

## Georgina (Jean) May Power

Georgina (Jean) May Power was born in Dannevirke on 29 May 1932 to Henry Richard David Power and Ema Power (nee Namana). Jean understands that *“the midwives, Auntie Lillian Laing and Auntie May Webster (nee Power) advised Mum to go to hospital to have me due to complications with the previous baby which she lost”*. When Jean was born the Power whānau lived in a house by the Aohanga Urupā. She was the last of the Power children born there as they shifted to Kapakapanui at Aohanga in her first year.

She grew up at Kapakapanui in a two bedroom home with her four brothers Dubby, Tom, Johnny and Dick and seven sisters Mary, Joyce, Grace, Rose, Ata, Gwen and Dorriane. *“We had no electricity in those days and the boys would jump up and blow out the candle, shut the door and I would run into it”*, Jean laughs.

Some of her happiest memories as a young child were staying at a big house they called Sherwood out the back of Branscombe Station. Jean enjoyed going with her Dad to work and shooting rabbits.

Figure 1: Getting Ready for a Performance



L-R: Jean Power, Auntie Mata Rautu, Takotoatu Rautu, Putiputi Rautu, Mary Power and Grace Power  
 Kneeling: Joyce Power and Joy Whitmore.

Jean clearly remembers that, *“one day a rabbit took off, the dogs went, and I ran too. I was chasing the dogs and the rabbit and nearly got shot by Dad. That was my last rabbiting trip”!*

Jean began her education at Aohanga on correspondence. She later went to Pongaroa School when she was seven years old. When the Native School opened in 1941 she completed 7 years of education at Aohanga. Her special friends at Aohanga School were Joy Whitmore and Putiputi Rautu. Jean said, *“We learned a lot of waiata at Aohanga and would get dressed in our piupiu to perform for an audience”*.



Figure 2:  
 Nurse Jean Power

Jean attended Te Waipounamu College in Christchurch for two years from 1948 to the end of 1949. *“I got a nursing scholarship and Dad took me down to Masterton then we went to Wellington on the train. We went across on the Rangitira to Lyttleton, had breakfast in Christchurch and Dad took me to Te Waipounamu College on Ferry Road in a taxi.*

*He carried my bags in; turned around and walked out the door. I bawled! It was quite lonely the first year because it was the first time I had ever left Aohanga in all my life. I started nursing in 1950 at Dannevirke hospital. I did 2 years and 5 months nursing and that's when I met Dan Pomana,”* says Jean.

Figure 3: Mr and Mrs Pomana at Aohanga



L-R: Joyce Power, John Pomana, Jean Pomana, Hine Power (flower girl), Dan Pomana, Ata Power and Johnny Power

Jean recollects, "I went home and worked with Bill Meech in the sheds. I left Bill Meech's gang and ended up cooking a season for Dad. Dan was a scrub cutter. Dan and I married were in Pongaroa in 1953 by the Reverend Keith Elliott VC. We had our wedding reception at Papauma Marae. At first we lived with Mum and Dad at Aohanga. We both went out and worked in the shearing gang with Dad and Bill Meech.

Jean continues, "Dan was not a shearer at all; he learned over the years and became a gun, shearing 400 sheep in a day. The first year Dan brought a car and I brought the furniture for our house. Tom and Annette our two eldest children would come out in the gangs with me. Raha stayed with Mum as he didn't like moving around. We did a varied lot of jobs. Every shearing season we would go back out into the sheds. Dan started as a shearing contractor himself. When we settled in Pongaroa I started off the Māori Women's Welfare League at Akitio; I was the first President. I was also a member of the Return Services Association – Women's section. Dan was on the school committee when Mereana was born. Joseph, Jocelyn, Barbara and Pania are our youngest four children. All of our 8 children and our eldest grandson Jermarl, which we raised, went to Pongaroa Primary School. We worked with welfare in those days providing work for teenage boys and supervising them out in the shearing gangs. Other than that," states Jean "it was just looking after the children making sure they had a good education, shearing and cooking".

Figure 4: The Pomana Whānau at their eldest daughter, Annette's wedding



L-R: Jocelyn, Diane (Tom's wife) holding Rona, Barbara, Mereana, Pania (flower girl) Annette, Jean holding Jermarl, Dan, Joseph, Tom and Raha.

Jean smiles as she says, "Things became a little more hectic when the children started secondary school. Annette went to St Brides in Masterton and Tom began his secondary education at Te Aute. Raha went to Tararua College in Pahiatua so Tom changed to Tararua. The older three had nearly completed their secondary education by the time Mereana went to St Joseph's in Hastings. Joseph attended Hato Paora near Feilding. The younger three girls' Jocelyn, Barbara and Pania also went to St Joseph's so I was still continually running between Pongaroa, Hawke's Bay and the Manawatu.

Figure 5: Jean cooking at Aohanga



All my life I tried to raise our family and keep Dan's job separate – Dan reckoned I wasn't going to cook". Jean ran the school bus from Pongaroa to Aohanga. Jean remembers "I went cooking at Aohanga but still had to keep the school bus running. I would have to begin preparing breakfast at 5am to serve the shearer's at 7am and have everything finished before 8am.

I would pick up all the children along the Aohanga to Pongaroa bus run, leave the bus in town, hop into my car and go back to the sheds prepare morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, and the evening meal and have to race into town before 3pm to pick up the children from school

and drop them off. I would get back in time to put the evening meal on the table for the shearer's and start it all again the next day.

Figure 6: Jacob in the drawer



Laughing Jean says, "it was about the same time while I was cooking at Aohanga that Mereana came racing in with her baby Jacob and asked if I could look after him. I had nowhere to put him so I made a bed for him in one of the drawer's in the kitchen so I could continue to do my job cooking for the shearer's".

Figure 5: Jean cooking at Aohanga



"In 50 years I've cooked in every shed in the district from the Tararua Range to the Coast including the Hawke's Bay, Taihape and even some of the sheds in the South Island. I still enjoy travelling around the country side visiting friends and family. If my brother Dick rings I'll go down to Tinui and look after him for a while. I take pleasure in knitting for my family and friends. All in all I've had a good life"! says Jean, smiling wryly!