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## The Pursuit of Happiness

by Miriam Silver

1947 was the coldest Winter in living memory. The snow fell in December 1946, froze and remained like that until April. Pneumatic drills were used to break up the impacted ice impeding the progress of trolley buses which skidded dangerously causing their long poles to become disconnected from their overhead lines.

Wartime restrictions were still in place, food, clothes and fuel, especially coal which both heated our homes and water, were all in short supply due to road and rail conditions, nothing could reach the shops road or rail transport was frozen. We only ate either that which we grew or was in season, I.e., English, things like bananas, oranges, all imported, grown elsewhere even now, 2 years after the war had ended were rarely seen. During the war our Merchant Navy protected incoming essentials, such as flour and oil, and suffered terrible losses in the process.

Government edicts proclaimed electricity was only to be used 2 hours daily, the coal froze at the head of the mines, the roads were impassable, queuing at shops was normal. As the youngest I did that daily, especially for fish, which for some reason was not rationed.

Life was real, life was earnest, I was 19, determined to go to teachers training college, never to see NW London again. My aim in life was simple, to return to the country and have space round me in which to breath, I'd enjoyed both during evacuation and subsequently boarding school.

This was not encouraged by my family who believed further education was only for boys, and a future in office or shop work was the life they planned for me. In those days girls, especially girls obeyed their parents.

In the 18 months after leaving school until July 1947 I was never without a job. I was totally unqualified, though I did learn to type, albeit on the job. Earning no more than £2.10s a week, paying rent and fares usually left me with 10/-(50p) just enough to buy a cheese sandwich and plenty of time in which to apply for jobs in the country, advertised in the Lady

magazine. I soon found out that College places were only for the ex-service people, it was office work or starve.

I tried being a teaching assistant at a boarding school where I soon found I was a slave. Then there was the au pairs job where two children ran rings round me. Eventually ending up back in N. London amongst the bomb rubble, pavements and into office work.

The thaw came in April 1947 together with determination to seek my dream, I realised that my life's choices were entirely up to me. Luckily during my usual search in the Times Jobs Vacant section I read, "Emigrants wanted for nurses training in New Zealand," which immediately led me to N.Z. House where I collected the application forms.

After much argument, my mother did sign, 21 was the legal age for passports. The medical and interview, where I convinced them I was their next F.Nightingale was no problem. Packing was, clothes were rationed, I only had homemade derivatives of school uniform.

In July I sailed on the Rangetata liner for a five week journey, other than airmail letters dropped off at Bombay, no home contact. But I was going to fulfil my dream in wide open spaces and endless sunshine.

Pursuing your dream especially at 19, does not take into account the paths along which you must go, and they are not always easy or pleasant.