

## **TAPU REMEMBERED**

Well it was back in the early 1940's that was when my fond memories began. My grandparents bought a section across from the beach at TAPU along from the massive Pohutukawa.

We were summer visitors and our accommodation was always basic. To begin with we had a converted creosote painted garage.

No electricity, a gravel road in front with cows grazing along the roadside. We knew nearly every car that passed by.

I can still picture my mother reading at night by the light of the kerosene lamp as the 4 of us (2 brothers and 1 baby sister) lay tucked up in our canvas stretchers. We went to sleep surrounded by sacking curtains trimmed with cotton print and the steady rhythmic murmur of the waves.

Milk was collected in a billy from a local squatter whose hygiene left something to be desired. It resulted in my brother developing an abscess on his chest followed by osteomyelitis in his leg.

Bread was delivered unwrapped to the store via the back window of the bus.

My father was an early surveyor draughtsman for the govt and spent many months traversing the Coromandel ranges, he was able to point out to us the makeshift campsites that gumdiggers would use, their sacking bunks would be lined with a tangle of springy fern to make a mattress, he always returned with stories of the dramatic and beautiful scenery.

Mother was an adventurer at heart and picnics were her forte. When the tide was low we would pack our togs and lunch and trudge up to our favourite pools in the Tapu Creek. One time when we were returning our way was blocked at the pub, the road had come to a standstill with a herd of cattle across it. They were waiting for the drovers who had called in for a beer to quench their thirst in the baking heat.

The year of the Polio epidemic we had an extended stay. I remember my brother and I becoming very ill with high fever one day, possibly we picked up a virus from the dirty bread. A camper who had nursing qualifications advised our mother not to shift us the Thames, we were too ill. Somehow the crisis passed and we pulled through without damage.

Fishing for Pakete at the rocks with manuka pole rods was a favourite pastime. Along with other local children we would brave the incoming tide to return to the safety of the road.

Sometimes we would look for native Kokopu and Koura in the limpid pools of the Diehard stream. The air was full of the sound of Cicadas and Kingfishers, which nested in the holes in the bank alongside the stream.

Occasionally there would be a cloudburst and torrents of mud would sweep down from the little waterfall behind the batches. This would flood onto the beach.

We always ran round barefooted. Boxthorn hedges grew in places along the beach. When we unhappily trod on a thorn the agony was unbelievable.

There was an ethic of sharing surplus food among the locals. The plentiful surpluses of Plums, Apricots, citrus and garden veggies and boatloads of Snapper, Gurnard and Kingfish were happily distributed. No freezers then.

On many evenings all the locals, plus any campers would join together and play rounders on the wide expanse of field above the beach, it was such fun.

My Coromandel experience of 60 years was so special. I have tried to recreate some of the feelings in my property at Waikanae Beach. One day I will reward myself with a holiday on the Peninsula. So much has changed.

*Adrienne Jeffs (Webb) April 2007*