



Maori Battalion Veteran Remembers

Maori Battalion, veteran, Thomas Ruka of Glen Innes, Auckland has cause for celebration, with the presentation of a medal and certificate from the Greek community.

Mr Ruka remembers the kindness of the Greek people when he and his companions were trying to escape after the capitulation of Greece in the Second World War.

They were, eventually captured by the Germans when the boat used in the escape attempt was fired on and forced to stop. He then spent four and a half years as a prisoner of war in Stalag 18A in Germany.

The Greek Consul for New Zealand, Mr Filippopoulos said the medal and certificate was to commemorate Mr Ruka's part in the campaign of 1940-1941.

Born in Taheke, Hokianga of the Nga-puhi tribe, Thomas Ruka volunteered for service in the Second World War along with two of his brothers.

Reminiscing on his capture off the Greek coast, Mr Ruka says he and his companions had spent six weeks crossing the Alps after the capitulation of Greece, and were too late to be picked up by the Allied destroyers they were hoping to meet.

He says a Greek farmer offered food and shelter in exchange for them working the farm but they instead opted to hide out and take their chances of escaping in a boat given to them by another Greek.

Mr Ruka says he's thrilled to have the medal and certificate because it reminds him of the tremendous help and kindness shown to him by the Greek people.



The oldest driver that Traffic Sergeant B Buchanan of the Transport Dept has had to test for the renewal of his driver's licence is Mr Titi Tihu, leading elder of the Whanganui Tribes, Mr Titi Tihu, who is near his 100th year.

Titi, whose 100th birthday falls on Jan 28, 1983, drives regularly from his home at Tawata, 30 miles down the Whanganui River from Taumarunui usually twice a week. He is fit and alert except for arthritis he gets in the leg at times.

"I don't think it can be fixed — it is like the motor car, the oil has dried out and sometimes in the cold weather it gets crook", he said.

Mr Tihu's age is authenticated in a document sworn before the Maori Land Court judge on a certificate by the Sisters of the Convent school at Ranana which he attended for a period of his youth.

Mr Tihu speaks English but he is more at home in his native Maori tongue, and he is a regular and impressive orator on the Marae at Ngapuwaiwaha.

The winding metal road to his home at Tawata is a challenge to a much younger driver and required full attention. By comparison the last few miles to town over the once treacherous Te Maire and Herlihy's bluffs are "a piece

The 100 year — almost — driver, Mr Titi Tihu, leading elder of the Whanganui River and Taranaki, receives his certificate for his driver's licence from Traffic Sergeant B Buchanan.

of cake".

Every year at Christmas some 100 members of his family gather at Tawata to spend the festive season with him.

Alone on his farm he enjoys the solitude, reliving the days of his youth when the river was heavily populated. For a while he worked on the river boats that toiled the river.

He still works the farm and rides a horse when he checks his sheep. Last year he built a new woolshed on the property and celebrated, by shearing a sheep.

The traffic officer said he had no hesitation in renewing the driver's licence. "He satisfied me that he could drive well and had complete control".

Perhaps Titi had a premonition that he was to have his licence renewed because only a week before he bought a new Ford Laser car.

"It is a good car but it has so many buttons I still don't know what they are for", he said.