

Jim - A Brief History

Born Nurse Davidson, cnr Fairfield Ave & Braddon street, Early morning 16th July 1922
Lived my life until the War at 11 Disreali Steet Syd/Addington,
Attended Selwyn Sreet Kindergarton, cnr Selwyn Street and Harman Street.
Primary School, West CHCH District High School. Prim. 1 to Standard 4. Class No. 50 plus.
West CHCH Intermediate, Form 1&2 whilst Sth CHCH Intermediate was being built {delay during Depression}

Secondary CHCH Technical College, Commercial Class, not by choice, by direction, as they had to fill numbers. My choice was Engineering.

My first job arranged by the Vocational Guidance, was with NZ Farmers Coop Cashel Street as Office Boy. It was supposed to be 44 hours per Week, but we never worked less than 48. Did not want to be clerk. Worked on the Mail table sorting distributing mail and general rowse about, the lowest of the low. Finished up in the Banking Dept looking after the budgets for "in Debt" Farmers, Caused by the Great Depression

Joined the RNVR. New Zealand Division. Early 1939 age 16 yrs. because most young fellows at that time joined the Territorials and I chose the Navy. I think primarily, because my Brother had joined the Permanent Navy in 1936. Mobilised for Naval Service end 1939.

NAVAL SERVICE.

Mobilised for training Ord Smn. [P] end 1939. HMS Wakakura 3 weeks. Mine sweeping Wellington for departure of 1st echelon to Mid East mid Jan. Saw the whole convoy. British, Aus. and N Z warships Navy Office Lyttelton as Ord Smn [T] Messenger and general dogs body. Everything from sweeping the Heads to fwd hand on the relief Inspection Launch, Freindship. Asked under, Scheme B, if I would like to stand for a Commision. Later I realised it was crass stupidity to say NO THANKS.

RNVR HQ to prepare for Monowai draft. Commissioned HMS Monowai. Armed Merchant Cruiser. {A pitiable substitute for a genuine Cruiser being a converted Merchant ship} in August 1939. The Armament Mk 7 6inch dated 1900 to 1914. Everything was manual. And a max firing range of 14000 yds. What a hope we had, when you recall what happened to Jervis Bay and Rawapindi. like Armed Merchant Cruisers, Against German Pocket Battleships with a range in excess of 32000yds.

July 1942 Volunteered for ASDIC {Submarine Detection very secret} passed hearing test, Course at St Marys Bay Ak. 6 weeks Living ashore, Great.

Drafted HMNZS Rata with Don Fraser. and after 3 mths to New Naval Electrical School Petone for Higher SubmarineDetector Coures. Qualified as Higher Submarine Detector [HSD] and so on to Naval base Auk. as relief HSD and served on a number of Mine sweepers, including the Clean sweep of the First Bay of Islands Mine Field. Before new field was laid. Back to Petone for Refresher on latest equipment. Auk. Base for Ldg Smn course. Passed, then HMNZS . Muratai in Ak. training Tamaki new recruits. and Anti Sub Duties.

Recommend as Fleet CW . Skipper, Lieut. Hancock had problems with Comdr Elworthy {ex Christ College] over CHCH Tech Versus Christ College. Comdr. Tidswell, who was senior to Elworthy, saved the day, by saying he would sign the papers, if Elworthy did not.

To England on the MV Port Wyndham with my friend Red Greenbrook Ldg Stoker as companion. 24 Passenger First class. Arrived Liverpool, no escort all the way., Reported to HMS Drake. Devonport and Red went his way, as he was not a CW. One night in Jagos Mansion, the barracks was enough. Shifted next day to CW class hut for a week, then over St Budeaux camp and much better accomodation. Four weeks course then by train to Portsmouth Barracks, on SR Railways. A fortnight in Pompey, then back to HMS Raliegh Torpoint Devonport, again on the slow train,

The next 6 days we traversed the Fleet CW Selection Board all Naval Subjects etc and then appeared before the Admirals Board headed by a 3 ring Adm.. I was lucky 1 of 4 straight to King Alfred, a number were deferred for extra training and the rest of the 56 sent back to their ships. Not unusual for Fleet Candidates. Class distinction at its worst. King Alfred at Hove, the Officers Training establishment, 10 weeks with a weed out after 5. Only a couple dipped. and at the end Commissioned. Off to Greenwich for a fortnight to learn what an officer should do [named a Knife and Fork Course or how to become a Gentleman] then back to Hove for a Navigation Course. My appointment was to stand by a Transport Ferry TF27 {Large LST} as the Pilot

[Nav]nearing completion at Blyth, Northumberland. Commissioned the ship. European War ended and made ready to go to the Far East but that ended as well, thank goodness.

Left the ship in Southampton and after brief leave sent to HMS Victorious, a run down Aircraft Carrier, as crew to Transport returning Aus. and NZ. servicemen. Watchkeeping all the way to Sydney via Suez., Colombo, Trincomalee, Fremantle. Transshipped at Sydney to Melbourne, by troop train then on Athlone Castle for Wellington and ferry to CHCH. As it was now end of January 1946 I did not get my discharge because of Leave due to me, until Easter that year.

So I started the war as a bare arsed OD{P} and ended as a Temp Sub Lieut.

And so to Post War

Shirley and I had been going together off and on since 1938 or thereabouts. During the war she joined the WRENS. We decided when I got called up that we would not get engaged or married until it was over. Not thinking it would last 6 yrs. It was pretty hard going when on leave, which was infrequent. However we did get engaged before I went to England..

On my return the Wedding date was set for Easter 1946 but her tonsils got in the way, so it was deferred until July 13th. Housing was lousy, times were difficult and ex Servicemen were being exploited. I went back to the Farmers as they were obliged to give me employment? They did not want me. Shirl, after discharge became a short hand writer at Andrews and Beaven. I wanted a job in the Electrical trade because I had been involved in electrics in the Navy. As I was so late getting my discharge all the Rehab. adult apprenticeships. had gone. By a stroke of luck I did get into the trade 12 mths later. Even the PWD was difficult, Private employment fullup and the New Zealand Railways did not take adult appts., so it was real tough to get a suitable vacancy. Still as I indicated I finally succeeded in the private sector. Bill Walker was a very good boss and ex NZAF, On telling the Farmers I was leaving I was told by the Assnt Acct., who by the way never went away because he was in a protected industry, that really I was not worth the money they had to pay me . Good Riddance.

A Reduction in wages and Shirl. was expecting. I went back to Night Tech. to study for my Registration. Again tough times, 5 pound a week with tax off that, no Housing etc. Barbara born Nurse Keartons in Stravern Road August 1947, We rhe got rent of an old cottage in Selwyn Street, very sub standard. Part earth floors, no bathroom, coal range and boil the copper. When I told the State Advances, Shirley was again expecting, we got up the priority list and ultimately a State house in the Emmett Block, in Shirley. All mod cons but no sewer, the night cart for 3 yrs. A palace compared with what we had. We had only just shifted when Raymond was born 18 November 1949. Shirley had booked in to St Georges but they were full up when the time came, so Ray came into the world at the old Essex Home in Linwood. As I was credited with 20 mths. towards the Adult term of 3yrs and had passed the Registration Exam. I was registered as an Electrician in 1949, but had to stay with my employer, as an act of good faith, for giving me a job as a Rehab Trainee. Mother passed way in 1950. A broken heart, as she lived through two World Wars, with close kin in each. I got ichy feet, as the work was mainly house wiring. So I applied in 1952 for a job in the Post Office workshops and got it, far better pay and conditions. Our finances were nix at this time so we set off to save for a section and an ultimate build. The work was very rewarding because of the expansion of Exchanges and the construction of many new ones. In the meantime the Reg Exam had become a Trade Certificate and there was an Advanced Trade Cert. so I went back to Tech and passed, being one of the early ones., the first in the PO. The PO did not at this stage recognise it for promotion as they had internal exams of their own, so I sat and passed them, all much to the disgust of other people. I got a promotion to Ldg Electrician in the late 50's.

As I had no inclination to go to University and once again drag my family backwards financially, I took a middle track by Studying for the NZ Cert. in Engineering, a new Engineering qualification and after 3 yrs passed, thanks to the support of Shirl. and the children. Again I was the First in the PO to qualify, As is usual between Govt. Departments [Education] and the PO the latter did not officially recognise the Cert. but the Professional Engineers did.

I think it was in 1959 that I was seconded to the Engineering Dept as an Engineering Assnt. to do design work on all aspects of Building Service viz. DC power, which supplied the Auto Equipment, AC power, Air Conditioning, which was essential for the control of Humidity for the switching equip., Fire Alarms etc.

It was not long before the other District Engineers heard and I used to be sent to Dunedin, Invercargill, Greymouth & Timaru to assist, the design or redesign of B/S, plus the acceptance of work carried out by contract. The DC3 flights to INV. took 3hrs, with a stop in Dn. and I had some hair raising

experiences in the NWers, but the 2pound jar of oysters was most welcome to Shirl.. and the family. I then decide after, being pushed by the Engineers, to attempt to Qualify for Registration as a Prof Eng. via the NZ Institute of Engineers Exams. This was achieved and in June 1969 I was Registered as a Professional Engineer. So you will see that I had virtually been studying since 1947, and Shirley was most tolerant and helpful when sometimes I got so frustrated, as much of my later study was done by Correspondence. Never mind, we now had the recompense. I was promoted to Asnt Engineer and a year later to Full Engineer. First of all my work entailed Building Services but the District Engineer encouraged me to convert to Telecom which I did and had such jobs as Eng PABX, Field etc. From then on I progressed again to Eng. B/S, promoted to Supervising Eng B/S in charge of the discipline, then Divisional Eng. and my final designation at retirement in 1986, was Senior Divn Eng. B/S for the South Island Region. During my time as a Supvg. Eng. my work took me to Gm and Tu to relieve the District Engs in those places. Very rewarding.

My Involvement in the Post Office Association {Official Staff Association, all Staff compulsory except Administration } A State Union in other wards. Approx Membership at this stage 35000 increased to 40000.

As an Electrician, before I joined the PO it was compulsory to join a Union and I complied. They never did anything for the Electricians as we were only a small part of a Major Engineers union, working for many different bosses, so had no punch. and their meetings were quite far left, which did not fit in with my thoughts

And so to the Post Office Association...

It did not take me long after joining the PO to deduce that the whole employee structure was divided vertically by classes and separated into 2 Divisions. Very much class distinction and it got up my nose. The first divn. consisted of all Clerical, Professional and those who in the technical area, who had. by promotion been classified as C5 and above. as a qualified Tradesman I was 2nd division along with all Linemen, Postmen etc. The fact that a Clerk was my social superior rankled, when I was made cogently aware by clerks of my position . My Ldg Electrician Jim Hewitt was of the same opinion, as he had come in from OUTSIDE. We decided after a couple of years and some frustration with the system to take part in Assn affairs to try to change the system, to get all Tradesmen inc. Linemen, altho actually Tradesmen, were considered Labourers, a better status. We started to attend the monthly meetings of the Assn. and stir the pot. Progress was very slow and never really achieved much, except in the case of linemen, who were in the late 1970s reclassified from Labourers to Tradesmen, after along battle between the Assn. and the Dept. I was in the forefront of the battle. The local Assn committee was under the control of other pressure groups such as Equipment Technicians and Clerical. Jim H left the PO for greener fields but I carried on putting on pressure for a better deal. I was promoted to Ldg Hand but this made no difference to my stand and at a number of meetings addressed by a very formidable General Secretary, who was very prominent Labour Local Body Politician, I stood up and got counted.

In 1963, a vacancy occurred in the number of delegates [4 in the case of CHCH] sent to the Annual Conference of the Assn. in Wellington, due to a retirement and I stood and was elected. Little did I know that this was my first step into a far reaching part of my life.

The 1963 Conf. of the Assn. was a milestone, as we had to debate the proposition of EQUAL PAY for EQUAL Work for Women. This subject was to be put to Conf. as a remit and if passed would become the policy of the Assn and would initiate a fight with Govt to get it agreed to. It took some years but I was there at the kill. The CHCH section of the Assn. whole heartedly agreed with the proposition and I spoke in favour at the Conf. After a protracted debate the Remit was passed with a big majority and the fight was on for equality. The PO Assn. was the first Union to pass such a binding resolution in this country and I think in the WORLD. Delegates were elected every 2yrs. and each time I stood. In some instances there was no election. The Assn. was governed by an Executive Committee [E/C] of eight plus a President all of whom were elected for 2 yrs. at every second Conf. The 2 VPs were part of the 8 and elected from that 8. As I was studying at the time I did put my name forward until 1969 when I joined the E/C and was elected Junior Vice Pres. It was a great responsibility to be on this body which represented 35000 employees of all PO persuasions and had the duty to negotiate on their behalf at Departmental and Ministerial Level. It sure broadened my outlook. In this capacity I was in many negotiations some of which we achieved and in others, a compromise, to fight another day, Shirley agreed with my being on the E/C and it entailed going to Wellington very frequently, but it had its rewards for us both

1969 was a very significant year for the Assn. and I became deeply involved in the decision making. The Govt. {Nat} had flatly refused to negotiate with us on increases in wages for all PO people and would

not budge. The E/C took a decision to test the members regarding the taking of Industrial Action. The result was an overwhelming vote in favour of "minimal action" and ultimately the E/C put a proposition to the members to initiate a GO SLOW action, which was thought to be the least we could take without interfering in Public Opinion too much. Many of our members would be of Nat. persuasion, but nevertheless went along with the proposition because our wages structure was so far below that of the Private sector. A date was decided and Govt. notified. It was the first direct action ever taken by a State Union. So each member of the E/C was under considerable strain, as it went against their consciences. The Govt. remained resolute and the Minister McCready tried to bully us. We had no idea of the consequences. As it turned out it caused chaos and after two days we had decided to call it off, but before we could notify the members arrangements had been made for a Tele. interview between Mc Cready and our General Secretary Ivan Reddish. The Minister was really caught out on all points and concede Govt. had not been made aware of the extent of the problem and the staffs feelings. He undertook to resume negotiations, so we had a moral victory. which in the end was of good financial benefit to the pockets of all our members from the Administration down and the Director General [DG] [Chief Exec.] Retired before his time. Just one of the struggles we had for our members.

To move on!!!! The Snr. VP unfortunately and tragically pass away in 1970 and I became Snr VP being re elected to that position in 1971. In 1972 the Pres. became ill the evening before the Conf. started and was unable to attend, so I was precipitated into the Chair, I had to open the Conf. receive the dignitaries, and the Minister with no notes etc. What a situation. In the address to the Minister and later the DG you were expected to line them up and push for all that we had been declined. Real Political stuff. I sufficed.

Dad passed away in 1963 which a gap and he was badly missed.

In 1973 I was elected Pres. and remained as such for 4 yrs. I stood down in 1977 but went back as Snr VP in 1981. Once again I took over the Pres. in 1984, as the current incumbent stood down. I did not stand in 1985 as I wanted out. I had had enough.

During my time at the top I negotiated and argued with some notorious people, Holeyoke, Muldoon, Douglas, Prebble, Caygill, Tizard, Bolger, Lange, Kirk to name a few and was ordered out of Muldoon's Office twice as part of a Negotiating Committee. During this time I served on many Joint/Dept, Assn committees To name a few, the comm. that selected the Posts Logo, the "Lazy Snake" and the original Telecom Logo, that has now been replaced. The committee set up to appraise the Philatelic area of the PO which was being strangled by the internal Bearocracy, who did not want to relinquish their hold and many other Joint Committees, who changed the way the PO operated or twisted it. Some of the Statuary Boards came within my orbit, such as the Promotion Board etc When the Labour Govt decided to split the PO I was nominated for Telecom Board and went on the establishment Board of 6. This meant that I had to retire from the PO, as you could not be master and servant.

More of the Board later.

From 1971 to 1984 I travelled quite a lot as I became a delegate to the PTTI [Post Telegraph Telephone International] A Member of the International Labour Organisation [ILO] an associate member of United Nations.

My first PTTI Conference was in 1972 in Bandung, Indonesia. I was nominated to go to Sarawak and Sabah, Eastern Malaysia, after the Conference to investigate the PO workers right to join a Employee Org., to ensure that they were not being victimised and had the fundamental right of Freedom of Association This latter was supposed to be a right in all so called Democratic countries. Very shaky as this covered the right to hold a free and unencumbered meeting. Oh Hell!! I did not know where to start. I spent a week there and produced a report for PTTI. To speak to those involved I had to resort to walks on the beach as I was told I was being monitored? One High Light. I was introduced to the Sultan of Sarawak in his beautiful Palace in Kuching and had a long conversation, as he remembered the kindnesses shown to him and his people by the NZ forces who fought there during the confrontation with Indonesia. My introduction into International affairs. Sabah was more laid back and I did not have the feeling that I was being followed. Both countries had not long had their independence and there was a little bit of racial conflict which had led to the suspicion of all those of European extraction

During my sojourn in the PTTI Orbit I visited many countries, attended numerous conferences etc. some of which were:- Seminar Isu Inatori, Near Tokio, Seminars in Fiji, Conferences Melbourne Seoul, Tokio, Singapore Oslo and numerous Committee Meetings in Singapore and Japan. and Colombo I took part in a number of Delegations to countries to ascertain if they had Freedom of Association and Human Rights and that they were being observed. Whilst in London in 1977 for a briefing with the UK Reps I had the doubtful privilege of being allowed in to No 10 Downing Street and signed the visitors book on the same

page as Rt Hon. Robt Muldoon. Jim Callahan was the PM of Great Britain at the time, ex Navy of course and I was assured if he was available he would have welcomed me, as he was also a Fleet CW. Also in 1977 I attended ILO Geneva for a month for series of meetings regarding to rights of PTTI members in all countries to have Freedom of Assn. as a fundamental right, many countries did not let their State employees have this facility. Recommendations and resolutions were passed but in many cases the countries only paid lip service. I also visited Germany to study their Postal System and Telecom. Hong Kong was a festering sore under the British Raj and we could get nowhere. After the Oslo Conf. I was sent into the USSR to ascertain if they had Freedom for their Post/Telecom people as they wished to join PTTI and a Japanese group did the same in Comm. China. We met in Tokio after the visits and decided they had both failed so I went to the Asian office in Singapore to prepare a report for Geneva. . A sad case was the Phillipines. One Postal service and 12 Telecom Companies owned by the Yanks and the most restrictive and bad working conditions, again we got nowhere, because money talks.

A little too much !

The Telecom Board.

What an experience, from the working side to the administration. So in July 1986 I joined the establishment Board of Telecom NZ Six members and a Chairman Mr Mason . A real gent, who helped me considerably Suffice is to say we started from scratch. There were only 2 non Commercial members, a Professor of Elect Eng from Auk. and myself. The Board became an entity in April 1987 and later that year the board was asked by Minister Prebble, if Telecom should be sold and the vote was not to sell. This was conveyed to Prebble by the Chairman only to be told, go back and try again. We did, with the same result, as we could see that it was a "CashCow". Prebble sacked the Chairman. He then appointed Ron Trotter as Chairman ex Round Table, plus 3 more members from the Round Table. The next vote was in favour because of the Round table influence, so Prebble could then announce to the News Media that the Board had recommended to Govt. that Telecom be sold. A tragedy really as we paid the Govt something like a total of \$850m in one year. The skuldugery then started but I will not expand in these notes. Telecom was sold for well under its real value because of the time constraints on the Board and our inability to obtain a full value of the asset after spending many thousands on O/seas consultants, The Business Round Table plus a certain Investment Bank who were also involved with Railways had their finger in the pie. Bye Bye Telecom and I finally retired when it passed into the hands of the Americans

Since then I have not done much and was really hit when Shirley passed away in 2001 . She did travel quite a lot with me to conferences and the Japanese paid for a 10 day holiday, for us both, in Japan when I left the PTTI area. FINIS E&OE.