

Hohepa Mei Tatere - Hepa

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Ko Awatoto te Maunga
Ko Mangatainoka te awa
Ko te tipuna whare Tutaekara
Ko Kaimokopuna te tangata

Born in 1932 in Dannevirke and educated at South School, and Dannevirke High School, Hepa remains a well known resident in the town with an extensive network of friends and relatives.

He and Rene (nee Ryan from Pongaroa) recently celebrated 50 years of wedded bliss with their 3 children and 6 grandchildren. A new great-grandchild has recently arrived to expand the whanau.

Hepa's teaching career spanned 42 years, beginning in 1953 at Ratana Pa and then at Akitio and Owahanga, Taumarunui, Woodville and Dannevirke South. He served for 15 years as Deputy Principal at Dannevirke South and also as Special Education Service Visiting Teacher prior to his retirement in 1995.

For this interview Hepa remembered some of the people he knew when working at Owahanga.

There were the families who lived around the marae papakainga back then, Ron and Tangi Pratt, Aunty Kittie and her sister May Webster, Dolly Grant (Ngerengere), Bidy and Dave Potangaroa, Aunty Nani and Uncle Punch, the Boottens up at the Station, Henry and Emma down the other end. These families and the Station staff families all had children who attended Owahanga Native School. Hepa said that he learned a lot from the children who attended the school and that teaching

back then was different from today. More involvement with the rhythms and seasons of the land and much more isolated than today.

There were the Station Managers; Alec Moon and Geoff Derbridge and the shepherds; Frank Meech, Tom Ross, Boris Potatau who were part of the staff back then.

There were the Swaggers - £5 Tom (Tom Connelly), Anderson and Blackberry Joe - who used to come through the Station regularly. The custom was to feed them and they did a bit of work before moving on. There was the man, Forsythe, and his son who did a bunk from the Back Whare in the Austen car they struggled to get to the hut.

Hepa was first elected to the Aohanga Incorporation Committee of Management in 1981. He served on the committee for 16 years before he took a break from committee duties in 1997. Hepa was re-elected back onto the Committee of Management in 1998 to serve for another 9 years, 7 of these years holding the key position of Chairperson, before retiring in 2007. Hepa was seconded back onto the Committee of Management in 2008 to fill the position vacated by Cheryl Kurei whose position comes up for re-election this year.

Since leaving Owahanga in 1957 Hepa has expanded his community involvement, sport interests and hobbies. He had played rugby at school and club level and is a long term member of the Aotea Rugby Club. He has played golf, is a recreational fisherman and is a member of the Hawke's Bay V8 Club. He has been a member of the local Lions club and the

Ruahine Lodge, the Waikune Prison Relief Association and the local Budget Advisory Service.

In 1980 Hepa went into local government for a term of 15 years. He was a councillor of the Dannevirke Borough Council for six years, three as Deputy Mayor, and this was followed in the same position on the Dannevirke District Council. The final six years were served on the Tararua District Council.

In 1998 Hepa was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for his services to local body and community affairs. He said in an interview in the Dannevirke Evening News that it was a reflection

of the involvement of a lot of people. "There were many people around me helping me and I was helping them at the same time. There are people in the district before me who could have got recognition but did not."

Nowadays Hepa and Rene enjoy their grandchildren and great grandchild, the Hawke's Bay V8 Club and continue their association with Aohanga Incorporation, Papauma Marae committee and our whanau spread throughout New Zealand.

Hohepa Mei Tatere, a man of this land, a man of learning.



"What do we do next?"