

# THE GISBORNE YEARS: Part 1

## The Early Years (1940 ~ 1950)

This period of my life begins with my birth in Gisborne and continues until about 1950 when we moved to our second home.

### Note: Gisborne “Photo News”

In preparing these notes, I came across the Gisborne “Photo News” which was a monthly publication from 1954 to 1975, illustrating goings-on in the Gisborne district through the use of black and white photographic reproductions and text. We used to buy this every month. There is at least one picture of me in it (see later). The publication only ceased when more photos were being published in newspapers, magazines and with the popularity of television. The website for the “Photo News” is:

<http://photonews.org.nz/gisborne/index.html>

Take a look at what life was like growing up in Gisborne at that time.

### Parent's wedding

- My parents were married on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1939 at the Church of Christ, Roebuck Road in Gisborne. My father was 24 years old, while my mother was four years older.
- I believe that the venue of the wedding produced some friction between the families. In those days, it was traditional to have the wedding in the bride's home town which then was Wairoa. However, Grandma Heyworth pretended that Grandpa Heyworth was sick and had a poor heart and so could not travel to Wairoa (only about 60 miles away!). So the wedding was held in Gisborne and not in Wairoa. A few months after the wedding however, Grandma and ‘sick’ Grandpa were off to see a national exhibition in Wellington! So much for a weak heart!



## Birth

- I was born almost exactly nine months after the wedding, on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1940. I was born at a small (now defunct) hospital called the “Edward Murphy Hospital” which was run



by the Salvation Army and was Gisborne’s only private maternity hospital. The hospital was situated on the banks of the Taraheru River, which is a tidal river and looked nice at high tide but terrible at low tide when it was mainly mud! The picture of the hospital here is taken from:

[http://photonews.org.nz/gisborne/issue/GPN28\\_19561018/t1-body-d38.html](http://photonews.org.nz/gisborne/issue/GPN28_19561018/t1-body-d38.html)

[Other pictures for the opening of an extension at the hospital in 1960:

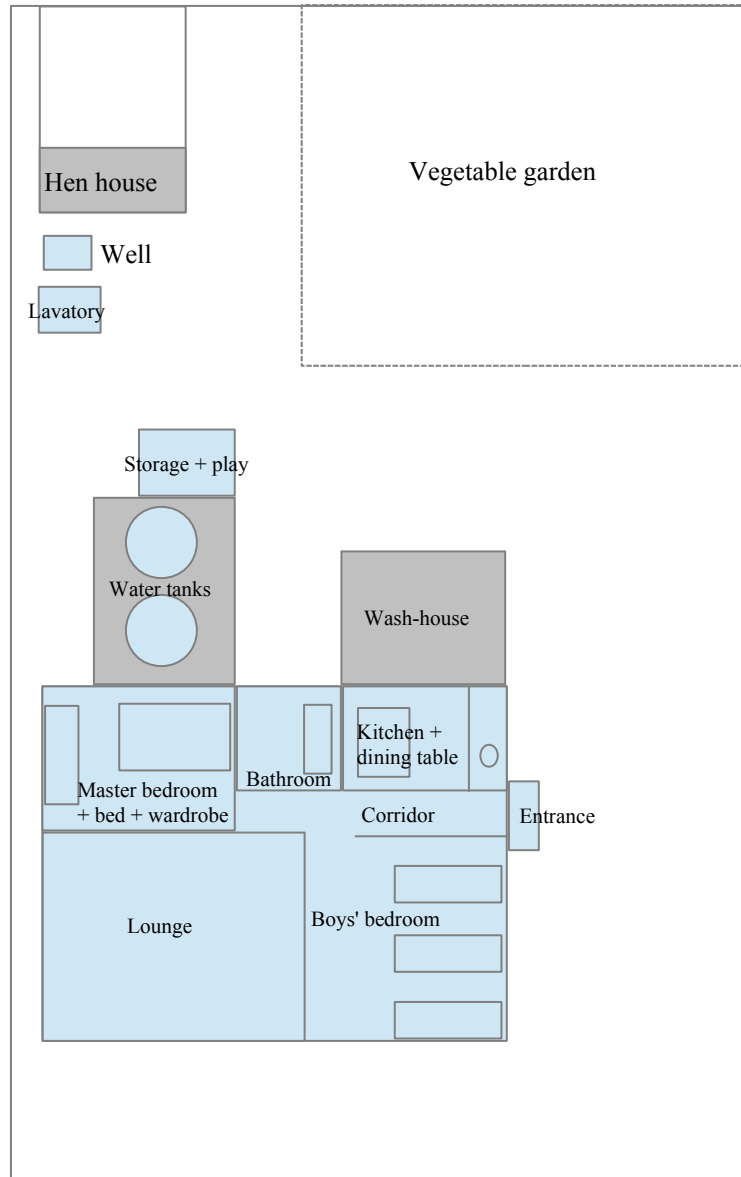
[http://photonews.org.nz/gisborne/issue/GPN67\\_19600128/t1-body-d52.html](http://photonews.org.nz/gisborne/issue/GPN67_19600128/t1-body-d52.html) ]

- The picture on the right shows the river (at high tide!) very close to where the hospital was situated.
- The pdf file in the folder for this period shows a copy of my birth certificate.



## First home

- For about the first 10 years of my life, our family lived in a very small house on a very large “section” (the New Zealand word for a plot of housing land) at 557 [now 337] Ormond Road ). The house is still there. The house was rented, not owned by my parents, as they were not wealthy enough to afford to buy a house. The house had a small lounge (which I did not seem to use much, probably because, to save money, it was not heated - though that is only a guess, I do not know the actual reason). There were two bedrooms; a small one for my parents and another slightly larger one for us three boys, though at the time they did not appear to be that small. There was a small bathroom, with a bath (no shower) and a wash basin. The kitchen was also very small, just large enough for a small meal table with a bench for us three boys. An oven but no refrigerator! That was it!
- The diagram below shows the layout of the section and house.



### Road

The front of the section facing the road had, as all houses then did, a robust fence. One reason for this was to keep cows and sheep out of the property. In those days, farmers would drive their animals down the roads to the abattoirs near the centre of town. (Nowadays, they use trucks to move the animals.) So if someone left a gate open, chaos could ensure when animals entered a



property. The picture above, taken from Google Maps, shows the section as it appears today; however, the house is not visible behind the large trees. Although we did have trees on the front lawn, I think they were just fruit trees. There was no driveway; we did not need one as we had no car (and did not get one until I was about 15). The road and curb were not as they are now. There was just a strip of sealed road in the middle and an open ditch between the footpath and the road to drain away water.

- **Wash house:** Outside the back door, as an attachment without a door was the “wash house”. There was no such thing as a washing machine of course; instead we had a “copper”, that is, a large copper container set in concrete and heated underneath by a wooden fire. After washing the clothes in it, they would then be transferred using a long wooden pole into steel basins then passed through a hand wringer to squeeze out the water. The clothes were then hung up on a wire outside to dry. [The photo, not of the wash house in our house, but very similar. If you imagine it cleaned up, with the walls covered and the “copper” cleaned, it would be just the same with the position of the “copper” and the window identical.]



- **Water tanks:** Next to the wash house were two tanks, with a pile of fire wood stored underneath. The tanks collected rain water from the roof. So, although we had running water to taps, there was no public water supply. (Even in 1958 when I left Gisborne, the public water supply has not reached our suburb!) So, if there was no rain, we had no water! This was serious in summers, which were often hot and dry. To get water, a company had trucks that would carry water which would then be pumped into people's tanks. However, we, like many people, had a well in the back yard, from which we could draw water. When not in use, the (wooden) cover was always locked.
- **Toilet:** Little water also meant of course, no flushing toilets. Instead, about 20 metres behind the house there was an outhouse with a large metal can and a wooden seat with a hole in it. The “nightman”, as he was called, would come one night a week (never during the day!) to collect the can of “nightsoil” (as it was euphemistically called) and replace it with an empty one. Occasionally, with one can serving five people, it would fill up before the nightman came so we (that is, my father, sometimes



with our help) would have to empty it in the garden area. Also, for along time, there were no toilet rolls; instead we had to use cut up newspaper. And imagine having to visit it in the middle of a storm on a freezing winter night; it did not have any light and there were cobwebs and lovely creepy-crawlies! Usually we didn't; there would be a “potty” under the bed that was used and would be emptied the following morning. The toilet in the picture is very similar to ours. It is also from New Zealand and an article on it can be found at:

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/4864873/Reinventing-the-backyard-lavatory>

- The house was situated on a ½-acre section, which is much larger than sections nowadays. There was grass in the front and on one side (the other side being almost at the boundary fence). I remember that on occasions (probably in summer) on the front lawn we would often build a tent out of scrim (a kind of sacking material) to play in.
- **Vegetable garden and chickens:** At the back, most of the section was taken up by a vegetable garden and a chicken coop plus yard. All this meant we were essentially self-sufficient for vegetables, eggs and the occasional roast chicken (usually a single rooster that was used for propagation purposes, then fattened up and killed for a special occasion such as Christmas dinner). I remember that I became responsible for looking after the chickens, which meant feeding them and providing water, collecting the eggs and cleaning the coop (which was as large as our bedroom in the house). We dispatched the roosters ourselves, usually by my father or grandfather. This was done by wringing the neck and not by chopping off the head. When I was older (more than 10 years of age) and after we had moved to live in our grandparent's house, I too would kill the rooster occasionally though I did not really enjoy doing it.

- **New pressure cooker:** I remember when my mother got a pressure cooker. It would have looked similar to the one in the picture. I was absolutely terrified of it, and was always afraid it would explode. It never did.



- **Milk:** On the front fence was a large letter box (made by my grandfather), large enough to hold milk bottles as well as mail. In those days, milk was delivered in glass bottles every day. (The bottles were sealed with a cardboard top which had a small part in the middle that could be pushed in to make a hole for the finger to pull out the cardboard top - see examples in the picture). Money, and later tokens (bought from the local grocery store), were placed in the bottles. The milk then was not homogenised so my mother would skim off the layer of cream from the top and use it where cream was needed and we would drink the skimmed milk.



- **Postman:** Letters were also placed in the letter box. In the summer, my mother would

place a glass of cordial for the postman to drink. But then she discovered that the boys from the house two away from ours were getting in first and taking the drink! She wondered what the postman thought on discovering empty glasses! I cannot remember if she continued this or not.

- There was of course no television in those days. I cannot even remember a radio; it was probably in the lounge which, as I said, we seldom used.

### Early photos of me

The pictures here are just about all that were taken of me, or at least, those that I have. I have put them in order of age.

1. Taken on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1940 which means I was exactly 8 months old. Note that in those days, babies were placed in prams and not strollers or baby backpacks as today. I think I look



quite handsome and not unlike Elymie, my second granddaughter. Note in the background of the photo, an example of the kinds of cars in those days.

2. Taken at 12 months. The large 'rompers' are because in those days, cloth nappies were used and they were not disposable, being washed in the large 'copper' described above. Note the empty section next door where we boys often played.



3. Also at about 12 months. I am standing on the well referred to above. The wooden stool would have been made by my grandfather, who was a joiner/furniture maker.



4. Taken at 1 year 10 months at Waikanae Beach, the beach close to the town centre. I am wearing full protective gear to avoid sunburn. Unfortunately, when I was older I would not protect myself in this way as it was not the thing to be done, at least among boys. Consequently, after a day at the beach, I would end up with terrible sunburn mainly on the face and shoulders.

5. Taken when I was about 2 years. My father is in his air force uniform; I guess he was on leave. Because of the war, I would not have seen him very often. Note the hedge where I would crash when learning to ride the bike. Also note the two water tanks behind the neighbour's house. This is exactly what our tanks were like. Water from the roof would flow into the spouting and then into the tanks. Paint in those days was lead-based so I guess we must have absorbed some of this lead.



6. Taken with my grandfather when I was 2 years 9 months. This would have been very close to the vegetable garden (see plan above). From the look of me, I guess all these pictures



were in my pre-asthma days (but that is only a guess). The tree would be a fruit tree; we used to grow a number of fruit trees, including (over the years) apple, grapefruit, orange and lemon, as well as fruit that grows on bushes, such as kiwi fruit (then called 'Chinese gooseberry'; they were neither Chinese nor a gooseberry).



I had my first haircut when I was 19 months old. The picture on the right shows my curls at that time Note: I still have these curls, which are kept in an envelope!

## Play

- Play was always a simple affair and we usually had to invent it ourselves. Next door was a section that was not built on and often had large grass. There was also a large tree at the back that we boys liked to climb. Next to the water tanks, my grandfather (who was a furniture builder) built a second wood-house cum play house which we used. Inside the house, play was often in the small corridor (refer to the plan again). I remember once I got a toy cannon as a present and we boys enjoyed firing its small wooden 'shells' at objects placed at the other end of the corridor to see if we could demolish them.
- Christmas and birthday presents were few, again due to cost. At Christmas, each of us boys would have a sock or sometimes a pillow slip hung up near our beds though we got few presents, but we didn't seem to mind as that was just how life was in those days. But it

meant that you looked after your toys so that they would last a long time. There might have been a few decorations as well but certainly no Christmas tree (probably too expensive).

- Occasionally, we would play with children from neighbouring houses, though they were few in number. Across the road was a family with two daughters. Their father, a house builder, built a very nice play house that we occasionally played in with Shirley (the younger of the two daughters, about my age).
- I also remember when I was 9 or 10 learning to ride a bike (not a full-sized one). This was necessary when I transferred from the local school to another further away that was too far to walk to. While learning, I would frequently end up in the hedge along the edge of the section (see again photo #5 with the hedge).

### **Sunday school**

- On Sunday mornings, we would have to go to Sunday school at our church. We would go as passengers on our parent's bicycles, two on my father's bike (one on a wooden seat placed on the bar and one on a seat at the back) and one on our mother's bike (seat at the back). [In summer, this is also how we would go to the beach on a weekend.]
- We would often have to go again in the afternoon to another location. We would wait - in our Sunday best - on the side of the road to be picked up by a car.

### **Asthma**

- The main illness I had was asthma. First, I had skin eczema when I was a baby. To prevent me from scratching myself, my mother would place soft mittens on my hands, which was the only course of action in those days. It must have been terrible not to have been able to scratch. (I think eczema is a precursor to asthma.) According to my mother's record (see 'Rex's Baby book' in another file in this folder), my asthma began at 3½ years.
- When I developed asthma, it was not pleasant. I would often get severe attacks and could do little about it, just waiting for it to break. There were few medicines available, the main one being ephedrine, which had very unpleasant side effects including increasing the heart rate and sweating. Attacks then seemed to occur more frequently in cooler and damper conditions, which is the main reason I went to university in Wellington and not Auckland, the latter having quite a humid atmosphere and where, when we visited it, I would invariably get severe attacks. (Perhaps triggers change; Hong Kong after all, is also a very humid place, but the humidity does not seem to be trigger here.)
- I actually remember nothing about this early battle with asthma. Psychologists say that people are able to black out from this mind's unpleasant past experiences, and my asthma was certainly unpleasant. I don't remember my parents ever saying much about it either; I guess it was just as painful for them.



- When I aged 4 or 5, I had my first life-threatening asthma attack. Again I do not remember this but this I do remember my mother commenting to me when I was much older that the doctor said there was nothing that could be done and that I would probably die. Somehow, with little or no medicine (which at that stage was ineffective anyway), I managed to pull through - obviously!
- My childhood asthma took a terrible toll of my physical development. All the energy I needed for growth and development was being diverted into fighting asthma which stunted my growth as you can probably tell from some of my school photos. I was very conscious of this too. At the age of 11, when I entered Form 1, the school was further away and I would have to go by bike which meant exercise. This seemed to help and this is one reason why I feel I have to do exercise; other reasons which we give today, such as heart benefits, etc., never entered my mind then.
- Asthma is not a social disease. When an attack comes, one just wants to be alone and away from people, not letting them see the agony one is going through just struggling for every breath.

### **War years**

- The first five years of my life, of course, overlapped with World War II. I was probably told about it but remember very little. My father went into the RNZAF (Royal New Zealand Air Force) as a medic and was based at the airfield in Gisborne. Although he did come home occasionally on leave, I do not remember this either. His unit was getting ready to be sent overseas to somewhere in the Pacific, but the war ended just before they left.
- At the end of the war, my father brought home a (tom)cat that had strayed into their camp and which they had adopted. His name was “Dreyfus”, named after Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer serving in the French artillery, who in 1894 was falsely convicted of spying for the Germans and sentenced to life imprisonment. The cat was already quite old then and lived with us for about another 12 years.
- At the end of the war, in 1945, a Lancaster bomber flew over cities and towns in New Zealand to celebrate. I remember this quite clearly, going up the hill behind our place to watch it fly over, though the image of the plane itself is now just a black blur. (Quite a lot of men from the Gisborne district were pilots or crew members of Lancaster bombers during the war.)



### **Primary school years: Mangapapa School**

- Primary school began when I was five years old. This was my first formal education. There was no such thing as play-school or kindergartens in those days.

- **School:** The name of the school was the Mangapapa School, Mangapapa being the name of the suburb in which we lived. I had six years of schooling there though classes were named differently from today. They were:
  - First year: Primer 1 and Primer 2 (half a year each)
  - Second year: Primer 3 and Primer 4 (Again half a year each)
  - Third - Sixth years: Standards 1 to 4.
- **Buildings:** There were two buildings on opposite sides of the road, one for Primers 1 and 2 and the other for the remaining classes. There for just two classrooms in the Primers 1 and 2 building. I remember a children's play house in the corridor. And behind the building there was a slope that led down to a creek (not part of the school).
- The larger school building had a sort-of assembly hall but was partitioned to form two classrooms. Every morning (I think, unless wet), there would be an outside assembly in a small concrete quadrangle. There was a flag-pole but I don't think we raised the flag every day. At the end of the assembly, we 'marched' to our classrooms with martial music played over the speaker system.
- **Toilets:** As at home, the schools had outdoor toilets though slightly less primitive. They were usually very smelly! There was also a one-room dental clinic with a dental *nurse* (many schools in those days had dental clinics though most have gone today). The dental drill was a mechanical one operated by foot and there were no such things as injections to lessen the pain of a filling. There was no gymnasium or swimming pool. But we did have a “jungle gym” for climbing on, consisting of horizontal and vertical steel ladders.
- **Travel to school:** Most pupils (we were not called *students* in those days), including me, walked to school though a few came by bicycle. In my early years, some even came on horses! which were left at the back of the school for the day.
- **No uniform, no shoes:** There was no school uniform; that did not happen until we were in Form 1. I, like most other boys would go to school in bare feet (in spite of asthma!), often even in winter. One reason was that shoes were expensive and also it was the “macho” thing to do. Boys who wore shoes and socks were often teased. A result of having bare feet was that one day I stood on a piece of broken glass and received a nasty gash on my right foot; I still have the scar today.
- **Rugby:** During breaks from lessons, we played outside (unless it was raining) and boys and girls were segregated (I think). Boys would often play rough games. The school had Rugby teams and I, in spite of asthma, became quite a good half back, good enough to be in a team that would travel occasionally to other schools to compete. We did not have proper uniforms nor did we wear boots; games were always played in bare feet, and remember that Rugby is played in winter!

- **Tennis court:** The school had a tennis court (but I cannot remember it ever being used for that purpose) which doubled as a netball court for girls (called ‘basketball’ then as no-one played or had even heard of ‘indoor’ basketball when I was at primary school.
- **Swims:** Out-of-school activities were few and far between. In the later years, during the summer months, we would be bussed to the (one) public swimming pool to learn how to swim; I remember there was always a strong smell of chlorine.
- **Food:** At morning break, a free apple and a half-pint of milk were provided and were compulsory unless a pupil had a good excuse. This was partly due to an excess of apples at that time and the need to improve the health of children after the war years of rationing. Free milk, though not apples, was still provided even when I was in Form 6A (Form '7'), though it was no longer compulsory. Adjacent to the school were two shops that sold pies - one shop had rectangular shaped pies, the other 'pie'/oval shaped.
- **Lunches:** My mother would make a school lunch most days. This would consist of some sandwiches (I think that is when I started to like tomato sandwiches), a slice of cake (I especially liked my mother's rich fruit cakes) and a bottle of fruit cordial (not juice - the only juice you got then was if you squeezed the fruit yourselves). I would occasionally be allowed to buy a pie for lunch. There was no school tuck shop. A fish 'n chip shop opened down the road a little but not while I was at Mangapapa School.
- **Fancy dress ball:** Every year, the school would hold a “fancy dress ball” in a public (army) hall. This was always looked forward to though I only remember going to them in the later years of primary school.



[not sure of the year]



1947 (Standard 1)



1949 (Standard 3)

I cannot remember the kinds of dances we did, but I think they were 'square' dances. At that age, there were no individual boy-girl dancing. A highlight of the ball was the supper; I do remember those!

**School photos:** Here are some photos of my primary school days.

- Standard 2 (Primary 4) in 1948:



There were no school uniforms when we were in primary school. We had a lady teacher for this class, though she is not in the photo. Can you see me?

- Standard 3 (Primary 5) in 1949:



We had a male teacher this year. Many of the male teachers in schools were returned servicemen from the war (we did not call them veterans). I do not remember his name, though I do remember the names of many of my classmates.

- Standard 4 (Primary 6) in 1950:



Again, we had a male teacher (Mr Mines). Note that most of the boys are bare-feet; it was the done thing then and there were no school rules forbidding it, probably because the schools knew that many parents just couldn't afford them, at least for use every day. There is one boy in the photo with shoes and with his socks pulled up high, which was another thing boys were loathe to do. (At secondary school, we had to wear shoes and socks, though sandals were also allowed in summer), and the socks had to be high, something which many boys, including myself, did not do. Rather, we wanted to have the socks around our ankles). The boy in the front row of the photograph wearing shoes and socks (and pulled up high; boys did not do that!) was teased somewhat and called "Flower". Poor guy!

Some of the pupils in these photos were in the same classes as me in later years. One girl was in most of the same classes as me even right up to MSc level (1961) at university (Standard 4 photo, second row from back, extreme right).

In these classes, some boys were several years older than the rest of us, though I am not sure why. For example, the boys in the Standard 4 photo, rear row, second and third from the left. The name of the latter (in black) was Barry Cameron (see later under 'Punishment').

### **Other incidents at primary school**

I mention here some of the things that happened at primary school.

- **Classroom heating:** Many of the classrooms used to have a wood-burning steel heater in the centre of the room to keep us warm in winter. I remember that in Standard 2, the teacher would sometimes have it so hot that the steel would glow red-hot. That used to terrify me.
- **Writing competitions:** In those days, there used to be a handwriting/penmanship competition throughout the country. I entered at least twice as my handwriting was very good. When in Standard 2, I was placed first equal (though not in the whole country - just 'Division 1.2' wherever that was). The picture shows the prize order form. It was called the "Weetbix Prize" named after a popular breakfast cereal of those days (and still is). I was actually annoyed at receiving the prize as the two of us who shared first had to split the first prize which was seven shillings and sixpence (7/6 as we used to write it), so my share was just three shillings and ninepence (3/9; there are 12 pence in one shilling), whereas the 'second' prize winner got the full second prize of five shillings (5/-).

PRIZE ORDER FORM

**DOMINION INDUSTRIES JOURNAL**  
(In which is Incorporated "British and Colonial Industries")

P.O. Box 1507,  
AUCKLAND, N.Z.

25 NOV 1948, 194

..... Weetbix Prize .....

Headmaster  
Mangapapa School

Dear Sir,

Please deliver to Row Hayward

of Mangapapa School

Book Prize  
Goods to the value of 3/9 being 1st Trophy

in the 1. 2 Division of the Dominion Industries Writing Competition.

Yours faithfully,  
DOMINION INDUSTRIES JOURNAL

Per [Signature]

Te Rau Press

- **Kissing a girl:** As mentioned elsewhere, at break times, we had to leave the classrooms but were allowed to stay inside when it was wet. In Standard 3 on one such wet day, we boys got up to a bit of mischief. I don't remember exactly what it was but it involved me having to kiss one of the girls. But in order to do this, I had to chase her around the room as I guess she, understandably, was rather reluctant. Her name was Judy Garland and is shown circled in the Standard 3 photo above. At the end of that year, she and her family moved to

Christchurch and when I was teaching at Burnside High School, I met her again. She was a presenter for a children's TV show and had come to the school to film something, so I went up to her and re-introduced myself - she was rather fat by then!

- **Pens:** In those days, we did not have ball-point pens, and fountain pens were just coming into use in schools. All of us had to have a pen holder with a metal nib. Every desk (similar to the one in the picture ) had a space for an ink-well (see it in the picture on the right), into which we would dip the nib. To help dry the ink and soak up excess, we always used blotting paper. Ball-point pens came into use about that time but were not allowed at school.



- **Punishment:** For boys in those days, punishment was often by getting strapped on the hand with a leather belt. This happened to me once in Standard 4. The boy behind me (Barry Cameron) was using his pen as a dart and my back as the dart-board. Well, the pen nib stuck into my back and I, naturally, yelled out. For 'fooling around', I received six (I think) lashes of the strap on my hand - in front of the class. Of course, I did not cry though I probably felt like it. I was rather annoyed as I think it was only me and not the perpetrator who was punished.
- **Arithmetic drill:** I remember that in Standard 4, every day we would practice the +, -, x and division tables. Often we would recite these in unison - boring but effective. Also, many mornings would begin with 20 sums - four each of +, -, x and division that were written on the blackboard.
- **Art work:** I was not really an artist but I enjoyed drawing. I remember in Standard 4 we would place easels in the corridor for art work. (I was conveniently placed opposite a girl - Doreen - that I liked.) When learning about Captain Cook's voyage of navigation around New Zealand, I drew a large map of the country showing his route. To show the coastline, I shaded it in blue. [See also the art work in my Form 2 Science notebook which is in this folder.]
- **Javelin incident:** In 1950, the British Empire Games (now the Commonwealth Games) were held in Auckland. After the games, many of the competitors, particularly overseas ones, would tour parts of the country. Mangapapa School received a visit from Luke Tunabuna from Fiji, who got the silver medal in the men's javelin. I remember the whole school was seated on the grass in front of the school while he demonstrated the



javelin throw. Unfortunately, his throw went a bit too far and pierced the corrugated metal fence of the adjoining property, which happened to be the shop plus house of a Mr Kerr, a very grumpy man. We all suspected there would be consequences. And sure enough, out he came (he must have been watching through a window and saw what happened) on his side of the fence, and, instead of a scolding, passed over a pot of paint and asked Luke to paint his name under the hole made by the javelin. He painted a circle around the hole then wrote “Luke T 1950”. The fence has since gone. The picture above is of Luke Tunabuna, later in life, with the citation for his performance.

### Train journeys

- **Steam trains:** We would occasionally visit relatives in other town. Before we had a car, we had to travel by train. I always loved travelling by train (and still do). The trains in those days had steam engines and I was always a bit frightened that they might explode. No



air-conditioning of course, just fans (see photo). To keep cool, people used to lower the windows. But these had to be closed again when going through tunnels to avoid the carriages filling with smoke from the engine and getting covered with soot.



- **Railcars:** Later, the steam trains were replaced by two-carriage diesel ‘railcars’ (picture shows the 1955 version). One carriage was for smokers, the other was non-smoking.



- **Railway lines:** These only went south from Gisborne to Wellington. A track to Auckland was started but the rough terrain of the Waioeka Gorge proved to be too difficult so that section of route was never completed. The line to the south crossed the airport runway, so had to stop if an aircraft was taking off! The photograph shows a train waiting for a plane to clear the runway (taken after my time in Gisborne).



- **Taxi incident:** Once, when I was quite young, on arriving back at the railway station, I somehow got into the wrong taxi with a group of Maoris and was taken with them to a fish and chip restaurant in the main street of Gisborne. I was eventually found, but it didn’t seem to worry me at all.

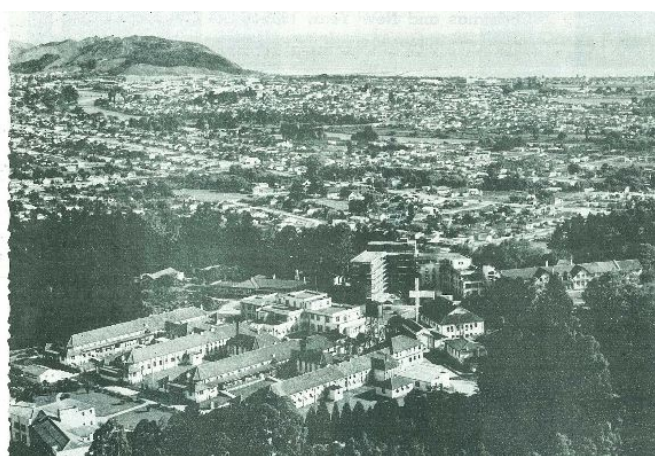


### Houses and house fires

- Most houses in New Zealand are built of wood or have wooden frames (as the Christchurch house does) rather than brick frames. This is because of earthquakes; brick frames collapse very easily when shaken whereas wooden frames bend and so houses are less likely to fall down. Many houses, though not our first house, also had open fireplaces that burnt wood or coal. Because of these two factors (wood plus open fireplaces), house fires were not uncommon. I remember one night in 1948(?) there was a house fire about a kilometre from our place. We could see the glow so we walked down to see. The house was completely destroyed and to protect the house next door (belonging to a family we knew), water was being continually sprayed onto the walls of the house.

### Hospital visits

- When we boys were young, we would walk with our mother up the hill behind our place to the hospital on top of the hill to visit patients. (In those days, many hospitals were built on hills; it was believed this was healthier). I can't say we enjoyed the visiting but it did show a good side of our mother. But we did like playing on the hillside, half of which was



covered with large trees. (The hospital is now gone – replaced with one at sea level.) The picture shows the hospital in 1955 (taken from "Photo News"). Our house would be located about middle right at the bottom of the hill.

### Local airport

- Passenger planes flew in and out of Gisborne, though not frequently. The name of the airfield was "Darton Field". As boys, we would occasionally cycle to the airport to look and to play. We would even cycle around the perimeter and stand on the runway. There was a short sealed runway in one direction (which the railway line crossed; in the other direction it was just



grass. After the war, Lockheed 'Lodestars' were used for passenger flights (one of which is pictured). My father would sometimes go to Wellington (and Auckland, though I am not sure of this) on these planes. They could not make it non-stop, but needed to stop at Napier and Palmerston North. Later, these aircraft were replaced by DC-3 aircraft. On many mornings, and especially on cold winter mornings, at about 6.30 or 7.00 am, we could hear

the (piston-engined) engines of planes being warmed up; this could last for up to half an hour.

There was also a flying club based at the airfield that flew Tiger Moth aircraft. The picture shows one of these flying over the bay at Gisborne. We would often see these flying across the town. The airfield was also the base for the aerial fertiliser topdressing of farms. (Look back at the picture of the train waiting to cross the runway. The plane is one such topdressing plane, though as it is a DC-3, it would probably be after my time in Gisborne.)

