

FAMILY AFFAIRS

The house the Hoodless's occupied was one of those allotted to medical staff. It was near the CMS and Colonial War Memorial Hospital. It was designated semi-furnished but Hilda promptly delegated most of the furniture to the garage to replace it with her own. The garage became a storeroom because DWH declined to own a car and settled for taxis. The firm they dealt with provided a regular driver but very often they chose to walk one way at least, to any engagements, partly for pleasure, partly to keep fit. For several years DWH, Sir Henry Scott and Dr Pearce used to walk several miles before breakfast, regularly. Their route usually took them to the Suva Point where they swam before returning home.

DWH was careful about money. This stemmed partly from his experience, partly from necessity. Earlier in his Colonial Service career he had made what turned out to be a decision he regretted. Initially membership of a superannuation scheme was voluntary and he chose not to join. When membership of the scheme became compulsory for new appointees, serving personnel were given a choice that had to be made by a certain date. At that time DWH was single and decided against joining. After marriage he applied to join the scheme but was informed he was too late, his previous decision must stand. He decided then to save himself to make retirement financially secure for his wife. They lived comfortably enough, but not frivolously or extravagantly.

The CMS became a show place for distinguished visitors to Suva, in the late 1930's. For some, including H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester and G.W. Forbes, Prime Minister of New Zealand it must have been part of the perpetual round; for others like the school, its students and aims, would have held real interest. Professor Sydney Smith, Dean of Edinburgh University, the author of a standard textbook of that era *Forensic Medicine*, arrived when the pathology and bacteriology laboratories were under construction, when his expert advice was pertinent and welcome.

Dr Peter Buck, the son of an Irish father and Maori mother had been on vacation in New Zealand after a two year term as Professor of Anthropology at Yale and was passing through Suva on his way to Hawaii where he was to become Director of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum. He spoke to the students of his belief in maintaining a strong sense of racial pride, of the needs of Polynesian peoples to learn to overcome the environmental checks of recent decades, to develop their potentialities to take a fitting place in the world as they found it, and to be of service to their peoples.

Lord Horder, the English physician, chose to sit among a class while a Fijian

student gave a demonstration of the intricacies of the scapular region, then he asked questions, carrying on an informal tutorial as he did so.

The most honoured guest of all was Victor Heiser MD, the Medical Director General of the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation which had granted financial support for the School. Dr Heiser first visited Fiji in 1916 initiating the early campaign for the Foundation. In 1934 he returned to visit the School and travel widely throughout the Pacific with Dr Lambert. His own story *A Doctor's Odyssey* tells of a life devoted to public health in almost every part of the world.

The ever increasing Europeanisation of the races of the South Pacific crept into the ways of the students. The Cook Islands students, having received their preliminary education at Te Aute College in New Zealand, arrived wearing trousers, shoes and socks in contrast to the sulus or lava-lavas, and bare feet of the Fijians, Samoans, Tongans and Gilbertese. The Principal watched the efforts of some of the students to copy one or more of the habits of the Cook Islanders. He was particularly amused when there was a craze among the Fijians for parting their wiry hair. Most students kept to their own native customs of dress during the week but dressed up in semi-European fashion for social occasions. Sports facilities were improved by levelling and draining the St Luke's playing fields adjacent to the school. There was no difficulty in encouraging the students to participate in sport. On the contrary it was sometimes necessary to control their indulgence so that hospital duties and studies were not neglected. The frequent injuries and fractures incurred on the rugby field raised the question of whether they would be wiser to change to soccer but the suggestion was so unpopular that rugby reigned.

The CMS cricket team won the Sir Walter Carpenter Challenge Shield for 1937-38, the shield being presented personally to the captain, Aisake Niu, by Sir Walter. The CMS cricketers had a dedicated coach in Mr P.A. Snow of the Colonial Administration Service. In a review 'Cricket at the CMS' March 1940 (Vol. 3 No. 2) Mr Snow wrote almost lyrically:

"It is no exaggeration, nor a case of the wish conceiving the thought, to state that the fielding of the CMS compares favourably with that of the highest class of cricket in England. The agility of the fielders in the slips probably surpasses most of the slip-fielding in England. The reason is, I think, both psychological and physical. The slip-fielder in England — who is usually a professional — lacks by reason of so much purely automatic play day in and day out, the rather dashing technique of the cricketer from a Pacific Island . . .

I often think too, that apart from not possessing the same dash and abandon in his character the first class player in England has simply not the same quickness of eye and reflex action in his physical make-up as has the typical CMS cricketer.

One might receive the impression here that the fielders specialise only in the brilliant and spectacular but this is not so; in short they are as thoroughly competent in the fielding department of the game as any side could hope to be. In bowling and batting the CMS side would not excite the spectator as much as when fielding, but nevertheless their talent and potentialities made one exasperated that a more or less regular coach could not be secured to develop their considerable gifts. The CMS side have not departed from the South Seas idea that cricket is a game for fast bowlers and hard hitters. This side is perhaps more willing to believe that defensive batsmen sometimes win a game than they are to believe that slow bowlers can ever win a match."

The 1938-39 season boosted cricket in Suva. Ten clubs of all nationalities competed for a new trophy, the Sir Harry Luke Shield presented by the Governor of the day, who was a cricketing enthusiast. The CMS won the shield. The Prime Minister of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who was a student in those days, is recorded as having bowled with great life and pace, making numerous elegant strokes while batting on the crucial final day against the Suva Cricket Club's 1st XI. Another team personality was the Solomon Islander John Wesley Kere who, at a desperate stage of the match, determinedly ignored his partner's frantically moaned plea 'Block, John please,' and smote the ball in scythe-like manner each time just out of an out-fielders reach.

More should be said of John Wesley Kere. DWH did not permit himself to have favourites. His wife did not have to be so impartial. The bright eyed Solomon Islander appealed to her as a most striking personality.

One Friday DWH returned home and said to Hilda, "I have asked a student to come over this evening to tell you the tale he told the class today." The Principal had instituted an hour's story-telling on Friday afternoons, partly as a reward for a week's work well finished, but mainly to give the students self-confidence and to help their spoken English. The students came from many different islands and English was their only common language.

Hilda wrote the tale as follows:•

"I didn't want to go to school! So another boy called Joni and I, we thought it would be a nice day to go out on the reef fishing. We took a boat and our spears and we rowed across the lagoon to the reef to a place we knew where there was a big rock on the edge of the reef with a deep pool by it. It was a good place to spear fish.

While the tide was low, we both speared a lot of fish and put them in the bottom of the boat. Then the tide began to come in and the boat was afloat and I had to stand on the rock and hold the boat. Joni kept on diving into the pool for more fish because there were plenty that day. The water was getting deeper and deeper and several times I called to Joni to stop fishing, but he would not. He kept saying, 'Just one more'.

I was standing with my back to the sea and holding the rope tightly, and the water over the boat was knee deep, but still Joni would not come. Suddenly I felt fear! I looked over my shoulder and there was a great shark rushing from the ocean and diving in Joni's pool. It had smelt the blood from the fish he was spearing. I could not let go the rope or we would have lost the boat and I called to Joni 'Shark, Shark'. He looked up just in time. Joni fought the shark; it bit half his thigh away and the pool was full of blood. I could not help because of the boat, but Joni fought until he wounded the shark so much that it swam away. Then I managed to haul Joni into the boat and he was bleeding very badly. It was two miles back to the village. Joni lay in the bottom of the boat and I rowed as fast as I could. When we reached the village, the doctor was away at another village but the sister cleaned the wound and sewed it up and bandaged it, and he was in hospital a long time. Now he can walk all right but he has a big hole that you could put your fist in, in his leg."

The Colonial Office made arrangements for DWH to visit medical schools within the various colonial territories at the beginning of his overseas leave, due mid 1939. He was to visit the King Edward VII Medical College Singapore, the Ceylon Medical School, Colombo, the Medical School at Makarere, Uganda, the Khartoum Medical College and then after an overland journey across Africa, a Medical College in the city of Dakar run by

the French, finally ending up in London, where he would report his observations, prior to his holiday. It was an undertaking that required considerable planning.

Hilda did not plan to either accompany her husband or travel. I was the cause of her decision because I had been in hospital some weeks with scarlet fever. Dr Hardie Neil thought it would be a good idea if she took me from the boarder's hostel and rented a flat for both of us for a while at least.

When World War II finally broke he was in Kampala. Although DWH would dearly have wished to proceed on his way he knew his duty was to cable the Colonial Secretary Suva, for instructions which would recall him to Fiji. When he sought a passage in the reverse direction there was nothing available for some weeks. On enquiring how he might be usefully occupied during the wait, the Headmaster of Kampala Normal School wished out loud that the visitor was a mathematics master, not a doctor, and found he was that also.

Eventually he returned via Indonesia, New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand. The journey to Batavia was on a tense unhappy ship. The Dutch officers had divided loyalties. The ship's surgeon and second officer were Royalists and the remainder were pro-Nazi. An English doctor was not a particularly popular passenger but the ship's surgeon clung to him as he felt isolated and afraid. Another Englishman from Havana, Frank Rose, who had spent forty years prospecting for mineral wealth throughout Latin America, which he had written about in his autobiography "A Gringo in Latin America" was a fellow passenger. The two men found much in common and spent many hours in each other's company on that unfriendly ship.

DWH was able to spend a short while with his family in Auckland where it was decided that Hilda would stay a while longer. I accepted the situation without realising that my parents did not really enjoy being apart. DWH returned to Auckland for six weeks vacation in December of 1940.

We expected DWH to return a year later. Hilda would have then returned with him to Suva but December 1941 brought catastrophe to the Pacific. In the confusion that ensued, leave was cancelled and by early 1942 when the Japanese Juggernaut appeared to endanger every corner of the South Pacific, it was suggested that women and children who could leave for safer places, should do so. DWH wrote to Hilda that she was not to consider returning until the situation improved.

DWH's duodenal ulcer which had been quiescent for some years flared up in 1943 so he needed a break. He arrived in Auckland tired and tense. All the medical staff in Suva were overworked at that time. They not only carried out their own duties but also gave additional help to the medical staff with forces based in Fiji, both New Zealand and American. For the first days of his leave DWH either slept or smoked innumerable cigarettes. After three days he decided to look for some constructive activity. He returned from a visit to a city bookstore with copies of Stage III and Masters mathematics papers for several years, his version of occupational therapy, and the information that he had found some work to do each morning. He had visited Auckland Hospital's pathology laboratory to renew acquaintanceship with Dr Gilmour, the senior pathologist, offering him his services gratis, for a few hours each day if Dr Gilmour so wished. The offer was accepted and DWH began to unwind and really enjoy his stay; as we also enjoyed his company.

It must have been a wrench for DWH and Hilda to part again, particularly as Hilda was aware that he was not coping too well without her. Again he was unable to leave Fiji the following year but by early 1944 a change was evident in his letters. They were less frequent. His usual good humour had faded away. It was replaced by a grey pessimism. At that stage I regret that Hilda did not return to Fiji. The thought did not occur to me then. She was a very restrained, self effacing person who hardly ever referred to her own feelings. I was a student at Auckland University College, thoroughly self centredly immersed in my own concerns, taking it for granted that Mother was around without much thought for either her or my father's feelings. It was some years later before I realised that she was really the prop who supported both of us and that the father whom I adored was by then badly in need of her calm presence.

At intervals father would write to me, letters that I read and reread and retained. He himself wished to know as much as possible of my student doings. He would reply with comments.

"Your very sad story about half a dozen female students comparing little bits of broken combs in the ladies dressing room almost moved me to tears. To think of all that lovely hair, — red, brown and black, becoming dishevelled and blown about on the careless breezes — no wonder Aileen had a 'perm' — even if David Cole did make rude remarks about it. You can always get one back on any male student by merely saying, 'You haven't shaved properly today!' — even if he has, it always has a very sobering effect."

How little the war touched us girls at that stage, when a mere shortage of combs appeared of such importance. Another time DWH gave some parental guidance:

"If you want a good working basis for your life why not act on the following:

- (a) First of all acquire knowledge — as much as you can.
- (b) Help others — select an occupation in which the basic principle is helping others.
- (c) Cut out all excessive emotions.
- (d) Don't let any fads master and control your life; don't become an extremist in any direction.
- (e) Then keep on helping others — and then more of it.

All the rest will follow:- happiness in your work; happiness in your life and leisure."

Time passed. The Germans were not defeated until May 1945, but by then DWH had been alone too long. He wrote infrequently abrupt letters. Then a letter arrived that wounded Hilda deeply. He said he had thought matters over — he was coping satisfactorily alone — he did not think there was any point in her returning to Fiji and him — ever — he would transmit money regularly as before but not write again unless there was something important to be said.

Hilda gave me the letter to read and exhorted me to silence. She never hinted at any personal worries to her friends or her sisters, though they were aware all was not well, as they knew she had already made arrangements to return to Fiji early in 1946 after my proposed transfer to Otago University. She had no wish to remain in Auckland so we went to the South Island

together, Hilda heading to Lawrence and Queenstown. There in June in 1942 an urgent cable arrived from Sir Henry Scott. DWH was seriously ill, his duodenal ulcer had haemorrhaged.

A flurry of cables sped back and forth. Sir Henry used his influence to whisk Hilda to Auckland and then by Sunderland to Laucala Bay, the flying boat base near Suva. That flight was an unforgettable debut to flying for her. A severe tropical storm was encountered. Lightning struck the flying boat, damaged the radio and hurled the cabin door off, so that an icy blast chilled the cabin occupants. Hilda had begun the journey with a heavy cold and arrived shivering. The next day she was feverish and was soon diagnosed as having pneumonia and a patient in a bed alongside her husband in the Colonial War Memorial Hospital.

They both recovered. There was no question that Hilda would do other than stay in Fiji.

DWH had officially been due to retire on 31 May, 1942 but had agreed to carry on in an acting capacity for the duration of the war. By 1 February, 1947 a replacement had been found in Dr A.S. Frater.

Retirement carried with it the problem of where they would settle. After so many years in the tropics DWH did not relish the prospect of successive English winters. England was also rather far from their daughter who was about to marry a fellow medical student, John Wray. They did not wish to settle in New Zealand either. They decided to remain in Fiji. Friends tried to persuade them to build a home in the developing suburb of Tamavua on the hills above Suva but they did not wish to be so committed so they rented a flat in a new block near the Government Buildings overlooking Albert Park.

As the flat was very compact Hilda no longer required a cook, household help and a gardener. She was content to have the help of a Fijian widow who had been a friend for some years, for an hour or two each morning. Nevertheless DWH did not wish to have his wife bound to cook every meal so they arranged to have dinner at night at the Grand Pacific Hotel, a stroll away across the park. They had their regular table, which being a table for four sometimes had other occupants.

One such was Geoffrey Unsworth, the British cinematographer who was in Fiji on a mission to find the ideal tropical island for a film 'The Blue Lagoon'. He had, just prior to the assignment, completed work on a film about Robert Falcon Scott in a very different locale. His conversation was of such interest that DWH happily co-operated and suggested that Geoffrey Unsworth look at some islands in the Westerly Yasawa group, or failing those, the Eastern Lau group. The Yasawas ended the quest for a perfect island so then enquiries had to be made about arrangements for the film company. The plan was to hire a ship as headquarters and lodgings for the film crew and cast. DWH introduced the newcomer to the local community. DWH was asked to accompany the ship and stay with it on location as medical adviser, and Hilda to help the star, an up and coming young actress named Jean Simmons, during her stay in Suva.

Some months later 'The Blue Lagoon' was produced. There was quite a stir in Suva as extras were recruited locally and business of all sorts received a fillip, including the budding tourist industry which realised from that time

that the Yasawas could well be the sort of haven overseas visitors might wish to visit and Blue Lagoon cruises became popular from their inception.

DWH compiled a history of the CMS to which his friend of many years, Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna, wrote the foreword:

“My only qualification for the job, and that a very slender one, is that, for more years than I care to remember, I used to examine applicants for entrance into the old Medical School in the great days of Dr Corney and Dr Lynch. Two of the candidates I pushed through or recommended are now the two senior Native Medical Practitioners. The ground covered by the old Medical School and in the new, is well and sufficiently told in these pages, and I should like to add here my deep appreciation of the work done in them by a long list of devoted Chief Medical Officers, lecturers, and last but not least by Dr Hoodless, a very old friend of mine as Tutor and Principal.”

Ratu Sukuna went on to acknowledge the deep debt the peoples of the South Sea Islands owed to the Rockefeller Foundation and the late Dr Sylvester Lambert, ending by a plea to the peoples of the South Western Pacific to continue to take advantage of the school's facilities. The Government Printing Office had the illustrated booklet ready for Graduation Day in December 1947.

DWH's role at the school was over. This book is not concerned with events after the 1950's. Suffice to say the discussion continues. At a seminar in Auckland in April 1971 on Medical Education in the South Pacific, the then Principal of the Fiji School of Medicine, Dr T. Guy Hawley and others, presented views with still no very clear solution in sight for the continuing problems.

The Hoodlesses returned to Suva to DWH's activities on behalf of the Philatelic Society, the Masonic Lodges and a multitude of other interests. Their acquaintances were many, their real friendships few and close. DWH once wrote that the two greatest evils of the day were firstly Communism and the subversive side of the labour movement, and secondly alcoholism. He had much experience of alcoholism over the years. One of his closest friends was a successful Fiji businessman who was subject to dipsomaniacal binges, ending in deep despair when he was barely recognisable as the well groomed man of his 'dry' intervals. As the years passed many times Hilda and DWH went to his aid, literally cleaning him up, nursing him through to reasonable health again. Each time he would swear it would never happen again; each time they prayed for his sake that it might be so. He had a beautiful house built on the coast past Korolevu which he insisted the Hoodlesses use as theirs whenever they felt inclined. They enjoyed relaxing there too. Next door was a rest centre for a teaching and nursing order of nuns in Fiji. Hilda and DWH would join their neighbours for picnics.

Fiji was beset yet again by a post-war shortage of colonial servants including doctors. Having developed an International Airport at Nadi on the drier Western side of Viti Levu, a medical officer was essential to attend to the needs of airport personnel and visitors. The doctor holding the position was unable to go on leave unless there was a replacement. In September 1948 DWH was approached to do a locum at Nadi. He and Hilda found the experience so interesting for the four weeks they were required they agreed to return for several months in August 1951.