

smiling. Their names are Ngahina, Takamaiterangi, Rakaiheria and Te Rauparaha but they are usually known as Hina, Taka, Chocolate and Junior. "They'll stay until they're nearly 100. They'll drive me to Australia, or Hawaii."

Said Junior, "That's where two daughters are." He put his hand on the room-long solid oak table. "There used to be sixteen kids around here."

Before leaving I enjoyed another feed, with the two sons, and more laughter. When Aunt Leah came out to say goodbye her little dog Spotty followed . . . and bit me on the ankle when I started the motorbike.

She laughed. "He likes you."

It would have taken more than a dog bite, Aunt Leah, to keep me away from your birthday hui. Porirua M.P. Gerard Wall described the mood of that night: "To say that we love you is to put it mildly . . . but what more can we say?"

Ria Moheko Taiaroa of Otakou is great-granddaughter of Matenga Taiaroa — nicknamed "Fighting Taiaroa" by the Pakeha — and famous for halting Te Rauparaha's southward conquest. In 1834 he brought 500 men from Otago and Southland in canoes up the coast for the final counter-attack against Te Rauparaha in Queen Charlotte Sound. They chased and skirmished with bands of Ngati Toa for two months before going home when supplies ran out.

Strong feelings continued into this century between Ngati Toa and Kai Tahu — then in 1921 Ria Taiaroa became a human peace offering. She was given to Te Rauparaha's descendant — Te Rauparaha Wineera — in an arranged marriage.

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