelve guests for 2 weeks.

The following January, we headed south for Queenstown. Pat sat the School Certificate exam before we set out and results were due while we were on the road. As we passed



Nigel, Murray, Pat in HVHS uniform, Roger in HVHS School Cadet uniform

through Oamaru we bought a copy of the *Oamaru Mail* and to everyone's great delight we saw her name among the successful ones. Further on when we were staying at the Hayes' farm, we had a phone call from one of her friends to say Pat's boyfriend, Robin Te Whero, had been killed in a car accident. I shall never forget taking her for a walk to break the news. How I wished I did not have to. Family life is made up of sorrows and joys. Let us hope that there are more of the latter.



MRA Visitors from many countries after a mayoral reception in Lower Hutt with civic leaders. They all visited our home. L to R: Kahi Harawira (NZ), Ann-Margret Eneborg (Sweden), Birthe-Lis Bruun (Denmark), Eunice and Harsant Opperman (Southern Rhodesia), Alpheus and Anna Hayes (NZ), Aino Poussa (Finland), April 1957.

[Nigel writes, The Hayes family and ours have been friends for a long time. We have had more than 50 holidays at the farm over 50 years. Their Visitors Book records their extensive hospitality.

The first Alpheus Hayes made a decision to come to New Zealand in the 1870s. As he stood beside two ships at the Glasgow Wharf in 1872, he saw that one was going to Canada, the other to New Zealand. He tossed a coin to decide, New



Garfield Hayes

Zealand won. On arrival he worked on farms until he was able in 1878 to buy 3000 acres in the Hakataramea Valley, South Canterbury. Alpheus Hayes (in photo above with his wife Anna) was his grandson. Alpheus went blind in the 1960s. Their son Garfield and his wife Helen took over the farm in 1972. In 2009, Garfield and Helen's son Andrew and his wife Elizabeth became the fifth generation of the Hayes family running it.]

Rossie's Overseas Experience

From the time Rossie was in her third year at HVHS where she did well, she had itchy feet and thoughts of going overseas. We said, "First you must get School Certificate, then University Entrance and then save up your fare." This she did, joining the local post office staff. In 1954, she was 19 and had her fare—enough to get to London and to return. Well do I remember those days. We drove her and her friend Yvonne up to Auckland to catch the ship. We were quite apprehensive saying goodbye to our first born. Although she was going first to Ros's mother in the UK, we found it hard to see her off. Particularly I did because I had a guilty conscience. I had not loved her enough and we had used her for a baby-sitter too much. I felt she might be going just to get away from home.

Rossie started writing very interesting letters from England. With two other shipmates they bought an old Daimler car for a tour of the country. Rossie, the only one with a license, did the driving. And the fun they had! Driving the wrong way in a one-way street in Oxford and other equal escapades. She landed a job in the Savoy Hotel in London as a cashier in the à-la-carte restaurant. She told us of many notable people she met. Some were not as nice as their films made us believe.

Rossie had been away three years. We were beginning to wonder when she would come home. She had given no sign she was thinking of it. Then a letter arrived saying she had settled in Glasgow and was very happy. She thought she would settle there for the rest of her life! We were shocked.

For a few days we were very unhappy. Then in a quiet time one morning I thought, "Write to Rossie and apologise for your lack of love over the years." I did, but before posting the letter I showed it to a close friend who was staying with us. To my surprise he said, "If I got that letter, it would leave me as cold as a wet fish." I did not understand. I had put my heart into it. "Now," he said, "if you apologised for just one specific thing—not a general apology—that would ring bells with me."

I thought of several occasions when I could have shown compassion and hadn't. One

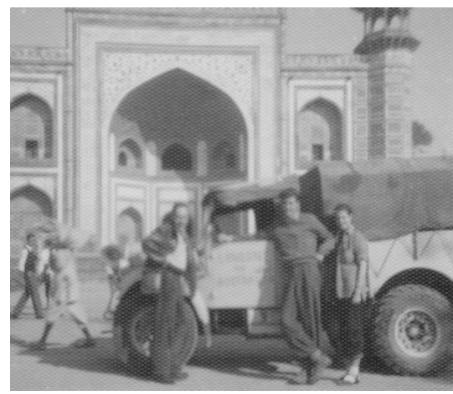
happened shortly before she had sailed. I had spoken sharply to her in front of a visitor. So, I mentioned this occasion and said how sorry I was that I had been so insensitive and hoped she would forgive me.

Air mail took seven days then. On the fourteenth day after posting my letter her reply came—just a brief note. Now, after 35 years I remember every word: "Dear Dad, thank you for your letter but I too was to blame. I've thought things over and I'm coming home. I've booked on the *Orsova* leaving Tilbury Docks on February 17 and should be with you by the end of March. With all my love, Roslyn." Ros and I with tears in our eyes said, "Thank you God for a miracle." Then we remembered that the surest way to anyone's heart is through sincere apology.



Pat and Rossie were both born on April 9, seven years apart.

Rossie changed her plans when she discovered a group of 14 were travelling overland to Australia and needed one more person. She joined up with them. They bought two large ex-Army Land Rovers and set off overland. In Turkey, eight of the party including the leader split off and drove to Africa taking one vehicle. Rossie plus six others decided to carry on. By the time they reached Iran, they were running short of money, yet they somehow managed to drive through Iran, Pakistan, India, Burma and Malaya to Singapore. They had no visas into Burma or Malaya but got through with the help of a police escort.



Rossie was in a party of 15 travelling overland through Europe and Asia. These photos show some of the adventures they had on the way.

One by one, the party dwindled, one for homesickness, one for lack of funds, one got malaria, one thought it was too dangerous. After many adventures, just three of them reached their destination, Rossie, Ron (by now her fiancé) and his best friend. They sold the truck for £10 and took a boat to Fremantle, working for their passage. There, Ron and Rossie



had a registry office wedding. They reached New Zealand a year later. That trip certainly deserves a book of its own. Maybe she will write it after reading this.

[Rossie became Ros after her marriage. However, for clarity purposes, we retain Rossie in this text. She died on 23 March 2020. Her sons Keith and Jeff have her diaries which record that memorable journey.]

Rossie and Ron Patrick 1956

The Coffee Party

Branch managers were encouraged to join a service club, so I linked up with the Lions Club. Once-a-week luncheons at which we each took a turn to chair and at which we would have a great speaker. On the day of my turn to chair the meeting the speaker was a trade commissioner from the German Embassy. He made a very dry and boring talk. Towards the end of his address, I saw to my absolute horror that the member I had arranged to give the vote of thanks was sound asleep. Help! I tried to alert those sitting near him to give him a dig. All I could do was raise my eyebrows and contort my face as I was sitting next to the standing speaker and could do no more as he would see me. Eventually he stopped and to my intense relief the applause woke my sleeping friend. He remembered his part and rose to thank the visitor "for a most interesting talk which we have all enjoyed". Blood pressure back to normal.

When I was managing Palmerston North branch I was approached by a Chinese lady. She wished her daughter could join the staff. She had the necessary qualifications, was a courteous girl, aged 16 and spoke well. But Chinese? No such had ever been taken on to my knowledge. However, I sent in her application and recommended it. A few weeks later an assistant inspector rang me to say all okay. The application had gone all the way up to the general manager in Sydney. When I asked how he knew this he said that the staff inspector in Sydney had said that he had been instructed to take on the girl, Anna Wong, and no one but the general manager tells the staff inspector what to do. The girl turned out trumps, and soon rose above the rank and file and the bank's prestige stood high with the influential Chinese

community. Now the bank has a great many Asians on the staff, especially in Australia.

On one of my relieving jobs at Palmerston North the accountant came to me one day suggesting I call in the father of our junior officer and advise him to withdraw the boy as he was quite unsuitable for banking. He was mistake-prone, forgetful and generally unsatisfactory. I asked the accountant was there anything at all positive he could think of about the lad? Nothing. I had learnt that in everyone there is some good. I told him I had noticed the boy was the first to arrive every morning. Tomorrow morning, he might compliment the lad on his prompt arrival. "Won't do any good," was the response. Next morning, I prayed that what God wanted would happen. I was immensely relieved when the accountant walked in to hear him say, "Nice to see you here so early, Pat." The lad broke into a smile—he went about his work with his head held high



Rossie and Ron (centre) having arrived home to Eastbourne 1957.

and whistling—yes, whistling in a bank, and we did not stop him. He never looked back and rose rapidly to a very high position. Many years later he was relieving in Wanganui under my brother Maurice who described him as a cracker-jack officer. Still years later he was appointed sub-manager, Christchurch and I had the thought to tell

him about his very early days. He was most appreciative. I believe that such incidents are meant to teach us something. Always look for the positive. A spot of praise is so very important. Unfortunately, I have not always remembered this especially in my family. How I wish I could make up for that.

I had been in Petone for 10 years, keeping a low profile. I did not want another branch or to have to move our family from the home we loved. However, the bank decided I had had a

good spin. I was appointed to Cuba Street in the city of Wellington and we could stay in our home. The family were delighted. I had been there only a few weeks when I noticed a very neat summary of the previous day's work all nicely typed. I enquired of the accountant who had done it. He said Bob. Bob was a big fellow, 6'2", aged 21. When I said to him, "Good work, Bob. That's a very neat job," I was amazed to see a tear run down his cheek as he said, "No one has ever spoken to me like that before." I was staggered. Twenty-one and no one had ever paid him a compliment. If ever anyone needed convincing of the value of a kindly word at the right time, this was it. From then on Bob's work was first class. Whereas previously he had been reported on as a 'good average hand' he now was showing initiative and maturity above his years. So much so that I put in a special interim report to that effect. I am pleased to remember that he rose rapidly in the service to a high position in Sydney.



Coffee Party, Photo: Tyler Nix

We had bought a big Dodge car to replace our Deluxe Ford and we formed a carpool. Four of us from Pukatea Street in business in the city took our cars in turn. In those days there was plenty of parking space around Cuba Street branch. I came out one evening from work and couldn't remember where I had parked. Can you imagine my dilemma? I had to ring my three mates and tell them to catch the bus. I returned to the office and waited till after 6 pm and then toured the deserted neighbourhood on foot. I found it eventually.

Wellington was a great place for cocktail parties but with our large family we always pleaded no thank you. After 12 months in Cuba Street the bank decided to move the branch 300 yards and renamed it Te Aro. To mark the occasion, they wished me to throw a cocktail party for the customers. A cocktail party! That was a poser. I had stopped drinking alcohol and could not in all conscience do what they wanted. I said I'd throw the party, but it would be a coffee party. Consternation in Head Office. I was summoned before the Big Boss. "Enough of this nonsense, Cooper. A cocktail party you will have." Home I went, torn this way and that

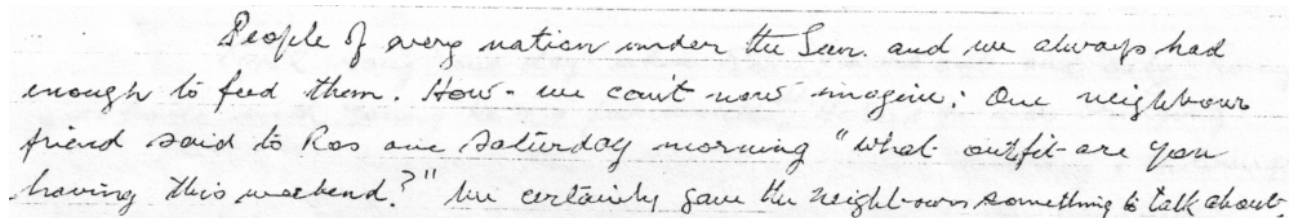
and well I remember saying to the family, "If I have to resign over this, it will be hard for you children. No higher education. You'll have to go to work at the first chance." Out of work bank managers are useless for other work as their training has been confined purely to banking and I would likely have been unemployed. Pat and Roger were then at HVHS. They would be greatly affected. I really thought if I stuck to my guns I would have to resign. We prayed about it. How we prayed. Ros and the children were united, "You do what you know in your heart is right. We are right behind you."

Back I went next day to his office and with some considerable trepidation said, "Sorry, Sir. It's going to be a coffee party." "Oh," he said, "I'd hoped you'd have changed your mind." I reminded him that only a few months before this, one of our Wellington managers had drunk too much and was involved in a car accident in which a man was killed. I

added that if in later life one of my sons turned out to be an alcoholic, I would never forgive myself for failing to take a stand when I had the chance. He said he understood. But he wasn't finished. He suggested we have the coffee, but couldn't there be beer, whisky and gin? "Just around the corner—out of sight sort of." I was by then feeling more confident. "No way, Sir. Sorry but my family are right behind me on this and I cannot compromise." "Um?" he pondered, "All right. I'll talk it over with my assistant and ring you at your branch."

Later that morning when I was called to the phone my heart was pumping nineteen to the dozen until he came on with, "That's okay, Lawrie. Your coffee party goes ahead, and my three assistants and I will join you at 5 pm on Monday." Relief. I thanked God for seeing me through this first real test of my faith. I have forgotten to mention one further point on which he had yielded. He wanted me to invite all our customers, some 1400 of them, but I held out for only 50 invited guests.

Now, how to make the party a success. I rang the best caterer in town, explained the position and was highly pleased to hear him say, "A coffee party. Great idea. I'm sick of



People of every nation under the Sun, and we always had enough to feed them. How - we can't now imagine. One neighbour's friend said to Ros one Saturday morning "What outfit are you having this weekend?" He certainly gave the neighbour something to talk about.

A sample of Lawrie's handwritten memoirs

these cocktail parties where some always drink too much, spill their drinks and drop butter in the piano. We'll do you a darn good show. We'll send two waiters in dinner suits, two girls in uniforms and caps, and we'll serve our best eats on our best china. Whitebait fritters, crayfish tails and other delicacies." I was delighted, but there were more hurdles to cross.

I picked out the 50 most important customers and, asking them one at a time, was pleasantly surprised when all 50 said they would come. Only one said, "I thought the bank would do better than a coffee party." However, he came on the evening in question. The caterer and staff came at 4 pm. The reception was held in our new banking chamber and everything, including flowers, was set out on white, starched cloths. 4:45 pm. I wondered would anyone turn up. 4:55 pm. The Big Boss and his men walked in, "Good evening, Lawrie. All ready, I see. Hope we have a happy time." This was encouraging, but whatever would I do if nobody came? Suppose they had accepted the invitation just to please me, but had no intention of coming? I prayed.

And then they trickled in. By 5:05 pm, 49 had turned up and boy was I relieved. We were under way. The staff too rose to the occasion and were a great help. After I thanked them all for coming, I gave a brief history of the branch and the bank and called on the Big Boss. He was tops. He put everyone at ease, none more so than me, when he concluded by saying, "Lawrie has done a good job. I had a bit of a battle with him on how this evening should go, but he won out and I'm sure you'll all agree that it has been a very happy occasion." Could I ask more? It's strange how the smallest details of that incident have stayed in my memory 34 years later. I wrote a sincere letter of thanks to the caterer.

Ah, but there is more—much more. The next day, each female on my staff came to me privately and thanked me for the evening,

saying things like, "This is the first time we have felt safe when the guys drove us home afterwards, as they had not been drinking (alcohol)." And the guys came in individually and said things like, "Thank you for making it a coffee party. Actually, we don't like getting drunk and making a fool of ourselves."

A month later the bank ball was to be held. The Boss called in the ball secretary and said, "There'll be no liquor at the ball." The secretary said, "But we can't do that. We've sold tickets to the public." "Alright," said the Boss, "There'll be no liquor at the top table." And there wasn't. Now at the time, the bank was running an indoctrination school for 12 young boy juniors and 12 young girl juniors in Wellington, so they too were invited to the ball. They were seated on the opposite side of the top table facing the heads and they saw with their own eyes the heads and their wives could have a good time enjoying themselves without liquor. I just thanked God that the Boss had the steam to nail his colours to the mast.

For several years I attended numerous Christmas parties, farewells and welcomes in his office and never once did he embarrass me on account of my abstinence. He always had a soft drink for me. Once when he was pouring drinks for a group of which I was one, I just put my hand over my glass. He looked up and said, "Oh, I'm sorry Lawrie," and went off and brought me a Coke.

Our Lower Hutt branch were having a celebration. I was invited. During the evening the Big Boss came over to me. "Hello Lawrie. Tell me how is that little boy of yours that had the eye operation. Is he OK now?" He touched my heart. I had difficulty holding back a tear. To think that our top man in the bank would have the grace to enquire about Nigel touched me deeply. I was noticing that whenever we met, he always used my first name, a courtesy not shown to most of the other managers.

Lighthouse Keepers and Chief Walking Buffalo

Rossie and Ron searched for a job with a house and found it as lighthouse keepers on Cuvier Island, 50 miles out to sea from Auckland. [*Cuvier Island lies east of the Coromandel Peninsula, south of Great Barrier Island. Its lighthouse, operated manually from 1889 to 1982, now runs on solar power.*] When they arrived in the 1950s, only one other family was on the island. Rossie's early letters were gems. A completely new lifestyle. Milking a cow, making bread, killing chooks for dinner, a really primitive life. Mail only once a fortnight by the Marine Department's little boat which also brought essential supplies. If the weather was too rough for the boat, then they had to wait another two weeks. A helicopter could land, but again dependent on weather. Lighthouse duties were not heavy but twice a day Ron had to climb a hill to attend to the light. Just doing the necessary to keep alive was a pretty full-time job: fishing, shooting goats and gardening.

Rossie wrote that she could have visitors, i.e. family, part of the Marine Department policy to keep their keepers content. Nigel, Murray and I went. Train to Auckland and the department boat took us to the island. It was on that trip that I had Accident number 6. I stepped over an open manhole and dropped. One leg stayed up and one went down. It gave my spine a terrific wrench. To disembark we got into the boat's lifeboat and rowed to a huge concrete slab which served as a landing stage. The lifeboat could not tie up. As each wave lifted the boat to near the top of the slab you had to jump ashore. Two strong arms grabbed you and you were safe. Two weeks after we arrived Pat came up. She could only

get a few days off work. However, when her boat reached the island, it was too rough a sea to use the landing slab. The boat had to go round to the other side of the island. Pat had to jump into the sea up to her waist, hold her suitcase over her head and wade ashore. We on the beach cheered her on.

After a few days' rest on the island, my back was fine. That holiday warrants a book on its own too. The fishing was wonderful, weather lovely. I'll never forget the look on Nigel's face as he returned from a fishing trip with Ron with eight lovely big snappers draped around his neck. One very interesting feature was the presence of tuatara [*NZ's largest and the world's only surviving representative of an otherwise extinct order of 'beak-headed' reptiles*]. On Cuvier, they lived in bushes quite close to the back door and were a common sight. They liked to sleep in the daytime on the concrete by the back door. One day we came out after rain and there on the concrete was a dry patch exactly the shape of a tuatara which had stayed for a shower as well. We searched and found him in the grass. He moved very slowly indeed, then suddenly darted off out of sight.

What a holiday that was. It was hard to say goodbye and come back to Eastbourne. Roger missed that trip. He was working. Rossie had shown me how to make bread and I kept that up for a few years. When the four of us returned by train to Wellington, there on the platform at eight in the morning was a big surprise. Ros had driven in alone from Eastbourne to meet us—quite an achievement!

When Rossie became pregnant, Ros went up to help. Rossie came into Auckland before she was due. The night Keith was born, the Marine Department radioed to all lighthouse



Family gathering 1959. L to R: Murray, Ron Patrick (Rossie's husband), Ida Cooper (Lawrie's sister), Rossie, 'Nana Christchurch' (Mabel), Nigel, Roslyn holding Keith (Rossie's son), Lawrie, Pat

keepers, “Mr Ron Patrick, congratulations. You will be pleased to know you are the father of a fine, bouncing boy.” Ron slept well that night.

Ten days later Rossie wanted to go home, so rather than wait for the regular fortnightly boat the department provided a little fishing boat in which Rossie, baby and Ros, with some trepidation, set out on the 50-mile trip on the open sea. This time they landed at the concrete slab; the baby being passed from mother on the boat to father’s strong arms ashore. Ros likewise had to do ‘the jump’ but all went well. She stayed two weeks. Rossie was into her stride. The life suited her.

A few months later, Rossie was home for a visit with her young Keith, a few months old. One day, when Ros and I were out and only Rossie was at home, Cyril Phelps rang to say he was bringing over six Canadian Indian braves. Poor Rossie! It was a wet day and the lounge was draped with nappies drying, but she rose to the occasion. Washing was all swept up and she started making pikelets. When we arrived home, she told us the news and we thought she was bluffing, but her activity soon convinced us and the big party arrived, Chief Walking Buffalo and all his braves, in Indian regalia. Did the neighbours’ eyes boggle! The pikelets were spot on. Their staple diet was similar, griddle scones. A happy day.



Chief Walking Buffalo, Chief David Crowchild, Arnold Crowchild, Edwin Crane and Joe Kooteney, in Lower Hutt. They all visited our home, 1960.



L to R: Rear: Ron Patrick, Coogie (Maurice’s wife), Maurice (Lawrie’s brother), Nigel, Lawrie, Middle: Ida, Rossie holding Keith, Mabel (‘Nana Christchurch’), Roslyn, Pat, Murray, Front: Garth Cooper, Mark Cooper. Roger took the photo, 1959.



Murray going on holiday, 1965.

1960s

Move to Christchurch

In 1960, when I had been the manager at Cuba Street in Wellington for four years, I was asked if I would become manager of the High Street, Christchurch branch. Mother and Ida were on their own there, so we had no hesitation in accepting. We'd had 18 years in one home. Can you imagine the accumulation of all those years? Garage sales had not been thought of yet. We gave a lot to friends, who were glad to take our surplus, including our canoe.

We had bought the Eastbourne home for £1000 in 1942 and sold it for £3,300 in 1960. *[Two owners later, in 1999, it was sold for \$450,000. The house was carted away in two halves to a new life in the Hutt Valley. A new five-bedroom house was built on the section. Three real estate companies valued it at over \$2m in 2021. The only remains of the original today are the garage and dividing fence that Lawrie and Roger built.]*

We came to a furnished bank house of four bedrooms. The first few days we stayed in a good hotel. How Nigel and Murray enjoyed the repeat courses at breakfast. The first day, the manager I was replacing wanted to show us our new home. His car was already on the ferry, so we had to go in our little Hillman. Pat was so looking forward to seeing it, but I felt five in our small car was too much and decided she would have to wait till the next day. She was heartbroken and I felt terrible. I hope that by now she has forgiven me. Despite all we had learnt about caring for one another I could still forget that lack of compassion could cause such unhappiness in others.

The first night in our new home we had fish and chips for dinner. I well remember Murray's first remark on opening up the package, "Gee, look at the quantity. Twice as much as we got in Wellington." Pat quickly got an office job—she had taken shorthand and typing at HVHS—and the boys, Nigel and Murray, were

accepted into CBHS. I had written to the headmaster pointing out that my father and I had both been to the school.

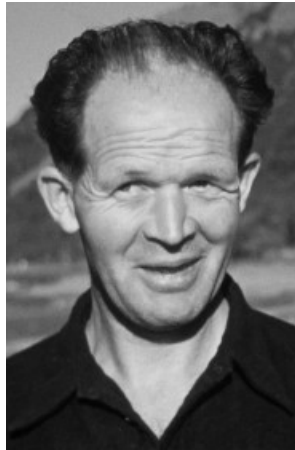
Transport next. Bicycles for all three. We got the boys' fixed; for Pat's we advertised and bought a good bike and brought it home. When she came in from work there it was. I so clearly remember her words, "Is that bike really mine?" Some of the awful feeling I had from our first day left me.

In our second year in Christchurch, Pat decided that office work was not for her and she took her baby-care training in Karitane nursing. She made many good friends there, some for life. To give some variety to their life we would call for two or three girls at 7 am by car and take them out for a picnic breakfast. We would fry sausages and make coffee in a thermette on an open fire, away on Lyttelton Heads or on the Waimakariri riverbank. They loved it. The two boys were cooks and stokers. We got the girls back to their home by 9 am for lectures.

We had not been in Christchurch long when Roger got the chance of going to Antarctica with a five-man geological team. Professor Clark and Dr Wellman at Victoria University, Wellington, arranged it. Harold

Wellman discovered the Alpine Fault in the 1940s and was one of the leaders in New Zealand in the adoption of plate tectonics.

The team was to fly from Christchurch so stayed a few days with us waiting for the weather to clear in Antarctica. A call came at 3 am for them to be at the aerodrome by 5 am. Breakfast in a big hurry and off they went. Next day we got a phone call from Scott Base to say their side of bacon was still in our fridge. We sent it south by the next plane. The phone to Scott Base went by radio and cost only two pence, before the days of satellites.



Doctor Harold Wellman.
Photo: Geological Sciences NZ



Roger reading mail dropped by
helicopter in Antarctica.



CBHS Motto: *I seek higher things*

Murray got his School Certificate and bought a set of drums. He practised in the garage. When we asked the old couple next door if the noise was too bad the old lady surprised us by saying she loved the drums. Soon after he took off for Dunedin to enter Otago University. He always was keen on running and decided to become a physical education teacher. We drove him down, drums on the trailer.

Nigel was doing well in chess. He won the NZ Premiere Reserve Championship 1963. In 1964, when playing the NZ Champion Ortvin Sarapu, Nigel narrowly missed a draw when he misread his clock and failed to make the final move before the time control. He was disappointed; Sarapu was relieved. Sarapu won the NZ title 20 times, a world record.

Nigel was also playing rugby for Old Boys under 20 as fullback. He played for Canterbury Juniors and had a trip to Australia for his club. Ros and I used to enjoy watching the boys, Murray running or Nigel at rugby. In one match, Nigel converted no fewer than 13 consecutive goals, a rare feat.

Roger sometimes hitchhiked to Christchurch to join us for holidays. We arranged picnics, one was to Hanmer Springs in the snow, another time we had much fun tobogganing on the slopes of Porters Pass. Frying sausages over the thermette brings back memories of those great appetising smells we so enjoyed.

One of the main functions of a branch bank is lending money, and over the years you have some strange experiences. A customer one day came to me for some help and brought in the title deed of his home. When I pursued it, imagine my surprise when I realised it was my grandparents' old home at 7 Coopers Road, Shirley. He got his loan.

Customers were always on their best behaviour. I wondered what they would be like when they've had a few beers. More than once I delayed a decision until I had visited their home and seen its condition, particularly

around the back door. Once when I was asked to lend on a fairly streaky venture I said to the customer, "If you were sitting in my chair and I came to you with a proposition like this, would you lend me the money?" And to my surprise he said, "No." I gave him full marks for honesty but nothing else. It was too much of a risk.

In 1963 Wattie's Industries, the largest food processing company in NZ, opened a Christchurch factory. Sir James Wattie came for the opening ceremony which I attended. In his speech he said that in all his years in business he had not lost one day's work through industrial action. A journalist asked Sir James what did he attribute such remarkable harmony to? Sir James said, "I know the first names of every one of my 1,500 employees and I spend more time on the factory floor than I do in my office." That was a great lesson for me.

Things were progressing well at work. High Street was a busy office with a good staff of 10. Most were quite young. Ted Mabin, the accountant, and I had to spend a lot of time assisting them. They responded well, especially when I remembered to give a little praise for good work. The bank was none too happy at the way branch audits had shown up sloppy work. They brought over a disciplinarian who had swallowed the rule book. When he came to Christchurch he spotted a few misdemeanours and we waited for his report from Wellington with some trepidation, but his report concluded, 'Customer service excellent. Staff morale high.' The staff were on top of the world. We celebrated with a chocolate cake.

Again, an instance of what a difference a pat on the back makes. If only I could remember to give a kindly word more often. Sometimes someone would do something wrong, often causing a big hunt for a few pence. At such times I would say, "Bad luck," and tell them of the time I lost £100 in notes and omitted to register the mail, and how bad I felt. I also stayed behind and helped them find the



Nigel playing chess 1962



Nigel with the NZ Premiere Reserve Trophy 1963. He was NZ Veteran winner in 2014 and 2015.



Ortvin Sarapu, NZ Champion

error. In all my years of management, over 20, I had only two staff resign. Both were cases where I could have been more compassionate. I fortunately never had to report a dishonesty, except that of my boss at Courtenay Place.

During a visit back to Wellington, I remembered something which I am sorry to say has dogged me for most of my life—a streak of self-righteousness. This, of course, leads to a critical attitude to others. Roger in Wellington had kindly got up early and come down to the ferry to meet us at 7 am. Later when I wrote to him, I commented with absolute insensitivity that when he met us his shoes could have been cleaner. How unkind can one get? He quite rightly rejected my criticism and returned my letter. I deserved the snub and felt terrible. How easy it is to forget to always look for the positive, then there is no room for self-righteousness.

Fortunately, Ros is aware of this weakness in my character and has many times saved me from such indiscretions. Now when I start to feel critical, I remember all the things I could have done better. I have not much time left now to put things right, but I hope this story will let my family know that I have not given up trying.

Nigel bought an old 150cc Jawa motorbike to tour some of the South Island. Just before he left, I heard a squeak in the rear wheel, so I tried to eliminate the squeak by using oil. Unfortunately, it got on the brake drum and Nigel had to make the 11-day tour using only the handbrake on the front wheel. He came off three times but learnt how to ride a motorbike!

He then bought a 500cc single-cylinder AJS motorbike and toured the North Island. Approaching Wanganui, he discovered the gear lever had fallen off. He had to travel over 100

miles using one gear before he could get it fixed. In Whangarei in the far north on a Sunday evening, he had a puncture in the back wheel, always a difficult job on a motorbike. While contemplating how to tackle it, along came a bomb with four young, tattooed Māori fellows in it. ‘Here comes trouble,’ he thought.

But they piled out and enquired if he needed a hand and offered to help. They removed the wheel, took the tube into Whangarei, bought a new one, returned and replaced the wheel. When Nigel offered to pay them, they declined and said they were at a

loose end, so helping Nigel meant they had been kept out of trouble. “All we ask is that you do the same when you find someone in need.” Nigel has endeavoured to do so ever since. They also enjoyed a ride on the motorbike when it was fixed.

Rossie and Ron had been two years on Cuvier Island and were looking for a change. They fancied Australia where Ron’s people had settled. They came ashore and stayed in Christchurch for a few days before they sailed. Keith was now two years old, our first grandson and a real delight.

Early in their time in Australia they bought six-acre property 10 miles from Nowra, NSW, 110 miles south of Sydney, and set about building their own home out of wages. It was tough going, making every penny a prisoner. They did it so well that now, nearly 30 years later, they still live in it. Ron has every right to feel proud, as has every man who builds his own home. In

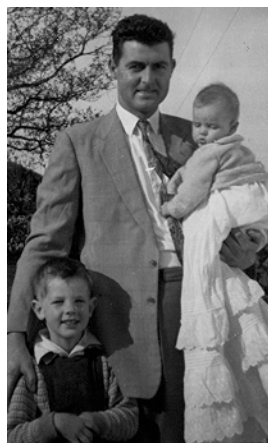
saying that I am not forgetting Rossie’s large part in that great venture. Their three sons have all been very happy in their country home.



AJS 1953 500 cc motorcycle. Photo: Nick Cedar



Rossie with Keith, 1959



Ron with Keith and David



We entertained the Indian hockey team in New Zealand, 1964. Captain Charanjit Singh is standing in the centre with a white turban.

The Indian Hockey Team visited NZ on its way to the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo. They were to play their last match against NZ in Christchurch. I had met three of the players when they toured NZ three year earlier with the Indian Army hockey team. I went to their hotel and saw the manager and asked if some could come to our home for a meal. The manager said they did not separate at all. We could have all 23 or none. I said, "We will take the lot." He was careful to check that there would be no liquor. When I told Ros that we were having 23 for dinner, she didn't turn a hair. Born hostess that she is, she prepared a deluxe curry with the help of a few friends.

The visitors had been with us for 15 minutes of small talk and drinks when the captain Charanjit Singh said, "Mrs Cooper, you invited us here for a meal. We are ready." Later we learnt that on the day of a test they do not eat lunch or even breakfast, they must have been starving. For 15 minutes they had endured the delicious odours of curry emanating from the kitchen.

The meal was a great success. Ros had four large trays of rice and two large bowls of curry. She called them 'Salvation' for the mild curry and 'Damnation' for the hot one. The manager asked me what prompted us to invite them. I told him we just felt that we Europeans in the past had failed to do all we could to win friends in Asia. Incidentally, when Nigel was in India in 1970, he

stayed with the captain Charanjit Singh in Punjab. Charanjit later visited *Asia Plateau*, the MRA Centre in Panchgani, Maharashtra, with a party from his work.

We still had many Asian student visitors, particularly from Indonesia and Malaysia. Soekantinah brought a party of seven and asked if they could prepare their own meal. They came early and worked most of the day and produced a most beautiful meal. We remember their tasty peanut butter dishes and the whole stuffed chicken presented as a frog with egg yolks for the eyes. Very original and very tasty.

We saw quite a bit of another Asian student, Brahma Chowdhury from India. A Lincoln College boy who was studying the effect of feeding sheep on barley of which there is plenty in India. He had three sheep at Lincoln with their stomachs shaved and their contents visible through a 'plastic' window so he could see how long it took for the barley to digest in each of the sheep's four stomachs. Brahma stayed several times. He was a full vegetarian and introduced us to yoga. Another Lincoln student from Asia we knew was Andrew Lau who came from Miri in Sarawak. Andrew came back in 1990 where he set the family up with a house and his daughters completed their education at Burnside High School, Christchurch.

A friend, Duncan McGregor, rang from Dunedin to say he was farewelling a young man who was coming to Christchurch, Frank Hutchful, the Registrar of Apprentices in Accra, Ghana. When I met him at the train, he wondered how I recognised him so quickly. Yet he was the only African in sight! He was thrilled to be invited to stay with us.

By 1964, Ros was getting concerned about her mother who was getting on in years. She decided to go home to see her, after 30 years apart. Not an easy decision as she was claustrophobic and being in a plane, her first flight, would be a very trying experience. A lot of prayer preceded her journey. She made it safely and was very pleased she had done so,



Roger speaking Malay with Sabah residents, 1964

alone. On her way back via Singapore where she stayed at Raffles Hotel, she diverted to visit Roger and Dot in Sabah, North Borneo.

How I wish Ros would put her story on paper. She has so much to tell, especially about her early years in Burma. *[She did. Her story was published in 2012.]*

[Roger's first job on graduating from Victoria University was working for the United Nations in Sabah, part of the new country of Malaysia formed in 1963. Roger wrote, 'I arrived there in March 1963 and two weeks later found myself in the jungle with a team of ten Ibans (natives of Sarawak), none of whom spoke English. It was a crash course in jungle camp life, learning Malay, and starting the geochemical sampling survey with the Labuk Valley development project funded by the United Nations Development Project.' Roger Cooper, DSc, a Fellow of the Royal Society of NZ Te Apārangi, was the Chief Paleontologist of NZ Geological Survey from

1989 to 1997. He retired in 2002 but continued his scientific work until four days before his death in 2020. The Royal Society eulogy commemorating Roger's life and career can be seen on their website.]



Rutherford Silver Medal 2003 and Hutton Medal 2017 awarded by the NZ Royal Society for Roger's 'outstanding contributions to understanding the geological foundations and the earliest organisms of Zealandia and beyond'.

In 1965 an MRA play came to New Zealand called *We Are Tomorrow*. Ros and I went to a conference they held in Wanganui. Nigel came too. It was there that he had his own life-changing experience. He completed his BSc degree at Canterbury University that year. He did not stay for capping but went off to an MRA conference in Canberra. That was the start of 26 years full-time 'on the road', working without salary but living by faith and prayer trusting God.

Before Nigel left, Pat and Tim Ruki were married in Shirley, Christchurch. Tim's brother Ted was best man, Pat's bridesmaid was Lou Berry. Murray was in Dunedin. Family all gone now. Our nest was never empty, though.



Lawrie and Tanzanian student Jesseh Mtui 1966

We had many visitors during our early years in Christchurch. We took in Jesseh Mtui from Tanzania. He was a thoroughly fine fellow, most appreciative of being in a NZ home and so close to the university. He stayed a year with us before he returned to his country to become the headmaster of a primary school.



UK, 1974 Standing: Roger, Malcolm Sherman, Lawrie, Daniel Gorton, Judith Gorton, John Gorton, Alan Sherman, Nell Herriot (Edith's sister), John Gorton (Judith's husband). Seated: Edith Gorton (John's mother), Ena Sherman (Alan's wife), Maisie Sherman, Roslyn (née Sherman)



Roslyn and Dot, Jesselton market, Sabah 1964



Sulaiman bin Haji Daud met Lawrie and Roslyn in the 1950s. He brought his wife to meet them in 1990 when, he was the Attorney General for Malaysia and a cabinet minister in the Prime Minister's Department.



Canadian Chief Walking Buffalo 1871-1967. Photo: albertachampions.org



Rockinghorse Road, Southshore, Christchurch. Photo: Gladys Goodall

Nigel was in India for five months during 1966 but unfortunately developed infective hepatitis (jaundice). He was very ill and almost died. His doctor, Roddy Evans, said he had to return to NZ to a drier climate and live a very quiet life for six months. Our bank home was in a very long street with busy traffic, quite unsuitable for Nigel's convalescence. I had been in the bank by then for 43 years, eligible for retirement. Also,

NZ was about to change currency from pounds, shillings and pence to dollars and cents. These factors, and a bank credit squeeze that made it difficult for people to get

bank finance, helped me to decide. I applied to retire. We found the ideal home near the sea at 127A Rockinghorse Road, Southshore. Its outside bedroom suited Nigel. Six months later he had regained his health and set out for Australia.

I shall always be grateful for those first six years in Christchurch. They enabled us to have much time with Ida and Mother who was increasingly frail. To help out, we took her out on Sundays while Ida went to golf. Mother inspected our retirement home thoroughly before we finally settled on it. The day after her inspection she had a fall and broke her hip. She passed away peacefully in hospital a week later, on 22 December 1966, with Ida, Maurice and me at her side. She was 89. A month later, I retired, aged 58. The customers gave me a farewell function and a portable TV set, our first. We had the staff out to our new home for afternoon tea. A happy farewell.

I had made many friends through the bank. The confidential nature of our work encouraged

customers to open their hearts, knowing their confidences would be respected. Now, 25 years after retiring, when I run into some of them in town, I always get a warm greeting.

Waking up on 1 February 1967, my first day of retirement, it was quite something to realise I could turn over and go to sleep again. No more work, after 43 years. A complete change of lifestyle. But we could not sit back

and take life easy. There was much to do in our new home, especially outside. The lupins and marram grass came right up to the front of our

house, presenting a fire risk. It took us three months to cut and burn it back to a safe distance and to establish the vegetable garden. Fortunately, we had a good supply of seaweed

from the beach, grass clippings from our large lawn, fowl manure from local poultry farms, plentiful metered water from our double section. We built four large compost bins and top-dressed the garden every autumn. Our sandy soil warmed up quickly in the spring.

I had joined the Compost Society in 1962, later the Soil and Health Association. We practised the principles of organic gardening for more than 30 years; it generated a most productive garden, pest free, and gave us great pleasure, especially as we had so much to give away.

We rarely bought vegetables and seldom went out in the car without one or two cartons of vegetables for friends or relatives. It was the healthiest and happiest period of our lives and we attribute our good health and that of our family to having enjoyed fruit and vegetables grown without chemicals of any kind.



Visitors playing on the large lawn at 127A Rockinghorse Road, Southshore



Mabel Cooper ('Nana') as we like to remember her, with Maurice, Ida and Lawrie.



Rear: Nigel, Tim Ruki holding Annette, Pat. In front: Michael Ruki (Tim's brother), Keren Ruki, Thomas Ruki 1969.



Dorothy (Dot) and Alan enjoying a joke.



Keith Patrick (Rossie's son) playing in a puddle.



Roger, Dot, Alan and Julie (in pram)

Rossie and Ron were now settled in Australia, Roger had married Dot Berry and was living in Lower Hutt; Pat and Tim were in Christchurch; Nigel—recovered from hepatitis—was overseas with MRA; Murray had married Penny Thorpe and they were living in Nelson. One year after Mother's death, Ida died from cancer.

Grandchildren were arriving. Rossie and Ron had Keith, David and Jeff. Roger and Dot had Alan and Julie. Pat and Tim had Thomas, Keren and Annette. Murray and Penny had Leanne, Alison and Oliver. Nigel was single.

We were always busy around our home. Pat, Tim and family visited us frequently, so we built a tree house in one of the large macrocarpa trees, of which we had five. These we had cut down later. Very good firewood.

Next door, we had a large empty section occupied by a Shetland pony. A friendly fellow. Whenever we were working outside, he would

come and stand against the fence and 'talk' to us. The street was thinly occupied then, only 250 houses in 1967. No footpaths, streetlights, sewerage or public transport. There was no through road, like Eastbourne, so little traffic. We had telephone and reticulated water. Many in our helpful, friendly community were keen gardeners like us.

To give some shelter from the southerly, we built a concrete block wall six-feet high. I knew nothing of block-building but picked up the essentials by watching tradesmen building houses and garages nearby. We made many changes to our house. We added six feet to the back of the house giving us that much extra on our bedroom, fenced the back and front, installed picture windows in the lounge, new carpets, stucco finish on south and west walls, relined the lounge, and installed a new log burner. We painted the house a few times. I never employed anybody, I did it myself every time, with help from the family.



Thomas, Keren and Annette Ruki



Murray and Penny with Leanne, Alison and Oliver at his christening.



Oliver, Alison and Leanne Cooper

An MRA play *Anything to Declare?* came from Europe to NZ. I assisted both in Auckland and Christchurch with our car. When they moved on to Papua New Guinea (PNG), Nigel and I were invited to join them. Nigel had just had three years working there and later wrote a booklet about MRA's trust-building work in Bougainville.

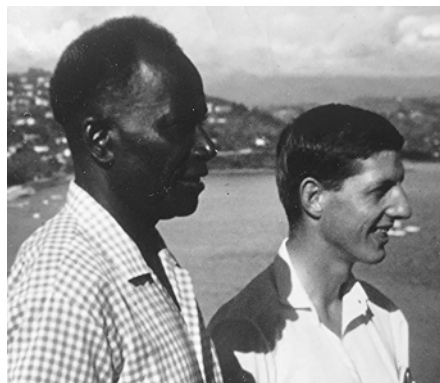
My first taste of the tropics was quite an experience. Whew, it was hot! Great Barrier Reef was a picture. It is vast, only a few feet above the sea at low tide.

Landing at Port Moresby we were immediately impressed by the many happy faces. Smiles all around. Any playing cards we carried had to be surrendered. The authorities were trying to stop the natives gambling.

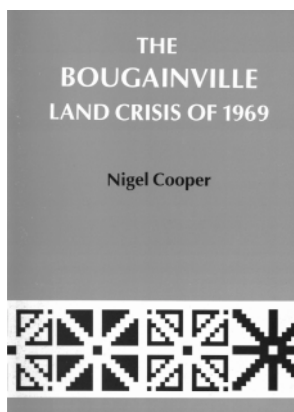
The play was to be an evening presentation, open-air under floodlights at the Hubert Murray Oval. In addition to the reserve seats in the grandstand, thousands were accommodated on the grass. They had to queue to get in and we had little to define the queue line, only a rope. It was quite easy to step over the rope and jump the queue, but not one did. I wondered if Kiwis would behave that well.

The dress rehearsal had showed that sound was a problem; it did not carry. So the Danish technician pre-recorded the play in Pigeon English and the players mimed their lines. It worked well. The journalists reporting the play could not understand how it came over so clearly while the audience could not understand how the cast had learnt Pidgeon English so quickly! The play, with quite a lot of humour, was warmly received by the Papuans who quickly grasped the salient points.

As the whole movement was based on faith, we gave the local people the opportunity to support us, which they did splendidly. At the conclusion as they left the ground, we had some of the cast at the gates with baskets for the collection. There were three of us at one gate



Paul Lapun, a Bougainvillean MP, and Nigel in Port Moresby, 1969. Paul became PNG's first knight and was Minister for Mines in the first cabinet after Independence in 1975.



and I was most surprised to see some of those leaving put a coin in each of our baskets. The baker gave us all his unsold bread each day. He was a member of the Bahá'í faith. I commented to him one day on the high number of damaged cars about and asked him about it. His reply was one word, 'Liquor.' The Australian expatriates on their high tropical allowances certainly 'lived it up'. Unfortunately, the liquor trade has targeted the native population as well. Drunkenness has been the cause of some serious rioting. A great pity.

PNG is a beautiful country. The tropical shrubs and flowering trees were a delight, as was the bird of paradise. We were in Port Moresby for four weeks and made many friends. One was Julius Chan [Photo: Left] who became prime minister twice between 1982 and 1997. I corresponded with him for many years afterwards. [Sir Julius Chan, a current MP and the Governor of New Ireland, wrote Nigel in October 2021, "I remember very well all the tragedies and triumphs over a period of almost 40 years trying to address the Bougainville issue(s). I am very sympathetic to the desire of Bougainvilleans for Independence. The history they have gone through is a terrible comedy of errors, on all sides. I have long believed that the only way Papua New Guinea can survive as a unified country is accepting much greater autonomy on the part of the Provinces. Our system needs to be much more federal and decentralised if the country is to prosper in future."]

With my host I attended mass at the cathedral, a most interesting place. The roof supported by poles and no walls whatsoever, just masses of bougainvillea and hibiscus growing all around. One day, for relaxation, we arranged a picnic to a riverside but for some reason changed plans and went to a different spot where we all enjoyed a swim in the warm river. On returning to Moresby, we learnt that crocodiles had been reported in that very river not far from our original swimming site.

Returning by air to Australia, I stayed with Pat in Sydney and Rossie in Nowra for a few days each. I took a four-day trip to Melbourne by tourist bus, my first close look at the very dry Australian countryside. At Thredbo, the alpine skiing centre, I was most

intrigued at the multimillion-dollar Snowy River Scheme. It was awesome. To divert a river and tunnel through a mountain chain was evidence of mighty planning.

Melbourne was so like Christchurch with its parks and trees, and streets at right angles.

The English cricketers were playing Australia at the 100,000-seat Melbourne Cricket Ground. Jim Coulter had been given two seats by West Indies cricketer Conrad Hunte, vice-captain of the team, so I went with Jim's boy, Gordon. What a huge ground, 80 yards from the pitch to the boundary.



Family gathering, 1985 Rear: L to R: Julie Cooper (Roger's daughter) holding Liz Cooper (Nigel's daughter), Jane Cooper, Alan Cooper (Roger's son), Dorothy Cooper (Roger's wife), Oliver and (hidden) Alison Cooper (Murray's children), Penelope Cooper (Murray's wife), Roger. In front: Nigel, Murray, Leanne Cooper (Murray's daughter) holding Francis Cooper (Nigel's son)



Left: Patrick family gathering at Nowra, NSW, 1983. Rear: Jeff, Rossie, Pat, Keren Ruki (Pat's daughter), Front: Ron, Mrs Patrick (Ron's mother), Jane, Elisabeth, David Patrick, Nigel



Pat and Roger, sister and brother



Jeff, David, Keith, Rossie and Ron Patrick



Rossie, Ron and Pat

On my return from PNG, a customer of High Street branch, Wakefield Metal Co Ltd, approached me to join them as credit manager, a position I held for three years. Interesting job. The salary enabled us to improve our home further. Asking customers to pay up their overdue accounts produced varied results, some quite humorous. "Glad you called today, Monday. If you'd come on Friday, you would have spoiled my weekend." I got excellent results because my approach was, "I am here to help you avoid getting into trouble." I then helped them budget to clear their debts. They were usually grateful.



In 1971 I felt an urge to walk the track to Milford Sound, a five-day trek through wonderful mountain and bush country. A guide took 20 men and 20 women, stopping each night in lush hostels, meals provided. All we carried was a light pack with toilet needs and sleep wear. Most enjoyable. At one stop each of us was asked our thoughts about the walk. I said, "I'd love to do it again with a grandson." Our guide drew our attention to the fish in a river we were crossing. They were 60 feet down, but we could see them perfectly clearly. He explained that there was absolutely no pollution in the air or the water. In fact, Ros said to me when I got home and unpacked, "Didn't you wear your shorts? They are unmarked." I'd worn them every day.

One Christmas when our family were all away, we booked a motel at Mount Cook for a few days. After we made the booking, we invited an old Chinese friend, Peter Gee, to join us. When we reached Mount Cook, we found we could not change our motel. It had three single beds all in the large lounge. Now what to do? Peter quickly solved the problem. He put two chairs between the second and



Nigel's photo of Mt. Cook before the top fell off.



Mitre Peak, Milford Sound

third beds. Stretching a coverlet over them he said, "There you are. The bamboo curtain."

The Commonwealth Games in 1974 were held in Christchurch at QEII Park, 10 minutes' drive from our home. A week before, we had a ring from Precious McKenzie [Photo: Left], weightlifter from Bristol, England.

Nigel had met him in Bristol and given him our phone number. Nigel had told us this but omitted to give us his name. I answered the phone and when he said it was Precious McKenzie I said, "Sure, Precious. We'll be very happy to see you." Ros was dumbfounded to say the least. I had to talk fast to save the situation. He is a grand fellow, 4'10" tall and a ball of muscle. He later decided to come and settle in NZ and brought his wife and family out. They now live in Auckland and keep in touch.

A Swaziland athletic team was also at the Commonwealth Games. An MRA friend in Mbabane had written us about the team coming over so we made contact and had them out for a meal with Precious who was everybody's friend. They were a happy bunch. One ran fourth in the marathon, with a heavy cold. Our climate was so different to theirs. One of them

took a small jar of sea water to show his family back home. It is interesting what small things are important to some folk who have little. I well remember an Indonesian student who, when asked what he wanted to do most in NZ replied, "Pick an apple off a tree." We enabled him to do that.

In 1977 Rossie, Ron, David and Jeff came over from Australia. They, with Nigel and me, walked the Milford Track. It was tough going. One day there was a blizzard. Snow blew almost horizontally. But I had my wish, that I had hoped to do it again with a grandson, only instead of one we had three as Thomas came too.



Roslyn's last visit to her mother in England, 1978



Alison, Murray, Oliver, Penny and Leanne Cooper 1983



Murray created and managed Cooper Medical and Soma Technology companies, 2001-21.



Pat and John Stroud with Annette Sharp (née Ruki), 1993



Lawrie and Elisabeth 1982



At the Cooper family reunion in 1977 we decided to research our Māori ancestry.



Nigel and Jane with their daughter Elisabeth on her christening day 1982.



Roslyn and Rossie about 1994

How those years slipped by with the family growing up. Ros was busy cooking, baking, knitting jerseys and socks, and so on to keep them warm. She kept the tins full as we were meeting and giving hospitality to increasing numbers of MRA and other folk. The outside playroom / bedroom was a great boon. Two Melbourne couples who came several times were Jim and Rita Coulter and Wing Commander Eric Roberts and Jean. Their son Neil Roberts became one of Nigel's lifelong friends, both being keen on chess, maths and teaching.

Ros's cousin from Canada, Bob Daly, and his wife, Sheila also visited and Ros was able to catch up with family news over the past 40 years. They were impressed with NZ but not with the salaries, much below those in Canada.



Some of the cast of the MRA musical revue Song of Asia visiting our home 1975: Standing: Lawrie, Lee Crowchild, Edward Peters, Nigel, Rob Wood; Standing, Front: Suresh Khatri, Leo Laita, Tureiti Moxon, Cath Eatwell, friend from Wairoa, Aroha Huata. In front: Rod Eatwell, Gele Bonaruah, an Eatwell granddaughter, Catherine Linton, Ramphay Chantharasy, Leena Khatri. Photo: Edward Peters



MRA friends, Standing: Nigel, Campbell and Claire Leggat, Joan Holland, Janet Mace, Seated: Glenys Wood, Avis Cooper holding Glenys' daughter Sarah, Helen Mills



Bob and Sheila Daly

In our early days here, the seagulls were quite a nuisance on the iron roof. We tried various devices to scare them off till someone told us that crackers were most effective. However, the first time I resorted to use them, I lit the match and threw the device up onto the roof, only the big explosion was in my left hand. I had thrown the match and retained the cracker. The seagulls burst out

laughing.

Our house was only 100 yards from high tide. We played golf along the very deserted beach. I once saw an albatross run 50 metres along the beach to gain enough speed to take off. It was a majestic sight. Nigel once found a live kahawai fish there. How did it get there? He guessed it must have been dropped by a seagull flying past who found the fish too wriggly to hold in its beak or claws. It made a tasty meal for our Tuvaluan visitors that day, Matakite Maata and his wife Taoruru Tebana.

Nigel's Wedding in UK

At Christmas 1977, Nigel got a letter from Jane Bygott in England accepting his proposal of marriage. Great rejoicing. Plans for his flight to the UK. He naturally wanted Ros and me to go over for the wedding, but we had to decline as we did not have the money needed. However, we prayed about it and within a week the bank advised that all our pensions had been increased and were backdated three months. Further, if we chose, we could take this increase in cash! The amount was \$3,500, just the amount needed for the UK trip. Our prayers again were answered and we flew over for the wedding.

Nigel and Jane met us at Heathrow. We stayed at an MRA home in Charles Street, Mayfair for two nights and had a good look around the West End. We were most surprised that we had no trouble finding our way round, 42 years after leaving UK. We noticed the large number of Asians and Africans operating the public transport and doing it quite efficiently.

After two days we set out for Ros's folk in Brighton by car and had lots of fun negotiating the roundabouts. We found Maisie and Nana in good health and excited to see us after so long. It was only Mum's second visit in over 40 years. We drove down to Flint Cottage, Jane's home in Forton, Somerset to help prepare for the wedding as Jane's mother was very ill with cancer.



Flint Cottage, Forton, Chard, Somerset, UK. Jeannette Hanby's painting of the Bygott family home.

With still two weeks to go we set off with Nigel to visit Tirley Garth in Cheshire for two nights. Nigel stayed there while Ros and I drove to

Scotland. I accidentally drove south almost to Birmingham, confused by the sun going round the southern sky, before realizing we were heading in the wrong direction!



Tirley Garth, Cheshire where Nigel met Jane, and where Jane's parents, Elisabeth and Frank Bygott, met during the World War II.

We eventually reached the Lake District, very pretty. Inspected Wordsworth's cottage and visited the studio of Henry Cooper. A real tourists' town, souvenirs galore. Stayed two



The front lawn of Tirley Garth. Painting by Jane Cooper.



Jane and Nigel's wedding 24/6/1978. Lawrie and Roslyn, Nigel and Jane (née Bygott), Elisabeth Bygott (Jane's mother), David Bygott (Jane's brother) and his wife, Jeannette Hanby

nights at a very old, pub called Nab Cottage by Rydal Waters. Tiny stairs and tinier bedrooms. The earlier English must have been of much smaller stature than today. The food was always good. Eggs and bacon for breakfast without fail.

We drove through Gretna Green on our way to Biggar in Scotland where we stayed a night with Royce and Margaret Hutt. Next day on to Edinburgh. Very confusing, the main road from the south changes its name twice. We stayed with Mike and Margie Barrett in Winton Castle, a genuine old one belonging to Sir David Ogilvie. The Edinburgh Festival was on and we saw the play 'Columba' in a small theatre in the Golden Mile. Edinburgh Castle is perched on a very big rock in the centre of the city, but we did not climb up—nowhere to leave our car. Wne day we drove out to the Lammermuir Hills and saw some hang-gliders practising. Speaking to one of the boys I said we had a world champion living in Christchurch. He replied, "Yes, he's a very good friend of mine." Another day we drove up to the home of golf, St Andrews, and were surprised to find there are no less than four 18-hole courses. We putted round the green so we can say we played at St Andrews.

We crossed the Forth Bridge going towards Forton via North Wales. The country was very pretty, like Scotland. But into South Wales we ran into the coal-mining towns. Very depressing. Row upon row of dark terraced houses. Not a tree, not a flower or a blade of grass in sight. I wondered why the working class were not all bitter communists. Their sense of humour and love of singing no doubt kept their spirits up.

The wedding in the village church was a very happy occasion except for the shadow of Jane's mother's illness. We all knew that she did not have long to live but she was brought in a wheelchair to the church and very bravely enjoyed it all, especially the reception and the speeches. Jane's brother David and Jeannette had done a wonderful job in decorating the school hall and used all their artistic skill. The

bride and groom had a grand send off, but three days later were back as Jane's mother had died. Garth Lean, an old family friend, said after seeing her on her death bed, "She looks so peaceful and relaxed, her mission in life accomplished."

While Ros stayed with her mother and Maisie, I went to Caux, Switzerland for 10 days for an MRA conference. What an experience!



MRA Centre, Caux, Switzerland

Over 300 there and that really requires another book. One sharp memory was taking the funicular to the top of Mt. Rochers-de-Naye, 7,000 feet above sea level. On a beautiful clear day snow peaks all around and colourful edelweiss everywhere. The funicular that came up after ours brought two bright red hang-gliders. When they pushed off, they circled below us but above a dark pine forest. An unforgettable sight, like two red butterflies. An up-current brought them back over us watching, and then out away over Lake Geneva.

Our flight back to England landed at Gatwick at 9:30 pm and to my great surprise everyone had gone home. No customs clearance. I was able to catch a train, station in the airport, straight to Brighton.

On our return flight home to NZ, we stopped over for two days in Los Angeles and were looked after by Ros's old school friend, Margaret Cooper. She took us to Disneyland and down to San Diego. Disneyland we shall always remember for absolute spotless cleanliness. Not a leaf or a cigarette butt anywhere. The many entertainments were out of this world with not a discordant note of any kind to mar the excellent presentations. The day we went there were 36,000 visitors. The parking area was vast. A big fleet of buses kept touring the lot picking up visitors to take to the main entrance.

On arrival back in NZ, when going through customs the checking officer looked at my passport, then at me saying, "You're pretty good for '08." It was some time before I realised he was referring to my birthdate, 1908.

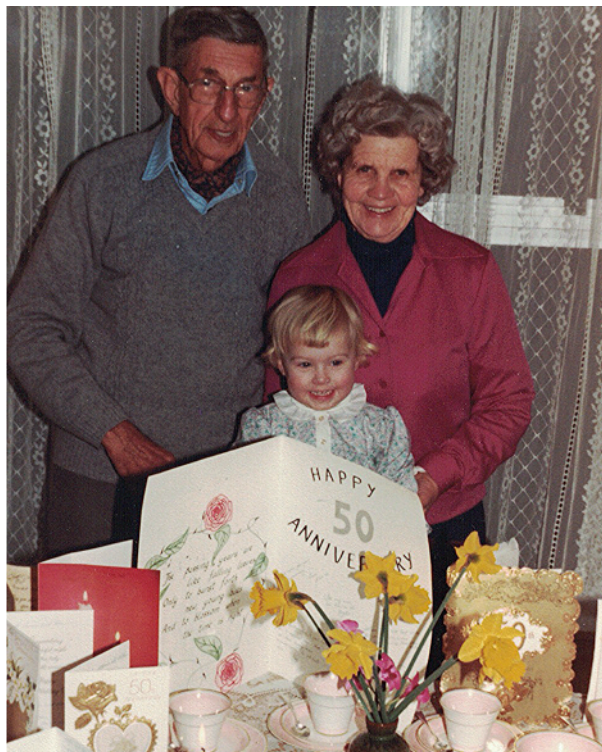
In July 1993, when snow was falling in Christchurch and we were feeling very cold, Pat rang from Sydney suggesting she and her second husband John buy a house in Brisbane, big enough for all of us so that Pat could look after Ros and me. We accepted gratefully. Within a week we had sold our house to the people next door. We paid £4,700 (\$9,400) in 1967 and sold it for \$140,000.



'Grandpop' and grandson Francis, 1989.

As with our experiences in Eastbourne, our home in Rockinghorse Road was ideal and a joy. Free access to the sea, only 100 yards away. But it was time to leave.

Pat and John found a house with a granny flat in in Redcliffe near Brisbane where we have had many happy years together. Ros got rid of her pots and pans after more than 60 years of cooking for others. Pat supplies us with a hot meal every day. She is a great cook. She and John also drive us to shops and outings.



Golden Wedding Anniversary, 4 August 1984. On their 60th, they had a message from the Queen. They had 64 years together.

It has been an enjoyable occupation completing these memoirs. I started them seven years ago. I thought that my grandchildren might find it interesting to know what sort of a rascal their grandfather was at their age. So, I now feel the time is right to draw it to a close. I shall sleep well tonight.



Ros and Lawrie in their vegetable garden, Christchurch.

Postscript 1 by Roger Cooper 2018

Our family home at Eastbourne, at 14 Pukatea St, (later renumbered to 20), was right on the sea front. The house spanned the full width of the narrow 16 perch section with just enough room for a narrow path down one side. The sea was just a few metres from the fence. We always called this the front of the house. The road was at the back of the house. A small front lawn was just large enough for cricket, but it was difficult to avoid hitting the ball through the glass windows of the front rooms. Leg-side shots were not possible and for this reason my leg-side stroke play was always my weakness in cricket. If you hit high on the offside, the ball went over the fence into the sea.

As our house was built on sand dunes, the longer back lawn was full of potholes. We had a garage at the bottom of the section against which I built a small lean-to workshop out of recycled motorcar cases. A second lean-to, added later, housed the fowl house which was shared by a pair of tumbler pigeons that someone gave us.

That left just a small area for a garden which my father kept and space for a 10 x 20 ft shed, built by Dad and me for us and our neighbours to play table-tennis in, but which eventually became a bedroom.

For a family of five children, it was pretty crowded but of course this did not occur to me at the time. With the beach at our front gate and the Eastbourne hills behind us, there was plenty of space for playing and roaming. It was an idyllic home. Pukatea St was a dead-end street with little traffic so, with the neighbourhood kids, we played our cricket 'test' matches on the street. The house was built with two bedrooms and a sun porch which became Rossie's room and after she left, our guest bedroom. Pat had the small bedroom; the three boys were in bunks in a smaller back room added on as the family grew. Access to the back bedroom was through Mum and Dad's room. So much for privacy for my parents.

I spent many hours in the workshop making things out of wood. I was always

dreaming up new things to make. I made a tiny chair and table when I was six that Mum kept for many years. And a Spanish galleon out of balsa wood and meat skewers for masts with parchment sails when I was about eight and staying with my grandmother in Christchurch.

Later projects included a spear-fishing gun that never actually caught any fish but was fun to make, a carved wooden tiki that I gave to my schoolteacher who was from Switzerland, and a cabinet for Mum's radio and record player. Dad said he once caught me hammering a .303 cartridge in the vice to see what happened, so I was also into experimentation. It must have been lying around from Dad's Home Guard days. I also remember hammering nail holes in the caps of his home brew bottles, so I could have an occasional swig. He never commented on this. Woodwork has remained my hobby.

I particularly loved the coast track used by the Pencarrow Lighthouse keeper who rode his horse out to Eastbourne periodically for supplies. Pencarrow was NZ's first permanent lighthouse and the only one for 140 years to have had a female keeper. The track threaded its way among the rocky outcrops scattered along the narrow sandy beach for six miles with rock pools crammed with anemones, cock-a-bullies, starfish, limpets, chitins, crabs, sea snails and seaweed. You never saw anyone else when you rode your bike or walked around there. During the polio epidemic in 1948, when all NZ schools were closed for



Pencarrow Lighthouse

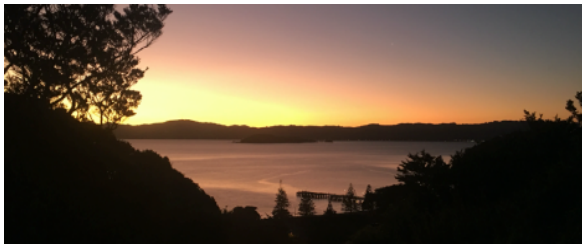
several weeks, I rode my bike around the Pencarrow coast almost every fine day. One bay was bordered by a steep hill with a small waterfall spilling down its frontage. When we climbed up this cliff face, we discovered a grassy area at the bottom of a tiny valley that could not be seen from the coast track. It became our secret place. Dad and I boiled tea in a billy made from an old honey tin which we hid in the bushes along with matches and a tin of tea leaves. It was magic. Years later I took Dot, Alan and Julie there and we camped out in our pup tent. But by this time the coast track and much of the original beach was destroyed by a bulldozed roadway built when the sewer line was installed, in 1956.



Roger at Lake Hayes, Arrowtown, 2009



Roger and Robyn at their home in Days Bay, Eastbourne, 2005.



Sunset from Roger and Robyn's home in Days Bay.



Redcliffe home where Mum and Dad lived in Brisbane, 1990s.



Matiu/Somes Island as viewed from the living room of Roger and Robyn's house, Days Bay.



Dad and Mum, as we like to remember them, 1987.

Being so close to the sea, we children spent many hours playing on the beach and swimming. No sun block in those days. When we got sun burnt, Dad wiped methylated spirits on our backs and the pain stopped. I peeled several layers off each summer. I don't recall being taught to swim. It just happened. Little Blue Penguins swam across from Leper Island and Matiu/Somes Island. They got under the house and made a very loud squawking call during the night, so they were regarded as something of a pest. Dad could not get under the house but shone the torch around to scare them away. He finally won the battle by throwing crackers at them, making loud bangs.



Graeme Wilson, aged 13

The frequent storms caused erosion of the beach front and a variety of sea walls were constructed, all of which were destroyed after just a few storms. Our front fence was undermined in one storm and the front gate opened to a two metre drop with the sea at high tide. Eventually a substantial concrete sea wall built on 3 metre sheet piling was built and is still there today, 65 years later. Storm waves crashed against the wall and shook the house, but we were only conscious of this when guests said they were awakened at night.

Eastbourne was a village of about 1000 people at the end of the road around the harbour. A group of shops at the town centre by the school, about a mile (1.6 kms) from us supplied all essentials. Milk was delivered first in milk billies which we put out by the letter box each night, and later in glass bottles. I walked through an alley way to the main road to our local store, Foley's Store, to get the bread and groceries. Groceries were always wrapped in a brown paper parcel and tied up with string. I was fascinated by the way Mr Foley could wrap the groceries and tie the string, snapping it with a flick of his wrist, in a few seconds. Vince Mazzola sold vegetables



Foley's Store, Eastbourne

from the back of his truck which came down our street each week.

The neighbours in Pukatea St knew each other well. Roger Lyon lived down the street from me and was in my class right through primary school. In our last year he was the school dux and I was head prefect. John Harper lived at the other end of the street and became a well-known mathematician – we still see each other at meetings of the Royal Society where we are both Fellows.

Graeme Wilson lived near us at 334 Muritai Road – we were friends right through primary school and we both studied geology at university, became palaeontologists and joined the Geological Survey, working a few doors from each other. Murray's friends from across the road, the van Opdorp family who were Catholics, were very impressed by the way Murray spoke about all the things 'our father' did for us. Murray seemed to be very friendly with 'Our Father'. Each family summoned its children for dinner by whistling and each had its own distinctive call. This came

in handy at other times. I remember going to watch the rugby at Athletic Park with Dad once and getting lost in the crowd. I was starting to panic until I heard the familiar whistle-call and made my way to its source. It is indelibly ingrained in my memory.

Dad came to my Saturday cricket and rugby matches and often ended up as cricket umpire. On one occasion I remember he drove the whole team home in our car, a 1939 Ford V-8. There were no safety belts in those days, and we were all doubled up.

I became a Wolf Cub and had to pass the Citizens Badge. I was required to telephone our leader, 'Akela', and explain how I would use the phone to call for help in an emergency. We did not have a phone and I had to call from the public phone box by Foley's Store. I was terrified and took my Mum along for support. I called Akela and he told me there was an

emergency – my mother was ill and needed an ambulance. I didn't know what to say and Mum prompted me. "Now, now Roger, no help from your mother," Akela said. Unfortunately, I had rehearsed a house fire, not a medical emergency and ended up saying my mother was ill and we needed the fire brigade. At that same phone box, Mum once left her purse after making a call. It had no name inside and was gone when she went back to look. Worse, it had a blank signed cheque inside, which Dad left for her to pay for the groceries. A couple of local boys came with the purse later that day. They worked out the owner from the signature on the cheque.

We got our own phone in 1946. It was a party line, shared with about five other people in the street. Each was identified by the ring; 334-S answered to three short blasts and 334-M to two long blasts. You could use the line only when others in the party were not using it. Gossiping to neighbours and thus tying up the line was a bone of contention. The Eastbourne switchboard operator knew every bit of local scandal and news and was the first person you called to find out if any rumour was true.

Rossie worked at the Eastbourne Post and Telegraph office for a while and learned to send telegrams across the harbour by wireless in Morse code. They were then transmitted to their destination office wherever it was in the country, translated back to text and the recipient was telephoned with the message. The delivered message was sometimes so garbled we had little idea of what it meant.

During the war, we sat around the open fire in the lounge in wintertime listening to the radio. The latest news was rebroadcast from the BBC and I came to associate important announcements with the undulating voices of shortwave radio reception. Mum sent food parcels to her family in the UK during and after the war. Dad was in the Home Guard and trained along the Pencarrow coast. Our first washing machine, which had a mechanical wringer, arrived about 1945. Before that Mum had to scrub the washing for her family of four kids on a scrubbing board, in two wooden tubs. I remember her getting her hair caught in the wringer as she bent over unloading the machine; luckily, she managed to release the safety lever herself. Our fridge arrived about 1946, before that we used an outside safe. Dad

commuted to work by bus or by ferry in the *Cobar*. He was a BNSW manager. We got our first car, a 1939 Ford V-8, in 1948. Vehicle imports were licenced and cars were very expensive.

I wonder how Mum coped. She had lived in comparative comfort in Burma with servants to do the housework. Within three years of leaving Burma, she found herself in New Zealand, far from her family who had moved to the UK, and without support. She had to learn to cook and manage the house which was filling with children. Her entire life revolved around the family. We had a Karitane nurse to help for a few weeks after each new child. On one occasion, our local primary school teacher, Bill Renwick, and his wife Merle came and babysat the whole family in the school holidays while Mum and Dad were away.

Apparently, I liked giving things to my friends. If I didn't have things to give, I was not above giving away other people's things. On one occasion I gave a girlfriend some stamps which I got from Rossie's stamp box. When Rossie discovered they were missing she was NOT pleased and went and retrieved them. I amused the family when at church and I tried to sing 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. I knew few of the words and made up the rest. Apparently, I substituted 'Christ the Royal Master leads against the foe' with the more prosaic, 'Christ the Royal Master leans against the phone'.



Nigel, Murray and Roger, Christchurch, 1998

As Murray and Nigel grew bigger, the three boys in the family had a lot of fun play-wrestling on the floor or playing carpet cricket in the hallway during the long winter evenings. Once the playroom had been built, we played table tennis. Murray became skilled by his determination to keep up with his two older brothers. Murray, Nigel and Pat all went on to achieve in sport, Murray becoming coach of the NZ women's volleyball team, Nigel and Pat both played First X1 hockey for their school (HVHS). I played for my high school First Eleven (cricket) and that was it for me.

Postscript 2 by Nigel Cooper 2021

In 2020 Jane and I drove from our home on Waiheke Island to Lower Hutt and stayed with sister-in-law Robyn in Days Bay after Roger died. While there, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the lockdown because of the Covid-19 virus. We decided to stay through the lockdown, about two months. For exercise, I walked the tracks on the hills behind Days Bay and Eastbourne several times. It brought back many happy memories. I found the site of the log hut that was used as a kiosk to serve afternoon tea to those who had walked to Butterfly Creek. It was built in 1932 and burned down in 1949, and never replaced. I saw the hut as a boy, aged five.

Even though I knew the terrain, I managed to follow a wrong track and got lost. The police were called to rescue me. Two officers and a police-dog finally found me. I got home about 11 pm, my pride shattered.

Another recent walk was around the coast past Eastbourne bus barn and Burdan's Gate. After 45 minutes, I found the 'secret posse'. It was quite hard to get up to and was overgrown with 60 or more years of gorse and flax, but the memories of trips there with Dad were sharp. I walked on to Pencarrow Lighthouse. Beautiful scenery. On my return a fisherman gave me some paua and large mussels. Jane and Robyn made delicious paua fritters.

Dad spent his working life in a bank, but his heart was always in the outdoors. He once told me that he would love to have been a farmer if he had had the chance. The lifestyles in Eastbourne and Christchurch fulfilled a great deal of those wishes. As secretary of Rockinghorse Road Association he edited a booklet on plants that could be grown in that suburb. His knowledge came from experience. It was much appreciated by the residents. He produced it himself without using a computer—that was a step too far for him to master.

Dad had some unusual habits. He used to lock his bank office door at lunchtimes and meditate and do yoga lying on the floor. At home he was often seen standing on his head. He would happily go for walks in the rain. One day rainwater got through his hat and trickled down his neck and back. We all laughed.



The tea kiosk at Butterfly Creek. Photo: Frank Fitzgerald, Alexander Turnbull Library

Dad taught us many things, like how to make plaster of Paris moulds of birds' feet from their footprints in the mud and how to polish paua shells. He taught us how to look after visitors and put them at their ease. "Look for those who are shy and retiring. Make conversation with them.

Don't worry about the outgoing, talkative ones. They'll look after themselves." I never forgot this. He also taught us to have generous spirits. I hoped to be dux of Muritai primary school, but a friend was chosen. I was able to congratulate him.

Another thing Dad taught us was thriftiness and making things last. His cars lasted many years, two of them more than 15 years each. He also taught us business skills which I have benefitted from in my full-time work with MRA and since becoming a businessman and entrepreneur. "Don't put all your eggs into one basket," he used to say. And, "Always pay your debts off on time or early."

Dad once asked me, "Who is the most important person in the bank?" After I guessed "The manager," and "the customers," to which he did not agree, I gave up. "Who is it?" I asked. "The frontline tellers. They are in contact with the public. If they are happy and smiling the customers will keep coming in."

One of his junior staff at the time of Dad's retirement, Bob Marryatt, wrote to me recently: *Lawrie was an intelligent and very respected manager. As my first 'boss', he was a person I held in high esteem. As a 'probationer', I delivered his morning tea to his office twice a week, also sometimes when he had an important customer.*



Bob Marryatt



Liz (Elisabeth), Jane, Frank (Francis) and Nigel, with Shorty, our loved Jack Russell dog, 1995.



This book was edited by Nigel Cooper (above) and Robyn Cooper (below).



BNSW became Westpac Bank in 1982. It is now the third largest bank in NZ and is the Crown banker.



Ros singing in a restaurant, Queensland 1998.



MRA conference, Living Springs, Christchurch, 1992. Back row: Alison Hayes, Garfield Hayes, Liz Hayes, Unknown, Alan Porteous, Roslyn Cooper, Duncan McGregor, Keith Hanning (hidden), Unknown, Phyllis Kay, Anna Hayes, Barbara Jackson, Joan Holland, Kathie Hanning, Jim Coulter, Second from back row: Unknown, Jane Cooper holding Patrick Abel, Lynne Abel holding Sean, Rob Sinclair, Raewyn Rogge (née Macdonald), Dawn Garner, Joanna Grigg (née Hayes), Campbell Leggat, Next row: Helen Hayes, Unknown, Muriel Shackel, Val and Michael Stammer, Joan McGregor, Front rows, Rex Lovell-Smith, Lawrie Cooper, Alison Cooper, Kate Thorpe, Nyra Abel, Val Lyon, Peter Wood, Andrew Hayes.

Bankers then had a sound knowledge of basic banking law and product knowledge. The Banking Royal Commission in Sydney highlighted the poor standards of banking knowledge among today's young staff, even corruption. That would not have been tolerated during your Dad's or my time in the bank. Hopefully the Royal Commission has contributed to a clean-up of banking standards in Australia and New Zealand.

During much of Lawrie's time as a manager, the bank's lending and deposit criteria were regulated by Government decree through the Reserve Bank which constrained lending to various sectors, unlike the open banking environment we have today. Technology has also changed significantly over the last century. In 1967 when Laurie retired, we still had pen and ink ledgers, bookkeeping machines, telegraphic transfers and cumbersome international transactions. When I left the bank in 1998 there were real-time transactions, online banking, mobile phones, and plastic bank cards for local and international use. Westpac (BNSW's successor) was the first bank in the world to introduce EFTPOS technology nationwide.

Dad cared for not only his staff but also his customers. He would go to inspect a customer's house, business or vehicle to see what they wanted to borrow money for. He would assess its value, as well as the character of the applicant, and then make the decision himself. I wish bank managers today would do that.

Dad had a truly forgiving nature and his willingness to overlook an offence and forgive others spoke volumes to me. He was not a jealous man, not even when other people prospered and he missed out.

Dad counted his blessings and was happy with his lot in life. He was especially grateful for being delivered from the drug of nicotine by learning to listen to God's voice. His doctor didn't realise Dad's bronchial problems were related to smoking, and the doctor himself died of lung cancer. This was the early 1950s when the link between smoking and cancer was still being discovered. I am grateful that Dad gave up smoking when he did or my children would never have known their wonderful grandfather.

Many wonder how Mum and Dad cared for so many people, as well as bringing up five

children, on one salary. Their Christian faith played a big part in it all. The 'loaves and fishes' story comes to mind. "God's got it all in hand; whatever He wants, it will come to pass," Dad wrote. I treasure my heritage: my parents' faith, hope and love, and their large print Bible. A passage they took to heart and lived to the full was Matthew 25:35-40. *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; ... I was sick and you looked after me ... Whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers, you did for me.*

Dad died in 1998 in Redcliffe, Queensland and his ashes were buried there in a park close to where they lived with Pat and John. Mum returned to Christchurch in 2000 and died in 2001. Her ashes are buried with Dad's. The gardener offered to plant a tree and to name a seat in their honour.



Lawrie and Roslyn's seat, created in their memory, Redcliffe

In March 2020, Roger passed away after losing his battle with prostate cancer. Three weeks after Roger died, Rossie's time was up too. She had only one day's illness, a stomach aneurism. She died in her sleep. Following the death in 2018 of her beloved Ron, she had left England to live in the same retirement village as Pat in Burpengary, Queensland. Pat and John plus Rossie's son David were the only people allowed to be at the cremation (behind glass) because of the Covid-19 virus restrictions.

On my last visit to Roger, he asked me to edit and produce Dad's memoirs, a project that he and Robyn began in the 1990s but did not manage to complete. They gave priority to *Bullock Carts and Balichao* (Mum's memoirs), a project no one else could have undertaken.

So here Robyn and I are, in 2021, producing Dad's story. Although his generation have all passed away, the lessons he learnt in life and the example he set are still relevant today. Who has not wished they had a bank manager with a heart?



Relocating the Cooper house at 20 Pukatea Street, 1999



Roger and Robyn visit Ros and Lawrie in Redcliffe home, 1995.



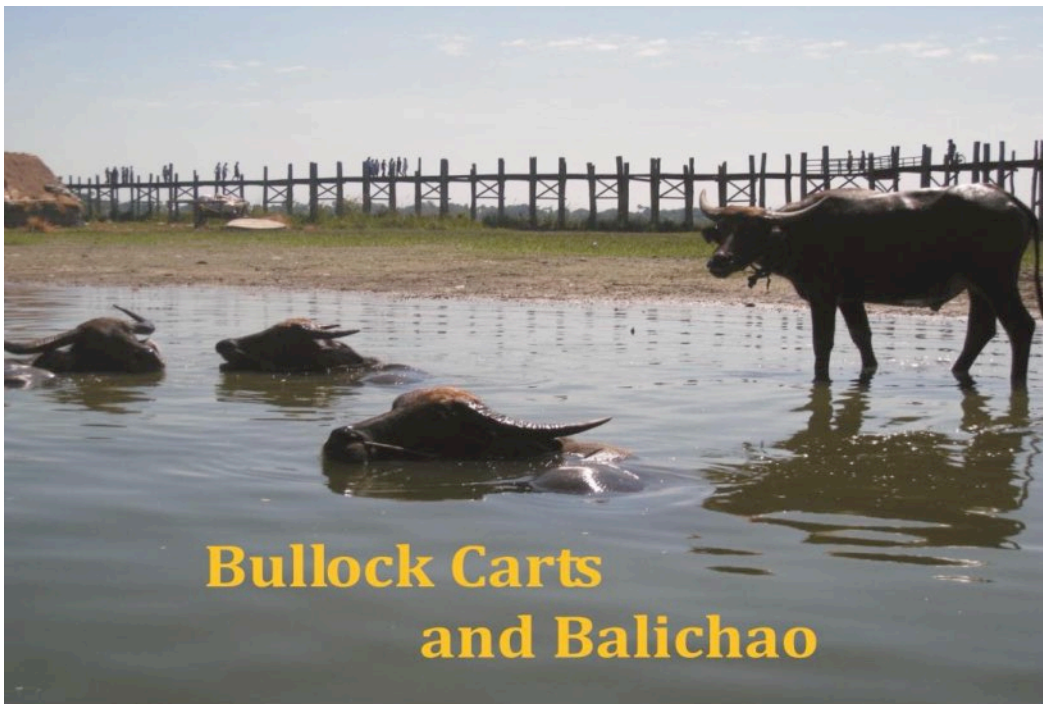
Above left: Rossie and Pat take each other's blood pressures, 2005.

Left: Five siblings meet in Nowra and Sydney, 2005.

Below left: Lawrie and Roslyn became Australian Citizens, 1997.

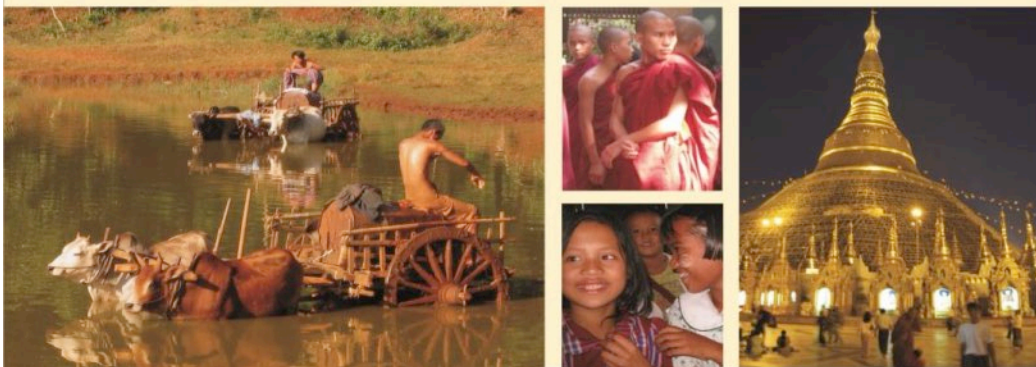


Rear: Jeff Sharp (Annette's husband), Robyn, Nigel, Annette Sharp (née Ruki, Pat's daughter), Jane, Front: Roger, Liz, Roslyn, Murray. Last family gathering with Mum, Christchurch, 2001



Bullock Carts and Balichao

Roslyn Sherman's memoirs
and other stories of Burma

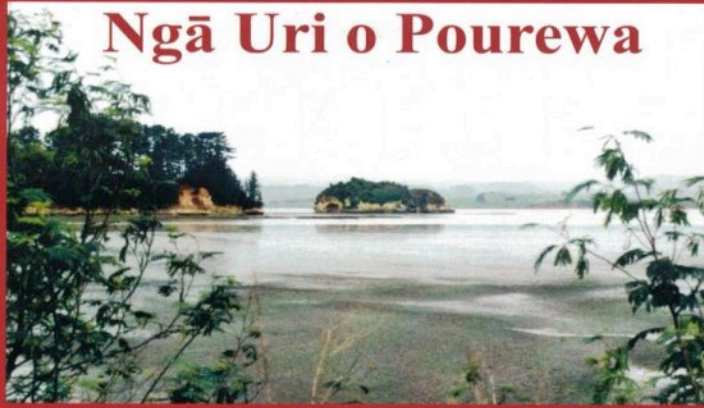


Roslyn Sherman recounts life in the early 1900s in Maymyo, Burma, where she is brought up by her great grandfather—an apothecary with the Indian Army. Household water is delivered in goatskin bags; she rides by bullock cart to school; there's her sneaky puff of the cook's opium.

After graduation, Roslyn teaches Afghan princes in Kalaw, 5000 feet above sea level. But the Burmese are revolting against British rule and Indian bureaucrats, and life is unsafe. Roslyn leaves by ship for England and in the next door cabin is Lawrie Cooper, a New Zealander on his way to Britain. They marry, and life changes dramatically for Roslyn.

Almost 100 years after Roslyn's birth, extraordinary family secrets are discovered, leading to a much extended family. Roslyn's son, Roger Cooper, and his wife Robyn, retrace Roslyn's steps in Burma and encounter interesting connections to her early life.

Ngā Uri o Pourewa



A Pākehā Family Discovers its Māori Ancestry



Nigel Cooper

Nigel Cooper and his family decided in 1977 to start searching for their Māori ancestry, knowing only two facts—that they were descended from a Māori ‘princess’ and that her English husband was named Charles Cosell (or Costle? Or Cossill?). They had no idea of the wonderful adventure it would lead them into. They have discovered their complete whakapapa genealogy back to the captain of the *Tainui* canoe, through Ngāti Māhanga chief, Pourewa.

The story brings to life Māhanga, Pourewa and other chiefs as we follow the raids by Ngā Puhi under Hongi Hika, the impact of missionaries, traders, the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand Land Wars, confiscation and the 1995 Tainui settlement. Many descendants have been discovered including Nancy Wake (the ‘White Mouse’ of the Second World War). Charles and Pourewa’s gravesite has been found and restored as a national treasure.



A Bank Manager with a Heart

Lawrence John Leslie Cooper (1908-1998), known as Lawrie, handwrote his memoirs in his eighties after being prompted to do so by an old school friend. By age 38 he had become the youngest Bank of New South Wales manager in NZ when given a few thousand pounds in cash, a revolver, and instructions to open a branch in Petone.

Lawrie writes with candour, warmth and humour about his family of origin, his Māori 'princess' great grandmother, childhood in Canterbury, his 43-year career in the bank starting at age 15, shipboard romance leading to marriage, family life in Eastbourne, Wellington, and his life-changing experiences with Moral Re-Armament (MRA).

Join Lawrie on mischievous escapades with schoolmates involving guns, disappearing coins and electrical circuits. Find out how the young bank clerk, Lawrie, and his flatmates buried a dead horse, and what happened when he hid his lighted cigarette in the drawer as the boss came in. Discover how he challenged another boss for dishonest practices yet managed to retain his friendship. Learn how, as a boss himself, Lawrie cared for his staff and his customers while also opening his home, with Roslyn, to thousands of international visitors, in particular Colombo Plan students.

A Bank Manager with a Heart is also a window on social history and banking in New Zealand over the 20th century, and through Lawrie and Roslyn's encompassing hospitality, a window on the wider world.