

On his father's side Eruera is of Scottish and Ngaitahu descent and he speaks affectionately of this portion of his heritage.

### THE PROPER WAY

One land issue he recalls involved his claim to Stirling Point and Tiwai Point, the latter being the place where the New Zealand aluminium smelter is today.

An objection was sent by the "Stirlings in England" on the grounds that his great-grandfather William Stirling and his great-grandmother Te Huikau didn't marry "in the proper way".

Eruera says "that is how we lost the case" despite the fact that they had descent rights to the land. The objection however, was over-ruled as the wrangle continued in the court, but, the Government wiped the claim because "property unclaimed for more than one hundred years goes back to the Crown". Something always comes up!

### ASTOUNDING INCIDENT

Eruera's report of one particular incident at his mother's tangi is astounding to say the least, and is indeed a real education to the predominantly urban Maori population of today.

Kepa Ehau, a chief of Te Arawa "smashed" his "words upon that woman's head", abusing her as she lay in state on her own marae. The reason for this started at another tangi held forty years previously at the Tamatekapua meeting house in Ohinemutu. At that particular tangi Mihi Kotukutuku stood up to reply to the speeches of welcome.

After expressions of disgust and demands for her to be seated in this "men only speak" marae, she recited her whakapapa. Because she was descended from the eldest son of Tamatekapua, Tuhoromatekaka, and the angry Te Arawa people in front of her were descendants of the younger son, Kahumatamoe, the junior line, they had no right to demand that she be silent.

During this time she defiantly turned her backside to her audience and lifted her dress. Despite the demands that Mihi Kotukutuku be buried, Eruera stubbornly delayed the proceedings to enable Te Arawa to have their say. Kepa Ehau's words echoed throughout the marae as tears streamed down his face, and Eruera withstood the anxiety and anger of his younger brother and gave Te



Arawa the honour of burying their "relation Mihi Kotukutuku into the belly of the earth". Eruera concludes "that finished it".

Time flies by in the book as it has probably in Eruera's long and full life. From a fairly full coverage of his ancestor's lives, and his own, he gives his views concerning contemporary Maori land march in 1975, and Matiu Rata's resignation from the Labour Party and eventual formation of the Mana Motuhake movement.

He describes both the Labour and National parties as not really caring about issues that affect the Maori people, saying "they both pass legislation giving away the rights of the Maori". Eruera's advice to the young Maori leaders of today stands paramount.

He insists that both the material and more important the spiritual part of life must go together. The spiritual side "gives you the power to talk, the power to stand up at the marae, the power to deal with everything. When a man with that blessing upon him stands up to speak he'll be taller than anybody else and his ancestors come to stand beside him and nobody can touch him".

Young people, everyone, take heed! The book Eruera, as told to Anne Salmond, allows us to see our heritage through someone who learnt Maori traditions and history in the old school, through someone who saw with his own eyes, who heard with his own ears, and who experienced first hand both the happenings of the past and the present.

*Eruera Stirling in his home in Auckland. Surrounding him and co-author, Anne Salmond are mementoes of a long and busy life.*

Eruera Kawhia Whakatane Stirling has the ability to see more clearly what is happening today to the Maori people, and throughout the book he gives his solutions to the many problems. After all, to know the past enables one to appreciate and analyse the present situation, and in turn, conclusively enhances one's capabilities of navigating the canoe of Maoridom to the future.

We learn from Eruera the true meaning, as he sees it, to the word *rahui* as he speaks about Sid Mead's *rahui* in 1979 concerning Maori men playing rugby football with teams going to South Africa. He also gives his enlightenment on the traditional He Taua as he speaks about the incident concerning the Auckland University engineering students.

### VALUABLE

There will be those who will question and even criticise many of the things that he has spoken about in his book.

However, in my opinion, he and Anne Salmond will accomplish what they have set out to do. To teach the younger generation the traditional Maori knowledge and history as seen through this elder. There is a lot of valuable material and advice between the covers of this book. I recommend it.