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A NEW YORK YANKEE IN AOTEAROA

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It was 1957 and of no small significance, at least to me, that in my 24th year I sailed into Auckland Harbour to begin the rest of my life. I had not intended to leave America, and certainly had no idea of staying in New Zealand, but I had won a Fulbright scholarship which paid my way to and from New Zealand and a small monthly grant to sustain me for nine months. It wasn't awarded to do archaeology, but to continue some research I had begun in Hawaii concerning Samoan migrants.

These are some tales of my first year in New Zealand, some faded but others vivid, of a tau iwi's first adventures in this green, lively and singular country. Like my much earlier compatriot a Connecticut Yankee,¹ New Zealand was hugely different in place and cultural time than the many Americas I had known. And since I still get asked at least 2–3 times a week either, "Where do you come from, Canada?" or, "How do you like New Zealand?", I'll divert to that subject briefly.

I answer variously, such as, "Royal Oak", or, "Listen, Sunshine, I've been in New Zealand since before you were born!" or, "California", or, "Hawaii", depending on my mood and the occasion. As the title indicates, my birth culture is New York Yankee, two variants. I was born in Ithaca, second daughter of Freddie and Adeline, both students at Cornell at that time. Freddie grew up in suburban New York City, of third generation German, French, and British parentage, and Adeline came from a grape farm near Jamestown, a first generation immigrant from Sweden. At the tender age of four I travelled to Pasadena, California, when Freddie had been offered a research fellowship at Cal Tech. My childhood in Pasadena, which basks in the glow of Hollywood, was one of increasing social eccentricity. And I decorated my school notebooks with endless drawings of sailboats that I intended to build in the backyard, in order to sail around the world.

¹*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Mark Twain, 1889.

I think I became an anthropologist, and as a result came to New Zealand, mainly because in primary school the local librarian chased me out of the adult book section, where I had discovered some anthropological tomes. In high school I savoured the writings of Ruth Benedict, resolving to become an anthropologist *and* circumnavigate the world. I then went to Whitman College in Washington State, and then back to Cornell to finish my BA, where one of my teachers, Alan Holmberg, recognised my enthusiasms and helped me into a 2 year teaching assistant's appointment in Hawaii. And after 4 months as cook on a yacht trip to French Polynesia I boarded the Oronsay for New Zealand (along with 1200 drunken Ozzies). French Polynesia introduced me to field archaeology in the company of Jack Ward, our ship's navigator, who was equally enthusiastic about Pacific cultures, and who is now a linguist in Hawaii. I had never studied archaeology formally at Cornell, although it was considered to be one of four basic fields of anthropology in America. Apparently it was practiced only in far distant places, such as Central America, or France. Sitting in on Kenneth Emory's course on Hawaiian history changed that impression forever.

New Zealand was a little known and foreign land then, in spite of the fact that I had been assured that English was spoken there. The only anthropological books about New Zealand that I found in the library in Hawaii were by Joan Metge, mainly about recent and contemporary Maori society, but there were, of course, splendid books by Maori authors about their own traditional culture and history. In 1957 the relatively new Anthropology Department in Auckland already included many specialties and people who worked in many parts of the Pacific and Southeast Asia. The author of this multidisciplinary centre was Professor Ralph Piddington, his band of colleagues including Bill Geddes, Bruce Biggs, Jack Golson and Rusi Nayacakalou, amongst others. Roger Green and Ralph Bulmer came the next year. The staff had offices in the Clocktower Basement and taught in temporary sheds to the east, and the following year took over No. 5 Symonds Street, an elderly weatherboard house whose former dining room and kitchen became the social centre for archaeology students. At most times of the day and night one could join a serious debate on (mainly) archaeological topics, and in the summer we would move to sit in the sun in the back yard next to a little building set up as a lab by Wal Ambrose, the first in a rich lineage of scientific and technical specialists who have been part of the department over the years.

I was welcomed, as a visiting student, to take part in classes and field activities as much as I wished. Jack Golson was recommended as an eloquent and inspiring lecturer, and I appreciated such talents, having tried to teach during my two years in Hawaii. His enthusiasm for archaeology was contagious, and we all learned about modern stratigraphic archaeological methods and theories,

later immortalised in song as the Wooley–Wheeler way. The core of the Golson Gang thus began to develop, including not only students, but people from other professions and ways of life. The students living in the Grafton Road area spent much time at No. 5 and often gathered to share evening meals, either at the student caf (sausage and mash for 2/6), Greys Avenue Chinese restaurants (chicken and cashews, 2/6) or lashing out on an occasional steak at the Hi Diddle Griddle on K Road.

The Golson Gang also included staff from other university departments, the Elam School of Art, and a variety of others, such as school teachers, librarians, even a fruit grower and wine maker from West Auckland. These people had been attracted by the opportunity to take part in the early archaeological excavations in the Auckland area, a (voluntary) work force from a wide field with a wide range of interests and skills. They enjoyed the camping, the intelligent conversation and singing corny songs around the campfire. Excavations had already been held at Mercury Island, Taylor’s Hill, Opito Bay and Sarah’s Gully, and most of them came back for more, in spite of the fact that Jack was well known for not minding the mood of the Auckland climate or its changes.

One field trip for students, early in 1957, was a bus tour of the Auckland volcanic cones. I remember boarding the bus at Princes Street to find a 17 year old Les Groube with a copy of Best’s Pa Maori open on his lap. On that day we were treated to an almost undisturbed Puketutu Island landscape, which can now only be appreciated through Geoff Fairfield’s early aerial photo series. Little did I know how much the Tamaki cones would occupy my life in more recent years. Jack Golson had already joined other locals in appealing for public protection of these remarkable sites, still an activity in the Auckland area.

In May we all climbed aboard the Limited Express to Wellington and thence by ferry to the South Island, and again by train to Dunedin to the second conference of the New Zealand Archaeological Association. I remember clearly the exhaustion of those two days, but we were to become accustomed to this form of Kiwi torture and do similar trips many times again. The trains were usually so full that there were more people than seats. Sometimes we had to sit on our backpacks, or lie on the floor and use them as pillows. There was a big group of us, but can only definitely remember Jack, Wal, and Max Smart—alas, memory fades! Jack had phoned ahead and booked us into the Captain Cook Hotel in Dunedin. The conference was held across the street at the Otago Museum, under the auspices of H. D. Skinner and organised by Peter Gathercole. The meetings were held in the museum, with chairs in amongst the many display cases. My memories centre however on the feeling that I had never been so cold before. The Museum staff found a small electric heater to point at a group of us, which helped a lot, and my gratitude for their kindness is here repeated. We had

the pleasure of meeting the southern members of NZAA, including Ron Scarlett, Les Lockerbie, Roger Duff, Michael Trotter, Bev McCulloch and many more. NZAA conferences have always been special because of the joy of getting together once a year with old friends from many parts of New Zealand.

The Captain Cook Hotel was an adventure in its own right, the first New Zealand hotel I had stayed in, an experience that was to be repeated many times but never ever exceeded. There was no one at the reception desk when we arrived but eventually a lady in an imitation leopard skin coat appeared, took down all our names and crossed an equivalent number of names off the bottom of the list of guests in the registry book. This was because of the need in those days for all people drinking in the bar to be registered as guests. The list of regular local drinkers was a more or less permanent fixture so that they could remain after 6 pm in the days of 6 o'clock closing. There were periodic visits by the local police in the evenings to check on this. After a quiet warning was passed around the drinkers they quickly rearranged themselves with broom in hand to sweep the floor, or hopped out of a ground floor window. Meals for a conference group appeared to be an unusual activity for the Captain Cook, but the whole family of the owners lent a hand to the task. We even received that other characteristic feature of New Zealand hotels of the era, a cup of piping hot tea brought to our bedside at 6.30 am or so. My sleep was somewhat broken because the bedrooms were not heated. I had on a pullover, a wool suit and a topcoat, and had also brought along a sleeping bag in case I ended on someone's floor for the night. I got into the sleeping bag with all my clothes on, and then put the blankets over the top and was still cold. I swear it's true.

However, not much sleep was had because after the drinking in the bar had faded, in the wee small hours, we all gathered in one of our rooms to continue to party. We got out a guitar, thinking that as long as there weren't any other guests, there was no problem about disturbing others. Eventually the police came in to check on us and asked if Les Groube was under age, and who were we, by the way. We got our heads together and Les Groube was identified as Max Smart's son, and I was his auntie, or some such tale. The police joined us for a drink and I recall we composed a calypso song for them about the occasion, before they went on their way.

That was it, I was hooked, and I returned to Auckland to begin new University studies in archaeology. The year ended with a trip to Sarah's Gully where I arrived in the middle of the night, slept in a sheep paddock by the Kuaotunu Road and joined the diggers in the Coromandel dawn.

What a year that was.