

My Father

December 25, 2005

Abstract

This is meant to be a part of a series of reminiscences about my family, the people I love. I am sorry it is rough, but I would like to get going on it. Additions, and other writings are gladly accepted. Please email them to me at (reid@uwo.ca) and I will post them!

1 Some Memories of the Early Days

My Father was born in 1933, in Mossburn New Zealand. In the mountains, in the most beautiful of countries. Life for the Reid family was difficult. Growing up during the depression years, and during the war, on a farm, meant that days were full with work.

World War II ended when my father was 12. It was also a time of opportunity. I remember the stories about the plague of rabbits. Rabbits had been introduced to New Zealand, for sport and specifically hunting purposes. Being no predators, and in the lush temperate climate their population soon exploded out of control.

Dad would set traps, and also go hunting them. Sometimes I heard that whole hillsides would appear to move, there were so many rabbits. I remember also a very long tennis game! That went on for days it seems.

I was born in 1957, and my earliest memories are of playing around Mossburn. There were biplanes then, at Mossburn airport. They were used for crop dusting for the fields around the town. We used to play our little boy war games around them. Old fuel tanks from the planes were used for boats in one of our adventures on a large pond beyond the airport towards the Dome. Safety wise, this is almost as impressive as the time, I planned to take a huge wooden packing case, raise it high into the tree at the bottom of our section, and make it into a hut. Then it was to be padded with many cushions. I was to experiment with dropping it out of the tree, with my brother inside, so that the cushions would ensure that he had a rapid and safe journey to the ground! Fortunately, perhaps, I did not even manage the first step of this ambitious plan!

My father was always interested in flying. He is the most wonderful craftsman, capable of designing and building almost anything! Unfortunately apart from the designing part, I inherited almost none of these practical abilities. Flying is a poetic activity and practical for the area we came from. Almost from

the beginning, legendary beings, Bill Hewitt and others led a dangerous life, first putting super phosphate on the fields, and later in the 70's and 80's in deer hunting activities. Dad once told me about being in the plane when Bill decided to buzz the Mossburn Pub, and he passed a few feet above its roof. Dad exclaimed: 'Bill did you see the aerial! (stretched along the roof, that they had just missed by a whisker)'. What aerial! Bill replied.

My father made the most beautiful small planes from Balsa wood. I remember at age 5 being fascinated with one of these. It was a large plane. But I decided it needed a door, and I found a kitchen knife, to make the door. Dad was not impressed!

Days in the high elevations, and the minute town (I keep thinking that the population was about 300 then, certainly less now), passed lazily by. Some times there were picnics, by the streams, which because of the high mountain feeds always felt cold.

The tiny school meant that many grades were in the same class room. I remember ringing the bell on my first day. I also remember cracking a glass panel (I was about 6 I think) leaning on it, fixated by the little creatures inside. Mr. Nihoff, the teacher asked who had cracked the glass, and being brought up to be scrupulously honest, I confessed. He 'gave me the strap'. He later told my mum, that he did this reluctantly, because he admired the fact that I had been honest!

Dad was extremely talented, but had to leave school early, at 15 because he was needed to work on the farm. Also he started an apprenticeship.