

School Daze by Noleen Burton continued...

Twice a week, after school, I would trek to the library in Hardy Street -now the New Zealand Fisheries School nearly opposite the St John's Methodist Church. The children's section was in Harley Street facing where the police station is now, with the museum upstairs above the library. I had to get my regular 'William' or Enid Blyton, if William wasn't available.

Saturday mornings it was off to the YMCA for gym lessons with Mr Gay. Down a drive and behind quite near where 'Rollo's' is now. All this walking alone at a young age with no thought or likelihood of any sort of abuse from a grownup. Life was simple then.

Lunch times, as I sat eating my homemade sandwiches, were spent salivating and coveting friends 'bought lunches', mostly from the little tuck shop by the entrance to the school, being New Zealand, more often than not, pies.

One magical day Mum gave me 6d to get fish and chips from 'Peter's' shop in Hardy Street for lunch. Disaster, come lunch time I had lost my 6d. I ran all the way home to tell Mum and get another 6d. Mum of course suggested I had lunch there, but no, I wasn't going to lose this golden opportunity for a 'bought' lunch. Now, I realise the new 6d meant Mum had used grocery money to provide it. We didn't get much for a truck driver's wages. I ran to 'Peter's', got my fish and chips, back to school, breathless but very happy. Finally, a bought lunch to flaunt in front of my sandwich eating friends!

I was helping set up a school fair and was given the task of tossing away in the big rubbish incinerator around the back of the school, a tin of homemade hokey pokey invaded by ants. Are you mad? I picked all the ants off and took it home to be enjoyed at leisure. The faint taste of formic acid only added to the flavour.

My friend Julie and I would dawdle home after school, always finding it necessary to use the men's toilets in Pioneer Park, of great daring mostly rather than need. Sometimes I would try to outrace Christopher Christie who lived in the big old Richardson House on top of the valley hill, now Richardson Street. Even new sandshoes didn't give me the necessary edge over him to be the winner.

Occasionally one of us would have a penny to spend at Pogmore's shop at the V intersection with Hastings Street. Broken biscuits was our usual choice, trying to get Gordon to serve us as he gave us more than Mr Pogmore. Absolute bliss!

On these regular walks home Julie and I formulated the theory that if you put your foot under a moving car it wouldn't hurt because of the car's speed. Out we both ran to try this plan under a taxi going past. The driver, white faced, screeched to a halt and gave us both a severe telling off. Who knows, it could have worked!

In 1947 we went for a year to Karamea and let our little house in Washington Valley. Dad was a truck driver at the mill up at Umere. A lonely life for my Mum with no-one nearby, but at weekends we would often walk several miles down to see Mum's friends.

I still had my weekly comics, 'Chips', 'Radio Fun' and 'Film Fun' sent by Miss Noelle Mellett from her shop in Nelson. Each school day I rode down on my bike to

Tunnicliff's farm to catch the school bus. Mr Richardson was the driver. For some reason which I never did find out we (the Tunnicliff kids and I) were dropped off at Johnson's farm on the return journey so had to walk to the farm where my bike was. My Dad's pig dog Bill would hear the three o'clock whistle at the mill and run down to wait by my bike. But on the way home he nearly always abandoned me to go chase deer in the bush. One of my teachers objected to me not wearing shoes to school so Dad went down to the school to sort it out, but in the end took the teacher deer stalking.

There was six weeks home schooling in the midst of this because of the polio epidemic. I hated it, Mum was a hard taskmaster and with no other kids about, that didn't do a lot for me either.

After the year was up, back to Washington Valley and Auckland Point School. My primary schooling up to standard six finished in December 1950. So off to The Nelson Girls' College in February 1951. Not wanting to be alone on my first day I arranged for a friend who lived in a house in a row of houses where the Elma Turner library is now, to cycle there with me. Another first day.

I understood I was going to study the womanly arts such as cooking and sewing a fine seam as Mum felt this was as it should be for a girl. But no, I was in a general course and then later after an exam, a professional course. Whose decision it was to not make me a domestic goddess I never did find out. Anyway, it wouldn't have worked I am positive!

We all trooped off to our assigned class rooms and I sat bemused as I could see the girl in front of me was going to sit in a pool of spilt ink. (Dip pens and inkwells were in use) Later, (against all odds you would think) we became good friends. My Mum died in my first year while I was there in the third form but I continued for four years, all which I thoroughly enjoyed, academically average but good at sports.

Being motherless was a challenge but I made it, with a little help from my friends (Thanks guys). I appreciated wearing a uniform as there was no worry about my clothes being not the best. Four years later with my education finished I was ready to face the world, ready or not!