

Lindsey Rea (by her daughter Lindsey Rea)

My mother was born on the 7th of February 1923, in the Waikato, in Frankton Junction. Frankton Junction is on her birth certificate and passport. She always said that it sounds like she was born between trains. Her family lived in Cambridge. Her father at various times was a butcher, a carpenter and real estate agent. Her mother had worked for solicitors but didn't work outside of her home for the time of her marriage although she always did the books for my grandfather's businesses, paid the staff etc

My mother was educated at primary school in Cambridge, then went to Epsom Girls Grammar and did a BA and Dip Teaching at Auckland University and also did some papers at Otago University. She married my father, John Rea, in November 1945. She spent her honeymoon in Pahiatua because my father came back from the war and was attached to the Polish Children's Refugee Camp in Pahiatua. He was a New Zealander and was a medical student. During the war he worked in the malaria control unit in the South Pacific. The Polish children came over here in a ship and came down with malaria. They moved a whole medical unit into Pahiatua along with them. David Lange's father was there and my father was there in the lab because he wasn't yet qualified as a doctor, but had been a laboratory technician before he became a doctor. He only got two days off for the wedding. They stayed in a hotel in Pahiatua, and father got up every morning and went to work. So there was my mother stuck in Pahiatua so she bought a horse.

She always made the best of difficult situations. She'd been brought up on a farm in the Waikato and they always had horses. She was talking to this chap and he had a horse that wouldn't go over bridges. This was its last chance before it became jellymeat and she bought it from him. She spent 2 weeks working this horse around Pahiatua and got it to go over bridges and sold it to somebody else at the end of the fortnight.

Then they went to Dunedin and my father was eventually de-mobbed and finished his medical studies. My mother worked for Child Welfare. Once she left University, she had worked for the School for the Deaf at Lopdell House in Titirangi. She graduated as a teacher but she didn't work in a 'normal' class for most of her education career.

She had always been interested in children. She said that one of her earliest childhood memories was going with her parents to some sort of festival near Cambridge and there was a whole row of children all dressed almost identically. All nice and neat etc. She wanted them all, wanted to take them all home. It was an orphanage outing. She was always very child orientated. Her main interests were children and education. So she went to University, got the appropriate qualifications, settled in to teach but taught the difficult sort such as School for the Deaf and then later went into child therapy and child psychology.

In Dunedin she became a Child Welfare Officer. She had some difficulty getting pregnant. I wasn't born until they had been married 5 years. She took parental leave, or maternity leave it was in those days, which was quite unusual at the time. The Public Service Association organiser came round and said to my mother that she could take maternity leave if she wanted. My mother hadn't thought too much about that but decided that she would. Six weeks after she had me, my father lost his Bursary. Without father's Bursary there was no money, so mother went back to work. Because she had taken maternity leave she had the right to go back to her grade and her old salary, so that was enough to keep us.

Her father's sister, her aunt, came down to live with us and looked after me. She had been a housekeeper at the Auckland Club and she chucked in the job and came down to Dunedin. She moved in with mum and dad and looked after me and then my brother John who was 2 ½ years younger than me. By that stage father had finished his medical degree and we came back to Auckland for a couple of registrar and locum years. We had a couple of years in Dannevirke and then he was in Wairoa as a locum. He got a job here in Auckland which turned into a partnership and the family lived in various houses around Mission Bay and Kohimarama. After that, apart from a couple of years in Singapore during the 70's and a couple of years when my father was in Waiuru and mother was there intermittently, they were Auckland based.

Mother got involved in kindergarten when I went to kindergarten in Dunedin. She continued with that interest when we came to Auckland. She was very much involved with the Mission Bay Kindergarten because by that stage I had several brethren and they all went through the Mission Bay Kindergarten.

She was on the Executive at Mission Bay Kindergarten and in 1965 when my youngest brother went to school she was elected onto the Auckland Kindergarten Association Executive (now known as the Auckland Kindergarten Association Council). The same year she was elected the first woman President of the Auckland Kindergarten Association.

Most of the people that were on the Executive were Auckland captains of business looking for something for their CVs. Meetings at 5.30pm suited them fine. They walked out of their offices and up to the AKA in Myers Park, but it was a bit difficult for a mother of 5 children who lived in Mission Bay. She had to get herself in here, initially on the bus, and then eventually she got her driver's licence and a car. She made various domestic arrangements to have us and father fed and watered until she could get home.

At the AKA there was a Secretary who was a paid staff member who had previously done all the administrative work. Mother said she had some trouble persuading this woman that she did actually want to be a lot more hands on and be involved in things and discuss things before they turned up on the Council table. She worked her way around that. Those of course were the days when there were kindergartens opening up all over Auckland and in the top half of the

North Island. Mother was constantly going around the place speaking at various fundraising events and opening kindergartens. Communities would get together to start a kindergarten. They raised money, then the government chucked in the other half and got it built. Then mother would go and cut the ribbon. We've got quite a few pictures and newspaper clippings of mother being involved with the local dignitaries, opening various kindergartens from Kaikohe to Flat Bush. She was often off at various kindergarten conferences, traveling up north putting Establishment Committees together, helping with their fundraising and dealing with the government about subsidies etc. and then getting it built.

She also lectured at the Kindergarten Teachers Training College, which at the time was in Remuera in Arney Road. She was on the committee that selected the students, and she lectured there intermittently. She was their relief because she could teach quite a wide range of things. I remember my guinea pig that used to constantly disappear for lectures on small animals suitable for kindergartens. We had cats, guinea pigs and budgies. I don't think she took the cats, but the guinea pig regularly got put in the carry cage and taken off for discussions on care. In fact, my last guinea pig went to Mission Bay Kindergarten when I outgrew that phase.

So basically we grew up with kindergarten things. There was the kindergarten Ball. Mission Bay every year had a major fundraising Ball that was at St Helier's War Memorial Hall and mother was always involved with the Ball Committee. We always had a pre-Ball party at our house. Us kids decided we liked cashew nuts but we didn't like olives! We would go round picking out the bits of leftovers. After they would go out, we would drink the ginger ale that was left in the bottle! The Kindergarten Ball was always a highlight of our year as well as mother's.

In 1969 she became Vice President of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Association, a national body. She also worked for the Family Guidance Centre, where she started part time and then most of the time went full time. She was at the Family Guidance Centre for 6½ years and she left there because my father went to Singapore and she went with him.

My father had previously been in Vietnam. He had been a General Practitioner in Auckland, but in the later '60's there were some domestic difficulties and in 1969 he went to Vietnam in the Combined Services Team. He hadn't actually left the Army, but had continued in the Territorials after the war and had continued to be involved in some military medical things. After a year or so in Vietnam he came back to New Zealand and set up a general practice in Kaikohe but the people, because mother had opened their kindergarten, knew perfectly well that the lady who was accompanying Dr Rea and calling herself Mrs Rea was not in fact the woman to whom he was married. So things were a bit stiff in Kaikohe. When that all turned to custard, father fled back to Vietnam and was involved with External Affairs for a while longer and then in 1971 he was offered a posting as second in charge at Waitangi with the New Zealand Forces there.

He and mother thought that the devil you knew was better than the devil you didn't, so they got back together again and had a couple of years in Singapore where mother got herself a teaching job. She wasn't about to sit around doing bits and pieces like the other Army wives. What I think she got was one of the only jobs she ever had teaching a 'normal' class and she worked at the NZ Services School in Woodlands and then in Tengah. She had some years doing both remedial teaching and family guidance in Singapore.

The penalty for 4 years in Singapore was 2 years in Waiouru and father was posted to Waiouru in August, to a tiny house. The previous medical officer had been a little Sri Lankan Doctor who had been married to a little NZ nurse. They had no children and the army had put them in a non-commissioned officer's house, which was 2 ½ bedrooms and was tiny. They expected father to move into that. We were all reasonably adult by that stage; the youngest of my brothers came from secondary school in Singapore and in New Zealand boarded at St Patrick's College. Technically there weren't any of us at home, although we were all still involved with the family, coming home for Christmas etc. Anyway, mother said she wasn't living in this house and moved into a local motel. I don't know how many square metres the house was, but we had the same number of cubic metres worth of furniture arriving on the Jalunga which was the Army's ship. Then they moved us into a proper 4 bedroom, decent sized house that fitted quite a lot of our furniture.

Mother spent 3 weeks in Waiouru being bored so got herself a job as a preschool advisor with the Education Department in Waikato. She got a territory, which extended as far as National Park so she arranged things so that she was visiting in the southern section of the patch on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons and she got herself a little flat in Hamilton by the University so she was there during the week and came back to Waiouru on the weekends and during the holidays. Father usually cooked for himself or ate in the mess and we all came home in the holidays and spent a bit of time in Waiouru. Father was there for a couple of years and then got a job back here in Auckland and mother eventually got a job with the Education Department in Auckland still being a preschool advisor. At that stage I was working for the Education Department in Auckland. I'd done my degree in Wellington, worked at the University for a while and then worked for the Education Department in the Building Division.

I got transferred back to Auckland and at one stage was working in the preschool side of the Building Division and mother was working on the professional side of the preschool department. This caused a lot of difficulty...people would ring up and say they would like to speak to "Lindsey Rea" and the departmental telephonist would say, "Which one?" and they'd say, "The one in preschool". So the telephonist would say, "I need a bit more than that. Do you want the one on the professional side or the one on the building side?" and of course they didn't know there were two of us. That caused some amusement.

I then moved on in 1981 to another job. Mother stayed there until 1983 when she retired. In those days when you turned 60 you had to retire and so she went.

She continued to have an association with the Family Guidance Centre. She was on their Board when she came back. She kept on working with families and children and she also continued to have a number of private clients, people who she counseled through the Guidance Center. Father worked at AIT (now AUT) for a while and then in his older years he worked at St Andrews Rest Home until he retired quietly into gardening and other things.

Mother was still involved with U3A and Probus right up till she had her second to last stroke in February this year. She died in September 2003.

In lieu of flowers we asked that donations be sent to the Auckland Kindergarten Association. We didn't want to put florists out of business but when father died it went to the Foundation for the Blind so we were looking for something for mother, and of course the thing that was closest to mother's heart was the Auckland Kindergarten Association. It's been a very big part of her life so it was the logical thing to do.

(2 letters attached)