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**“AD LUCEM - TOWARDS THE LIGHT”**

**A COMPARISON OF TWO PRINCIPALS AT THE  
NAPIER GIRLS’ HIGH SCHOOL, MISS B. SPENCER  
1901-1909 AND MISS R. JAMES 1969-1989**

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**2005**

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History at  
Massey University

Pam Medcalf

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## CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
A Brief Survey of Education in New Zealand and Britain During the Schooling and Teaching Years of Bessie Spencer 1870-1910 and Rosemary James 1935-1990.	4
CHAPTER TWO	
Early Life and Teaching	38
CHAPTER THREE	
PRINCIPALSHIPS	50
CHAPTER FOUR	
Principals in the Community	84
CONCLUSION	99
APPENDIX A	109
APPENDIX B	112
BIBLIOGRAPHY	124

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to compare and contrast the early life and teaching, principalships and community involvement of two principals at a girls' state secondary school in Napier, Napier Girls' High School (NGHS), Miss B. Spencer Lady Principal 1901 – 1909 and Miss R. James Principal 1969 – 1989. They were chosen because they were not only successful in their time at NGHS but in their community involvement gaining the award of O.B.E. – Miss James for her services to education and the community and Miss B. Spencer for her efforts in introducing the Country Women's Institutes to New Zealand

The focus will be on their leadership qualities, motivation, interests and achievements but will also include their influence on the school, the functioning of the school and the problems they faced in the different time periods and their community involvement.

To provide a background there will be a brief survey of education in New Zealand and Britain at the time of both principals and some comparison between NGHS and Nelson College for Girls (NCG). Miss R. James was a student at NCG and it is a state girls' secondary school with a boarding establishment founded the year before NGHS and very similar. There was no comparable school in Hawke's Bay or Poverty Bay.

Information available in general texts on girls' secondary education, state education in New Zealand and Britain and the various school and Women's Institutes' history editions

have provided basic contextual information for the study. More specific information was available from the diaries of Miss B. Spencer in the Hawke's Bay Museum from 1893 – 1926 and then sporadic entries until 1953, 18 oral interviews, school and Inspectors' reports, NGHS Board meeting reports, early registers, school magazines and prospectus, local newspapers and information available from the Alexander Turnbull Library and Jerome Spencer House in Wellington.

In my research procedure I first contacted the principal of NGHS, Miss C. Hague and Professor D. James, Miss R. James' only surviving brother in Australia to gain their consent for my thesis. Dr D. James was sent a copy of my research proposal, the Massey Ethics Committee consent form, the information Sheet, a list of research questions and a covering letter. All the other participants whose names had been given to me were telephoned to assess initial interest. The information was then sent out to them with a covering letter requesting interview times and at places which were convenient for them.

Four of the interviewees had known Miss B. Spencer and fifteen had known Miss R. James – six teachers, three students, two friends and members of the community, NGHS secretary, Chairman of the NGHS Board, a pupil who attended NCG during Miss R. James' time and a teacher from Tauranga Girls' High School.

Although I had been prepared to audiotape their interviews they all preferred just discussion (some of them were very elderly!). These discussions were very informal and took about two and a half hours. After I had summarised their information I sent them a copy to see if there were any changes they wanted made and there were just some minor

ones. They were then sent a letter of thanks. The discussions were very full and frank and were crucial in gaining an insight into the lives of these two outstanding women.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A BRIEF SURVEY OF EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND AND BRITAIN DURING THE SCHOOLING AND TEACHING YEARS OF BESSIE SPENCER 1870 – 1910 AND ROSEMARY JAMES 1935 – 1990.

Primary schooling in New Zealand became free, compulsory and secular in 1877. Prior to this there were small fee paying primary schools set up in private homes for both girls and boys—dame schools. Bessie Spencer's brothers attended one of these schools in Napier. Bessie and her sister Emily had a governess as did other children from wealthy homes. However some fee paying secondary schools had already been established before this, particularly in the South Island.

Although prominent business men, professional men, farmers and ministers were keen to send their boys to secondary school if they could afford the fees there were those who felt that higher education for girls was a luxury when their later roles in life would be homemakers. Those men who did petition Parliament and the local communities were far sighted to realise the benefits for women.

The earliest state funded girls' secondary school to be established in New Zealand was Otago Girls' High School in 1871. The curriculum for girls as it was for boys was academically based as most of the headmasters and headmistresses were educated in Britain. Senior girls studied English, History, Latin, French, German, Mathematics (Algebra, Euclid and Trigonometry), Science, singing and drawing. Mrs Burn, the Lady Principal of Otago Girls' High



School commented in 1878, 'We prepared our highest pupils with a view to their going forward to University.'<sup>1</sup> The school was divided into Upper and Lower. There was no examination for the nine year old students entering into the school but they were expected to read, spell and know four simple rules of Arithmetic. The aim of the Lower School was 'to lay the foundation of a sound English education.'<sup>2</sup> So the subjects taken were reading, spelling, grammar, composition, writing, Arithmetic, Geography and History. Latin began as soon as the girls moved to the Upper School as well as Science, Botany and Physiology. The girls from Otago Girls' High School were able to attend university as Otago University opened in 1871 for both men and women and despite opposition women were able to gain degrees in 1874.<sup>3</sup> The school had some notable successes two of the most important being Ethel Benjamin who became the first woman barrister in New Zealand in 1897 and Emily Seideberg who became the first woman doctor in 1903. In Britain women were not able to gain degrees at some universities until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Oxford 1920 and Cambridge 1947).

Some schools were following the English Schools' Inquiry Commission in 1890 which reported that the 'complete education for a girl at secondary school should be English five hours a week, French or German two hours, mathematics five hours, Latin eight hours and Drawing two hours.'<sup>4</sup> This was followed by three hours of prep. There were those in the New Zealand community who questioned the teaching of Latin and

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<sup>1</sup> I. Cumming, A. Cumming, *History of State Education in New Zealand 1840 – 1975*, Wellington: Pitman, 1978, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Fry, *It's Different for Daughters*, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1985, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Cumming, p.119.

Mathematics for girls but most secondary teachers at the time 'thought that the classics and geometry constituted that culture of the mind which prepared it for the reception of any subsequent crop.'<sup>5</sup> However, some early Lady Principals and examiners were concerned at the heavy workload. In the 1880s the examiner at Christchurch Girls' High School, J.H. Pope reported,

Judging from the appearance of fatigue visible in the faces of nearly all the school girls, I should be inclined to say that they take over too much interest in their work and that the desire to obtain good places in the school and the spirit of emulation are so strong that the pupils are led to do very much more work than is good for them.<sup>6</sup>

Miss M. Marchant, Lady Principal of Otago Girls' High School 1896 – 1911 was concerned at the stress laid on the girls by the examination system and that the University Scholarship requirements were coming to dominate the work of the higher classes.

There is a difference of two years hard work between the standard required for Matriculation and the Scholarship and this disparity is neither requisite nor advantageous. The Matriculation pass is in effect too low and means little or nothing scholastically while the Scholarship standard exceeds what, in my opinion, should be expected from young girls.<sup>7</sup>

The Manual and Technical Instruction Act passed in 1900 allowed schools to have classes for 'manual or technical Instruction.' The English Bryce Commission in the 1890s when commenting on the establishment of a sound secondary system commented that secondary education was 'a process

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<sup>5</sup> I. Cumming A. Cumming, p. 148.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Peddie, *Christchurch Girls' High School 1877 – 1977*, Christchurch: Pegasus Press, 1977, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Eileen Wallis, *A Most Rare Vision, Otago Girls' High School- the first 100 years*, Dunedin: JohnMcIndoe, 1972, p.64.

of intellectual training and personal discipline conducted with special regard to the profession or trade to be followed' but Lady Principals and Principals in New Zealand were suspicious of technical education.<sup>8</sup>

The early girls' schools especially those with boarding establishments like Napier Girls' High School (NGHS) and Nelson College for Girls (NCG) which Miss B. Spencer and Miss R. James attended were modelled on the British schools of Miss Beale at Cheltenham Ladies' College, Miss Buss at North London Collegiate School and the Public Day School Company. They followed the naming of the classes, dress, discipline and school organisation. They were academically focussed but also believed in plenty of physical activity. Miss Buss encouraged the girls to do plenty of walking, callisthenics and had a school gymnasium with parallel and horizontal bars and ladders fixed to the wall.<sup>9</sup>

Nelson College for Girls was established in 1883 and Napier Girls' High School in 1884. The push for NCG came from Mrs Jan Marie Atkinson supported by important men in the community. She commented, 'I want my daughter to have a boy's education, it is so much better than what is called a girl's.'<sup>10</sup>

In Napier the impetus for the Napier Boys' High School Board to provide a girls' secondary school may be indicated by the family circumstances of those who filled the positions of the chairman, the Honourable J.D. Ormond,<sup>11</sup> and the secretary,

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<sup>8</sup> Cumming, p.147.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>11</sup> Member of Parliament representing Clive 1861 – 1881 and Napier 1884 – 1890, in the Legislative Council 1891, founder of the Napier High

the Reverend Dr D. Sidey.<sup>12</sup> A copy of the roll of the first day (29 January 1884) pupils lists Ada Ormond and Isabella Sidey.<sup>13</sup>

The first Lady Principal of NCG was Miss K. Edger. She was the second woman in the British Empire to gain a degree. She had to attend Auckland College and Grammar School in a class of 12 boys. She gained a Masters degree at Canterbury University while teaching at Christchurch Girls' High School. She was aged twenty five when appointed and her main concern on accepting the position was her ability to undertake supervising the boarding establishment. She nearly resigned in 1885 because of this but stayed on because she was able to live outside the college and have no responsibility for the boarders.

In contrast Miss M. Hewett the first Lady Principal of NGHS was a graduate of Newnham College Cambridge, and gained her teaching qualifications from Queen's College London. However she had been Acting Principal of Otago Girls' High School before her appointment at NGHS.<sup>14</sup> She was responsible for the hostel and had to live in, as did all Principals at NGHS until 1961.

The Board of NCG had a different criteria for appointing their principals. The first four Miss K. Edger, Miss B Gibson, Miss A. Tindall and Miss M. Lorimer all had attended Christchurch

Schools' Board, Chairman of the Hawke's Bay Education Board and Superintendent of the Province of Hawke's Bay.

<sup>12</sup> Presbyterian minister of St Paul's church in Napier and secretary of the Napier High Schools' Board for 30 years.

<sup>13</sup>M.A. Anderson, *Napier Girls' High School Notes from 1883 – 1940*, 1940 p2.

<sup>14</sup>Kay Matthews, 'Imagining Home: women graduate teachers abroad 1880 – 1930.' *History of Education*, volume 32: no.5. 2003, p 51.

Girls' High School (the last two had actually been taught by the first two) and were graduates from Canterbury University. They wanted New Zealand educated women whereas the NGHS Board for their first two, Miss M. Hewett and Miss M. Matthews wanted overseas graduates. (Miss M. Matthews was a graduate of St Andrews University in Scotland.) Miss M. Hewett's father was a minister in the parish of Whitwick in Leicester. He had an MA from Oxford University and had taught Lord Jellicoe who later became Governor General of New Zealand. So not only her academic achievements were important but also her family connections with good moral values and her public boarding school education.<sup>15</sup>

Miss M. Hewett was able to negotiate some of her conditions (boarders' fees and school opening with a bible reading and a prayer) and she sent a letter to the first Board meeting after the opening of the school requesting the teaching of Science to the senior girls. This was very modern thinking for the time and was agreed to by the Board.<sup>16</sup> The other subjects she and her two assistants, (both educated in Britain) were required to teach were English, French, Latin, German, and Callisthenics (Drawing and Singing were taught by visiting teachers). An inspector's report of 1885 which Miss M. Hewett had requested, commented, 'The programme appears to be skilfully adapted to the wants of the pupils. There is a very good tone as to manners and diligence and a good understanding between teachers and pupils.'<sup>17</sup> So the NGHS' Board confidence in her was justified.

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<sup>15</sup> Matthews, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> J. Garnham, G. Cowlrick, *Ad Lucem. Napier Girls' High School 1884 – 1984*, Waipukurau: Central Hawke's Bay Printers, 1984, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Garnham, Cowlrick, p.5.

The NCG Board expected very good academic results from the staff despite cramped accommodation and large numbers. (all principals after Miss K. Edger had to live in for many years). In 1883 there were 118 girls including 26 boarders with the Principal, two assistants and a Matron. The second principal, Miss B. Gibson (1890 – 1900) had to fight for what she wanted – extra teachers, an earth closet and a gymnasium and she even came to Board meetings to put her case! (Principals were not expected to attend Board meetings)! In 1892 the inspector's report stated, 'The marvel is that with the small staff engaged in the work, the College should produce such satisfactory results in its dual capacity of Girls' School and University College.'<sup>18</sup> Miss B. Gibson commented in 1893,

The school work is perhaps heavier for me than any other principal in the Colony. The staff is small in proportion to the number of classes necessary and the girls doing degree work give me a great deal of additional work, so much so that, if it were not a means of bringing the school under public notice, I should refuse to take them. <sup>19</sup>

The NCG Board refused to grant Miss B. Gibson and the next principal, Miss A. Tendall (1900 – 1906) leave of absence so they both resigned. (The founding principal, Miss K. Edger had left in 1900 to be married). However a later principal, Miss M. Lorimer (1906 – 1916) was allowed leave. NGHS Board was more co-operative and allowed its principals to take leave with the belief that the overseas experience would benefit their schools.

NGHS Board changed its appointing criteria of principals after Miss M. Matthews as both Miss B. Spencer (1901 – 1909)

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<sup>18</sup> Lois Voller, *Sentinel at the Gates. Nelson College for Girls 1883 – 1983*, Nelson: General Printing Services, 1982, p.41.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.

and Miss V. Greig (1910 – 1926) were graduates of New Zealand universities. Miss B. Spencer was also an internal appointment as she had been a pupil teacher at the school while studying for her BA extramurally at Canterbury University. The Board must have realised her leadership qualities as she was offered the position without having to present a formal application. However there may have been humanitarian reasons. The members of the Board would have known her father who had been a doctor and former Mayor of Napier and they would have been aware of the desperate straits the family was left in after his death.<sup>20</sup>

As a pupil teacher she was apprehensive of the Board's activities. Dr Sidey, Board Secretary, often visited the school and checked on what teaching was being accomplished. She commented 'Old Sidey was poking about the school all day. He came in to see my Latin class.'<sup>21</sup> However when she became Lady Principal she did seem to have a better relationship with him. He often came up to school to discuss problems with her. However the maintenance and proposed new buildings for the school were left to the discretion of the Board to decide although Miss B. Spencer was informed. With the expected increase in pupil numbers after the introduction of the Free Place scheme she commented, 'Dr Sidey and Mr Edwards came up to school re extending the building.'<sup>22</sup>

Both schools, as did most girls state secondary schools, had junior departments. Both Bessie Spencer and her sister began in the junior department in 1884 at NGHS which

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<sup>20</sup> The family was left with no money and bills to pay off. Diary entry, June, 1897.

<sup>21</sup> Diary entry, August, 1893.

<sup>22</sup> Diary entry, February, 1903.

continued until the earthquake of 1931. At both schools ages ranged from seven to seventeen. At NCG the primary department became a fee paying private school after the Free Place regulations were introduced in 1903.

Most of the early principals and some of their staff gained their degrees and then taught in the schools for their practical experience as there was very little secondary teacher training in New Zealand until in the 1950s. However, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand adopted a scheme from Britain where students could become pupil teachers.<sup>23</sup> Of the 24 teachers working with Bessie Spencer during her principalship only seven had degrees so many must have been through the pupil teacher scheme as Bessie herself had. Becoming a pupil teacher was sometimes an alternative to secondary schooling.<sup>24</sup> In Hawke's Bay a fourteen year old could be offered a contract for four years with an initial salary of 20.50. Each year with good conduct and having passed the annual examination the salary increased by 6.00.<sup>25</sup> It was a busy life as they often had sole charge of a class so there was preparation and marking as well as studying. When George Hogben, the Inspector General of Schools 1899 – 1915 introduced his new regulations for inspection and examination of public schools he recommended each pupil teacher should only have 30 pupils.<sup>26</sup> In 1890 there were 58 female pupil teachers in the Hawke's Bay Education Board District and by 1900 66. Some students were able to go to Teachers'

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<sup>23</sup> Some suggested this was 'a degrading system supplying cheap labour.' I. Cumming A. Cumming, p.168.

<sup>24</sup> It was not in Bessie Spencer's case as she studied at NGHS to gain her Matriculation and was a pupil teacher while studying for her BA.

<sup>25</sup> Kay Matthews, 'White Slates, Mud and Manuka', in *Women in Education in Aotearoa 2*, Sue Middleton, A.Jones (eds.) Wellington: Bridget William Books, 1996.

<sup>26</sup> George Hogben, 1853 – 1920, responsible for many changes in the education system particularly the Free Place.



College for primary teaching although they were closed during the depression of the late 1880s. When they reopened in 1906 most parts of New Zealand changed to two year apprenticeships followed by two years at one of the four Teacher' Colleges (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin) and one probationary year. The pupil teacher scheme was phased out in the 1920s.

George Hogben was not pleased with secondary education in New Zealand. In 1901 he reported that 'the whole of our secondary education would be far more useful to the state if it were more natural, more practical and less abstract than it is at present.'<sup>27</sup> In line with this thinking he introduced the Free Place System in 1903. He hoped the state secondary schools curriculum would become more relevant to the students. In 1904 when talking to school inspectors he said,

We must believe that Froebel and others of the most enlightened of the world's educators, that this child will learn best not so much by reading about things in books 'as by doing' that is exercising his natural abilities, by making things, by observing and testing things for himself and then afterwards by reasoning about them and expressing his thoughts about them.<sup>28</sup>

The students were participating in good experimental work in Botany and Science at NCG and NGHS.<sup>29</sup>

With the Free Place System George Hogben wanted students with ability to be able to attend secondary school free if they

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<sup>27</sup>Roy Shuker, *The One Best System*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1987.

<sup>28</sup>Sue Middleton, Helen May, *Teachers Talk Teaching 1915 – 1995*, Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press, 1997, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup>NCG won an award at the World Fair in 1897 on Ferns and the Living Environment. At NGHS they dissected animals and experimented with electricity.

could pass the Proficiency Examination..<sup>30</sup> The Education Act introducing the new system meant that students gained their Junior Free Place allowing them two free years at secondary school.

Many teachers were against it as they felt the curriculum would have to be watered down and it certainly had to be broader to cope with a wider range of student ability. Numbers in secondary schools certainly increased. At NGHS 70 in 1901 to 110 in 1909 and at NCG 113 in 1902 to 153 in 1903.<sup>31</sup>

George Hogben also proposed to keep up a universal standard of teaching for all schools with inspectors visiting twice a year to check on number of pupils in each class, quantity and quality of work and efficiency of instruction. There was to be no more than 60 children to each adult teacher and on average no more than 45 for each member of staff. The inspectors also looked at the suitability of the timetable, the order, discipline and manners of the students and the conditions of the school buildings. This meant the Ministry of Education had far more control of secondary schools than ever before.<sup>32</sup>

The range of ability of the students compelled teachers to divide pupils into major courses. At Christchurch Girls' High School there were now three courses. Course One was for those intending to go to university and into teaching. The students had to sit Matriculation and studied English, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Botany or Physiology, History

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<sup>30</sup> Pupils sat the proficiency examination in their last year at primary school, standard six.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, p. 4. Voller, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> Cumming, Cumming, p. 156.

or Elementary Heat, Latin and French. Those in Course Two (Commercial Course) studied Arithmetic and Elementary Algebra, Geography, History, Physiology or Botany, Commercial Arithmetic, Shorthand, Book Keeping, English and French. Course Three (Home Life Course) included Arithmetic, Elementary Algebra, History or Geography, Physiology or Botany, Plain Sewing or Dress Cutting, Cooking, English and French.<sup>33</sup>

There is no information available of any major curriculum changes at NCG or NGHS and a Commercial Course was not introduced at NGHS until the time of the Lady Principal after Miss B. Spencer, Miss V. Greig.

In 1905 George Hogben introduced new training regulations. Every Teachers' College had to have a normal school, a model sole charge country school and a secondary class. Students could be admitted under Division A or B. The A classification had to have completed a pupil teaching course and to have passed Matriculation. The B group had to have passed some parts of a BA or BSc or have a credit in the Junior Scholarship Examination. Both groups had to agree to complete two years teaching after Teachers' College and had to pay back money paid in allowances.<sup>34</sup>

Ideas prevalent during the Boer War 1899 – 1902 were that because of the unfitness of the troops there was a need to educate the mothers. There was a push for more domestic causes for girls instead of more academic even in the senior school. A group of professional men in Dunedin made their

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<sup>33</sup> Cumming, Cumming, p. 156.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

views forcibly known. One, Doctor Truby King <sup>35</sup>commented to the Education Commission in 1912, 'education stunted and deformed women.'<sup>36</sup> Despite arguments by well respected women doctors, Emily Seideberg and Agnes Bennett, the Education Commission decided that Home Craft must be compulsory in every secondary school.<sup>37</sup> The University Senate of New Zealand passed regulations in 1916 requiring all girl candidates to present certificates to show they had taken a course in Domestic Science. It also became a subject for Matriculation in place of the former compulsory Latin or Mathematics.<sup>38</sup> .But the effects of this would not have been evident at NGHS until Miss B. Spencer left at the end of 1909.

Miss R. James attended NCG from 1945 – 1947. During the intervening years much change had taken place in education. There were many criticisms of the education system. In 1925 the Tate Report started, 'The chief purpose of the secondary schools should be to train the many for life rather than the few for university.'<sup>39</sup> The implication was that secondary schools were not training students for their future roles.

Hoping to quell these criticisms and curb some of the powers of the University of New Zealand, the Education Department introduced School Certificate in 1934. In three years of schooling pupils had to complete ten units of English, seven of Arithmetic, four of Science and three of History. They then sat the examination the same year as Matriculation. This

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<sup>35</sup> Sir Truby King, 1858 – 1938. Founder of the Plunket Society. Superintendent of Seacliff Mental Institution, Dunedin.

<sup>36</sup> Melanie Nolan, *Breadwinning. New Zealand Women and the State*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2000, p. 104.

<sup>37</sup> D, Emily Seideberg. First woman graduate of the Otago Medical School. Dr Agnes Bennett. Medical Officer St Helen's Hospital Wellington, 1960 – 1972.

<sup>38</sup> Nolan, p.190.

<sup>39</sup> Shaker, p. 126.

early School Certificate was not very successful and the later one replaced it.

The Proficiency Examination was abolished in 1937 so free post primary education was available to all students until the end of the year they turned 19. In 1944 the school leaving age was raised to 15.

The Education Department was also responsible for introducing the Thomas Report in 1944 which had a wide ranging effect on all secondary schools.<sup>40</sup> The terms of the Report were written into the Education Act of 1945 in the Post Primary Instruction Regulations. This introduced a core of compulsory subjects which had to be taken in the first two years of secondary schooling. In the third year students studied five subjects and sat School Certificate at the end of the year. To gain a pass students had to be successful in English and three but no more than four optional subjects. By 1948 School Certificate had replaced Matriculation (University Entrance) as the major secondary school examination. There were difficulties initially implementing the terms of the Thomas Report because of an increase in the student population and a shortage of teachers.<sup>41</sup>

While consultations and discussions were taking place on the new system the University Senate agreed that University Entrance( Matriculation) could now be gained by examination or by accrediting in the sixth form. Miss R. James probably sat the old style School Certificate as the new style was not

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<sup>40</sup> New Zealand Department of Education. *The Post Primary School Curriculum – A Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Education, November 1942.* Wellington: R.E. Owen Government Printer, 1959.

<sup>41</sup> Ruth Fry, 'The Curriculum and Girls' Secondary Schooling', *Women in Education in Aotearoa*, Sue Middleton, (ed.) Wellington: Allen and Unwin, 1989, p. 82.

available until 1946. There is no record of whether she sat University Entrance in the sixth form or whether accrediting was officially available.

During the 1940's there was a teacher shortage in schools throughout New Zealand and accommodation was crowded. At NGHS Miss E. McCarthy (Principal 1939 – 1953) was teaching 19 hours a week taking the majority of Mathematics and Science and the school numbers were 326.<sup>42</sup> In 1949 the staffing situation had improved to some extent but she was still teaching ten hours a week. Miss R. James was fortunate that she was able to attend a one year secondary teacher training course at Auckland Teachers' College when she completed her BSc at Canterbury University in 1951 as it had just opened at the end of the 1940's.<sup>43</sup>

In the 1950's it was compulsory for teachers to teach in designated country schools for a number of years before the age of 31 to be eligible for higher grading promotion. Miss R. James spent those years at Putaruru High School 1955 – 1957. This scheme was continued until 1980.

Because of the Post War 'boom' there were huge classes. The Minister of Education, R. Algie had to take drastic action.<sup>44</sup> 'In fourteen weeks clerical workers, factory hands, radio technicians, farmers, nurses, shop assistants, salesmen aged from 21 – 40years were equipped as teachers both primary and secondary.'<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Inspector's Report, NGHS, October, 1944.

<sup>43</sup> Mollie Neville, *Promoting Women*, Auckland: Longman Paul, 1988, p.273.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Algie, Education Minister, 1949 – 1957.

<sup>45</sup> Mollie Neville, p. 315.

By 1956 600 positions in secondary schools were filled by unqualified people. (Some of these were still teaching in the 1980s). The workload was heavy, some were teaching subjects they had not studied and some were unable to cope. Older retired teachers were also called in to teach.<sup>46</sup>

Miss R. James as the head of Mathematics and Science at Tauranga Girls' High School and the only qualified Mathematics teacher said later,

I don't know how I survived. We had a cook fill – in for our chemistry classes. It was sad because without qualifications, the best will in the world will not teach the students properly and I believe youngsters are entitled to the best tuition available.<sup>47</sup>

A 'pressure cooker' scheme for graduates over 25 was begun and a recruitment scheme introduced gaining teachers from Britain. NCG took advantage of this scheme and made its own contacts with the Society for the Promotion of the Emigration of British Women. It recruited nine teachers.<sup>48</sup>

In 1956 students could take advantage of a Post Primary Studentship. They were paid while attending university and bonded for each year they held it.

The Department of Education could not keep up with the increasing numbers. It thought estimated numbers in schools for 1959 would be 66,000 instead there were 90,000. Some students had to be enrolled in the Correspondence School because there were not enough specialist teachers.<sup>49</sup> Not only were teachers in short supply but also classroom space.

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<sup>46</sup> At NGHS two retired men headmasters were recruited to teach Mathematics.

<sup>47</sup> Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune Sat June 9 1984, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Voller, p. 204.

<sup>49</sup> Fry, p. 82.

Both NCG and NGHS were two of many schools that were overcrowded.

In the year that Miss R. James became Principal of NGHS, 1969, the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women organised a study on the education of girls. There were concerns not only in New Zealand but worldwide. In New Zealand more girls than boys were passing School Certificate and University Entrance but were not continuing on to further study. There was a preference for girls to take the arts courses, choices that were thought to be appropriate for girls, instead of Mathematics and Science. Domestic science had been a compulsory subject in schools for many years so full science was lagging behind. Girls needed other subjects to take part in the new technology. They were going into female occupations such as nursing, teaching, clerical work, textile manufacture and sales assistants. When they went to university they took similar subjects as they had taken at school so they had a narrow range of options. Also because of the importance of domesticity and motherhood they were a large proportion of the part time workforce.<sup>50</sup>

In 1975 during the International Women's Year a conference was held in Wellington on Education and the Equality of the Sexes. 'In matters of curriculum the conference was basically concerned with the limited and inhibiting attitudes towards women's role in society which the teaching of some subjects could convey.'<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> A. Ryan, 'Structural Inequalities in the Education of Women in New Zealand', J.Codd, R. Harker, R. Nash (eds) *Political Issues in New Zealand Education*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1985, p. 23.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth Fry, *It's Different for Daughters*, Wellington: New Zealand Council For Educational Research, 1985, p. 190.



As a result of this the Department of Education organised research projects to identify what was happening in education with a focus on what changes could be made in the future. One particular one was Teacher Career and Promotion Studies (TEACAPS). It outlined the promotion patterns of primary and secondary teachers and showed up the inequalities of the education system.

Over the years women teachers had been discriminated against. After the 1929 – 1935 Depression married women had been forced out of the profession. Some school boards had refused to employ married women. At NGHS there were some in the 1930's and then not again until the 1950's and 60's. Even during the post war 'baby boom' years women were recruited but their studentships were terminated once they married whereas those of men were not. From 1930 until the late 1950's married men received a marriage allowance on top of higher salaries so single women were disadvantaged twice. However this changed in 1989 with the Equal Opportunities Bill.<sup>52</sup> School rolls declined during the 1970's and women returning to the workforce after more than three years out of the service had to retrain. Teachers who took leave of two years or more from the secondary service had to be classified on List A again so this discriminated against married women who left for domestic reasons. The research found that women formed 38% of the state secondary service yet only 10% of principals and 14% of deputy principals. There had been a reduction in numbers since 1920.

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<sup>52</sup> R. Mexted, 'The Leadership of Six Women Principals in the New Right Environment', MED.Admin. Thesis in Education, Massey University, 1999.

The research also set out what options were available for training of secondary teachers. By 1979 most students after graduation attended one of the two Teachers' Colleges in Auckland or Christchurch for secondary courses although small numbers could attend special ones in Hamilton and Dunedin. These were in Division U. There were courses also for those wanting to teach Music, Physical Education, Commerce, technical subjects and Home Economics.

TEACAPS also set out the promotion system for secondary teachers. They began teaching on List A and could be classified on List B if the Inspectorate in conjunction with the senior staff of the school agreed they showed competency in teaching. They became Assistant Teachers. They could apply for a PR1 (Position of Responsibility) after three years on List B or for a PR2 or PR 3 after five years. They could not be appointed deputy principal or senior master or mistress unless they had completed seven years service on List B and hold a PR1 at the time of applying. To apply for a principal's position they must have completed 11 years List B service and either hold a deputy principal position or senior master or mistress. So they could become a principal after 11 years on List B or 13 years after beginning teaching but most took longer. Miss R. James at NGHS had the required years teaching but she was not a deputy principal or senior mistress. She would have been interviewed by the District Senior Inspector, a Representative from the PPTA, the Board of Governors with a representative from the Department of Education acting in an advisory role. They must have thought she had the right qualities to lead a large school and certainly their faith in her was justified.

Because of the unemployment position in the 1970's with the shortage of jobs for school leavers careers advisors became

to prominence in schools. The Johnson Report of 1977 stated,

The aim of guidance is to promote the educational, vocational and personal growth of the students. Every student has the right to guidance and every teacher needs to be involved in it. It should permeate every aspect of the school activity.<sup>53</sup>

Despite these altruistic aims there was limited funds available for schools to implement the ideas fully. However at NGHS a careers section of the library was begun in 1947 and a teacher became the first part time careers adviser. In 1970 the school held its first careers evening where employers came to discuss a range of employment opportunities with students and in 1975 the 4<sup>th</sup> Form took part in their first work experience being placed in the working community for two weeks. A fulltime Guidance Counsellor was appointed in 1977 to assist the Careers Adviser.

The Johnson report also stated that the curriculum of schools should also educate students for leisure. At NGHS as at other schools like NCG, the students had always been involved in many club activities held during the lunchtime and after school. However during the 1970's the junior classes were able to have a choice of hobbies taken during class time including Maori crafts, cane work, spinning, pottery, drama, cooking, Physical Education, art and cake decorating.

At NGHS and NCG students both juniors and seniors began attending Outdoor Pursuits Centres in the 1970's. At NCG six schools combined together and built a lodge at Lake Rotoiti. Here the juniors had a broad based programme while the

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<sup>53</sup> Shuker, p. 137.

seniors was more specialised not only experiencing tramping and communal living but also studying land and plant forms.<sup>54</sup>

Because of lack of classroom space and accommodation both schools were involved in building programmes in the 1960's and 70's. NCG seemed to have some of their classrooms and staff rooms completed by 1967. However with extra boarders (140) by the end of the 1960's they still needed more hostel accommodation as well as laboratories. These were not completed for another ten years. Miss R. James had to really persevere during the 1970's before the school managed to gain most of what they needed. By 1980 there was a new science block, a new staff room, new senior studios and a drama and music suite but it was not until 1984 the year of the school centennial they actually had what they desperately needed – a new gymnasium. In the board minutes of NGHS during the 1970's there were discussions on crowding in the staff room and in 1970, 71 and 72 the school roll had to be closed except for students from the Maori Girls' College Hukarere, those wanting to take Latin and hostel girls.<sup>55</sup>

In 1983 the school roll numbers were 724 while the hostel numbers were 152. The numbers had dropped to 138 by 1986 but had to be held to 140 in 1987 to help with the temporary accommodation problems during the rebuilding period.

During the 1970's and 1980's debates took place on educational matters. Schools were asked to examine 'both the needs of the modern student in a changing world and the special requirements of the local community.'<sup>56</sup> All aspects of school life were considered, the needs of the increasing

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<sup>54</sup> Voller, p. 204.

<sup>55</sup> NGHS Board minutes 1970, 1971 and 1972.

<sup>56</sup> Voller, p. 206.

numbers of senior students, their subject choices, their availability of leisure pursuits and their role in the school of taking responsibility. Miss R. James role in introducing school councils, and vertical forms were important here. Other aspects of concern were the place of students with special needs. NGHS had introduced remedial reading classes in the 1960's and transition classes in the 1970's. Different forms of assessment and reporting were under review.

At her retirement in 1989 as the 'Tomorrows School Scheme' was being introduced Miss R. James commented, 'I have a concern of all that will be lost in the new scheme and the changes are being made in unseemly haste.'<sup>57</sup> Miss R. James retired at the end of the second term just before the changes came in.

The 'Tomorrows Schools Scheme' or the 'New Right Policies' were set in motion by the re-elected Labour party in 1987. They thought education needed to be reorganised to 'better prepare New Zealanders for a rapidly changing global economy and to achieve greater equity, accountability, efficiency and choice.'<sup>58</sup> Mr D. Lange Prime Minister and Minister of Education at the time gave Mr B. Picot the job to establish a task force. The Picot Report was the result which recommended education reforms and how when and where these changes were to take place.

The activities of the Napier High School Board were outlined during Miss B. Spencer's time at NGHS. It is interesting to see how they compare with those during Miss R. James

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<sup>57</sup> The Daily Telegraph, April 21 1994 p.6.

<sup>58</sup> Document by Treasury Government Management, Vol 11, Educational Issue.

principalship. In the intervening years there had only been nine Chairmen of the Board and two Secretaries. The Board had initially administered to both NGHS and NBHS. However during the 1960's and 1970's when new co-educational schools were built they administered to them as well. Two decided to form their own boards in 1975 but one, Colenso High School, decided to stay and only formed its own board with the introduction of 'Tomorrows Schools' in 1988.

The Board comprised professional men from the community until Miss B. Spencer joined in 1931. There were no other women on the Board until 1949. By the time of Miss R. James there were three women members and one who had been a board member since 1961 became the Chairman of the Board in 1965. She held her position for most of Miss James principalship.

Usually there were 13 members on the Board plus the Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer and the Headmasters and Headmistress. They were organised into sub committees – Hostels, Works, Farm, Finance and Appointments.<sup>59</sup> Mrs Lucas, the Chairman, met with Miss R. James once a month before the combined Board met to discuss items of interest. The different sub committees also visited the school once a month. They visited all the schools in rotation on the day of each Board meeting. Miss R. James had a lot of input into these meetings and her views were well respected. There was a good working relationship with the Board during her years.<sup>60</sup>

Their policies on appointments for principals changed after Miss B. Spencer as all were outside appointments and all were

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<sup>59</sup> NGHS Board Minutes.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Mrs Lucas, 12 May 2005.

graduates of New Zealand Universities. Before Miss R. James, Miss E. Mc Carthy (1939 – 1953) graduated from Otago University. She was a Senior Scholar in Botany, gained her MSc and had been Head of Department at Gisborne High School. Later Miss A. Naumann (1953 – 1960) gained an MA in English and French from Victoria University and had been Head of Department at Avonside High School in Christchurch. All were very well qualified. Most Deputy Principals were internal appointments.

During Miss James time the principal was responsible for the buying of class materials. In a later chapter we see how she was very careful with the budget and never over spent. However some of the surplus she sometimes showed perhaps could have benefited different departments. She had automatic approval to buy class and library materials up to the amount calculated on the following basis; the average amount spent per pupil on a national basis as determined by the Department of Education multiplied by the number of students attending on the first of March each year. For large capital purchases she had to apply to the Board. In a later chapter we see the Board's role in treating student expulsions.<sup>61</sup>

As Miss R. James spent her primary and early secondary years at Tauranga District High School it is relevant to give a brief history of these schools in New Zealand. In the 1877 Education Act Education Boards could establish District High Schools but by 1899 there were only 14 mainly in the South Island. The Scottish settlers in Otago advocated these schools as they were reminiscent of their parish village schools

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<sup>61</sup> NGHS Board Minutes.

in Scotland where boys and girls with ability could be prepared for university.<sup>62</sup>

George Hogben wanted these schools to be more practical and as they were free he thought they would be popular but there was pressure from parents to stay academic. Country parents wanted their children to improve their education to have the same opportunities for 'white collar' jobs as city children like the Civil Service for the boys and teaching for the girls, so they resented the introduction of agriculture. They wanted Latin.<sup>63</sup> In 1904 45 of the District High Schools taught Latin, all taught Algebra, most taught Euclid, one taught cooking and none taught agriculture.<sup>64</sup> In 1906 23% of District High Schools were preparing for Matriculation and 52% for the Junior Civil Service. In 1917 the Education Department tried to require District High Schools with fewer than 90 pupils to teach agriculture and dairying but it was not all that successful. By 1925 manual subjects were taken by fewer than half the students at District High Schools. However, as well as compulsory English, Arithmetic, Geography, History and Civics almost as many girls as boys were taking French and Mathematics (close on 80%) and 58% of girls were taking Physics and Chemistry. The numbers in Latin had dropped.<sup>65</sup> Under the terms of the Thomas Report in 1944 and the revised School Certificate students could study dairying, horticulture, agriculture and animal husbandry so numbers increased. However with increasing urbanisation by 1958 only 17 out of 104 District High Schools were still teaching agriculture.

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<sup>62</sup> Alan Thom, *District High Schools of New Zealand*, Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1950, p. 45.

<sup>63</sup> Shuker, p. 271.

<sup>64</sup> Fry, p.68.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p.72.



At Tauranga District High School Miss R. James would have been taking an academic course. It is of interest that she came back to teach at her old school in 1959. However it had been divided into Tauranga Girls' and Tauranga Boys' High Schools the year she began at Nelson College for Girls – 1945.

When comparing what was happening in the area of education in Britain during these years there are some similarities but many differences. The main difference right from the 1870's was the class divisions. Certainly there had been criticism in New Zealand about the "elitism" of the fee paying early secondary schools but even here country students with ability were able to gain scholarships. (In 1901 students at NGHS had seven Education Board scholarships and four High School Board ones.)<sup>66</sup> With the Education Act in 1870 locally elected boards were meant to be set up but in many industrialised cities there were not enough schools. However they did improve conditions for the education of some middle class girls. The trouble was for the working classes employers and professionals thought the idea of schooling was to 'minimally educate, impose morals upon and control working class children so they did not aspire beyond the social class or employment held by their parents.'<sup>67</sup> Elementary schooling did not come even partially free until 1891. Attitudes had not changed in the 1890s. The Bryce Commission on Secondary Education in 1894 stated,

Working Class girls should not have an academic education. They should be better trained for responsibility of married life. They

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<sup>66</sup> M.A. Anderson, 'Napier Girls' High School Notes, 1883 – 1940 , p.5.

<sup>67</sup> R. Deem, *Women and Schooling*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p.9.

should only enter unskilled or temporary work. Academic education raises a girl's aspirations and leads to unhappiness in later life.<sup>68</sup>

However in Scotland their education system was much more democratic than in Britain. Each parish had a village school open to all classes of both sexes. This idea they brought to New Zealand, as was shown earlier in the chapter, with the introduction of the District High Schools.

The middle class girls between 1865 and 1914 were often educated at home till the age of ten or they might share lessons with their brothers at a local school or attend a dame school. At about 12 or 13 they might go to a selected boarding school till 17 and might have a year at a finishing school. The aims of this type of education was social not academic. At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century 70% of the total number of girls at secondary school were attending private boarding schools. After leaving school these girls were expected to stay at home and be groomed for the 'coming out party which would celebrate their entry into society and the marriage market.'<sup>69</sup>

Most married women like Miss B. Spencer's mother visited in the afternoon. They 'paid calls.' There was a special etiquette required. Girls leaving school would take part in this socialising.

However new types of schools were developing in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and some of the universities were accepting women. So there was a pool of educated women to head and teach in these schools. Miss M. Hewett the first Lady Principal of NGHS was a graduate of Newnham College Cambridge and she gained her teacher's qualification from

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<sup>68</sup> C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p.17.

<sup>69</sup> Dyhouse, p. 23.

Queen's College London.( Women were not awarded degrees at Cambridge until 1947. They were awarded a Tripos and recognised as Associates.)<sup>70</sup>

There were three main types of schools now, Ladies' Colleges, High Schools belonging to the Girls' Public Day Schools Company and the large public schools for girls following the fashion of the important boys' public schools (Roedeen,1885 and St Leonards,1877.) The girls' colleges of Miss Beale at Cheltenham and Miss Buss at North London Collegiate School were smaller public schools. Students from these schools were achieving well and were good role models for others. Agnata Ramsay achieved a first in a Cambridge classical Tripos in 1887 ( no male student gained higher than second class in that year) and Philippa Fawcett gained a mathematical Tripos in 1890.<sup>71</sup>

These schools were more concerned with academic achievement although the schools organised by the Girls' Public Day Schools Company did not introduce afternoon school until well into the 1920's particularly in the farming and textile areas. So they would not have been able to cover the same range of subjects.

In 1907 with the Free Place Regulations brighter children of the working classes were able to gain free secondary education but the pupil teacher system which New Zealand had copied, was being phased out so it was more difficult for them to train for secondary teaching.

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<sup>70</sup> Matthews,p.51.

<sup>71</sup> Dyhouse, p. 174.

During the Boer War the concern of national fitness became an issue as it did in New Zealand. Some thought Domestic training should be introduced for all girls but many thought girls should continue to study the same subjects as boys. However the Board of Education in 1908 stated that girls over 15 could drop Science to take an approved course in Domestic subjects and in 1909 girls might substitute Domestic subjects 'partially or wholly for science and for mathematics other than arithmetic.'<sup>72</sup> Also in 1909 a University Course was opened up in Domestic Science. Some thought it was, 'a degradation of university standards and an insult to women.'<sup>73</sup> So this legislation actually came into force in Britain just before it was passed in New Zealand and girls' secondary education was following along the same path.

There were concerns however, over girls' education. A report was received in New Zealand from Britain in the 1920s set up under W.H. Hadow. It commented, 'The curriculum for girls was still in the experimental stage after only 60 years of practice. The failure of girls to do better at English subjects and modern languages while boys achieve at Classics and Mathematics is mainly traditional.'<sup>74</sup> The report concluded that both had the same capacity for learning and there was no reason for a different curriculum but it counterbalanced this by proposing ways in which the strain on girls at secondary schools should be lightened.

College educated women avoided teaching in the state funded elementary schools as these were for working class girls. Elementary teaching was not thought to be respectable enough for a young lady. They went to the secondary schools.

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<sup>72</sup> Dyhouse, p.165.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>74</sup> Fry, p.40.

Over the intervening years there were some major changes in education, the main ones being in the 1944 Butler Education Act. Education was now available free and compulsory for all students from the age of five to fifteen (to sixteen in 1973). A Tripartite system of education was introduced with three types of schools being encouraged. These were grammar schools concentrating on an academic education and available only to those students who passed the 11+ examination, the secondary modern schools with a wider vocational choice of subjects and technical schools. (Not many of these were actually set up.) The schools were meant to be 'separate but equal' but this did not happen.<sup>75</sup> The grammar schools became the mecca for the middle and upper classes who realised they needed this type of education to gain higher paid professional jobs. Those children from wealthier backgrounds who failed the 11+ were able to go to the independent schools of which there was a large proliferation. So student society was divided into the able and not able and most of the students from the secondary modern schools left school for work at aged 15.

Under the terms of the act the Local Education Authorities (LEAS) became completely responsible for education in their areas. Education continued to be decentralised. The LEAS maintained the school buildings, allocated resources including equipment and materials, appointed and paid the teachers and set the school terms. Teachers groups and the teachers and the heads of the schools were responsible for the curriculum. School heads were very important in deciding the curriculum until 1980. There were no generally agreed curriculum goals, no centrally organised programme of study or subject, no

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<sup>75</sup> Status Differences from the Internet. P.1.

system of assessment in the primary schools and only the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) examination syllabuses to guide teaching in the secondary schools. Also there was no evaluation of the whole system except for the periodic individual visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMIS). The many different secondary Examination Boards also had their varied criteria – England and Wales and the national boards of Scotland and Northern Ireland. They set individual examination papers in individual subjects that could be taken by students choosing to take as many or as few subjects as they wished.<sup>76</sup> The organisation was completely different from the New Zealand system. Here the Ministry of Education was responsible for the maintenance, allocating resources, teachers' salaries and setting school terms as well as the curriculum. However teachers did have a say in the curriculum.

The General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) was introduced in 1951. Students usually sat this at aged 16 for O – ordinary level and later for A or Advanced level. This latter level was mostly taken by the grammar and independent schools. GCE was designed for 25% of the ability group. Because of many criticisms of the system a parallel examination was introduced in 1965 – Certificate of Education (C.S. E.) This catered for the next 40% of the ability range with only the highest grade of GSE ( Grade 1) being equivalent to the lowest pass in GCE O level(Grade C).

Despite many criticisms and inequalities of the tri-partite system – there were often more places for boys in the grammar schools than for girls; ' the level provision of

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<sup>76</sup> Harry Torrane, Professional Lecture given at Manchester Metropolitan University, Internet.

grammar school places ranged from 10% in some LEAS to more than 30% in others.,<sup>77</sup> the various governments did not bring in legislation to change the system. However changes were suggested to form the more fairer comprehensive schools open to all students. This would free the primary schools from the restraints of the 11+ examination. In the 1960s the labour Government issued the Department of Education and Sciences (DES) notices asking LEAS to submit plans for reorganisation of schools in their areas into the comprehensive system.<sup>78</sup> ' More than 50 of the 150 grammar schools offered the choice of going comprehensive or private decided to go comprehensive.'<sup>79</sup>

During the 1960's some schools changed to a three tier system – lower schools aged 5-9, middle schools aged 9-13 and senior schools aged 13-18. The first middle school began in Bradford in 1968 and by 1974 there were 1200. There was concern in the 1970's with some of the child-centred learning and the radical teaching that was being taken. It was suggested too little attention was being given to the basics in education. The teaching profession became alarmed. They had always believed that democracy in education had always been safeguarded in Britain by ' the existence of a quarter of a million teachers who were free to decide what should be taught and how it should be taught.'<sup>80</sup>

The training of secondary teachers in Britain had begun much earlier than in New Zealand.( not till the 1950s here). Boards of Education training teachers for secondary schools were set up in 1908. They were trained in a University Training

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<sup>77</sup> Derek Gillard, Education in England: A brief history, Internet, p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> Primary and Secondary Education in England and Wales from 1944, Internet.

<sup>79</sup> Gillard, p. 15.

<sup>80</sup> Gillard, p.20.

department, a Training College or a Teacher Training Department of a secondary school. The courses were restricted to graduates and had to last one year and included 60 days of teaching practice. Changes had taken place over the years but at the end of the course the teachers reached Qualified Teacher Status. In the 1970s the school population began to fall. There were redundancies and restrictions on teacher trainees' numbers and England became one of the first European countries to systematically integrate the Teachers' Colleges with the Universities. There was considerable controversy.<sup>81</sup>

The Thatcher government gave back the right to select for secondary education by the 11+ examination in 1976. The government also set about lessening the powers of the LEAS. 'They regarded some of them as 'the loony left.'<sup>82</sup> By the 1980s 90% of all secondary school students were being educated in some form of comprehensive schooling system and despite the 11+ examination having meant to be eliminated, a 1981 survey of all LEAS showed testing at that age was still widespread. However it was used now mainly in Mathematics, reading and reasoning to identify students with special needs, gain an idea of standards and provide records for students changing schools.

Finally in the 1980s Britain had a nationally determined core curriculum for the first time and the senior examination system was revamped. The new General Certificate of Secondary Education(GCSE) replaced the old one in England and Wales as well as the CSE and was graded on a seven point scale, A to G. Able students between 17 and 19 years sat the entrance

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<sup>81</sup> Newmann, History of Teacher Training 1800 – 1970, Internet

<sup>82</sup> Newman, p.21.



examinations for the different universities. This was aimed at the top 60% of school pupils, 15 and 16 year olds.<sup>83</sup>

In 1988 the Education Reform Act was passed. It took away much of the powers of the LEAS and passed them to the Secretary of State. He was responsible for the National Curriculum, the Testing and League Tables and the Local Management of Schools. School Management groups composed mainly of parents were given far greater control managing most of the budget and responsible for curriculum, discipline and staffing and the head became more of an institutional manager. So by 1988 Britain not only had some of the inequalities of the selective system remaining but also a whole new raft of new legislation. With New Zealand introducing the system of 'Tomorrows Schools' in 1989 perhaps many teachers in Britain would empathise with Miss R. James when she commented, 'I have a concern of all that would be lost in the new scheme and the changes were being made in unseemly haste.'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Pat East, Better School Report, Internet.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 21 April 1994, p. 6.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EARLY LIFE AND TEACHING

Bessie Spencer was the third child of a family of five and was born in 1872.<sup>1</sup> Her father was a doctor and had been an Army Surgeon with the Royal Irish Regiment during the Wanganui and Waikato campaigns. He then went into private practice in Napier. He was Mayor of Napier from 1882 – 1885 so was a well respected member of the community.

With her brothers and sister she had a comfortable early life. They had servants, as did 16% - 18% of households in New Zealand at the time.<sup>2</sup> The children had a nanny when they were young and Dr Spencer had a groom for the horses and three vehicles.

Mrs Spencer home schooled her children at first after which the boys then attended a Dame school in Napier. These were not uncommon and set up in private homes catering for both boys and girls. They attended Napier Boys' High School (NBHS) for their junior years and Charles and Jack were sent to Britain for their senior years and University. The girls had a governess – Miss Hansard and attended Napier Girls' High School (NGHS) in

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<sup>1</sup> She had two older brothers – Charles born 1868 who became a medical specialist to King George V and Willie (born 1871) who injured his leg in an accident which developed into TB. He became an invalid for most of his life and addicted to morphine. A younger sister, Emily, was born in 1874 – she spent most of her later life in England – and a younger brother, Jack (born 1880) He became a specialist in tropical medicine and was a colonel in the British Army. Interview with Maryan Moss, Sept 2004.

<sup>2</sup> James Belich, *Making Peoples – A History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 405.

the third term of 1884. They were among the 52 foundation pupils ranging in ages from seven to seventeen. Bessie Spencer was 12 in Form Two and Emily two years younger in Standard Four.<sup>3</sup>

Bessie Spencer was a bright student and she matriculated in 1889. The curriculum at NGHS and most other girls' secondary schools at the time including Otago, Nelson and Christchurch Girls' Colleges was very academic reflecting the dominance of the Matriculation examination. The most important subjects were English Grammar and Literature, French, Latin, German, Mathematics (Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry) and Science. The examination was controlled by the University of New Zealand and senior students sat it in their fourth year at secondary school. Despite the emphasis on this examination few girls achieved it. Bessie Spencer was one out of two girls who gained it in 1889 and two in 1890. By 1893 six girls actually passed out of school numbers of 59.<sup>4</sup>

She became a pupil teacher while studying extramurally at Canterbury University for her BA. She sat her term examinations in Napier but had to go down to Wellington for her end of year ones. Mr Wood the Principal of Napier Boys' High School (NBHS) coached her in Algebra, Trigonometry and Euclid and Mr Pinkney also from NBHS coached her in Latin. She studied English and French on her own. She became an Assistant Mistress and as she passed her subjects her salary increased. She finally gained her BA and her Teacher's Certificate in 1895 and was appointed First Assistant in 1897. Her salary as an

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Maryan Moss, 2 Sept 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Early Registration Booklet NGHS Archives. 1884 – 1910.

Assistant Mistress was 13 pounds a term, examination bonus was 20 pounds and with her BA she received 100 pounds a year salary from the second term in 1895.<sup>5</sup>

Much of Bessie Spencer's early years and teaching, her time as Lady Principal and work in the community has been recorded in her diaries in the Hawke's Bay museum. They begin in 1893 and continue for most years until 1926 when entries become spasmodic until 1953. She died in 1955.

There were very few professions open to intelligent women in these times so she continued into teaching from her student days. However she did have mixed feelings about it. At the beginning of 1893 she commented,

Wish I was going to Erewhon (a country estate near Taihape where she often stayed in the holidays) instead of NGHS' and she was glad to see Miss Fraser again 'and we exchanged accounts of holidays and the pokiness of school after them. Napier and school are so crushing but we must make the best of it.'<sup>6</sup>

Even in 1897 after accepting the position of First Assistant she comments, 'How can I live through this year!'<sup>7</sup>

With her affluent background and a very social lifestyle Bessie Spencer should not have needed to join the workforce. However the family had large expenses. Both she and her sister Emily attended NGHS where there were fees and also for the boys at NBHS. Charles and Jack also had their senior and university education in Britain. Emily does not seem to have had a

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<sup>5</sup> Diary entry, May 1895.

<sup>6</sup> Diary entry, Feb 1893.

<sup>7</sup> Diary entry, Feb 1897.

permanent position teaching although she relieved for her sister when she travelled to Wellington to sit her B A examinations. Bessie Spencer talks about her with the kindergarten so perhaps she helped with the juniors.

Her father died in 1897 leaving the family in very strained financial circumstances.<sup>8</sup> Just before he died she commented, 'We have had bad news about the iron sands.'<sup>9</sup> She was left to pay off all his debts from her salary which were not cleared until 1905.<sup>10</sup> A few days after he died the bailiffs came in and the family had to quickly shift out to take rental accommodation further away from NGHS. On top of the family expenses there were doctor's bills for Willie because he was always taking 'bad turns.'<sup>11</sup> This may have been one of the main reasons why she accepted the position as Lady Principal commencing in 1901 and stayed in it until 1909. By this time both her mother and Willie were dead.<sup>12</sup>

As a young teacher she had a very busy school life teaching English, Maths (Euclid, Trigonometry and Algebra) French and Latin and Botany. She had a half day off a week because of her duties in the weekend. There were weekly teachers' meetings, regular cloakroom duties and detentions until 4.30 and tea duties where she stayed and organised prep. She often worked late at

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<sup>8</sup> Her father had invested his money in a scheme to smelt iron sands to produce iron. The New Zealand Iron and Steel Company had predicted that the country would soon become one of the leading iron and steel producers of the world. However after people in the 1880's and 1890's had given about \$9000,000 the scheme was found not to be viable. James Belich, *Making Peoples – A History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996, p.360.

<sup>9</sup> Diary entry, March 1897.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Maryan Moss, 2 Sept 2004.

<sup>11</sup> For some time Miss B. Spencer and her sister took over the household chores because they couldn't afford servants.

<sup>12</sup> Willie died in 1904 and Mrs Spencer in 1908..

school marking, preparing lessons, studying and typing up the school magazine which she began in 1899. Often other teachers or her brother Jack would then come and walk her home.<sup>13</sup> She sometimes went back to school on Saturdays and took the girls to church on Sundays – the Anglican church or the Scottish church. Where possible she tried to visit home after 4pm to help with any problems particularly with her brother Willie. She then returned to school if she was needed.

Her diary gives an insight into her reactions to the examinations and inspectors' visits. In 1893 with Miss Fraser they sat the term examinations in Napier for their BA. Both thought they had failed and had 'weeps' together. Bessie Spencer even had a bet with her brother Jack that she had failed. When she received the telegram informing her she had passed she 'was astonished.'<sup>14</sup>

The Inspector General of Schools, Mr Habens, spent an afternoon in her Latin classes in 1896, 'This nearly finished me,' she commented.<sup>15</sup> William Habens was Inspector General of Schools, 1878 – 1899. He was a very zealous and overbearing man.

She believed in plenty of activity and would sometimes go boating and swimming before school and take the girls. There might be tennis and croquet after school. She watched the girls taking Gymnastics and sometimes joined in. She and a teaching friend set up a gym to do 'work outs' at the school but they had to be discontinued when some of the boys from NBHS were found

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<sup>13</sup> Diary entry, Feb 1893.

<sup>14</sup> Diary entry, Oct 1893.

<sup>15</sup> Diary entry, Oct 1896.

peering in the windows.<sup>16</sup> In the weekend there could be visits to the beach, rambling or picnicking for the girls.

Despite her busy school life she and her sister Emily enjoyed a good social life attending balls, musical and card evenings and tennis parties. They did not lack male partners. Sometimes they and their chaperone would stay at Karamu in Hastings after an evening's entertainment and Bessie Spencer would travel back to Napier by train in the early morning just in time for classes. The balls did not finish until 3am!<sup>17</sup> They both enjoyed staying with Bessie Spencer's friend Amy Large's family who lived in Hadfield Terrace just near NGHS.<sup>18</sup> They had a chalet in the grounds which was able to accommodate visitors when they stayed for musical evenings.<sup>19</sup>

With her mother and sister Bessie Spencer would often visit the country estates of well known Hawke's Bay families in the holidays – the Carlyons of Gwavas, the Guthrie Smiths of Tutira, the Ormonds of Mahia, Erewhon in Taihape and many others.<sup>20</sup> She was part of a very close family and though she thought at one stage of applying for a position as Lady Principal of Nelson College she felt this would be detrimental for the family.<sup>21</sup>

She saw the resignation of Miss M. Matthews, the Lady Principal 1893 – 1900, in the local newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* on 24<sup>th</sup> of September in 1900 and four days later the NBHS Board

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Maryan Moss, 2 Sept 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Diary entry, June 1893.

<sup>18</sup> The house is still occupied today and called 'The Large House.'

<sup>20</sup> Diary entries, school holidays 1893 – 1900.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Maryan Moss, 2 Sept 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Diary entries, school holidays 1893 – 1900.

<sup>21</sup> Diary entry, June 1900.

offered her the position commencing in 1901.<sup>22</sup> She accepted and the appointment was made public on the 9<sup>th</sup> October.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast Rosemary James was born in 1929 in Waihi the youngest in a family of three. She had one older brother Stanley, who became a Professor of Medicine and led the world in neonatal medicine and a younger one David who became Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University in Australia. Her father was a primary teacher but did teach History at secondary level in later years but he was gassed during World War One which caused on going health problems. To supplement the family income her mother taught music at home. Rosemary was expected to do household chores while still fairly young and she cooked dinner most nights because her mother was busy with piano pupils.<sup>1</sup> Relatives on both sides of the family were Anglican ministers and religion was an important part of family life. She realised how different her home background was from others when she asked a friend to stay. Prayers before breakfast was a new experience for the friend but just an expected part of daily life for Rosemary James.

The family moved to Tauranga in 1931 and Rosemary James attended Tauranga District High School. For three years from 1936 to 1939 her father was ill and did not work. This affected Rosemary as she and her father were good companions. They were a very close family and enjoyed family holidays particularly during December and January when they went camping for

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<sup>22</sup> Diary entry, Sept 1900.

<sup>23</sup> Diary entry, Oct 1900.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Helen Anderson, May 2005.



about a month. Fishing, boating, swimming and walking were enjoyed by all and other friends often were invited as well.<sup>2</sup>

In her Fifth Form year she travelled to Nelson and was a boarder at Nelson College for Girls (NCG) 1945 – 1947. Her mother had attended the school and there were relatives in the area. Here she excelled in many fields. She was a House Prefect in her Six A and Six B years as well as Head Prefect in 1947. The younger girls were in awe of her. Judy Lawlor as a Fourth Former remembers her coming into Gibson House where they were meant to be working quietly while other girls were doing Latin and commenting, “If you girls don’t stop talking you will have to write out Chaucer!”<sup>3</sup> They did not speak another word! She played the piano and cello and performed in group and solo items at school concerts. She was also skilled in drama and speechmaking (despite the fact that she had been very shy when young) and took part in competitions and school plays and productions. She was a good swimmer and gained her Bronze Medallion for life saving.

After leaving school she attended Canterbury University in 1948 and graduated B.Sc. in 1951. That same year she attended Auckland Teachers’ College. Her brother David said she had always wanted to be a teacher like her father and she never wavered in achieving this goal.<sup>4</sup> While in Auckland she played the cello in the Auckland Junior Symphony Orchestra. Her first teaching position was at Christchurch Girls’ High School from 1952 – 1955 where she taught Mathematics and Science. Here she lived in the boarding establishment Acland House as House

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Professor David James, June 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Judy Lawlor, 6 Dec 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Daily Telegraph, 19 April 1994, p.6.

Mistress.<sup>5</sup> She was Leader of the Student Christian Movement and a member of the Orchestra Committee. She was noted for her high standards, good discipline and co – operation.<sup>6</sup>

She taught Mathematics and Science at Putaruru High School from 1955 – 1957. She boarded in Putaruru at first but then travelled 40 miles to and from her home in Tauranga over the Kaimai ranges each day. Her father was ill with cancer and died in 1957. She was pleased when she was appointed to the position as head of Mathematics and Science at Tauranga Girls' College. There was a teacher shortage at the time and Miss R. James was the only qualified Mathematics teacher on the staff. Also there was only a cook to fill in for the Chemistry classes.

While at Tauranga Girls' College she coached the A and B basketball teams and took school parties away for skiing trips. She is remembered as being very supportive, cheerful, positive and a 'fun' person to be with. As there were little social opportunities for young single women teachers they organised their own fun with outings and weekend trips away. Miss R. James and other teachers living in Tauranga were very thoughtful and hospitable to others away from home.<sup>7</sup>

Her mother's sister came to live in Tauranga and this gave Rosemary James the opportunity to apply for the position of Head of Mathematics at Wellington Girls' College in 1962. Mathematics was undergoing major changes and she was in the

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<sup>5</sup> It was at this time that the two CGHS girls were involved in a murder and Miss R. James in later years was always concerned if girls were involved in too closer relationships particularly in the NGHS Hostel. Interview with Helen Anderson, May, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Smith, *Rosemary E. James, A Life to be Remembered*, School Research, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Marlene Richardson, Sept 2004.

forefront of these being seconded to the Ministry of Education for training teachers in the new methods. While here she coached basketball and trained some girls as referees, did invaluable work with the Drama club and with other staff members frequently joined with the Wellington Girls' College orchestra playing the cello in concerts. Her friend Vivienne Nelson explained that Rosemary James became headmistress by accident. While at Wellington Girls' College an inspector encouraged her to apply for the position just being advertised for NGHS. She felt she was too young at thirty nine years old but he encouraged her to send in her application and she got the position!<sup>8</sup>

The early life and teaching of Bessie Spencer and Rosemary James provides background to the study of aspects of their Principalships and their profiles in community affairs in the next chapters. It also provides initial insights into the themes significant to the overall comparison of the two focussing on their differences and similarities. These include their leadership role, motivation, interests and achievements.

There is no information available on Bessie Spencer's leadership role while at secondary school but while a junior teacher she initiated the first school magazine in 1899 and typed most of the articles. Securing the position of First Assistant and later being offered the position of Lady Principal by the Napier Boys' High School Board without having to place in an application shows the leadership potential the Board saw she possessed. After the death of her father in 1897 she also took

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

over the leadership role of the family coping with the family finances as well as Willie's illness.

Rosemary James took a leadership role early in life when she cooked for the family. This developed in her years at NCG with her positions as House Prefect and finally Head Prefect. As a young teacher she quickly assumed Head of Department of smaller schools and then as Head of Mathematics at Wellington Girls' College. In Wellington also the Ministry of Education recognised her leadership skills in seconding her to help with the introduction of the new Mathematics syllabus.

It is not certain what motivated Bessie Spencer into her teaching role. She was academically bright and was willing to study hard to achieve success in the examinations which opened up a teaching career. However it may have been the financial attractions of the position.

Rosemary James motivation into teaching came from her father and she was willing to study hard to achieve her goals. It was more unusual for girls to study Mathematics and Science in the 1950's and her enthusiasm and expertise in Mathematics encouraged more students to take the subject.

Bessie Spencer had many and varied interests - swimming, tennis, cycling, croquet and gymnastics. She often took the girls for picnics to the beach or into the bush in the weekends. She enjoyed gardening, dancing and attended balls, musical and card evenings. In the holidays she loved to get away to family estates of her friends.

Rosemary James also had many interests. Her musical ability came from her mother and at Nelson Girls' College she took part in group as well as solo items particularly on the cello. While at Teachers' College in Auckland she played the cello in the Junior Regional Orchestra and in Wellington played in the Wellington Girls' College Orchestra. She was interested in drama and speech and worked with their Drama Club. She also coached basketball and trained girls to become referees.

Bessie Spencer's achievements included passing her examinations to become a teacher, gaining more responsibility at NGHS and finally achieving the position of Lady Principal at the age of twenty nine. Rosemary James achievements led her to reach her goal of teaching through academic passes, being seconded to the Ministry of Education and gaining the position of Principal of NGHS at the age of thirty nine.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PRINCIPALSHIPS

#### Anna Elizabeth Jerome Spencer (Bessie) Lady Principal Napier Girls' High School 1901 – 1909.

'The object of education is to enable us not only to enjoy life but to accomplish something in the life we enjoy.'<sup>1</sup> With her lifelong friend Amy Large later Mrs F. Hutchinson as matron Miss B. Spencer commented in 1901, 'We have really begun.'<sup>2</sup>

Her position at the age of twenty nine was not so different from other Lady Principals at the same time. Miss Hewett, the founding principal of NGHS was twenty seven and two headmistresses from N CG, a school very similar to NGHS, Miss B. Gibson 1890 – 1900 was twenty four and Miss A. Tendall 1901 – 1906 was thirty.<sup>3</sup>

In 1901 there were 70 pupils at NGHS ranging in ages from 7 – 17 and the school had a high academic standard to uphold. As mentioned in the last chapter the curriculum reflected the predominance of the Matriculation examination. Even in 1901 when the third form was divided on academic ability the upper form took all the academic subjects while the lower could only drop German.

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<sup>1</sup> NGHS Magazine, Napier: Swailes Printing, 1904, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Diary entry, February 1901.

<sup>3</sup> Lois Voller, *Sentinel at the Gates – Nelson College for Girls 1883 – 1983*, Nelson: Nelson Printing Services, 1983, p.41.

Miss B. Spencer read the latest educational ideas of Montessori and Rudolf Steiner and used some of their methods. She had the belief that 'girls could do any thing' and she bought Mental Science books for them commenting 'Girls now is the time for thinking (schooldays) no – one can do it for you.'<sup>4</sup> She included History, Botany, Geography, Mechanics and Physiology in the curriculum. The Geography classes were using barometers, storm glasses, thermometers and rain gauges to keep records of the weather each day. She thought of Political Economy and practical sketching for the older girls. In language she believed in 'the natural method which avoids translation – the language becomes a living thing and in grammar 'more rational methods than the old drudgery – the pupil is taught to understand the mechanics of a sentence by practise in example and to write correctly before abstract study.'<sup>5</sup>

She believed in more practical experiences for the girls. They went bush walking and tramping where they studied swamp vegetation and collected plants and shells.<sup>6</sup> There were telescope evenings using meteorological instruments and they went to visit a Mr Stopford's orrery to observe the movement of the earth. She dissected rabbits for the girls and visited woollen mills and freezing works. Dr Moore gave a gift of bones to her to be used in the Physiology classes. She experimented with electricity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> NGHS Magazine, 1905, p.8.

<sup>5</sup> NGHS Magazine, 1904, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Other schools such as Nelson College for Girls were also forward looking in their practical work. In 1987 a group effort on ferns won an award at the world Fair in Chicago. Lois Voller. P41.

<sup>7</sup> Diary entry, April, 1906.

The Education Act in 1903 affected all state secondary schools in New Zealand including NGHS. In the regulations those who passed their Proficiency examination were able to attend the nearest secondary school free of charge. They gained their Junior Free Place.<sup>8</sup> It was an opportunity for those from less wealthy families to gain further education. Some Principals did not agree with the introduction of the Free Place. They were concerned that the academic syllabus would be 'watered down.' Miss M.V. Gibson, Lady Principal of Christchurch Girls' High School commented,

A great number of girls would use the free place system just to supplement their primary school education and she thought that girls who were suited to secondary education were already making use of it and that free places were unnecessary.<sup>9</sup>

All schools now had to hand in copies of their schemes of work and schools were open for inspection by the Inspector General of schools or a representative from the Education Department. Before this time schools could request an inspection if they wished. The introduction of the Junior Free Place meant a big increase in student numbers at NGHS – from 70 in 1901 to 110 in 1909.<sup>10</sup> Increased numbers and students with a wider range of abilities meant that the curriculum had to be broadened to some extent. By regulation, free tuition pupils had to have Domestic Science and they only needed to take one language plus English and the core subjects. Dr Sidey, the Board secretary came to discuss the changes with Miss B. Spencer and she introduced dressmaking and cooking classes. Later he and

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<sup>8</sup> Pupils sat the Proficiency examination in their last year at primary school standard six.

<sup>9</sup> A. Cumming I. Cumming, *History of State Education in New Zealand*, Wellington: Pitman Publishers, 1978, p.150.

<sup>10</sup> M.A. Anderson, *Napier Girls' High School Notes from 1883 – 1940*, 1940, p.4.



another board member came to investigate where school building extensions could take place.<sup>11</sup>

As well as Matriculation the girls were prepared for the junior and senior Civil Service examinations, the junior University Scholarship and the University term examinations. They sat the University examinations a year after they had gained Matriculation.

By 1905 the Junior or Public Service examination was changed from the end of primary school to the second year of secondary school. It was meant to be an examination for pupils wanting positions in the Government service but it also gave students who passed a Senior Free Place for two more years at school if they wished. This meant they could sit Matriculation and some girls at NGHS took this opportunity. This examination was also very academic and the free place holders had to sit this whereas the fee paying students had more freedom. If free placeholders did not keep up a high standard in their studies they could lose their positions. Before this time there had been a range of scholarships students could apply for at NGHS particularly for those who had to board from areas like Dannevirke and Woodville. In 1901 seven had Education Board, four High School and 13 Commissioners' Scholarships.<sup>12</sup> After the 1903 Act in 1909 out of 47 new day girls enrolled 22 were still fee paying.<sup>13</sup>

Inspectors' reports were very encouraging. In 1901 the report of both the NBHS and NGHS stated 'a general high average of the

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<sup>11</sup> Diary entry, Feb 1905.

<sup>12</sup> Early registration Booklet, NGHS Archives, 1884–1910.

<sup>13</sup> Inspector's Report, NGHS, July, 1909.

standard of work – the work of both schools in Euclid (Geometry) good, but that of the girls excellent.<sup>14</sup> However, Miss B. Spencer comments in her diary she felt wretched when she learned Mr Hogben, the Senior School Inspector was coming to the school in July 1903.<sup>15</sup> She need not have been concerned because the reports continued to be of a high standard. In 1908 the report 'commended the new methods and excellent teaching particularly in Mathematics, Physiology and Botany.'<sup>16</sup>

During Miss B. Spencer's time as Lady Principal the students gained important academic successes. In 1905 I. Dugleby was the first girl in Hawke's Bay to gain a Junior University Scholarship<sup>17</sup>. She continued on with her studies in medicine. Other students followed her. E.Hall and E. Taychenne in 1907, E Case in 1908 and H. white in 1909.<sup>18</sup> An important old girl Eliza Amy Hodgson F.L.D.Sc(Hon) became a world authority on liverworts. As Amy Campbell she attended NGHS from 1902 – 1905.<sup>19</sup> Her particular interest was Botany and this could have been stimulated by Miss B. Spencer who taught the subject and kept in touch with her all her life. In an advertisement in the Napier newspaper in 1909 the NGHS was credited with having 90% of its pupils gaining the Matriculation and Civil Service examinations.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> M.A. Anderson, p.3.

<sup>15</sup> Diary entry, July 1903.

<sup>16</sup> Inspector's report, NGHS, July 1908.

<sup>17</sup> NGHS Magazine, 1905, p.10.

<sup>18</sup> E. Hall and E. Taychenne , NGHS Magazine, 1907, p.12. E,Casey, NGHS Magazine, 1908 p.10. H.Whyte ,NGHS Magazine, 1909, p.11.

<sup>19</sup> J.Garnham, G.Cowrick (ed) *Ad Lucem Napier Girls' High School 1884 – 1984*, Waipukurau: Central Hawke's Bay Printers and Publishers, 1984,p113.

<sup>20</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 July 1909, p.8.

Miss B. Spencer, as was shown in the last chapter, was very keen on sport and the outdoors and she continued to share this with the girls as Lady Principal. She was a good tennis player and she encouraged them to play. She coached them in hockey and they often played both tennis and hockey with Miss Hodge's girls at Woodford House in Hastings, girls from the Maori Girls' College Hukarere in Napier and the boys from NBHS.<sup>21</sup> The girls played croquet and golf – two girls winning the Hawke's Bay Championships. In 1902 she tried Sandow's exercises and took them with the girls.<sup>22</sup> She and the girls still swam in the sea sometimes before school and when the Municipal Baths opened in 1909 the swimming club formed a connection with the school and the girls obtained concession tickets.<sup>23</sup> She introduced Basketball to the school in 1902 from a headmistress in Hobart and helped coach it.<sup>24</sup> At most state girls' secondary schools there were no Physical Education teachers appointed until the 1920s and later. There were no training facilities in New Zealand. Private girls' boarding schools were able to appoint Physical Education teachers from the colleges in Britain. Sport depended on the interest of the Lady Principal and the women on the staff. She and the girls went eeling and fishing at the wharf. They went blackberrying, tramping and enjoyed picnics. 'I took 34 girls and teachers for a picnic to Red Cliffs.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Other Lady Principals also were keen to encourage girls in sport. At Nelson College for Girls Miss A. Tendall (1901 – 1906) pressured the Board to build a Gymnasium and regularly took the girls for classes. Lois Voller, p.42.

<sup>22</sup> Eugene Sandow, 1867 – 1925, came from Germany and was physical adviser to King George V. His exercises were very popular at the time and he visited the school and also Miss B. Spencer's brother Willie to see if his ideas would help.

<sup>23</sup> Miss Gibson from NCG encouraged the girls swimming and by 1900 some were training competitively. They also began water polo. Voller, p.132.

<sup>24</sup> NGHS was one of the earliest schools to play. It was not introduced into Otago Girls' High School until 1916 and Southland Girls' High School until 1918. Catherine Smith, p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Diary entry, Nov 1902.

She was responsible for the girls having an interesting social life. Mostly this involved the boarders as there was on average 12 – 20 during her time. They went to the Athenaeum to hear lectures on a wide range of subjects, they had dancing with the boys from NBHS, they had musical evenings (Amy Large and her sister both sang) and they went to shows in Napier and Hastings. She comments in her diary, 'Em and I and a party of girls drove in drag to Hastings and saw *Midsummer Night's Dream* which was performed by the Woodford House girls.'<sup>26</sup> (Emily was her younger sister who became matron in 1907) They went to Wirth's Circus, to the opera *Tannhauser* performed by a German company and heard Dame Nellie Melba sing.<sup>27</sup> On Sundays she attended church with the girls – sometimes the Anglican Cathedral and sometimes the Scottish church. In the afternoon she took the girls for Scripture and later often a walk in the Botanical Gardens or down to the waterfront. In the evenings she often used to read to the girls for an hour and many of them remembered these readings with appreciation.<sup>28</sup> Two of the books mentioned were *Silas Marner* and *The Prince and the Pauper*.

Despite a very busy school schedule Miss B. Spencer managed to keep in close contact with her family and friends. As has been mentioned in the last chapter, her father died in 1897 and she felt some responsibility for her mother who often had 'fits of nerves' and her invalid brother Willie who had TB. When she left home to live in the hostel she felt guilty leaving them. However, she

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<sup>26</sup> Diary entry, Feb 1909.

<sup>27</sup> Other Lady Principals entertained their boarders. At Nelson College for Girls Miss M. Lorimer (1906 – 1918) 'sang with the girls coming back from picnics, took them to concerts and lectures and tramped with them.' Lois Voller, p.68.

<sup>28</sup> J.Rogers, 'Diaries of a Headmistress,' *Journal of New Zealand Federation of Historical Societies*, 2:3 (1985), pp.26 – 28.

often visited them after 4pm. She comments, 'I went home to dress Willie's back and then walked with Mother on the verandah for an hour.'<sup>29</sup> Social calls were often made at this time. Many of the women of notable families in Hawke's Bay were among her friends. There were the Ormonds, the McLeans, the Williams and the Convent Sisters. Sometimes she might fit in a game of tennis or a swim but of course she would have to be back at school to take tea and organise prep. She would then work on school preparation, marking, taking extra lessons, doing accounts and writing up the school magazine until about 11pm.

She continued with her wide variety of interests from her early teaching life as well as broadening out into other areas. Sometimes with the bicycle the girls had given her in 1899 she would cycle down in the mornings for a swim before school. She set up a garden at school and might do some gardening. With her friend Amy Large she might cycle to Rissington or Puketitiri in the weekends, a distance of about 40kms. When her brother Charles was on holiday in Napier from Britain in 1903 she cycled with him most days.<sup>30</sup>

Clare Simpson from Lincoln University in her article on the 'Development of Women's Cycling in late Nineteenth – Century New Zealand' gives some interesting information on the popularity of the sport in New Zealand. Miss B. Spencer was one of many who enjoyed the freedom and relaxation of cycling. However most seemed to belong to clubs and she does not mention a club in her diaries. Her costume would have been very discreet remembering the fact that she was a Lady Principal.

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<sup>29</sup> Diary entry, Feb 1901.

<sup>30</sup> Diary entry, March 1903.

In Christchurch the first all women cycling club, the Atlanta club was established in 1892. By the mid 1890s there were many such clubs in New Zealand including Dunedin, Wellington, Auckland and Greymouth.<sup>31</sup> In Napier the Wanderers' Bicycle Club began in the 1890s. It was a mixed club but by 1897 there were 20 female members. Cycling seemed to become more popular for women after the passing of the Suffrage Bill in 1893. Kate Sheppard, President of the Christian Temperance Union and an indefatigable worker for the suffrage cause, was a cyclist and she subscribed to the cyclist magazine the New Zealand Wheelman. There was a regular cyclists' column in the Union's Magazine the 'White Ribbon.'<sup>32</sup> It seemed that with freedom to vote women were keen to take on other freedoms. Some women even went on cycling tours around New Zealand. Alice Mitchell and her sister cycled from Gore to Bluff and back in two days (120 miles) and a year later Alice and her brother travelled 1000 miles in three months up to Masterton and back.<sup>33</sup> The New Zealand Cyclists Touring Club was established in 1896 and it provided maps and handbooks to assist tourists. By March 1897 the club had 740 members.<sup>34</sup> Cycling seemed to be just as popular in Britain. My own grandparents Alice and Harry Needham met for the first time at a mixed cycling club in London.

Miss B. Spencer was a great reader. She read poetry, Greek plays, Emerson's essays, religious and mystical works as well as novels. As well as being interested in the beliefs of Montessori

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<sup>31</sup> Clare Simpson, 'The Development of Women's Cycling in Late Nineteenth-Century New Zealand,' p. 31.

<sup>32</sup> Simpson, p. 33.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

and the Rudolph Steiner movement as mentioned before, she read the latest educational and scientific works of Huxley and Darwin and the ideas of the new psychology. She was interested in different religions – Buddhism, Christian Science and the Bahai.

The Large family was interested not only in music but also the occult. There were often musical evenings at their home and with them she attended concerts, organ recitals and plays in Napier some of which the girls attended. With the Large's she began the Theosophical Society in Napier and experimented with table tapping, Ouija boards, thought transference, spiritual healing and séances.<sup>35</sup> She talks of going to a spiritualist lecture with three teachers<sup>36</sup>. She read books on massage and sometimes practised it.<sup>37</sup> She took German and fencing lessons, learnt kit making from a Maori woman, did painting, sketching, carving, photography,(she did her own printing and developing), pressed plants she had collected as well as typing letters to keep in touch with friends and her brothers overseas. The list seems endless!

She delighted in the holidays when she could get away from the towns and on to the country estates of her friends. Here she loved horse riding, tramping, hill climbs and swimming in the creeks. She was very adventurous and energetic.<sup>38</sup> She climbed mountains, went pig sticking and while staying at

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<sup>35</sup> Diary entry, December 1903, 'had a séance with Willie till after 12pm.'

<sup>36</sup> Diary entry, April 1906.

<sup>37</sup> Diary entry, August 1908. 'I gave Mother a massage.'

<sup>38</sup> Another headmistress who showed this same spirit was Miss M. Lorimer Lady Principal of NCG 1906 – 1918. She was called 'The Mighty Atom' and engaged in a 'holiday career as an alpinist at an age when many would have been thinking of hanging up their boots and ice axes.' Voller, p. 65.

'Erewhon' near Taihape she helped on the farm with shearing and docking.<sup>39</sup>

During her time as Lady Principal, despite the successes there were many problems. Most girls paid fees until 1903 so day girls' fees had to be calculated differently from boarders' fees. Those mentioned earlier, on Education Board, NGHS and Commissioners' scholarships had to be kept separate. These all had to be calculated and given to the Secretary of the Napier High School Board, Dr Sidey, each month. 'What a relief when the accounts came out on the right side.'<sup>40</sup> With the 1903 Education Act introducing the Free Place system every free pupil now had to be accounted for in detail. It was a tedious job. Without the returns going in there was no money from the government. The test and examination results for the scholarship and free place students had to be carefully monitored. If their work slackened then they had to pay fees. Also because of the act there were larger numbers to cater for and for those wanting a free place in the Junior School the staff had to teach the subjects for the Proficiency Examination. Before this they had taught similar subjects including languages as the Senior school.

Staffing was a constant concern. Only one teaching staff member stayed with her from 1901 – 1909. There were 24 changes and ten teachers only stayed one year. Possibly they left to get married. In 1907 her sister Emily, now the matron, told

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Maryan Moss, 2 Sept 2004.

<sup>40</sup> J.Rogers.



her of dissatisfaction among the teaching staff which she had to sort out and also there was trouble in the kitchen which she finally resolved.

In the local newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, she had to cope with complaints about dirty students, girls at the hostel being allowed to act on Sundays and a particularly damaging letter about the expulsion of two girls.<sup>41</sup> This last complaint was taken to Wellington and finally the girls were able to return to school.

Although her friend Amy Large was Matron in charge of the hostel 1901 – 1905 and her sister Matron 1907 – 1909, and they all lived in, Miss B. Spencer was ultimately responsible for the girls. There was whooping cough, measles and an operation at the hostel on a girl with appendicitis – a very serious disease at the time. She was a very caring person and when one of her students became ill with scarlet fever, another very serious disease, she took over most of the nursing herself.<sup>42</sup> She had to talk to the girls about making too much noise in the corridor at night, waving from the hostel windows and bad behaviour in the street. She read a talk to the girls on 'honour' when a bed had been broken and gave them a lecture on "manners" which the first Lady Principal 1884 – 1892 Miss M. Hewett, had written. She often had to keep girls in after school for misdemeanours. After her trip overseas in 1904 she began an experiment of letting the boarders take more responsibility for their own behaviour. This was not all that successful as they were caught having pillow fights shortly afterwards.

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<sup>41</sup> Diary entry ,March, 1906.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Maryan Moss, September, 2004..

She often talks of being 'tired and depressed' and this was particularly so when she returned to school in 1905 after having a year's leave of absence in 1904 to travel in Britain and Europe. Her friend Amy Large had resigned as Matron to get married and she felt there would not be the same support over the coming year. The position of a Lady Principal was a very lonely and demanding role particularly if you lived in and had responsibility for the hostel girls as well.<sup>43</sup>

However, she continued in the position for another four years and then the stresses and strains became too much and at the end of the May holidays in 1909 she sent her notice of resignation to the Napier High School Board to take effect from the end of the year. Her replacement was a disappointment for one member of staff, Miss Kirk. She possibly hoped the appointment might have been an internal one as had happened in 1900. Miss Spencer commented in her diary, 'Tension and strain very great all day. Board gave its decision at 2.30 pm. Miss Kirk taking her disappointment very pluckily.'<sup>44</sup> However this didn't eventuate and in August the Board announced the appointment of Miss V. Greig for 1910. She had gained her B.A. and a Scholarship in 1898, her M. A. with Honours in Latin and English in 1899 and her B.Sc. in 1904. She had taught at Timaru Girls' High School, been First Assistant at Waitaki High School so she was well qualified for the position. However Miss Kirk continued teaching at the school until 1923 so she must have enjoyed her time there.

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<sup>43</sup> Miss B. Gibson, 'Lady Principal of Nelson Girls' College 1893 – 1900 commented, 'I cannot stand the constant worry that this entails.' (Fulltime teaching in the day and caring for pupils at night.) She applied for leave and when this was refused she resigned the following year. The following Lady Principal, Miss A. Tendall, also resigned for the same reason and only stayed till 1906. Lois Voller.

<sup>44</sup> Diary entry, August, 1909.

Despite resigning as Lady Principal in 1909 Miss B. Spencer has had a lasting impact on NGHS. In 1899 she began publishing the first magazine which has been continually printed each year since and she initiated the Old Girls' Association in 1908. She arranged a meeting in one of the tearooms in Napier and 80 old girls attended. She was elected President. The aims of the association were to keep in touch with old girls, to provide an annual prize for the school and to promote an annual entertainment. This has laid a firm foundation for the Association which is still very active today in 2005. Later, in 1931 she was the first woman to be elected to the High School Board – a most unusual appointment for the time. She did not retire until 1941 and it was not until 1949 that any other women board members were elected. Apart from Board meetings she and her friend Amy Hutchinson also attended functions at the school. Miss D. Watty remembers her as small and rather austere looking but she thinks this was probably the steel rimmed glasses. However there did seem to be a twinkle in her eye. She always wore a hat and was continually mislaying her scarf. It was part of her character and eccentricities and was one of the ways she was remembered.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Dorothy Watty, 6 September. 2004.

**Rosemary Ellinor James Headmistress Napier Girls' High  
School 1969 – 1989.**

A demanding workload confronts a headmistress. She is not only in charge of her girls and staff but is also involved in making important decisions influencing the running of the school buildings and grounds, for carrying out board meeting decisions, attending conferences, meetings and acting as guest speaker and sometimes judge at various community function.<sup>1</sup>

Miss R. James found her position as Headmistress at NGHS in 1969 very lonely at first. The First Assistant was not very supportive and some of the staff were older and set in their ways. She found the community difficult to break into and in the weekends she would sometimes just lie in bed and then go for a drive in her car.<sup>2</sup> However she was soon accepted. She had thought she might stay at the school for four years but she enjoyed it so much she became NGHS longest serving headmistress and stayed for 20.

She said that although she had always wanted to teach she had no wish to become a headmistress. It was difficult at first adjusting to a new role and when the bell went she felt like rushing off to class. It was sad to lose that personal contact with the girls.<sup>3</sup>

Miss R. James was amongst one of the youngest women in New Zealand at 39 to be appointed as Principal. You could gain the position after 13 years of teaching having had some years as a

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<sup>1</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 9 June 1984, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

<sup>3</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 9 June 1984, p.4.

senior master or mistress but most took longer.<sup>4</sup> She had been a Head of Department but had not had a senior mistresses position.

She became head of a school of 700 pupils when there were concerns in the New Zealand community and overseas about the under achieving of girls in education. In 1969 a study on girls' education was organised by the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women. It found that despite more girls than boys gaining School Certificate and University Entrance few were continuing on. Also girls were taking subjects for School Certificate which did not continue on to form six and few girls were taking Mathematics and Science required for many university and technical courses.<sup>5</sup>

She was able to improve the teaching of Mathematics as soon as she arrived. She had been seconded to the Ministry of Education in Wellington to implement the new syllabus. When she found a Physical Education teacher teaching Mathematics at NGHS she invited her to her home every week to coach her.<sup>6</sup> Although she did not have much time to do classroom teaching in later years, she did take junior Mathematics classes in the early 1970s and coached those having difficulty.<sup>7</sup> She also occasionally introduced a new Mathematics topic to a class. By the mid 1970's more girls were taking Mathematics. Such was Miss R. James expertise in the subject that she was

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<sup>4</sup> TEACAPS, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Fry, *It's Different for Daughters. A History of the Curriculum for Girls in New Zealand Schools, 1900 – 1975*, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1985, p.189.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Bernice Cavanagh, 24 July 2005.

seconded to the Education Department in 1973 for two months to join the inspectorate.

Many changes took place in examinations and the curriculum during her time at the school. The basic subjects for secondary schools had been stipulated by the Thomas Report in 1944 and had not changed much over the years.<sup>8</sup> The thirds and fourths had a common core of English, Social Studies, General Science, core Mathematics, Physical Education, Music and a practical subject which could be Art, Craft, Homecraft or Clothing. In addition one of the following options must be taken, in the Professional option, French, Latin or Mathematics or French, Book-keeping, Art or Mathematics; in the Commercial option, Shorthand and Typing, and Book-keeping or Typing, Commercial Practice and Clothing; in the Homecraft option, Clothing, Homecraft, Typing and Commercial Practice or Clothing and Homecraft.

For the Fifth Form they had four options; French, Geography or Biology, History, General Science, Shorthand/Typing, Homecraft or School Certificate Typing, Geography, Mathematics, Commercial Practice, Art or Book-keeping, Latin, Biology, Clothing or Mathematics. Pupils chose one subject from each option and they all had to take English. These five subjects were the requirements to sit School Certificate in the third year at secondary school.

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<sup>8</sup> New Zealand Department of Education. *The Post Primary Curriculum; A Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Education, in November 1942*, Wellington; R.E. Owen Government Printer, 1959.

For Six B. students took English plus three other subjects from French or Physics, History or Chemistry, Latin or Biology, Mathematics and Geography. They could then sit their University Entrance or be accredited. For Six A students chose Four subjects for Bursary beginning with compulsory English. then a choice of French or Physics, History or Chemistry, Latin or Biology, Mathematics and Geography.<sup>9</sup> They could also sit University Entrance Scholarship - the highest award.

Any major changes Miss R. James was aware of from the two volume manual for Principals which was being continually updated. However schools did have some leeway.

By 1989 extra subjects were added to the curriculum. For the thirds and fourths there were, Computer Skills, Keyboard Skills, Japanese, Maori, Reading Studies, Technical Drawing and Economic Studies. She wanted the NGHS to be competent in the new technology. When the school was given an Apple computer in 1981 it sat in the staff room for sometime. Finally she approached the staff and asked who would like to experiment with it. A part-time Mathematics teacher offered and Miss R. James gave her every opportunity to attend Computer classes and refresher courses to become 'computer literate.'<sup>10</sup> From these small beginnings by 1989 when she retired NGHS had a thriving Information Technology Department.

In 1970 the Maori Girls' College Hukarere closed their classrooms and Miss R. James offered to take them. There were

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<sup>9</sup> Napier Girls' High School Prospectus, Napier: Swailles Printing, 1969.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Erica Pearson, 11 Sept 2004.

about 40 extra girls at the beginning rising to 75 and more before she retired.<sup>11</sup> The girls came to NGHS for lessons but went back to their own school each night. Miss R. James had to organise teachers to take their prep at night. She rose to the challenge and not only appointed a teacher of Maori but also attended lessons herself. The girls thought she was 'real cool.'<sup>12</sup> In 1982 she was thrilled when the school's pass rate in Maori was 100%. She persevered with her studies and finally gained her Sixth Form Certificate. She also encouraged a Maori Culture group which began with 178 students.

There were many changes to the Fifth Form syllabus. Students could pass in just single subjects and if they were not up to School Certificate standard they were able to take alternative courses. They were Hawke's Bay English, Mathematics and Science. Those students who wished could also take six subjects instead of five for the examination. Economics, Accounting, Clothing and Textiles and Home Economics were added to the students' choices.

The Minister of Education, Mr L. Gander, in 1976 allowed four Napier schools, Colenso, Taradale, Napier Girls' and Napier Boys' High Schools to trial internal assessing School certificate in 1977. Miss R. James was not pleased with the results and for the remainder of her headship NGHS continued with the outside examining of School Certificate.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> By 1984 NGHS roll 27% Maori. NGHS Magazine, Torchbearer, Waipukurau: Central Hawke's Bay Printers and Publishers, 1984, p.10.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Derek Hutchinson, 14 April 2005.



University Entrance was shifted from the Sixth Form to the Seventh Form (not Six A any more) and internally assessed Sixth Form Certificate became a reality. Students now had extra choices of Art History, Practical Art and Recreation and Fitness for living.

Miss R. James believed 'that girls could do anything' and in line with this policy she wanted them to take more responsibility for the running of the school. In 1970 she invited members from Colenso High School Student Council to talk to the girls. This stimulated the girls to begin their own. This was to provide better communication between staff and students and also provide a forum where students could put forward their ideas. Many of this group's ideas were incorporated into the changes in the school particularly with school uniform. The Interact Club also began with 130 members grouped into five committees – club service, community service, international service and finance committee.<sup>14</sup> This club was responsible for continuing the NGHS high profile in helping communities in New Zealand and overseas.<sup>15</sup>

She was very receptive to new ideas and was responsible for introducing one hour periods, the new dean system and vertical forms. With the dean system in the 1970's she encouraged her three senior teachers to travel to Tawa College in Wellington to observe the system which they had implemented. On returning, after much discussion with the rest of the staff, these three teachers became the first deans. Each teacher stayed with her

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<sup>14</sup> J. Garnham, G. Cowlrick., *Ad Lucem. Napier Girls' High School 1884 – 1984*, Waipukurau: Central Hawke's Bay Printers and Publishers, 1984, p.80.

<sup>15</sup> NGHS raised thousands of dollars for a variety of charities including Save The Children Fund, Institute of the Blind, Red Cross and sponsoring children overseas.

form up to the Fifth Form and was responsible for her own assemblies and any concerns of those students. This lightened the workload of the deputy and Miss R. James and meant the students had easier access to a 'sympathetic ear.' Other schools in Hawke's Bay followed the lead of NGHS.

With the introduction of vertical forms in 1984, staff members from the school observed the system working in other schools in Napier and brought back their ideas. The staff were divided into groups to discuss it and after favourable feedback it was introduced. In the scheme the thirds, fourths and fifths were divided equally into forms and the sixths became captains – rather like a house system. It encouraged leadership skills in the sixth form and was a disincentive to bullying among the younger students which had become an issue. The seventh form was not involved in these forms as they were prefects of the school.<sup>16</sup> These innovations have been very successful and have remained in place in the school up to the present day.

Miss R. James had a great love of music as seen in the last chapter and she had a great impact on the Music Department at the school. She played the piano and cello herself as well as the hand bells and until she had trouble with her wrists she played the cello in the Regional orchestra.<sup>17</sup> When she visited her brother Stanley in the USA she would bring back tapes, CDs and gadgets that she thought would benefit the department sometimes despite the cost. The head of the Music Department, Miss J. Clifford, was very thrilled when Miss R. James through a Trust managed to acquire \$30,000 to spend on instruments for

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

<sup>17</sup> She bought a set of 24 hand bells from Whitefriars in England which she and the girls often played at school and in the Napier cathedral at Christmas time.

the orchestra – a keyboard lab, brass, violins and clarinets.<sup>18</sup> The orchestra increased in size from 12 in 1970 to around 50 when she retired and many of the chamber music groups were successful in the local competitions. The building of the Music and Drama suite in 1980 owed much to her enthusiasm in this area.

In line with educational thinking at the time she made sure that the school participated in new ideas. She was keen to see the academically able be extended and ensured the less able were not neglected. From 1969 she was made aware of the high incidence of pupils in the school in need of remedial reading. She suggested to the Board that an increase in the staffing allowance for remedial reading should be implemented. There was a discussion on this issue in 1973 when Miss R. James informed the Board that 57 out of 200 third form entrants had a reading age of less than 11. More teacher hours were agreed to. Again in 1983 one of the remedial teachers spoke to the Board on the problems. Entries into the third form came from 60 different schools so there was a wide variety of achievement. Another teacher was appointed for this area.<sup>19</sup>

In 1977 a full time Careers advisor was appointed.(there had been a part time one since 1948,) and a Guidance Counsellor joined the staff two years later. Senior girls began tutoring younger girls to assist reading improvement. Junior classes began outdoor pursuits and work exploration programmes. A Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme was begun and Transition classes for those less able students. The seniors joined the

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mrs J. Clifford, 20 March 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Napier High School Board minutes, March, 1969, May, 1970, June, 1983.

business world with the Young Enterprise Scheme and for the first time the school admitted adult students in 1984.

With her interest in religion she felt the regular assemblies she took with the girls with bible reading and hymns were an important part of school life. She believed that was the only religious education many of them ever experienced. She was very upset one April Fool's Day when some girls glued down the piano keys and no hymns could be sung. She stamped out of assembly but soon calmed down. This was her important time with the girls and it had been ruined.<sup>20</sup>

NGHS and Miss R James achieved notable successes. Among the academic achievements were the continuing high passes in the University Entrance and Bursary examinations. In 1970 NBHS and NGHS both had nine passes in Bursary despite the fact that NBHS had nearly 200 more students than NGHS.<sup>21</sup> In 1980 NGHS gained 64 passes in UE by accrediting or passing while NBHS gained 45 although in Bursary NBHS had 17 against NGHS 14.<sup>22</sup> IN 1989 Bursary results were very similar –NGHS 25 and NBHS 24.<sup>23</sup>

Linda Caradus won a Junior Scholarship in 1972 and continued with her studies to become New Zealand's only woman actuary. Miss R. James won a Woolf Fisher award in 1975 for her services to education and was able to study educational institutions in Britain and the USA. She returned satisfied with

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

<sup>21</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 Jan 1970, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 26 Jan 1980, p.6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 28 Jan 1989, p.7.

our own educational system which was 'middle of the road and not too extreme.'<sup>24</sup>

It was because of her energy, persistence and diplomacy that helped in the extensive building programme at the school, including new Senior Studies and Science blocks, a Music and Drama Suite with its own theatre, extensions to the library, an underpass over a busy road and finally a new Gymnasium. She also saw extensions to the sports fields.

With her interest in netball she could often be seen at the netball courts on a Saturday. From about eight teams in 1969 the number had increased to 20 in 1989. In her other interest swimming, the girls continually won the Knapp Shield in life saving and in 1983 NGHS won 258 awards. During her years the sports available to the girls broadened out considerably. From netball, indoor basketball, hockey, athletics, swimming, life saving, gymnastics, cross country, volleyball and softball to include sailing, badminton, cricket, rugby, soccer, dance, tennis, skiing, squash and archery. The girls also had an amazing range of clubs they could be involved in. So the school was certainly achieving one of its aims in the 1986 prospectus, 'To contribute to the well being of the school pupils are not streamed and girls are given opportunity to achieve a balance of academic, cultural and sporting activities.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 9 June 1984, p.4.

<sup>25</sup> NGHS prospectus, 1986.

There was nothing quite as splendid as participating in the Napier Girls' High School centennial celebrations in 1984. That was truly a highlight I will always treasure.<sup>26</sup>

Meetings for the centennial began in 1982 and staff and Old Girls formed important committees. Miss R. James was able to contribute ideas for the weekend as she had attended the centennial of her old school Nelson Girls' College in 1983. It was a magnificent celebration and was capped off with a service in St John's Cathedral in Napier which Miss R. James had carefully organised. The NGHS choir sang hymns the Old Girls knew and two former Principals did the readings. This was one of the most important parts of the celebration for her.

Perhaps the most important highlight in her life was being awarded the Order of the British Empire for her services to Education and the Community in 1988. The Member of Parliament for Napier Mr G. Braybrooke had put her name forward and was present at the Inauguration at Government House in Wellington in the presence of the Governor – General Sir Paul Reeves. Her friend, Miss V Nelson from NGHS, also attended and although her brothers could not be present her brother Stanley sent her an outfit including a hat to wear for the occasion.<sup>27</sup> She commented,

Everyone needs to do their share of community work, whether for a salary or not. At the school we talk about helping others, being generous, giving time, energy, possessions and money. It was an attitude that was here before I arrived and I hope it will stay after I leave.

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<sup>26</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 9 June 1984, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Helen and Maurice Berry, 16 Nov 2004.

Girls do not have to be great scholars but it is terribly important that they are prepared to give of themselves and be good citizens.<sup>28</sup>

When she was dying she wanted her award to go back to the school. She told her friend Miss V. Nelson to tell the school to keep the medal with the citation away from direct light so that the writing would not fade. Her friend commented, 'Nobody disobeyed instructions from Miss R. James – certainly not me!'<sup>29</sup>

Despite the many successes at the school there were also many problems. With the roll increasing to 720 in 1972 and the buildings being inadequate Miss R. James took the initiative and invited a team from TV1 to photograph the school and show the overcrowding.<sup>30</sup> When this was not successful two years later she invited the Minister of Education, Mr Amos, to the school to show him the appalling condition of the gymnasium and other areas. She was a very skilled negotiator. When any men from the Education Department came up from Wellington she charmed, wined and dined them and was able to gain her objective in a non – aggressive manner. She had a great strength of purpose.<sup>31</sup> It still took some time before construction began but finally in 1979, as we saw earlier, the school gained a new science block, a new senior studio and an underpass under Clyde Road.<sup>32</sup> However, the underpass had steps that were too narrow and too steep and Miss R. James had to be 'very stroppy' with the Works Department before they admitted their mistake and rebuilt them using the proper code.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 1988, p.4.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Many secondary schools were desperate for new buildings at this time but NGHS had the extra numbers from Hukarere which exacerbated the situation.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Mrs J. Clifford, 29 March 2005.

<sup>32</sup> This was a busy road the girls had to cross to get to lessons.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Mrs H. Anderson, 8 May 2005.

She was a very careful manager of the school's finances and caused some displeasure when she stopped Heads of Departments from having their own order books. Staff had to submit an annual budget which was usually approved and if a case for extra materials was made it was seldom refused. As a result the school budget was never overspent unlike many others.<sup>34</sup> However, if she felt the extra was too expensive she would comment to the school secretary,<sup>35</sup> Teachers were always encouraged to go on refresher courses and she took the money from endowment funds.

A graphics teacher who had only just begun at NGHS was told his budget was \$80. As his classroom had no pencil sharpener he purchased a desk model for \$16. He was upset when Miss R. James suggested that he pay for it himself because he had not sought her approval first.<sup>36</sup>

Although she had readily accepted the girls from Hukarere Maori Girls' College to attend lessons at NGHS it caused many problems apart from overcrowding. The girls resented coming to the school and having to take part in NGHS activities and wearing the school uniform. Their own uniform which they wore out on special occasions they wore with pride but not so the NGHS. Also there were discipline problems with unruly behaviour resulting in some suspensions. Because prep was not being done regularly Miss R. James had to organise teachers from NGHS to supervise it.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Mrs H. Anderson, 8 May 2005.

<sup>35</sup> 'They're wanting flowers on their graves.' Interview with Miss D. Watty, 6 Sept 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with D. Hutchinson, 14 April 2005.



There were problems with Hewett House the boarding establishment. Miss Stratford who had been a successful matron since 1961 retired in 1980. A series of replacements were not successful and the girls were getting unruly. Miss R. James took on the role of closely supervising the hostel. A principal had not lived in the hostel since 1961. As a boarder at Nelson College in the 1940s and housemistress at Christchurch Girls' High School in the 1950s she did have some experience of boarding life. It took some time before a suitable matron was appointed and she was able to relinquish her onerous job.<sup>37</sup>

Girls often had to be suspended both from the school and from the hostel for unruly behaviour and for smoking. Usually the suspension was only for three days. NGHS had a special smoking programme in which the girls had to do some form of physical activity. If caught three times they were suspended.<sup>38</sup> All cases of suspension had to be reported to the Board but Miss R. James dealt with them herself at the time. However with expulsions and court cases the Board were expected to take action with the agreement of Miss R. James. In earlier cases the District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools would decide on a course of action. Sometimes the girls were put into the care of the Child Welfare Department. Later they spent time in the Community Activity Centre and could return to school. Sometimes the girls were moved to another school. Colenso High School took girls with the agreement of the Principal and NGHS reciprocated. A change of environment often gave students a chance to improve.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Miss D. Watty, 6 Sept 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Vivienne Nelson, 25 August 2004.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*.

During the 1970's Miss R. James reported very few suspensions to the Board. However during the 1980s each month she reported five or even more.<sup>40</sup> She was very distressed after a Principals' meeting when she commented in the staffroom, 'We're the best of a bad bunch!'<sup>41</sup> Later she said,

'Over the years there have been changes in the type of girls. There are still just as many nice and well behaved ones but a lot more unhappy ones caused by the breakdown of the family unit.'<sup>42</sup>

When the school was sometimes criticised for being 'an old fashioned school' she agreed that old fashioned virtues of good manners, honesty, neatness and obedience were encouraged in the pupils.<sup>43</sup>

Miss R. James had a very heavy workload. She was a self confessed 'workaholic' with an endless supply of energy and dogged determination. She was often 'burning the midnight oil' especially when school reports were due.<sup>44</sup> She mastered the staffing returns, the 1<sup>st</sup> of July returns, and other Departmental forms as well as the two volume manual for Principals for which updated pages were continually arriving.<sup>45</sup> She always expected the best and set tremendously high standards whether it was the extensive building programme she oversaw at the school or the education of her students.<sup>46</sup> When things were not

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<sup>40</sup> NHS Board Minutes 1969 – 1989.

<sup>41</sup> From my time as a reliever at the school in the 1980s.

<sup>42</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 24 March 1984, p.6.

<sup>43</sup> *NGHS Magazine*, 1984, p.16.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with H. and M. Berry, 16 Sept 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Mrs H. Anderson, 8 May 2005.

<sup>46</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 April 1994, p.6.

going as well as they should be and there were problems she said, 'I just straighten my back and carry on.'<sup>47</sup> She saw challenges as something to be met and she never complained about her lot.<sup>48</sup> Friends who often invited her to dinner on a Friday night could tell what sort of week she had by the sound of her footsteps as she walked up the path. However, with a drink and a relaxing chat she soon unwound.<sup>49</sup> She was able to talk to them about school because they were not involved and she was very discreet and did not mention any names. One week she would discuss the unbelievable behaviour of some of the girls and the next week she would show understanding and say how appalling their home circumstances were.

Despite her heavy workload she was always willing to listen to staff and consider their suggestions but she did not always agree to adopt them. She put a lot of thought into changes and felt it was her role to lead. Once she made up her mind she did not dither but made decisions promptly. She did not 'suffer fools' and was intolerant of stupidity and inefficiency. She was not always tactful and this caused some criticism among the staff particularly in her later years when she became more autocratic. However her criticism was usually constructive but it was not always well received.<sup>50</sup> No matter how bad the situation was she never raised her voice. She was stubborn when she wanted things done and she mostly got her own way. She was definitely the boss.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with J.Clifford, 29 March 2005.

<sup>48</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 April 1994, p.6.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with H. and M Berry, 16 Sept 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mrs H. Anderson, 8 May 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Miss D. Watty, 6 Sept 2004.

She seemed severe to the girls and they were in awe of her. She kept students at a distance and would reprimand them severely when she felt it was necessary but praised them when she was pleased. She was very strict on uniform.<sup>52</sup> However she was dedicated to the education of girls and she had a caring concern for them all. She said for her 'teaching had been a most satisfying career.'<sup>53</sup>

She appeared stern but with friends she was a very warm person with a great sense of humour and was also caring towards family and staff. She went home every school holidays to care for her mother before she died. When one of the staff was having nervous trouble she supported her and encouraged other staff members to support her too. She also supported other friends through troubled times.<sup>54</sup> When a member of staff was having immigration problems she contacted the appropriate authorities and got circumstances sorted out. During this upsetting time she had the teacher round for meals and invited her home to Tauranga in the holidays. She also organised with the help of staff, funds for a teacher to travel to England for a parent's funeral.<sup>55</sup> She also had a very soft side to her nature. She had always wanted a dog and she bought one called 'Ginny.' Friends cringed when the dog came with her to visit because he was so naughty and spoilt. On one visit to Helen and Maurice Berry's home he jumped and knocked a valuable ornament from a shelf and then proceeded to chew it! She did not offer any words of

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<sup>52</sup> Kimberly Park who was Deputy- Head girl at the time was reprimanded in front of other girls for wearing a bracelet but it was actually her watch. Interview with K. Park, 12 May 2005.

<sup>53</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 9 June 1984, p.4.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with J.Clifford, 29 March 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Mrs S. McMullan, 31 August 2004.

chastisement but said, 'He's very mischievous.'<sup>56</sup> If he had been a NGHS girl the result would have been quite different!

When Miss R. James was not busy with school or community concerns she loved pottering round in her garden. She had a great knowledge of plants and she and her friend Helen Berry would often visit gardens in Central Hawke's Bay. She also was a 'cordon blue' cook and enjoyed having friends, staff, board members, visiting inspectors and other members of the Ministry of Education for dinners and entertainment. Sometimes she would play the cello while others played the piano.<sup>57</sup> With her love of music she attended concerts and recitals not only in Napier but also in Auckland and Wellington and had marvellous collections of recordings. She had a great appreciation of art and purchased many fine paintings. She thought that everyone including young people needed culture and beauty in their lives. She was also very keen on antiques and had many fine pieces in her home. The owner of an antique shop in Central Hawke's Bay contacted her if any articles had arrived which she might be interested in. With her friend Vivienne Nelson she also enjoyed playing Bridge.

Miss R. James took a strong leadership role at NGHS. Her influence on the curriculum was not as personal as that of Miss B. Spencer as she was not a teaching principal but she had to approve any changes taking place. However the Music, Mathematics, and Maori Departments benefited from her expertise. She was willing to introduce the new modern ideas

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with H. and M. Berry, 16 Nov 2004.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Mrs S. McMullan, 31 August 2004.

such as Guidance Counselling, Transition, Computer Technology Adult Students and the Young Enterprise Schemes. Her style was consultative as was seen in the introduction of the dean system and vertical forms but it became more autocratic in her later years.

As Lady Principal of NGHS 1901 – 1909 Miss B. Spencer's leadership role was self - evident. As she was a teaching principal her influence on the curriculum was immense.

She read widely to introduce new subjects and new methods so her students were not just passive learners. She continued to encourage sport and participated in coaching as she had in her early years teaching. She organised competitions with other schools and arranged outings to the beach and to picnic areas. As the boarder numbers were small (12 – 20) she accompanied them to interesting cultural activities to take advantage of shows, performances, talks from visiting speakers in Napier as well as visiting other schools such as Woodford House in Hastings to view their drama.

Both principals were motivated by the desire to give their students the very best comprehensive education that girls could achieve. Miss B. Spencer wanted their education to enable them 'not only to enjoy life but accomplish something in the life they enjoy.' Miss R. James was 'dedicated to the education of young women.'<sup>58</sup> She wanted to give girls whatever their academic abilities the opportunity to enlarge their horizons, take responsibility and become caring, honest citizens.

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<sup>58</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 April 1994, p.6.

Both women kept up many of their interests from their earlier years. They cared for their families and enjoyed entertaining with friends. They were interested in religion not only for themselves but also for the girls. Miss R. James was more orthodox whereas Miss B. Spencer experimented with a variety. Miss B. Spencer continued with her sport when time permitted she enjoyed the country life where she did not mind 'roughing it.' Both had a love of music and attended concerts and shows but Miss R. James actually played the cello in the regional orchestra. She was also interested in art and antiques.

Miss B. Spencer's achievements in her short time at NGHS were the excellent Inspectors' reports, the high academic results particularly Amy Hodgson and initiating the NGHS Old Girls' Association. Miss R. James also achieved high academic, cultural and sporting results, many new buildings and personally the Woolf Fisher Award, the 1984 Centennial Celebrations and the O.B.E.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRINCIPALS IN THE COMMUNITY

Although Miss B. Spencer was not actually a Lady Principal when she was involved in her community work she brought those same qualities to her new role. Leadership, enthusiasm and a belief in her aspirations were important in the introduction of the Women's Institute. Miss B. Spencer wanted what was best for countrywomen in New Zealand in the same way she had wanted what was best for her pupils at NGHS.

She began her community work while living with her friend Mrs Amy Hutchinson (Large) and her husband Frank at their home 'Omatua' at Rissington just out of Napier. She and Amy did spinning and weaving and experimented with natural dyes using native plants and lichens. In her interview, Catherine Downes commented that when she met Miss Spencer at "Omatua' when she was young there were spinning wheels and weaving looms in the house and lots of wool.<sup>1</sup>

When World War One broke out in 1914 Miss B. Spencer and many other countrywomen used their craft skills to make Red Cross parcels to send to the soldiers fighting overseas. She wanted to be more involved than this to help New Zealanders so in 1916 she sailed to Britain on the ship Turakina. Here she took positions in two hospitals. One was the Walton – on – Thames hospital for New Zealand soldiers where she worked in the wards and kitchen. Apparently she had to leave because she was 'too

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Catherine Downes, 9 Sept 2004.



bossy.<sup>2</sup> She also worked for W.I.S.P.- the Women's International Street Patrol. The women worked in pairs in the London streets and encouraged the young New Zealand soldiers to keep away from prostitutes. They wore khaki tunics and shirts and the peaked hats of the armed forces so they were recognised by the New Zealand soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Often the men would arrive on late trains and as London was overcrowded, they helped them with accommodation or took them to hostels and clubs for social evenings. The group disbanded in 1919 having carried out a valuable service.<sup>4</sup>

Miss B. Spencer seemed to be searching for a personal goal in life. While she was in Britain she wrote to her friend Amy Hutchinson, 'I do want us to work on bigger things. 'Omatua' is our necessary base and Mr Frank an essential part of the trio, probably have to have small beginnings.'<sup>5</sup> The large handcraft exhibition she attended in Caxton Hall in London in 1918, the first organised by the Women's Institutes of England, seemed to give her some ideas on what she was searching for.<sup>6</sup>

She realised how in her own area of Rissington in New Zealand during World War One the countrywomen had attended Red Cross meetings. Apart from the garments they made and knitted and packed there had been companionship and exchange of ideas, very important for many women living in isolated communities with very little social life. The aims of the institutes were to improve conditions for women and children in country

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Catherine Downes, 9 Sept 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Harper, *History of the Country Women's Institutes of New Zealand 1921 – 1958*, Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1958, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Catherine Downes, 9 Sept 2004.

<sup>5</sup> S. Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1993, p. 299.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

areas particularly on isolated farms by providing mutual support, practical help, education and cultural activities. There were opportunities to discuss problems and to help others.

Miss B. Spencer was interested in finding out all the information on the movement. It had begun in Canada by a Mrs Hoodless in the 1890's. It had proved so popular with Canadian countrywomen that the British Minister of Agriculture in 1915 invited a Mrs Watt from Canada to speak to British countrywomen.<sup>7</sup> Many groups were formed and the exhibition showed what the women were able to make and save during the difficult years of the war.

On returning to New Zealand in 1919 she began campaigning to form Women's Institutes here. In 1921 a group of countrywomen met at 'Omatua'. Miss B. Spencer had invited Miss Helen Rawson from the Home Science School in Dunedin as guest speaker.<sup>8</sup> She spoke of the work of the Women's Institutes in Canada and the USA. The women decided to form an institute that afternoon, the first in New Zealand, and Miss Spencer was elected President.<sup>9</sup>

The institute adopted the aims of the Women's Institutes of England and each meeting began with a collect composed by an American, Mrs M. Stuart especially for women's organisations. Miss B. Spencer's ideas were 'to see, to hear and to do' and 'if you know a good thing pass it on.'<sup>10</sup> So at meetings women took part in competitions for flowers, handcraft and cooking.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Catherine Downes, 9 Sept 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Harper, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Catherine Downes, 9 Sept 2004.

They could bring produce to sell and the profits went to the movement. They listened to interesting speakers on a variety of subjects and later tutors travelled round giving seminars and practical demonstrations on many activities. Often you could bring your oldest possession or a photograph of your grandmother and discuss it. Margaret Holt remembers some very unusual handcrafts shown at an institute meeting – a waistcoat made from the combing of a dog's coat and also a basket made of pine needles! Women could show their thrift and ingenuity. Margaret showed me a very well constructed stool she had made which had stood the test of time!<sup>11</sup> All women paid a small subscription, had the same rights, the same responsibilities and the same privileges. Miss B. Spencer instructed them in correct meeting procedure and they soon became very skilled at chairing meetings. She wanted them to take their place in all aspects of New Zealand life.<sup>12</sup>

After the first institute was formed she encouraged others to follow. Hawke's Bay women saw handcrafts exhibited at the local A and P show and contacted her. The second institute was formed in 1922 in Norsewood by a Mrs Hinds who had been involved in the movement in Britain. Other institutes quickly followed – Woodville, Otawhao, Taradale and Havelock North.<sup>13</sup>

Women were so keen to attend meetings that in 1924 there had been a cloud burst over Hawke's Bay and the river by 'Omatua' rose 30 feet. Two main bridges washed away but this did not

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Margaret Holt, 7 Sept 2004.

<sup>12</sup> *The Journal of the New Zealand Women's Institute*, Napier: Dinwiddie Walker, 1929, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Harper, p. 14.

deter the women from attending. They crossed the river by raft or by a box suspended from a cable.<sup>14</sup>

In 1925 50 members from the six Hawke's Bay institutes gathered at 'Omatua' for the first conference. Some of the women had travelled 70 – 100 miles to reach Rissington. For some, with dirt or shingle country roads and fording streams it had been a difficult trip. It was decided to form a Provincial Federation following the country federations in Britain. Miss B. Spencer was elected President.<sup>15</sup>

During 1927 she worked at an amazing level addressing public meetings and organising committees to establish institutes throughout the North Island. It was a long way for members from the four Auckland institutes to attend federation meetings in Hawke's Bay so Miss B. Spencer allowed them to form their own federation. Over the next six years she travelled extensively all over New Zealand helped by Mrs Kelso, for many years the Dominion Organiser of the Institutes, Miss M. Maddever, Miss Stops, from England and many others. The conditions of country areas were often primitive and she had to contend with mud, rain, gravel, uncomfortable beds, as well as good roads and fine weather. However the farmers' wives were most hospitable.<sup>16</sup> Each institute donated \$5 towards a little baby Austin car which made her travelling much more comfortable! She was always constrained by lack of finances. Her enthusiasm and drive was contagious. She wrote to the Government, individuals and

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<sup>14</sup> A.E. Woodhouse, *Tales of Pioneer Women*, Napier: Dinwiddie, Walker, 1929, p.12.

<sup>15</sup> Harper, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

various clubs and groups to gain funds. She gave demonstrations, lectures and continued with her public meetings.

By 1930 when the first Dominion Conference was held in Wellington there were five Provincial Federations including 73 institutions. At the Conference the Governor – General, Lord Bledisloe commented, 'Women's Institutes were probably the greatest social and educational movement among countrywomen in the world's history'.<sup>17</sup>

To keep in touch with the institutes Miss B. Spencer collected notes from monthly meetings and wrote out quarterly letters. The editor of the magazine 'The New Zealand Farmer' gave space for Women's Institutes news initially but when the subscriptions became expensive she set up their own magazine in 1927 called 'Home and Country' still being printed in 1955 when she died. Women's Institutes news and issues were also broadcast on local and national radio stations.

She also kept in touch with what overseas groups were achieving particularly in Britain, and informed members. In 1933 she and her friend Amy Hutchinson travelled to Britain to attend the Annual Meeting of the National Federation of English Women's Institutes in London. They continued on to Stockholm in Sweden to attend the Conference of Countrywomen and Homemakers' Association. (The name was later changed to the Association of Countrywomen of the World.) Here as the Dominion of New Zealand Women's Institute representative she presented a report

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<sup>17</sup> Harper, p. 28.

on the activities in New Zealand. Here also New Zealand became one of the first three members to join the Association.<sup>18</sup> With its ideas of fellowship, thrift and self sufficiency it became an accepted idea that countrywomen in New Zealand would join the Women's Institutes.<sup>19</sup> Its numbers certainly swelled during the Great Depression 1929 – 1935. Unfortunately at the 1933 Dominion Conference in Christchurch a dispute arose over the ideas for a constitution and Mrs H. Paterson was elected the first Dominion President instead of Miss B. Spencer.<sup>20</sup> Catherine Downs suggested that she was 'too bossy.'<sup>21</sup> This must have been a big disappointment for her as she had been the first Federation Chairman of the Central Executive Committee and chief organiser from 1921 – 1932 and worked tirelessly for the movement.

In 1937 Miss B. Spencer was awarded the OBE 'for her contribution to citizenship and more especially her achievement in founding the Women's Institute Movement in New Zealand.'<sup>22</sup> Her name had also been placed on the Roll of Honour of the Association of Countrywomen of the World as one of the 100 women from all over the world who had done outstanding work for countrywomen.<sup>23</sup>

Initially Miss B. Spencer had wanted the Women's Institutes and the Women's Division of the Federated Farmers (which had also begun in the 1920's) to amalgamate. However this wasn't to be.

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<sup>18</sup> Harper, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Else, p. 382.

<sup>20</sup> Harper, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Catherine Downes, 9 Sept 2004.

<sup>22</sup> New Zealand Country Women's Institute, *A Portrait of Change*, Wellington: Blenheim Print, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Home and Country Magazine, The Journal of the New Zealand Women's Institute, Napier; Dinwiddie, Walker, December, 1955. p.7.

The Women's Division of the Federated Farmers (known as the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmer's Union (WDFU) until 1946) began as a national organisation for women of landowning families whereas the Women's Institutes grew from local level to become federations of independent institutes. It included women of farm workers as well as Maori women. Women's Institutes concentrated on communities with populations under 4000. (this was expanded to 6000 in 1952.)<sup>24</sup> However a Co-ordinating Committee was formed in 1937 and this has received government funding for adult education in rural areas. Margaret Holt in her interview explained Miss B. Spencer's tactics in trying to pressure women to join her organisation. When she heard the Women's Division of the Federated Farmers was having a meeting on a particular day in Sherenden in Hawke's Bay she organised a Women's Institute one on the same day! Unfortunately we do not know the outcome but it shows how passionate she was about the organisation.<sup>25</sup>

It is thought the ideas practised by the institutes were based on Miss B. Spencer's interest in the Havelock Work. The philosophy behind this was inspired by Harold Large, Amy Hutchinson's brother and continued on by others particularly Dr R. Felkin in the Order of the Golden Dawn. He arrived from England and was head of the order from 1913 – 1916. Miss B. Spencer and her friend Amy were involved in the movement even before she retired from teaching in 1910. The purpose of the group was 'to search out the esoteric meaning or Ageless Wisdom within the

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<sup>24</sup> Anne Else, *Women Together. A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*. Wellington: Daphne Brassell Associates Press, 1993, p. 381.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Margaret Holt, 7 Sept 2004.

Western Tradition through study, silent prayer and meditation.<sup>26</sup>  
Most of the group involved seemed to be High Church Anglicans.

Miss B. Spencer was one of the first initiates into the order which Dr Felkin established in his home 'Whare Ra' in Havelock North. The home contains a basement where rituals took place. She was for a time cook and housekeeper for the Felkins and she edited their magazine, 'The Forerunner.' On the cover was printed 'Piscatores Hominum' – fishers of men. There seems to be some secrecy about the work of 'Whare Ra' and to what extent Miss B. Spencer was involved in it in later years but it was not disbanded until 1978.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the ideals of the Havelock Work were 'fellowship, simplicity and country handicrafts,' and these were certainly fostered by the Women's Institutes. However the Havelock Work's goals were not just to value crafts for their usefulness 'but as a means of developing intellectual, cultural and spiritual potential of both the individual and society.'<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Miss B. Spencer hoped this would also be achieved among countrywomen.

She continued to work for the Institutes both nationally and locally and was present working her loom at the Centennial Exhibition 1939 – 1940 where outstanding articles were displayed from Institutes from all over New Zealand. Also during World War Two she was pleased at the huge efforts being made by the Women's Institutes for the war effort. Thousands of cakes and tins of biscuits were baked included in the Institutes' quota of

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<sup>26</sup> Coney, p. 299.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>28</sup> Else, p. 389.



2,500 soldiers' unaddressed parcels sent every three months. There were also 2,12 sheepskin jackets hand sewn for men in the Merchant Navy.<sup>29</sup>

After the war with the renewed emphasis on women's place in the home, the Women's Institutes membership again increased. By 1946 when the movement celebrated 25 years there were 44 District Federations including 900 institutes and 30,000 members. During this time the institutes had approached the Government on many issues concerning women – maternity services, raising the marriage age, better films, dental treatment for children, restrooms for country areas, women jurors, women on the Legislative Council, hydatids and environmental concerns especially planting native trees and the preservation of native bush. They had also been represented on many committees – the Standards Institute, the Women's War Service Auxiliary, Adult Education, Patriotic, Red Cross, National Council of Women, Pan-Pacific Women's Association and CORSO.

In the forward to the booklet 'A Goodly Thing' written to celebrate 25 years, Miss B. Spencer commented,

Looking at the changes over the last 25 years, with radio, motorcars, road transport, there are not so many hardships that the original Woman's Institutes tried to help. However the Women's Institute's aim 'the improvement and development of country life,' is still important. Our nation's fundamental need is for an increasing number of happy, enlightened homes on the farms and in the country villages, thus stemming the drift to the towns. This is the direction in which the

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<sup>29</sup> Home and Country. *The Journal of the New Zealand Women's Institute*, Napier: Dinwiddie Walker, 1946, p. 11.

Women's Institute can continue to give unique and immeasurable service to our Dominion.<sup>30</sup>

Despite advancing years and increasing disabilities she still attended the Dominion Representative Council Meeting held in Napier in February, 1955. She died in the following December. Jerome Spencer House in Wellington was bought and refurbished as the Headquarters of the Organisation - since 1952 called the Country Women's Institute - as a memorial to Miss B. Spencer. It houses offices, lounge, kitchen President's flat and facilities to sleep ten. Members and visitors are welcome to stay. At the time of her death she had lived to see 1,000 Country Women's Institutes established involving 36,000 countrywomen!<sup>31</sup> From one woman's dream to help and educate countrywomen, beginning in a homestead in the small village of Rissington near Napier, had developed a national New Zealand organisation involving thousands of women!

Miss R. James also made a significant contribution to the Napier Community. Religion played a major part in her life. She attended St John's Cathedral regularly herself but also took a leading role in its organisation and outreach to the community. She was a canon of the Cathedral Chapter, an appointment for five years, beginning in 1983.<sup>32</sup> She was also a chalice bearer at communion and reader and chaired the Cathedral Centennial committee 1984 – 1986. She organised a christian care network – a group offering practical help to baby sit for solo mothers or to

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<sup>30</sup> Women's Institute, *A Goodly Thing, History of the Women's Institute 1921 – 1946*, Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1946, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Harper, p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> The Chapter was responsible for shaping the direction of the church's mission and ministry by liaising regularly with the Cathedral maintenance committee and vestry.

take them and their children to the doctor. The elderly were helped too. She not only organised the network but took part herself. She arranged and became a helper in the Cathedral opportunity shop working in the cold gloomy building sorting out and selling second hand clothes to people struggling to survive on inadequate incomes.<sup>33</sup>

With her interest in sport she could be seen regularly at the netball courts on a Saturday. She was President of the Hawke's Bay Netball Association 1972 – 1975 and patron of Napier till 1992. She was a delegate to the New Zealand Council of Netball for many years and was responsible for the New Zealand Netball Tournament held in Hawke's Bay – the first in the region. By 1983 NGHS fielded 20 teams in the Saturday games partly in response to her enthusiasm.

She was a member of the Hawke's Bay Museum and Cultural Trust 1986 – 1988 and President of the Hawke's Bay Gallery and Museum Board in 1986. She successfully steered the organisation through very difficult times with negotiations involving the Napier and Hastings City Councils, the Arts Council of New Zealand and the public to finally become the Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust. Here she showed her excellent negotiating skills and the respect of all the groups involved in the consultation process. She gave generously of her time to meetings and the presentations of submissions.<sup>34</sup>

With an endless supply of energy, enthusiasm and dogged determination she brought this work ethic to the regions various

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<sup>33</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* 15 April 1984, p.6.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with J. Clifford, 29 March 2005.

Nursing Education committees with which she was involved for 15 years. They were eventful years for health and education as they came under scrutiny from the public and Government with major restructuring taking place – changes difficult for those trying to provide leadership and direction. The nursing profession owes her a debt of gratitude for her commitment to its cause.<sup>35</sup>

In all the community organisations she was involved in Miss R. James took a strong leadership role. She was able to achieve goals pursuing her objectives in a non – aggressive style. She never lost her temper or got upset. She remained calm no matter what the situation in a non – confrontation manner. She was a good organiser and was not only willing to take positions in administration but was also able to back this up with practical help.

In her community work particularly with the New Zealand Women's Institutes Miss B. Spencer's leadership role was crucial. She was willing to put all her energies into encouraging groups and individuals to donate funds to the movement as well as travelling New Zealand and speaking at all different venues to encourage countrywomen to join. She wanted New Zealand to take its place among the larger nations of the world in their commitment to the betterment of countrywomen. It was a pity she was not elected the first Dominion President after she had worked so hard to establish the movement.

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<sup>35</sup> Kathleen Smith, *Rosemary Ellinor James, A Life to be Remembered*, School Project, 1994.

Both women were motivated by a desire to improve conditions for women in their communities at the time. With Miss B. Spencer it was particularly the plight of countrywomen. She hoped the Institutes would provide a safe, caring, creative environment where women were willing to provide support not only for themselves but also for those less fortunate than themselves. With Miss R. James her emphasis was not only on those who needed support, as shown in her work in the church, but also on problems that were taking place in the wider community of Napier.

Despite their busy lifestyles both women were able to keep up their interests. After her retirement, Miss B. Spencer concentrated on craftwork particularly spinning and weaving. She would often boast that every garment she was wearing she had made herself.<sup>36</sup> She kept hives and grew fruit and sold the produce. Also in 1923 and 1927 she went on scientific expeditions to the sub Antarctic Islands to observe and photograph the wild life. Here she enjoyed the simple life of sleeping outdoors in sleeping bags, swimming in the sea and cooking the food they caught.<sup>37</sup> Miss R. James continued with her love of music, art, cooking and gardening.

Miss B. Spencer's greatest achievement was her O.B.E. which was awarded in 1937 for her work establishing the Women's Institutes in New Zealand. Certainly by the time she died in 1955 she would have been very satisfied that her efforts had helped establish 1,000 Institutes involving 36,000 countrywomen. Miss R. James greatest achievement was also her O.B.E. awarded

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Catherine Downes, 9 Sept 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Rogers.

not only for her work in education but also for her involvement in Napier's community affairs.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the variation in time periods there were many similarities between the early lives and teaching, principalships and community involvement of Miss B. Spencer and Miss R. James.

Both were women of academic ability and took a strong leadership role in the family, the school and in the community. At NGHS both believed that 'girls could do anything' and wanted their students to achieve the best comprehensive education that was available. They kept up with the modern methods of the time, Miss B. Spencer ensuring the girls were actively involved in their learning and Miss R. James making sure they were given encouragement whatever their abilities to become responsible caring citizens. They encouraged sport and the arts so their students would become fully rounded individuals.

They both achieved at NGHS and left a lasting impression with high academic and sporting results. Miss B. Spencer established the NGHS magazine which has been printed every year up to the present day and was the first woman on the NGHS Board. Miss R. James was mainly responsible for the erection of many new buildings, gaining the Woolf Fisher and O.B.E. awards and the success of the 1984 Centennial Celebrations.

Their workloads were similar also. Miss B. Spencer was a teaching head so she had all the preparation and marking of lessons required as well as the administration and taking responsibility for the hostel. However the numbers were much smaller – 70 in 1901 – 110 in 1909. Miss R. James

teaching workload was not so heavy but with more than 700 girls for most of her years as principal administration was crucial. Also at times she did have to become involved in the hostel and there were 140 girls here.

They were both caring principals for their students, teachers and families. Miss B. Spencer often took over the nursing of sick girls and Miss R. James gave support to teachers when they were having problems. Miss B. Spencer took over the leadership role of the family after her father died in 1897 and personally cared for her brother Willie who was an invalid. Despite Miss R. James living away from home for much of her education she travelled to Tauranga each day while she was teaching at Putaruru High School because her father was ill. After he died she took a position at Tauranga Girls' High School to be near her mother. She only left for another post when her aunt came and lived with her mother. However both were spinsters so in some ways the girls of the school became their wider family particularly in the case of Miss R. James as she was at the school for 20 years.

A principal's position is a lonely one and support was often necessary. Both had special friends they could rely on. Miss B. Spencer's friend, Amy Hutchinson (Large), helped her as matron from 1901 – 1905 and when she left to get married Miss B. Spencer was at her lowest ebb. However her sister Emily was able to help as matron in the last two years 1907 – 1909. Miss B. Spencer later lived with Amy and her husband Frank for the rest of her life. It is interesting that Maryan Moss when describing her recollections of Miss B. Spencer in later years commented, 'She was small, quite mousey and quiet.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Maryan Moss, 2 Sept 1994.



Maryan thought that Miss B. Spencer's friend Amy had taken over the limelight as she got older and Miss B. Spencer had retired into the background. Rosemary was able to confide in her friend and socialise with her. They did not live together but she was a great support and helped nurse her when she was ill.

Both had a variety of problems. Miss B. Spencer did have a few suspensions and nearly a court case but the girls were able to return to school. In Miss R. James time despite the numbers of students remaining the same the suspensions in the 1980s just escalated and many were expelled. Staffing was more of a problem with Miss B. Spencer because only one member stayed with her all the years from 1901 – 1909. There were 24 changes and ten only stayed one year as they possibly left to get married. However in Miss R. James time 20 teachers remained with her all the years out of a permanent staff of 35.

They were both committed to their community work although it must be remembered that Miss R. James was actually involved in hers while she was a full time principal whereas Miss B. Spencer was not. Miss B. Spencer's work involved the countrywomen of all New Zealand. She hoped the institutes would provide support not only for themselves but also for those less fortunate than themselves. With Miss R. James her emphasis was not only on those that needed support in the Napier Community as shown in her work with the church but also problems taking place in the wider community of Napier.

Despite many similarities there were many differences some reflecting the time span and some not. Their motivation into teaching was variable. Miss B. Spencer's feelings were

mixed and it may be that hers were financial whereas Dr David James said his sister had always wanted to be a teacher like her father.

Certainly their early life and education showed many differences. Miss B. Spencer came from a wealthy home and the visiting, balls, parties, tennis afternoons, musical evenings and spending holidays on the estates of the gentry of Hawke's Bay reflected the social life of the time. Miss R. James background was more modest and her mother had to work which was unusual even in the 1950s. However this was more because of circumstances rather than the time span. Their education reflects the time span more. Miss B. Spencer attended NGHS which was a girls' fee paying state boarding school. She stayed at the school and gained her matriculation. In New Zealand at the time only about 3% of girls and boys went on to secondary school from primary school and most only stayed two years.<sup>2</sup> There were nine state girls secondary schools in New Zealand and most girls stayed at home when they left school until they got married. Miss B. Spencer was different because she not only stayed on at school but she also became a pupil teacher while studying extramurally for her BA from Canterbury University, became a teacher and then Lady Principal at the same school. She also gained all her teaching experience here. This situation was not possible in Miss R. James time. Teachers had to have a variety of teaching experiences in schools before they could be selected as a principal. Miss R. James attended a free state primary school and then a free state secondary school. She gained her BSc from Canterbury University and was able to attend Auckland Teachers' College

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<sup>2</sup> Fry, p. 291.

before taking positions in various schools and being appointed to NGHS.

When comparing the character, teaching, leadership style and the views of students of both principals this is difficult to assess. The students and the staff banded together in 1899 to buy Miss B. Spencer a bicycle because she had a distance to travel to school so they must have had a great regard for her. However her diaries do not cover other attributes in depth. Whereas with Miss R. James the interviewees knew her personally so we can get a fuller picture.

Both were outstanding women and good role models. They had dedication, vision and passion for their schools and communities. Was there a heavier workload for a Principal at NGHS in the early 1900s or later? Possibly there were just as many stresses and strains.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Miss R. James may have been heavier because she was also combining her community work with her Principal's role and the numbers at the school and hostel were so much larger. However we do not have the diaries of Miss R. James as we have of Miss B. Spencer to know how she really felt.

Both women were certainly important women in regards to NGHS, the Napier Community and in Miss B. Spencer's case, the whole of New Zealand but how do they compare with other Lady Principals of the same period?

If we look at Hawke's Bay, the only other Lady Principal was Miss M. Hodge who established the private girls' boarding school Woodford House. She had attended a boarding

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<sup>3</sup> Both principals of NCG left because they were not given leave and Miss B. Spencer did have a year's leave. However Miss R. James only had three months off for the Woolf Fisher award.

school in England , near London, from the age of seven until seventeen. She then taught at Woodford House in Surrey run by her second cousins for over ten years. When her father died her brothers emigrated to New Zealand and settled in Hastings. They suggested her and her mother join them and encouraged their sister to establish a school as there were none offering girls a good secondary education. NGHS was too far away for many.

At the age of thirty one she initially took over a small dame school in 1893 teaching 18 boys and girls while she planned for bigger things. She borrowed money from the Bank of New South Wales and bought a large doctor's house which she thought would be suitable with 12 rooms, a large garden, a tennis court, a paddock and a barn at the back. She also had built a large schoolroom with four bedrooms above for boarders. She began with a staff of five. Miss M. Hodge and another teacher taught English, French and German, a Miss Page taught Art and two others taught Music. Later Miss L. Large, an excellent singer joined them and a sports mistress from the NHGS.<sup>4</sup> Sport played a major role as they made use of the paddock for hockey matches against other schools such as NGHS but they used grounds of the local gentry for the athletic sports as the paddock was too rough. Swimming took place in a local lake.

The school was a great success and numbers increased. Miss M. Hodge was a liberal thinker of the time as we have seen was Miss B. Spencer. She believed that academic study should be balanced by practical skills. Students did gardening, were taught first aid, learnt craft skills such as

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<sup>4</sup> M. Varnham, *Beyond Blue Hills, One Hundred Years of Woodford House*, Upper Hutt: Wright & Carman, 1994, p. 12. Miss L. Large was the sister of Amy Large Miss B. Spencer's friend.

bookbinding carpentry, carving as well as photography. By 1902 the Woodford House academic curriculum included Physics, Algebra, Euclid, Latin and German as well as English, History, Geography, Arithmetic, Physiology and French. The school was examined regularly and James Hight a lecturer at Canterbury College and former teacher at Auckland College and Grammar School reported in 1901,

I am of the opinion that this school is in a high state of proficiency and doing excellent work in giving girls a sound and broad education preparatory to their entrance upon duties of life: each year it produces pupils capable of matriculating and continuing their studies at university.<sup>5</sup>

The school was running so successfully that in 1906 Miss M. Hodge gave up teaching and devoted her time to the management of the school. By 1909 with the roll at 130 – 100 day girls and 30 boarders she decided to build another school on the Havelock North Hills just out of Hastings. By 1911 a new Woodford House was ready for occupancy opening with a roll of 60 boarders.

Here was a young woman with business acumen as well as educational and organisational skills who was able to come to New Zealand and set up her own successful school for girls.

Other important Lady Principals of the early times were from NCG, Christchurch and Otago Girls' High School. Miss K. Edger from NCG, mentioned in a previous chapter, as a twenty five year old was appointed as the first Lady Principal and took her Masters degree at Canterbury University while teaching full time as second mistress at Christchurch Girls' High School. She also had liberal ideas for her time. She only gave a few prizes

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<sup>5</sup> Varnham, p.13.

and certificates at the end of each year to show 'the different grades of merit, the diligence of scholars and their conscientious devotion to study throughout the year.'<sup>6</sup> So the element of competition was entirely left out. She was an indefatigable worker and very dedicated to the school. When there were subjects to be taught and no one qualified she would fill in. If equipment was needed and the Board did not have sufficient funds she would pay and if an extra scholarship was needed for one more senior girl to stay on at school she would provide it.<sup>7</sup>

Miss H. Connon(Mrs J. Macmillan-Brown) was on the staff of Christchurch Girls' High School when she gained her BA degree in 1880 and her MA degree with first class honours in Latin and English in 1881.<sup>8</sup> She felt it was important that girls had plenty of physical activity and employed military men for this task. Major Richards stayed until 1902.<sup>9</sup> Other schools such as Otago, Waitaki and Southland Girls' High Schools also employed military men.<sup>10</sup> The girls took swimming classes at the Christ church Boys' High School pool. She expanded the Science teaching in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form in place of History and Geography and she introduced cookery classes for the girls using the chef from a local restaurant. Girls could also take shorthand, book – keeping, nursing and dressmaking. She married Professor J. Macmillan-Brown but continued teaching even after her first child was born. She showed that women Lady Principals were able to combine marriage with a career. However she did not have a boarding establishment to contend with as this did not open until 1901.

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<sup>6</sup> Voller, p.28.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>8</sup> She was the first woman in the British Empire to gain an MA degree with Honours.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Peddie, *Christchurch Girls' High School 1877 – 1977*, Christchurch: Pegasus Press, 1977, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Smith, 'Control of the Female Body: Physical Training at Three New Zealand Girls' High Schools, 1880s 1920s, *Sporting Traditions*, 13:2(1997) p.61.

Miss M. Marchant Lady Principal of Otago Girls' High School had to cope with very large classes after the Free Place system was introduced in 1903. Her Latin class was 53 and she and another staff member had English classes of 70. In 1910 there was a record first year enrolment of 204 and the school was just 'bulging at the seams' and new buildings were desperately needed.

In the years 1960s – 1980s it is not so easy to separate out the skills of the various principals as their influence was not quite so personal. Woodford House had a man principal during this time so its information is not really relevant. NCG under Misses L. Voller and E. Perrot, Christchurch Girls' High School under Miss J. Prisk and Otago Girls' High School under Miss R. Upchurch all had to press for new buildings and endure the inconvenience of overcrowding as had Miss R. James. Miss J. Prisk was awarded a Woolf Fisher Award in 1977 two years after Miss R. James so her expertise in the education field must have been recognised. They all incorporated the more liberal ideas into their schools such as school councils, the dean system, vertical forms, outdoor education, information technology and special help for slow learners. They all had escalating discipline problems in the 1980s and made full use of guidance counsellors.

From the small sample taken from the available information, all the schools had Lady Principals and Principals of outstanding ability. It is interesting that they were all single women except for Mrs J. Macmillan-Brown and were able to devote themselves selflessly to their schools and their pupils. However there is no indication of their involvement in community affairs either during their teaching time or afterwards. It may be that they did and we do not have any record of it. So Miss B. Spencer and Miss R.

James were exceptional as they were able to excel both in the academic sphere as well as in the community and their O.B.E. awards reflected their importance not only in the history of NGHS but also in the history of New Zealand.



## APPENDIX A.

### Profiles of Participants.

#### **For Miss B. Spencer.**

Catherine Downes Comes from a farming family in Rissington where Miss B. Spencer lived. Remembered her when Catherine was still a child and was involved with her in the Country Women's Institutes.

Margaret Holt Comes from a farming family in Puketapu very near Rissington. Was very involved in the Country Women's Institute and was National President from 1962 – 1966. She also gained an O.B.E.

Maryan Moss She and her family visited Miss B. Spencer at her home Omatua many time when Maryan was young. She is writing a biography of her.

Dorothy Watty NGHS Secretary to the Principal from 1940 – 1985 so had assisted four principals. Her contact with Miss B. Spencer was when she arrived for Board meetings and also for important events at the school.

#### **For Miss R. James.**

Teachers at NGHS.

Helen Anderson Deputy- Principal 1967 – 1984.

June Clifford Head of the Music Department 1976 – 1989.

Derek Hutchison Head of Graphics 1985 – 1989.

Sue McMullan Head of the Art Department 1976 – 1989.

Vivienne Nelson Dean, Mathematics teacher and great Friend 1969 – 1994.

Erica Pearson Head of Information Technology. 1981 – 1989.

### **Others.**

Marlene Richardson Mathematics and Science teacher at Tauranga Girls' High School 1958 – 1960.

Dorothy Watty Secretary to the Principal 1969 – 1989.

Mrs Lucas Chairman of the NGHS Board 1965 – 1985.

Judy Lawlor Student at NCG with Miss R. James.

Helen and Maurice Berry Friends of Miss R. James.

### **Students at NGHS.**

Mandy Wittmann 1980s.

Shelley Macdonald 1980s.

Kim Park 1980s

Bernice Cavanagh 1970s

**APPENDIX B.****INTRODUCTORY LETTER**

'Solimar',

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Date

Dear Ms Hague,

Following on from my telephone call thank you for allowing me the use of your archives while researching two headmistresses from your school, Miss B. Spencer headmistress 1901 – 1909 and Miss R. James headmistress 1969 – 1989 for my MA Thesis in History. I will contact you to arrange some convenient times.

Yours sincerely,

Pam Medcalf

## INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Researcher's Address

Date

Participant

Address

Dear

Enclosed is an Information Sheet concerning my Massey University MA Thesis. If you wish to participate would you please contact me and I will send you a consent form, which the university requires me to give you, and will discuss times for an interview.

Yours sincerely

Pam Medcalf.

**A STUDY OF TWO HEADMISTRESSES AT NAPIER GIRLS'  
HIGH SCHOOL 1901 – 1909 and 1969 - 1989**

**INFORMATION SHEET**

My name is Pam Medcalf and over the next two years for my MA Thesis in History at Massey University I will be studying two headmistresses at Napier Girls' High School, Miss R. James headmistress 1969 – 1989 and Miss B. Spencer 1901 – 1909.

My supervisor is Dr. Kirsty Carpenter in the School of History, Philosophy and Politics and she can be contacted at 06 350-4238. My address is 457 Marine Parade, Napier. Tel. 06-835-8231.

You have been suggested as a possible participant in this research as you were: a staff member/student/board/community member during Miss R. James time as headmistress.

Should you agree you will be interviewed on audiotape or if you prefer it I will simply take notes of our discussion. The interviews will be about one and a half hours in duration at a time and place that is convenient for you. In addition a follow up might take place to clarify points from the first interview. After I have summarised the information I will check with you to see if it is a correct copy of what was said.

You may ask any questions about the research, refuse to answer any particular questions, have the tape recorder turned off and withdraw from the study at any time. I would prefer to use your name but will do so only with your consent. However in some cases anonymity cannot be guaranteed particularly where the nature of the information given can only come from one source.

Please find enclosed a sheet of research questions and a consent form. If you have any primary material which can be photocopied and which I could use for my research I would really appreciate it.

All research must adhere to the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct. The thesis when completed will be held in the Massey University Library for the use of other researchers and students. Your information will be kept on file and stored by me. Should your interview be taped, you may request a copy of it. The tape will either be destroyed at the completion of the research, returned to you, or deposited, with your permission, in the school archives.

**A STUDY OF TWO HEADMISTRESSES AT NAPIER GIRLS'  
HIGH SCHOOL 1901 – 1909 and 1969 - 1989**

**INFORMATION SHEET**

My name is Pam Medcalf and over the next two years for my MA Thesis in History at Massey University I will be studying two headmistresses at Napier Girls' High School – Miss R. James headmistress 1969 – 1989 and Miss E. Spencer 1901 – 1909. I am interested in their lives at school but also in their contributions to the community.

My supervisor is Dr. Kirsty Carpenter in the School of History, Philosophy and Politics and she can be contacted at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My address is [REDACTED] Tel [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

You have been suggested as a possible participant in this research as you have a knowledge of Bessie Spencer and her work in the community.

Should you agree you will be interviewed on videotape or if you prefer it I will simply take notes of our discussion. The interviews will be about one and a half hours duration at a time and place that is convenient for you. In addition a follow up might take place to clarify points from the first interview. After I have summarised the information I will check with you to see if it is a correct copy of what was said.



You may ask any questions about the research, refuse to answer any particular questions, have the tape recorder turned off and withdraw from the study at any time. I would prefer to use your name but will do so only with your consent. However in some cases anonymity cannot be guaranteed particularly where the nature of the information given can only come from one source. to see if you are happy with the way I have used your material.

Please find enclosed a sheet of research questions, and a consent form. If you have any primary material which can be photocopied and which I could use for my research I would really appreciate it.

All information must adhere to the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct. The thesis when completed will be held in the Massey University Library for the use of other researchers and students. Your information will be kept on file and stored by me. Your information will be kept on file and stored by me. Should your interview be taped, you may request a copy of it. The tape will either be destroyed at the completion of the research, returned to you, or deposited, with your permission, in the school archives.

**A STUDY OF TWO HEADMISTRESSES AT NAPIER GIRLS'  
HIGH SCHOOL, MISS B. SPENCER 1901 – 1909 AND MISS  
R. JAMES 1969 – 1989.**

**CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will only be used if I wish, noting however that in some cases anonymity cannot be guaranteed particularly where the nature of the information given can only come from one source. The information will be used only for this research.

*I agree/do not agree to the interview being audiotaped.*

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

.I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signed:** -----

**Name:** -----

**Date:** -----

**Research Questions on Miss R. James for her brother Dr**

**David James**

Family and school background

What was your father's occupation?

Did your mother work outside the home?

How would you describe your family life?

How many children in the family?

Where did Rosemary come from?

Do you know if anyone encouraged her to consider a career in teaching?

Which primary and secondary schools did she attend?

Were they rural or urban?

At which university did she study and what subjects for her degree?

What were her outside interests?

Do you know of any areas of responsibility she had at school or university?

Did she do teacher training and if so where?

Where did she do her early teaching?

Can you think of any anecdotes concerning her which would shed more light on her personality?

### **Interview Guidelines for teachers**

What years did you teach with Miss R. James ?

In what areas did you teach?

What impact did she have on your particular subject?

How approachable was she if problems occurred with curriculum or with students?

Was she constructive in her criticism?

Did she give praise readily?

How would you describe her leadership style? Autocratic, supportive, assertive, consultative, co-operative, caring or people-oriented?

Did she encourage you to attend refresher courses?

Was she receptive to new ideas?

How did she relate to the girls?

How much say did staff have on school policies?

Despite her heavy workload was she willing to listen to staff and take on their suggestions?

Were their harmonious relations most of the time between staff and the headmistress while you were there?

Can you think of any anecdotes concerning her which would shed more light on her personality?

## **Interview Guidelines for Board Members**

What years were you on the board during the headship of Miss R. James?

In what capacity did you serve?

Was there plenty of expertise among the board members at the time to be able to support any initiative by the headmistress?

Were there any particular projects put in place during your time on the board?

Was she supportive of the board and its efforts to benefit the school?

What was her leadership style? Autocratic, supportive, assertive, consultative, co-operative, caring or people- oriented?

Did she praise readily?

Was she constructive in her criticism?

In what areas of administration was the board able to help her most?

Can you think of any anecdote concerning her which would shed more light on her personality?

## **Interview Guidelines for Students**

What years were at school with Miss R. James as headmistress?

How much contact with her did you have? Explain?

How approachable was she to all levels of students?

Was she fair in her discipline?

Did she give praise readily?

Was she constructive in her criticism?

Was she a good role model for teenage girls in manners and dress?

How did she enforce good standards?

How did she encourage girls to continue on to further education?

What was her response to girls with lower ability?

Did you think the school kept up a good standard during her years?

Do you know if there were harmonious relations between her and the staff?

Did your perceptions of the headmistress differ from those of your parents?

In what way?

Can you think of any anecdotes concerning her which would shed more light on her personality?

### **Interview Guidelines for Members of the Community**

During what years and in what capacity did you work with Miss B.

Spencer/ Miss R. James?

How did she become a member of your group/club?

What position did she hold there?

Was she approachable?

Did she initiate any changes in policy during her times in office?

In her leadership role how would you describe it? Supportive, assertive, consultative, co-operative, caring or people-oriented?

Was she encouraging to new members?

Did she listen to new ideas?

Did she give praise readily?

Are you able to give me any family background?

Can you think of any anecdotes concerning her which would shed more light on her personality?

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