



# MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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## A Doubles Match Rae and Bill Edgar

Our Historical Society members, Rae and Bill Edgar, celebrated 70 years of married life in Mount Albert on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018. Commitment to one another, their family, their church, their local community, and to those less fortunate than themselves has been their hallmark. It has been an incredibly active 70 years and, although Bill at 97 is not as active as he once was, Rae at 90 still runs the house and beautiful garden, goes to the gym twice a week, and keeps up with church and other local activities.

They met on the tennis court at the Mount Albert Baptist Church Tennis Club on Bill's return from the war. They were doubles partners, and while Bill was at the net, Rae picked up what he missed on the back line. She says, "[Bill thought] she will be a good wife, she'll pick up the pieces". The fact that he was a very attractive ex-serviceman may also have helped the budding courtship, which after lots of walks, talks, and combined activities, ended in engagement, and a marriage at the church in 1948, followed by an 11½-hour trip on a flying boat to Sydney on honeymoon. The tennis continued into their 80s, as did overseas trips.

Rae has lived all her 90 years in Mount Albert. She grew up in Jersey Avenue then moved a mile away, to Burch Street when she and Bill married, and bought and renovated their first home. In 1958 they built their house in Kerr Taylor Avenue, where the skills they acquired in Burch Street stood them in good stead. They dug foundations, laid concrete drives, and painted the interior – at one stage balancing on floor joists in the kitchen.

Bill came to Mount Albert when he was 13, to attend Mount Albert Grammar



*Rae and Bill cut the cake in 1948.*

School. His father, a school teacher, had moved the family from Thames to Paparua, near Maungataroto, where he was headmaster. Bill stayed with relatives in Alberton Avenue. At school Bill played tennis and soccer, and was in the First 11 for two years. Among his teachers were 'Grannie' Caradus, 'Herbie' Towers, and 'Butch' Brown.

### **Their ancestry**

Rae is of Irish, Scottish, and English descent. Her paternal Grandfather WF Tucker founded Totnes Toffees in Devon before emigrating to New Zealand in 1883. There he began a business in Auckland in 1885, initially making baking powder, and then jelly crystals (Sunshine Jellies) and other sweet products.

Rae's maternal grandfather, Edward Wrigley, was Second Engineer at the Western Springs Water Works. His father, James Wrigley, was architect for the main brick building of the asylum for the mentally ill on the

corner of now Carrington and Great North Roads. Both James and his wife died when their 9 children were quite young, and their grandparents, William Daldy and his second wife Amey, housed them next door in Hepburn Street, Ponsonby.

William Daldy, one of the early businessmen of Auckland, took the first cargo of New Zealand produce to Britain. He was MP for Auckland 1855–1860, first Chairman of the Auckland Harbour Board, and a founder of the New Zealand Insurance Company. Amey, supported by William, was an influential suffragette. Their grandson Edward married Louisa Holloway and they had two daughters, one being Rae's Mother, Nora.

Nora gained a Home Science Degree from the University of Otago, and on returning to Auckland in 1925, married Stan Tucker. As Rae has delved into her history, she has become aware of the input all these people have had in her life: genes, personality, and ability. For example, in 1997 Rae made a Heritage quilt incorporating some old laces and medallions from Grandmother Louisa Wrigley's fine embroidery. Louisa died when Nora was seven – Nora must have inherited the talent for embroidery, as she passed it on to Rae.

Bill is of Scottish and English descent. His mother's English grandfather, William Wood Senior, settled in Thames. His son William opened a general store there and it stayed in the family for four generations. Bill's father John, aged 18, emigrated on his own from Scotland, and in 1911 arrived in Thames with a letter of introduction to William Wood from a member of the Domain Road

Church of Christ in Edinburgh. John worked first with a firm of engineers and builders but later took up teaching. In 1914 John married William Wood's eldest daughter Elsie Jane, with the genuine approval of his future in-laws.

### Rae's early memories

Rae had an older brother and two younger brothers. She and her older brother Brian attended Miss Jenkins's private kindergarten preparatory school in King George's Hall at the terminus (now the Mount Albert shopping centre). Brian graduated as Head Prefect of the kindergarten!

Rae first attended Gladstone Primary School, but Grandpa Tucker insisted she go to St Cuthbert's, saying that he would pay the fees. After the first term he conveniently forgot, making it a struggle for Rae's parents. Rae left school at 15 as her Mother was unwell. She combined her caregiving role with a dressmaking course, and later worked as a dental receptionist, starting at one pound a week and ending up at four pounds. Although she regrets her curtailed education, it did not prevent her from taking up many interesting jobs and activities once her own children were at school.

Rae's was a close-knit family, working and holidaying together. Her early memories include holidays with the Tucker grandparents and cousins at their Muriwai bach, and holidays in Whitianga and travelling there in the old baby Austin complete with dog, luggage, and a mattress tied to the roof. Christmas stockings included a tin of condensed milk, an orange, chewing gum, and other bits and pieces. The Tucker men later built a family bach at Manly where Grandpa Tucker held a church service on the verandah on Sundays. Other families from the Mount Albert Baptist Church, also on holiday, would join them there.

The role of the church was central to family life. That was where they met their friends, celebrated festivals, and enjoyed picnics. At the end of 1940, dynamic young minister Hayes Lloyd came to the Mount Albert Baptist Church, where Rae and her family "enjoyed wonderful years of fellowship, learning, and the nurturing and love of friends' parents and, above all, a

very special group of young people. We had so much fun in a safe environment and I will always be grateful for that" (Rae's memoir).

### Bill's war training

After Bill left school, he went to teachers' college, then taught for three years. At 21 he was called into the army. He was away for four years: two years in the Pacific on a bomber base, air force training in Winnipeg as a navigator, and then further training in England at RAF bases. The war finished, however, before he was needed.



*Bill as an RNZAF officer.*

Bill had one trip over Europe with the RAF, a reconnaissance flight in a Lancaster Bomber piloted by Grahame Turner of Mount Albert. They saw the devastation of Hamburg and Cologne and Bill was briefly allowed to take over the controls. Then, as a flying officer, he spent the last few months in Britain spending time with Grahame Turner, his brother Jack, and father Harvey. Bill travelled all over the country on an officer's free travel pass. On VE Day he stood in Trafalgar Square in a huge cheering crowd and saw Winston Churchill giving his famous V for Victory salute to the people.

### Return to New Zealand

In October 1945 Bill returned home and accepted Harvey Turner's offer to start a new company, Manufacturers Agencies (NZ) Ltd, importing china, porcelain, crystal, silverware, and ornaments. As Bill knew nothing about commercial procedures and

practices, he learnt the hard way with a starting salary of seven pounds a week. "Pretty good for an unqualified returned serviceman", he thought.

In 1948 Bill completed his BA and embarked on commercial studies to support his new job. He was also taking music lessons in piano and organ. When these studies were completed, Rae suggested he take a break from studying as she was virtually a solo parent of their three children. Bill's accountancy qualification led to his teaching night classes, while his music studies equipped him for his role as organist and choir master at the church and his membership of the Royal Auckland Male Choir for many years.

With Harvey Turner as Chairman, Manufacturers Agencies became a leader in its field. Bill retired as managing director in 1989 after 44 years of service. Over those years he, sometimes accompanied by Rae, travelled all over the world importing china, silver, and glassware from the major world manufacturers. One vivid memory is the Bicentenary of the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Manufactory in 1975. Rae and Bill were invited to Copenhagen for a week of meetings, lunches, dinners, tours, midnight fireworks, and an opera, after which they met and talked with Queen Margrethe.

### Family Holidays

After Manly – when Rae's father Stan felt you couldn't get round in your old clothes because of all those people from Auckland – the Tucker families, now including Bill, holidayed at Te Muri, north of Wenderholm, for 19 happy years. Bill, Rae, and the children slept in a tent on the edge of the beach, while Stan and his brother Cliff built a bach from packing cases covered with malthoid. In 1966 the area became a regional park and everything had to be dismantled.

Walking was another family activity and one adventure featured in The New Zealand Herald on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August 1962. On the Saturday (incidentally the day Marilyn Monroe died) the family set off on a fairly strenuous walk in the bush at Karekare. It was in fact so long that they ran out

of daylight. They came to a big waterfall which they could not get around in the dark, so huddling together on a ledge above the river with a parent on either side of the three children, they sang themselves to sleep in their wet jeans, raincoats, and thick jerseys. They got out unscathed around 9am the next day, and made front page news in the Herald on Monday morning.



*Rae & Bill with their children, home safely (NZ Herald 6<sup>th</sup> August 1962)*

Over the years, as a family, they did most of the major and many of the lesser known walks in the South Island. Later Rae and Bill freedom walked the Milford Track, tramped in Stewart Island, and walked the Hollyford Track.

Their last holiday spot was at Parekura in the Bay of Islands. They have great memories of the bach they built there in 1974: spending time with other families, boating, swimming, and playing lots of wild competitive games of Racing Demon, Karam, and 500.

**In the church community**

Both Rae and Bill have given years of service to the Mount Albert Baptist Church in many roles, in Mount Albert and in the wider Baptist community. In 1996 Rae organised a reunion of the Bible classes and young people’s group from 1940 to 1948, and over 100 came from near and far to honour Hayes and May Lloyd, who had had such an influence on their lives.

Bill’s interest in theological education saw him join the Board of the Baptist Carey Theological College in Penrose, serving for over 20 years, 18 as Chairman. He was Baptist representative on the Auckland Council of Churches, and the first Baptist and the first layman to be their chairman. In that

capacity, he and Rae met the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh on the Royal Yacht Britannia in Auckland. Bill reminded the Queen that he had met her more than 20 years earlier at the bicentenary of the Royal Worcester Porcelain Company. The Queen immediately recalled the gift she had been given on that occasion – a coffee set with a decoration once made for an early King of England – and said that they had it at Balmoral and her husband loved using it.

For over 40 years Bill has also given service to the wider community as a Justice of the Peace.

**Hobbies and interests**

As well as travelling, tramping, boating, gardening, and tennis, Bill and Rae have had a host of other interests: bee-keeping, pottery making, Spanish lessons, and computers.

A swarm of bees settled in their garden in the ’70s and thus began years of involvement in the fascinating business of bee-keeping – up to five hives in the garden until Rae became quite allergic to the stings. Bill served on the Auckland Bee-Keepers Association and was made an Honorary Life Member.

Learning the practical side of the industry that Bill had dedicated his working life to at evening pottery classes at Mount Roskill Grammar School was another activity they both enjoyed. The Spanish evening classes at Avondale College, that Lladro friends in Spain had suggested, were not quite so successful.

In 1993 Bill bought his first computer, and he has continued to upgrade. At 97 he has no trouble finding his way around the screen like an expert.

**Family**

Rae and Bill are very proud of their three children. John, who lives in Karekare, is a stone sculptor, and President of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society. Brian, after 20 years in medical research, retrained as a teacher of chemistry and biology, and teaches at Otahuhu College. Catherine, a trained nurse, now works as a medical equipment consultant. They, their partners, and their children give Rae and Bill great joy.

**Looking back over 70 years together**

Rae says “we are both practical, economical, and thrifty and have worked well together.... With Bill’s guidance, I have learned how to paint, concrete, lay and point bricks, garden, tramp, go boating, and travel. Without his help I couldn’t cope with the computer and other modern appliances. Actually I don’t feel the need of most of them but they are part of life these days. I’d rather knit.”

Bill says “with all of the successes in my own career, of equal or greater significance was my decision when I had newly returned from the war to marry Rae. I was amazingly bold to think of having any success in winning her, but it happened.... She has always been and still is a wonderful wife and a marvellous mother and grandmother.”

In 2019, after over 70 years of marriage, they continue to be an exemplary Mount Albert doubles match.



*Rae & Bill all set for tennis.*



*Rae & Bill off on another adventure.*

M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

We have two walks coming up, for members only. To register, email [info@mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz](mailto:info@mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz) or phone 09 846 4509.

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2pm (by popular demand)**

**John Childs repeats the walk he led in Heritage Week 2018**, looking at Pre-World War One homes and buildings in Mount Albert that epitomise the cultural heritage of early prominent families that emigrated from the United Kingdom. We meet at the Mount Albert Presbyterian Church just before 2pm, and the walk ends at the Mount Albert Methodist Church at approximately 3.30pm. One home will be visited. We have a 25 walker limit, so *registration is essential*.

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2019, 2pm, The Shaw Estate, Sandringham**

Ten years ago MAHS conducted a walk of Shawville (off Sandringham Rd) based on information from Dick Scott's book "In Old Mt Albert". We visited Shaw, McDonald, Collins, and Ethel Streets, and Leslie and Kenneth Avenues. Truth being the daughter of time, it appears that Dick Scott was not correct, and that Leslie and Kenneth Avenues were not actually part of the estate, but dissention still rules on that. We invite you to walk Shawville (and Leslie and Kenneth Avenues) with us, to enjoy its history and houses and make up your own mind. We meet on the corner of Shaw Street and Sandringham Road just before 2pm for this walk led by Mary Inomata. Again we have a 25 walker limit, so *registration is essential*.

Notes

**We had Christmas High Tea at Ferndale House on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

Over 40 members braved the very wet spring weather and enjoyed this event. The Auckland City String Quartet played during the afternoon, and presented a most interesting concert after afternoon tea, describing the heritage of their instruments and the history of the works played.



*Sharyn Park, Caroline O'Connor, Eleanor Clemeau*



*Judith Goldie*



*The Auckland City String Quartet*



*Arnold Turner, Alice Wylie, Richie Afford, Marjorie Turner*