

Fredric William Samuel Cutler, Mystery Man - not really.

Fredric or Uncle Fred as we knew him was born in 1907. He was the eldest son of my grandparents Milly and Bill Cutler and eldest of a family of 6 children, 5 boys and 1 girl. My father was his youngest brother and Fred named him Eric. The family lived in Ada Street.

Fred attended College Street School and then moved onto PNBHS where he was given the nickname Mouse. He was the only one who knew the significance of this name and said the secret would die with him which it did.. Two of his younger brothers were also given the name mouse when they attended PNBHS. They never knew why but one of the wives fondly referred to her husband as Mouse.

On leaving school Fred went to Teachers' College in Wellington and then embarked on a very successful teaching career.

He was teaching in Seatoun when he was called up for war service in July 1941. Having already done well in the teaching profession, Fred was appointed to Camp Namaka in Fiji as a Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant from 16 January 1942 until 7 August 1942. Fred's second embarkation was to New Caledonia where he was posted to the Noumea Transit Camp and promoted to Warrant Officer Class Two from 1 January 1943 until 12 July 1944. He was discharged on 19 December 1944 on completion of his "duration of war" engagement, Fred received The Defence Medal, The War Medal 1939-1945 and the New Zealand War Service Medal.

Throughout his life Fred collected relevant cuttings and memorabilia to do with his life. These were all pasted into a series of scrap books which have now been lodged in the Palmerston North library archives. It was through these that we were able to provide evidence of his overseas service during the war.

Fred was a talented musician who could play any tune by ear on his violin. He had a great love of cricket and football and was always very involved with these sports especially at the schoolboy level. Scouting was another passion and he became involved in this wherever he went.

Fred loved the outdoors, especially the South Island where he spent many years teaching. He moved his way up through small country schools at Kokatahi and Bushside as a sole charge Headmaster, to a much larger School, Aranui in Christchurch. Most of his career was spent as a Headmaster.

Every summer Fred would go on an extended camping holiday in the South Island and take three boys from whichever school where he was teaching. These boys were given the chance to go at the start of their Standard 6 year. They had the year to raise their pocket money for the trip. It was regarded as a real privilege to be chosen to go camping with Mr Cutler. The boys had chores to do very much like a scout camp but they also got to see and do amazing things they otherwise wouldn't have done. One year he included one of his nephews in the group.

Fred never married but was very family oriented. All of the 12 nieces and nephews recall the wonderful Christmas presents he gave us all. Some of the older cousins remember following him around in Hastings one year as they were sure he was Christmas shopping and they hoped to see what he was buying. Another cousin remembers getting roller skates and a basketball. One year he won a raffle at the school and the prize was a doll in a pushchair, All the kids were asking him what he would do with it. He assured them he had a little niece who was nearly 3 and he would give it to her for Christmas.

When we all got to Secondary school we were given generous book tokens which stopped as soon as we left school.

Fred returned to the North Island as his mother whom he was particularly devoted to, was ageing and he needed to be able to visit her more often.

He had Headmaster jobs in Hastings, Dannevirke South, and finally Stratford. He retired at 59 in 1966 having completed his 40 years service, and returned to PN to live.

His mother died in 1968 and Fred died unexpectedly in 1969 aged 62. Fred was a teetotaler but his one vice was smoking and he was a very heavy smoker. Unfortunately this probably contributed to his early death.

No one in the family was aware that Fred's grave lacked an appropriate identification. So it was a great surprise when people started getting in touch with us to see if he was part of our family after the article appeared in the Manawatu Standard.

The family are really grateful for the work done by the Palmerston North RSA and in particular **Ian Bailey** for rectifying the previous omission of the appropriate plaque on Fred's grave and also arranging this unveiling ceremony today.

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