

# Powerful Profile of a Remarkable Kuia

## A Life of Leadership and Love

by Harata Solomon

Maraea Mary-Anne Te Kawa J.P. was born at Mohaka 6.7.1899 into a family of four brothers and three sisters (eldest sister 88 years June of this year). Their close family tribal affiliation being to Ngati Porou and Ngati Kahungunu.

Maraea was raised and grew up in Wairakaia and Muriwai, attended first the Muriwai Primary School then the Hiruharama Native School and in 1914-1916 was a student at Hukarere Maori Girls College in Napier.

Maori was her first language, at which she excelled. She was fluent in both Maori and English. Add to this a clear analytical mind and you know that here was a person who knew how to communicate.

Maraea was a woman of spirituality, tremendous energy and great humanity.

In Mangere, Maraea was superintendent for 11 years at a camp for industrial workers consisting of Maori men from throughout Aotearoa. She was their caterer, mum, banker, advisor, peacemaker, nurse, 'lawyer', tutor and all round best friend. When she left Mangere, her son George succeeded her as camp super.

In 1940 she moved to Auckland and started a new life for herself. She volunteered in the National Service Corps which consisted of 800 women. She was one of two Maori volunteers. The other one being the late Hopi Reweti. The two women, who were close friends were the first two Maori officers in the Corps and later became the first two female chauffeurs for the Auckland Post and Telegraph.

Maraea's first husband was Te Makarini Ngata. They had one son, George. In those early years Maraea and Makarini lived at Wharehou, the home of Sir Apirana Ngata. Maraea said she learned so much from Wharehou, and paid a high tribute to her then mother in law, Lady Arihia Ngata (Sir Apirana Ngata's first wife).

From the example of Lady Arihia, Maraea said she learned humility, sincerity, tolerance, and love of people. She became interested and involved in community service and in youth concerns. She also learned the history of her people and became an authority in this field.

Tane tuarua was Nopere Te Kawa (no issue from this union).

Nopere was a lieutenant in the 28th Maori Bn. In 1944, following his dis-

charge from the army as a husband and wife team, supervised a summer camp for 170 women and girls, all Maori, from all walks of life at Helvetia, Pukekohe.

The camp closed at wars end.

### M.W.W.L.

In 1953, just two years after its inception, Maraea became a member of the Maori Womens Welfare League, joining Ruapotaka, which was Auckland's first branch. She was founder of Arahina Branch which was formed in her own home in Panmure. Notables present at Arahina's first meeting were Mrs Ruiha Sage and Mrs Wikitoria Bennett.

The strong personality and leadership of Dame Whina Cooper, the M.W.W.L. first Dominion President had been an inspiration to Maraea, and she kept up close contact with Dame Whina all down the years.

Maraea served as Tairawhiti Area Representative of the Maori Womens Welfare League for 10 years up to May conference 1982. On that occasion, past president Mrs Mira Szasz paid a warm tribute to Maraea for her many years of service to her people, "In Maraea Te Kawa," she said, "is the epitome of what league is and what Maori womanhood might aspire to."

### Travel

During her lifetime, Maraea Te Kawa had done her share of overseas travel. In 1957, and again in 1959, she visited the U.S.A. attending the Moral Rearmament World Conference where all races, creeds, all religions came together sharing and caring about the complex problems besetting the nations of the World.

She visited Tonga and became a special personal friend of the late Queen Salote of Tonga. Then through a film "The Crowning Experience" Queen Salote invited Maraea with some of her Moral Rearmament Friends to take that film to Tonga which they did. She was yet again to be a special guest of Queen Salote at a Pan Pacific Conference held in Tonga.

Among her treasured possessions in all the years since, had been a bundle of letters sent to her personally by the famous Queen of the Friendly Isles, Salote.

In 1977 Maraea was in the 2nd Group who went on the 28 Maori Bn Pilgrimage. The many battle arena of World War II were visited and the high

point of that tour for Maraea, was the visit to the Holy Land.

On 6.7.1977 in Bethlehem she visited the Church of All Nations and there presented a Maori Prayer Book to the Elder and Leader of that Church. He invited her to place in on the Holy Altar and to lead the Congregation in Prayer which she did, in Maori.

This was a treasured memory for Maraea, and a great honor for the Maori people.

### M.W.W.L.

A poetess, writer of verse — she entertained and amused M.W.W.L. members when they gathered for annual conferences with her own witty and meaningful writings.

### Leader of women

Her hopes for the Dominion Executive of M.W.W.L. "...That they work as a finely tuned team dedicated to the upliftment of the M.W.W.L. and the overall advancement of the Maori people, especially Maori womanhood and the sanctity of the family..."

Her prayers and hopes for the M.W.W.L., as an organisation and for its members. That they should aspire to, and attain... renewed heights of accomplishment, of leadership, or responsibility, of commitment, of support and service within the community working not only in Maori causes but among the pakeha people also.

The two peoples have a great deal to offer each other. By working together within the community both Maori and pakeha can learn to understand, to know and to respect each other. There are many areas of endeavour within every local community which give ample opportunity for both groups to work side by side e.g. civic or community project, P.T.A.s, school committees athletics, sports, cultural arts, church activities and many others.

### Te Roopu Wahine Toko Ite Ora Kaupapa Maori:

The aims and objectives of the Maori Womens Welfare League: With emphasis on the whanau, the home and leadership training. The strength of the whanau is determined by the strength of the women.

"... no success can compensate for failure in the home..."

The retention of the Maori language "Me nga tikanga Maori e pa ana ki te whanau

tae no ki te whenua.  
Me anga atu tatou ki te atua... nana nei nga mea katoa."

The health, happiness, education and well being of Maori womanhood, allowing development of individual character and potential are recognised as prime ingredients in the aims of the League. Inseparable from these, and of equal if not greater importance are the cultural, spiritual, and traditional Maori values.