

Beryl Carr (nee Winstone)

I was born in Takapuna, the youngest daughter of George and Gertrude Winstone. I went to Takapuna Primary School, at that time the only primary school between Belmont and Milford, then to Takapuna Grammar School from 1931 to 1934 inclusive. Then I did my training at Auckland Kindergarten Association in 1935 and 1936.

Constance Colegrove was the Principal of the Auckland Kindergarten Association. She never married and lived with her parents in Arney Road. My parents knew the Colegrove family. They used to come to Takapuna to their summer cottage at the bottom of Hauraki Road over the years.

Miss Colegrove suggested I come over and see the beautiful kindergarten Sir Arthur Myers kindly built and gave to the children of Auckland City and it was really a lovely building, a two storey building. Not enough was being done for deaf children and she was getting the upper floor for the deaf school. It was the first school for the deaf in Auckland, possibly in New Zealand. The whole top floor was the school for the deaf.

I knew Nancy Emmitt (nee Arthur) and Marie Bomford who were kindergarten teachers, so I started training as a kindergarten teacher. We trained as students in a kindergarten in the mornings from 9am to 12 noon and had lectures at Myers in the afternoons from 1pm to 4.30pm.

Miss Colegrove gave us our lectures – Education, History of Education, activities for small children, Psychology, Red Cross lectures, Hygiene i.e. impetigo, ringworm, care and treatment, contagious sickness and so on. During this period of the Great Depression, mothers had no money for doctors or dentists, only for an occasional District Nurse.

In 1935/36 Miss Colegrove enjoyed a year's leave touring England and Madge Slingsby Newman took over as acting Principal. She had retired from lecturing at Auckland Training College in Epsom. How fortunate we were! She was an inspiring, brilliant lecturer who encouraged each student to extend her capacity and ability. There was no 'toeing the line or circle', Miss Newman believed in freedom and stimulation in education!

In art she was a great follower of Profesor Cizek, and how all her students be they adults or small children responded! There was a feeling of gay happiness about the kindies. In 1947 when touring with my brother and sisters in Vienna I looked up an address Miss Newman had given me. As we spoke no Austrian we hired an interpreter who introduced us to Professor Cizek who talked to us about his work, especially that with 'down and out street kids' who wandered into his large studio to watch him and his students at work. He would put out paper, pens, pencils, crayons and paints for the 6 to 14 year olds to experiment with. The results were astounding, so Cizek had both indoor and outdoor exhibitions. In time, sales of prints paid for materials costs of later tuition. I bought a number of pictures and cards for Miss Newman.

Because I lived in Takapuna I had to take the 6.30 to 7.00am bus, then a ferry boat journey and then a tram ride. So it was a long journey and we were expected to be at kindergarten at about 8.15am to unpack all the gear that was stored away. We'd have the children away at midday and then catch the tram or walk to Myers Park for lectures.

After lectures, those living on the North Shore ran down Queen Street to the Ferry Building to catch the 5pm (or thereabout) ferry to Devonport, Bayswater, Northcote or Birkenhead and finally a bus home. We managed to accomplish a surprising amount of study while travelling!

In my training days I went to six kindergartens. The first one was called Sunbeams and was in a hall in Virginia Avenue off Dominion Road. That was a very poor part of Auckland. Miss Clarice Pragnell was the Director (Head Teacher). She was a lovely sweet person and good with the children but definitely not a personality. She got married from there and Lucy Rothbury became Director. Miss Pragnell had a great assistant, her name was Peggy Arfeldt, she used to live in Bayswater. She came to New Zealand as a refugee with her father and mother and that was in early times when refugees came to NZ for security.

Next I went to Ponsonby Kindergarten. It was in an old primary school, one of the earliest of the primary schools built in Auckland. It had worn itself out. When the Education Department got some money they built a new school on the grounds... I think that's now the Ponsonby St. Mary's Bay Intermediate School. However, at that time it was a wreck of a place, with a huge playground. Miss Vea Middleton was the Director and Gwen Court her assistant. She was the daughter of John Court who had the department store in Queen Street. She was a character. She worked at the kindergarten for many years until she got married.

Miss Colegrove and the directing body had a look and they chose the three most suitable and tidiest rooms of the old school. By the time the students got going with paint brushes, they turned it into a happy kindergarten. Of course there was a lot to be made in those days, a lot of the furniture was made by fathers and friends and people like that. When they could afford it they would buy tables and chairs, and some of the old Auckland families donated money or things in kind.

A lot of the kindergartens when they first started didn't have pianos, so we used to get triangles and drums, and the children used to play rhythm. Some of the girls could play the banjo or the ukulele so music wasn't lost. It was a great part of our life. Some of the girls were beautiful musicians. If a kindergarten was lucky it would have an old gramophone and we'd find old records such as nursery rhymes for it. We had to be very innovative.

At Ponsonby we had a pink and grey parrot called Polly Perkins, a galah. It was the Court's family parrot and lived at the Kindergarten. Polly loved men and hated all women except Gwen. If she wanted to pull a fast one on us and

hadn't had enough attention, she would screech and pull at the latch of the door and get out and she'd fly up to the tram terminal in Ponsonby Road and fly up onto the top of the trams and there she'd be! They couldn't change the tram poles over because Polly would fly from one to the other. We would all be up there trying to get Polly and the tram would be getting late on schedule and we would be getting late for kindergarten.

The next kindergarten I went to was Logan Campbell. We used to call it Victoria Park. It was in the Victoria Park cricket field. Mrs Nathan (Simone Nathan) was on the Committee there. The Director was Olive Garland, who lived in Kingsview Road. Her assistant was Fay Cawkwell who lived over at Devonport in Vauxhall Road with her two aunts. Fay was one of the first New Zealand swimming representatives. Very tall person, very shy. Her brother George was a Rhodes Scholar.

It was a sad kindergarten, it was a poor kindergarten. We had a lot of Chinese and Maoris and of course pakeha. Food was very short there. A lot of the Directors at the kindergartens would get friendly with the bakers in their district. On Fridays we'd go round to the bake houses and we'd each go home with a loaf of bread and we would cut it up and spread it with Vegemite and bake it in the old wooden coal range. Then we'd each take a big tin of rusks for our classes' morning tea back to kindergarten.

Driving out to Birkenhead or out that way, we'd stop at orchards where we would just say who we were and where we taught and they would give us bags of apples and things like that and we would take them back each week to whatever kindergarten we were at. During apple season the children would have their rusks and their apples. Then later the government gave free milk to all kindergartens as well as the primary schools and we would have a bottle of free milk for the children. If they didn't get breakfast or lunch at home, they did have sustenance during the day.

It was considered very important that all children should have a rest after play and being so active for an hour and a half or so and not having been fed properly. We used to get sacks and we would wash them and put a cover over them and the children would lie on them and have a rest after we'd fed them. It was quite common for most of the children to have a sleep before they went home. In the winter we'd try to find wool blankets to cover them.

We'd buy end rolls of paper from the Herald and tear them into sizes for the children to draw on with crayons or to paint on. The parents would make the stands to pin them onto.

Then I was sent to Onehunga. The Director was Ruth Kidd (nee Sutherland) and her assistant was Lucy Rothbury who later became Director of Sunbeams Kindergarten when Clarice Pragnell got married.

When I was teaching out at Onehunga I'd have to catch the 6.30am bus because it was such a long way to get there. I would catch the bus, never later than 7.00am for most of the kindergartens. If I was going to Ponsonby or

Virginia Avenue or to Myers, I would catch the 7.00am bus. Then I would catch the ferry and the tram out to Mt Smart corner and I'd have my rope with all the little knotted loops on it and would pick up about 20 or more children as we walked down Queen Street, Onehunga, right down to the bottom of it, nearly to the waterfront there. Each child held onto a knotted loop on the rope. Those little children used to be so happy walking down there. All the years I did escorts in various parts of Auckland, I didn't ever hear of one child knocked or hurt or damaged by traffic.

I was sent next to Eden Park where we had a kindergarten in the changing rooms under the grandstand. It was called Haiata Kindergarten. The Rugby Union allowed us to use the back storage part. It was rather unclean and we had to busy ourselves and clean it up each day for kindergarten and again afterwards for the football training session. They didn't train in the mornings. We used it in the morning and we had to have everything put away by the afternoon. They did evening training.

I was the only student there, because it was only a small group. We usually tried to have about 30 children at a kindergarten at least, to make it pay. More children, more staff. At some places the committee would have to pay rental. Most parents couldn't afford a donation, some gave a penny a week, some sixpence a week. The 1930's was a very bad depression. I was only there a term. We had no musical instruments at all. It was very difficult storing materials and food.

In 1936 I had my turn at Myers Park. By then Miss Vea Middleton had been transferred from Ponsonby to Myers Park. Vea was tall and charming with a nice smile. She had a lovely personality and was loved by the children and students alike.

Myers was a lovely kindergarten, sunny and clean and nice. That was our gem. We loved going there, especially compared to some of the other kindergartens. We had to study hygiene and children at the poorer kindergartens had to have bowls and a jug to wash their hands, whereas at Myers we had lovely porcelain sinks and proper plumbing for toilets. There was a lovely refreshing happy air at Myers at the time of a very sad depression when people were short of food. It had to be well locked up after kindergarten because breaking in was very common in those days.

At Myers we had two goldfish – Tiddlywinks and Tiddlywol. Vea, who was musical, wrote a song and put it to music:-

*Tiddlywinks and Tiddlywol
Were two little fishes that lived in a bowl.
They looked so alike that everyone thinks
That Tiddlywol is Tiddlywinks!*

There came a time when we decided to use carbolic soap for impetigo. We came in one morning and went into the main room and Tiddlywinks and Tiddlywol had turned up their toes. We saw a little piece of carbolic soap in their bowl. We rushed in to Vea Middleton. What to do? We rushed down

Queen Street with the goldfish bowl to the pet shop. We were his first customers that morning. We chose two goldfish and rushed back up and nary a child missed Tiddlywinks and Tiddlywol!

The big rocking horse at Myers used to be at John Courts. When Mr. Court had his family he bought another rocking horse for his own children and when Gwen Court came to Myers Kindergarten to do her training she brought the rocking horse and that's the old John Court rocking horse that's at Myers.

From Myers we used to do an escort walk up the concrete steps going from Myers Park through St. Kevin's Arcade to Karangahape Road and drop some children off there and then go across the road to John Courts and drop others off. Another escort duty was across Queen Street up City Street, a steep street, up to Anzac Avenue, and drop children off. There were many houses in that area then, many cottages like the fencible cottages.

At that time Myers was all open, no fence. We had to be watchful because often you would find the old drunkies sleeping underneath the trees. We had to be very careful about that.

From there I was sent to Eden Terrace Kindergarten. That would have all been pulled down and rebuilt around there. The Director was Miss White, old-fashioned and tough on kids and students. Jean Watt, she was Jean Chandler before she married, was the assistant there. Jean had done the training as a hobby because she felt it was needed. When war was declared in 1939, working for the Red Cross became very popular. Some girls joined the army, some joined the navy. Of course we were all very manpowered as fast as they could look at us. Any job a girl could do to relieve a male soldier, they got the girls to do. Jean joined the VAD (Red Cross), and she went over as a VAD with the first corps of nurses to Egypt and was eventually discharged to America and she didn't ever come back. But she did do work in America for children who were in orphanages, so she kept up her interest.

The next one I went to was Onewa, in Onewa Road, Northcote. It was one of the last kindergartens they opened in my time. It was in the RSA building. Isobel Gilfillan was the Director. She lived in Birkenhead and ran the kindergarten for several years. I went over there as an unpaid assistant because they didn't have any money to pay me. A lot of us knew the work needed to be done and if they didn't have the money a lot of us might have done a term or two terms for nothing. Of course all our training was voluntary, we weren't paid at all, got no government assistance at all, no equipment given to us. We had to make it all ourselves.

Our parents paid all our fees. We had to buy all our books and uniforms, which were smocks in different bright colours. We bought these at George Courts. We'd get two smocks, the collar and cuffs a different colour. Two-toned greens, for example. George Courts would measure you and give a discount.

We had to pay for all our fares. Nancy Emmitt (nee Arthur) was living in Clifton Road in Takapuna. She had to go up the road to catch a bus, then a ferry and then the Otahuhu bus all the way out to Otahuhu. She resigned to get married and then opened a private kindergarten in her home. I wasn't sent to Otahuhu.

Isobel Gilfillan resigned and I became Director at Onewa. My assistant was Marion Roberts. However, at that time there was a war on and I knew that I wouldn't be satisfied teaching kindergarten and wanted to do more for the war effort, so I went to the Cargen training school at Auckland Hospital until I passed all the first year exams and got my second stripe as a nurse. I had previously applied to become a physiotherapist which was also considered to be an essential job during the war. Eventually I had a letter from Otago saying that they had a place for me in 1941 in the school of physiotherapy so I went there and started my career as a physiotherapist.