

Hilary in New Zealand; *as told to us by Hilary's sister Lindsay*

Hilary was born in the southern city of Dunedin, our father being a school-teacher and Mum an accomplished pianist and singer – Hilary started her piano lessons at the age of 3! She and Mum had perfect pitch and I do not think they ever quite understood the difficulties I had with a less good ear. I came along 3 ½ years later and I think she resented me a little at first, but she became the perfect older sister and teacher. She used to attend Sunday School in the morning and then give me my Sunday School lessons in the afternoon. She is the one who read to me as a child.

At the end of the war we moved to the country, first to a small township in Southland and in 1948 to Clutha Valley - inland from Balclutha. Seven small schools had been consolidated into one much larger school, which to avoid acrimony was built in the middle of nowhere - the school, the headmaster's house, the house for the senior secondary assistant and the school bus garage in the centre of the region – a shop and Post office being over a mile away. The secondary assistant had two children of my age, but every other pupil came by bus. After school we three younger children had an immense playground – 5 acres of school grounds surrounded by trees ideal for huts, and all the surrounding paddocks with stagnant pools, crops of swedes for eating, rock outcrops where we made Maori ovens - but everyone of Hilary's age left at 3pm.

While we played, she practised the piano, studied her music theory and wrote incessantly mainly for the various children's magazines and newspaper children's pages that proliferated after the war – jokes, anecdotes, competitions, letters to the editor – she loved it all. Eventually she wrote her own magazine – one issue a month for more than 4 years, each year sporting a different cover. And while of course I had to enter the competitions she had fun making up contributions from non-existent children.

After tea in the long summer evening she came into her own and organised the activities for the three of us. More formal games such as longball and cricket, scavenger hunts, plays (which our parents had to watch) and even activities in the tiny school swimming pool. And, at night when we were supposed to be sleeping she started a long series of stories involving our toys as characters who had all sorts of adventures. They were so exciting that she narrated long into the night and I had to lie facing the door so that I could warn if Mum came to see if we had stopped talking.

Eventually she boarded with a relative for her 6th form year at High School in Dunedin and the following year we came back there to live. Hilary did two master's degrees at the University of Otago, became a foundation teacher at Bayfield High school while still doing papers for her second degree and her Mus Bac, and finally successfully obtained a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom.

However, as an advertisement promoting local tourism in New Zealand said: 'don't leave town 'til you've seen the country' and she did not. In the 1960s she travelled extensively in New Zealand; I do not think there was any part she did not explore. And in her 5-yearly trips back to New Zealand thereafter she did it all again (except for Stewart Island – that had only one trip) to see what changes had been made and also to call on, until recently, every single friend and relative she had. Indeed, when my husband and I took her on a road trip around the North Island one year, I saw relations I had not met for 30 years, but for her it was the sixth visit

And although we were so far apart, we stayed the closest of sisters. The visits home were never long enough for all we had to say and phone calls, more especially after she retired, usually lasted at the very least half an hour. I knew all about The Ballance House and the activities there long before I came to my duty as scone maker and tea maker. Hilary of course loved taking the tours the most – a teacher still!

Hilary at The Ballance House; *Paul Hewitt, Chairman of the Board of Directors*

Hilary was legendary in the world of music in academic circles, reaching her zenith as Professor of Music at the University of Ulster, prior to retirement. She was a doughty, proud Kiwi who had a keen, if waspish, sense of humour and heart of gold. She never forgot her roots and poured so much of her multifaceted personality and time into the Ulster New Zealand Trust. Her interests in the Fine Arts were unending and her memory of the smallest details impressive.

We will always remember her annual playing of the New Zealand National Anthem each Waitangi Day on the Barn piano which was rarely in tune and even less often reliable in its keyboard actions. Only a couple of years ago she gave a succinct, beautifully illustrated and well researched talk, at that early February celebration which meant so much to her, on the songs enjoyed by Anzac and international members of the forces during World Wars - a topic that few in the world could have given - and none with the same panache and obvious enjoyment with which Hilary delivered it, always sensitive to the supreme sacrifices paid by thousands of serving men and women.

Hilary Bracefield was a stalwart of our Ulster New Zealand Trust at The Ballance House family and an outstanding representative of her native country who will never be forgotten by those of us who had the privilege of knowing and working alongside her.

On behalf of my colleague Directors, our volunteers and the general membership of the UNZT, I would like to pass on our deepest sympathy to her sister, her relatives and all her friends in Northern Ireland.