

always inherited everyone else's. He became more confident, but failed School Certificate the first time around nonetheless.

The family could no longer afford the fees for St Stephens. He went back to the local high school, became deputy head boy, got School Cert. Illness wrecked his hopes of U.E. and he went off into the bush as a scrub-cutter.

But one of his teachers, Bill Hill, convinced his mother he had a future as a teacher. Off he went to Ardmore Training College.

By the second year there, to a lot of friends he was a pakeha. That year faced him with a crisis. His mother was ill. He had to decide whether to finish teachers' college or go back and look after her.

He stayed, finished the course, did his P.A. year under the Maori Board of Governors — and rebelled. Maori children he believed, needed to be exposed to European values, not kept together in a Maori school. He was released from his bond. When he turned 21 his mother died, as she'd predicted she would.

Olly married in Christchurch and moved on to Kokatahi on the West Coast of the South Island then to Rununga as first assistant and on to Kaitangata, where his marriage broke up. He met his second wife Jan in nearby Balcultha and the pair moved back to Christchurch. Olly left teaching. The money couldn't support two families, besides, he saw the system as full of old people hanging on to jobs, leaving no room for the young.

The period was to see his debut in television, in such programmes as "Seagull," "Woolly Hill", "Woolly Manor." Later, in Timaru, his job as a life insurance salesman gone as a result of his involvement with a Pentecostal church, he won a part as narrator in a South Canterbury Operatic Society Production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat." It convinced him that his future lay behind the footlights, on stage or television.

He took a job with the Anglican church, started a happy hour for kids, making up songs and attracting up to 80 for a session. All the time he was praying for a career singing, entertaining — and one day the telephone rang. It was Television New Zealand's Ian Cumming, offering him a job as presenter of "After School".

Curiously, Ollie wasn't interested at first. He wanted something more musical. Moreover, he was working with alcoholics, having helped found an alcoholic recovery centre. He didn't even watch television, nor does he watch it much now: "We're more book people, out-and-about people."

Eventually, he took the job.

Now, as he talks, themes emerge. The strongest is his idea of a total New Zea-

land; that's why he started using different languages on "After School."

"I am a person," he declares. "That's the kind of thing New Zealand needs. I'm a New Zealander, not I'm Dutch, Maori, Spanish.

"Our elders are frightened of losing their Maoritanga. Well, they've lost it.

"Some asked me, 'are you proud to be a Maori?' I said talking to me in these terms, one per cent speak the language, a hell of a lot go through the prisons, the courts — on that basis I can't be proud. I'm sad.

My older children, Riki and Tania, don't speak Maori at all. I've said to them they are themselves first and foremost and they have a rich heritage from which they can learn if they want to and not be pressured to learn things Maori because if it doesn't come from inside, it's a farce. My other two, Jodie and Kiri, are starting to speak Maori. They want to."

He initiated "Kupu", encouraging the correct pronunciation of Maori place names.

His preoccupation has recently led him into more controversial areas.

He lodged a protest with the Race Relations Conciliator against the New Zealand Maoris tour of Wales. "If New Zealanders really want to be New Zealanders, then I think it's about time we got rid of racist teams like the Maori All Blacks and indeed everything that

bears the name Maori — for example Maori Affairs (which is merely a branch of the Housing Corporation) and Maori members of Parliament (Maori issues are not that unique to warrant a separate form of government). Let's start being New Zealanders then, and stop this almighty farce of trying to find unity in division."

"If the Maori people want to do anything I believe they should tell their children they are equal New Zealanders," he says.

"The concept of Maoridom needs to be broadened.

"Only a select few are taken through the whare wananga, the higher school of learning — so few there are hardly any left.

"Even on the marae, women take a secondary place. You can't tell teenagers that.

"The positive aspects — warmth, trust, aroha, the idea of sharing and caring — that's what we can learn from the Maori. The idea of being a worthwhile person.

"My hassle had to be, what the hell am I? I had to stop trying. It was a hell of a hassle, especially when you get Maori jokes.

"When people look at me, it's Olly Ohlson they see. Often people look at me and say, God, I never realised you're a Maori. Basically, the public see me as Olly Ohlson, the man with a smile.

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