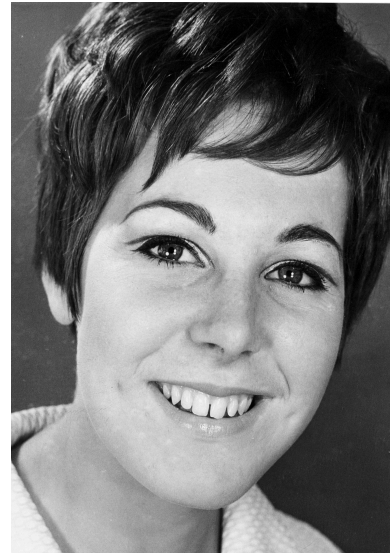


## Chapter Twelve

# On the domestic and employment scene

I could have easily married Angela. We dated for three years and reluctantly parted. I didn't want to spoil her dream of becoming an Air New Zealand hostess. In the 1960s a hostess had to be attractive, unattached and expect dismissal at 30 years of age.

Angela, a model and 'Miss Taieri', took to the mud and sweat of tramping with unexpected relish



Aileen was the secretary of the Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club and I was either Chief Guide or Vice-chair. Aileen proposed on my return from an Antarctic season. We announced our engagement in the general business at the club's 1973 AGM. Sadly this marriage only lasted three years. Perhaps I was away too much tramping and on Federated Mountain Club business. Aileen and her married boyfriend ran off to Australia taking our 18 month old son Craig. Aileen had connections with this man before we met. I had wondered why we got such generous fish and chip servings from his shop.





I decided to rent out the family home and go flatting. On the Friday night I circled three newspaper adds and gave myself a month to find a flat. By lunchtime on Saturday I had been accepted at all three flats and chose the one that Patsy was in. All knew me having been instructees on tramping courses that I'd been involved in running.

A few months later I asked Patsy out on a day tramp in the Silverpeaks. Patsy said she had never tramped with anyone who could go so fast uphill while talking so much, despite carrying a chainsaw and other gear to cut a new water supply track for Yellow Hut. Our marriage lasted 19 years and produced two lovely boys, Brett and Mark. Patsy was a charge technician at the Otago Medical School.

Our two boys enjoyed playing on our farmland. The family became involved with the Silverpeaks Branch of the Black and Coloured Sheep Breeders Association. In conjunction with a paddock at Moores' Bush we bred a registered flock of 25 coloured Perendale sheep.

Mark. Sheep (right)







Fun on the farm with the boys



My parents in 1940  
Marjorie and David

Marjorie with Patsy  
and Brett. 1984



I had become bored and isolated while working as a geological photographer in a condemned chemical-exposed basement at the Otago University, so after 15 years there I decided to train as a primary school teacher.

In 1985 while at Dunedin Teachers College we bought the derelict 1.3 hectares of land next to our home in Ettrick Street. We transformed it from a eyesore and rubbish dump to a scenic farmlet that enhanced the neighbourhood. Scores of cubic metres of sycamore was hand split for firewood and sold to finance fencing materials. Near-dead 100 year old kanukas were released from sycamore and a native forest ecosystem started in the stream gully. This became my experimental place to develop techniques for my other restoration projects. In the year 2000 the noted ecologist Dr Colin Meurk considered this to be the first site where building a complete native ecosystem, micro-organisms up, had been attempted and successfully achieved.

1994

01/98

04/00

1998

2000

**PATH TO REGISTRATION ON DUNEDIN CITY PROPOSED DISTRICT PLAN AS A SIGNIFICANT TREE.**

This took four years during which time I was discretely informed that the whole significant tree registration scheme was under review. To help keep the trust of others who had in public spirit registered fine specimen trees for future generations to enjoy, I persisted with my applications for my magnificent cabbage tree until it was successfully protected.

This old cabbage tree was fenced off in 1987 as a bald trunked, very tall tree fighting for light against tall sycamores. It subsequently sprouted a good number of vigorous stems from the base area. This base regeneration interaction with the 'mother' tree rejuvenated the main tree. Today the old tree has the company of groves of new cabbage trees planted in the adjoining extended Kanuka Bush. (see photo on right)

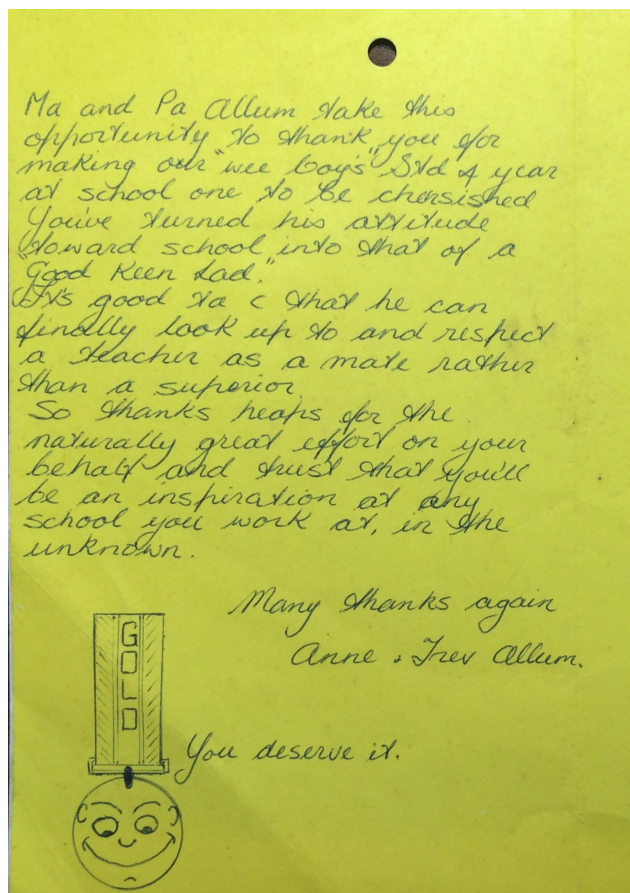
22.

For five years I, in effect, held year-long teaching positions for later graduates, who under a changed system were guaranteed a job. A starting teacher holding senior instructional positions in the outdoor and conservation fields caused jealousy amongst some seniors. Had I been an All Black I would have been accepted. An example was where I helped Maurice H, an exceptional teacher, run a unique



primary school tramping club where 12 year olds learned to do all the preparation. Activities were scaled to the age level. A nose-out-of-joint deputy principal with some tramping background killed that and, because I supported Maurice, made threats to my future career. Maurice abandoned teaching. People told me that I had been the most inspiring teacher they ever had. Despite some schools trying to get me, the system would not allow it.

I'm certain that Tahuna Intermediate's pleasure with me as a reliever and ability to mentor trainee teachers would have led to a more permanent position. Work here stopped overnight after I took a class where a particular farmer had his daughter. This landowner had complaints laid with the Police against him regards his actions against us in our Otago Peninsula Walkers group's re-opening of a semi formed public road to a popular beach. Over the next nine months I pieced together that the school had been most likely threatened with the loss of School Camp facilities if they employed me. About this time the shameless Deputy Principal tried to get me to view the school's Science Fair entries more favourably when I was a judge there.



For much of 15 years I was largely unemployable. An activist or whistle blower is initially applauded but subsequently punished. My knowledge and association was sort after until it is discovered that I don't hold any paid position. There is a strong element of academic snobbery in Dunedin. I did some farm fencing jobs; the tough ones that nobody else wanted. A friend ran Adventure Management Associates and gave me casual work taking abseiling, rock climbing and search and rescue activities. This kept me in replacement outdoors gear with a bit to spare.

In February 1999 two guys half my age and I were honoured by the Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club for being the only ones to complete all stages of the Club's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tramping traverse of Otago from Big Bay to St Kilda Beach. Two days later Patsy took the boys and left me. The effects of depression brought about by my inability to get work had been too much for her. I have had no problems gaining access to Brett and Mark.



The family home was sold but I kept the farmlet. For a few months I lived with my mother Marjorie in the St Clair end of Surrey Street. Mum had been a widow since my father Dave died in 1981 at 65 years of age. My youngest brother Peter lived with and helped mum out. Brother Bruce was living at Matakanui, a ghost gold mining village in Central Otago. Mum died in 2005 and Peter remained living at the old family home. With the help of a builder neighbour I was able to build a home on the farm.



I got part-time work restoring and restructuring properties including a one hectare formal Edwardian garden.

A branch 'kick-back' threw me off from the top of this ladder just as I had finished taking all the safety gear down. Despite landing on my back I walked away. A couple of weeks later my back gave and I spent several months bed-bound. Luck was on my side and a full recovery followed.



Modern French Jive dance became a large part of my life and this continues today. As the group developed we danced and attended work shops and competitions all over the country.





I met Sue through a dance event.

We set about developing Dun Eden Farm Park. Our objective was to have full no-fence contact with all our animals, some of which were expensive miniatures. Children were encouraged to climb, scramble, splash and even get a bit dirty. By greatly raising public expectations we soon put our opposition out of business.

