

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE HAWKE'S BAY EARTHQUAKE
3rd February 1931

By: Mrs Thelma Pickering, Napier - November 2005

I was ten years old at the time. I lived at Bayview with my family. My Dad, Arch Robertson, was away contracting road work on the road to Wairoa with trucks.

My mother Maria had to take my brother Raymond, to college in Napier to enrol him at the technical college, his first day. Another brother, Norman, and I went to the Eskdale School.

We were in our classes when the 'quake struck. Of course we all rushed outside. I had a cousin, Ken Brown, (who) was in the same room, and as he ran out a chimney collapsed, and he was badly injured and rushed to Palmerston North Hospital.

My brother and I, with other children from Bayview got home. I had an older married sister, Delia Calder, to go home to. Our homes were badly damaged, and of course not knowing what was happening with Mother and Ray and my Dad was a terrifying time. There was not the communications there is today. We did find Napier was very badly damaged; our thoughts were of Mum and Ray.

My mum had a terrible experience. She was having a cup of tea with a friend in town and she made her way to the technical college. It had completely collapsed and the children had been sent to several areas around the town. She walked to each one to see if Ray was there.

Mother went back to the tech. and a truck had a cover over the tray, and she saw Ray's shoes, which she had re-soled for him, out from (under) the cover. She climbed up and held him. She said he wasn't badly knocked about. Mother then went to Mr Dunstall's Funeral Director, to see if he could collect (Ray's) body, which he did.

Mother then had to get back to us at Bayview. She found the Embankment Bridge collapsed; the railway line way which was alongside (was) badly damaged. She had to crawl across to get home to us. Mother was a very brave lady for what she experienced.

My Dad, had to leave his truck up on the job and make his way over very damaged roads on foot. We were all warned to make for a hill, as they said there would be a tidal wave. We did; it was frightening.

Eventually Ray's coffin was brought across the lagoon by boat at Westshore and Dad was able to go and bring it home. Mr Dunstall was able to take the service for Ray (at) the family plot at the Eskdale Cemetery. He is one of the very few who is not buried in the community grave at Park Island.

We had to live in tents, and outside for cooking, until our homes were made liveable. We were very nervous when inside. Napier commemorates the 75th anniversary of the earthquake on 3rd February 2006.
