

MEMORIES OF DAD

My name is Heather Parker and I am mum and dad's only daughter. I have a number of special memories that I recall.

CAMPING

Every Xmas we would go camping. Dad would take us around various areas of NZ. I believe that we covered most of NZ as a child. It was a bit like a military operation. We all helped pack the trailer, and set off for the day. Some days we traveled what seemed to be a number of hours. They would buy a slab of chocolate and we would all see how long we could make a piece of chocolate last. It certainly made it last a long time. When we got to the camping ground dad and the children put up the tent. I believe we could do it in about 8 minutes.

NEW PLYMOUTH

Well, you all knew what dad was like introducing himself to people. One Xmas at New Plymouth we met a teenager called John. Well, dad, John and I walked over to this island in New Plymouth that is accessible at low tide and had a good look around. However coming back was a different story. The tide had started coming in too fast and the current sucked us out back to the island. There we are, the 3 of us, waving to mum who figured out what happened and she called for police rescue. The silly thing was, the 3 of us all needed glasses to see, and I was the only one with them. We took turns to see.

MARRIAGE

I married Warren when I was 18 yrs old. It's a bit hard to believe now that I was sure I knew what I was doing, but here we are still married 38 yrs later. We got married in the old church that was here. Any mum and dad came from very academic families and they thought it was of highest importance in a relationship. Dads mother had been top in NZ in Latin. Dad even wrote me a letter asking if I was sure that I wanted to marry Warren, as he was less educated!

SINCE MUM HAS GONE

Since mum died I have been the one who has cared for dad mostly as I had stopped worked. Now this was both a privilege and exasperation. The thing that amazed me was that mum had always said that dad would never be able to manage at home on his own. I want to express my great thanks to everyone in Morrinsville who kept

an eye on him and helped him in so many ways. It made it a lot easier for me knowing you were there as support. He did manage pretty well for a year after she died, and then from October last year, his mind started to deteriorate. I remember the twice he hitchhiked to Hamilton – only once successfully, we had this ongoing discussion whether it was asking for a ride or hitchhiking. He really couldn't see anything wrong in it.

LAST DAYS

I know that to start with he was not happy in Tamahere and would have preferred to be at home. I was grateful that the last few months he said how much he enjoyed it. You know, I didn't think Robert ever rang him at Tamahere, and Don and I would think, he doesn't care. But we found out when Robert turned up last Friday morning that in fact he used to ring every other weekend! Dad's memory was failing badly.

For me the last 2 weeks of dad's life when he was admitted to WPH have been a privilege. He went in with an enormous carbuncle that he recovered from, but the doctors couldn't find out why he wasn't improving. I would sit with him a lot of the day. He would cry when he saw me. He would say some quite funny things. One of the funniest was when he insisted that I call a policeman, as he had been drunk. The last few days he recognized very few people and slept most of the time. However he did recognize his sister Margaret & her husband Trevor and they had a lovely time.

I asked for him to have communion, and Margaret Parsons, the local chemists wife here, gave it to him. As much as he was very confused he stared intently into her eyes the whole time she said communion. The night they called us back to the hospital when he was unconscious we all went up. We took turns speaking Bible verses to him and each time we did this he would open his eyes. After everyone had gone I stayed the night with him and held his hand. In the morning a nurse came in to see how I was and to say that he was going and did I want any other family member. I decided this was my time and I read him Bible verses and he quietly slipped away in the sunrise. Jack Wirihana, another hospital chaplain and a man dad worked with came and gave him the commendation.

My lasting memories are of giving him a priceless gift. And that is one of dying, as I am sure he would have wanted. I love you dad, and may you rest in peace with mum and with God. You are where you want to be.