

VERONICA'S RESPONSE

It was the 25th of August 1939 in Nelson and the family of 6 were just coming back from an afternoon out for lunch. As they arrived home Betty, one of the younger daughters, went and collected the mail. Getting the mail was one of Betty's favourite parts of the day, -other than breakfast, lunch and dinner - Betty loved her food! She came running inside and she rummaged through the mail saying,

"I hope there is something for me". But there was nothing for her, there was only a letter with the words '*Mr Manering*' on it. Betty passed it over to her Dad and he started opening it with a look of interest on his face having no idea of what was inside.

He started reading and as he got further through the letter his face changed from a surprised, excited face to a face of worry and apprehension. The room went quiet and Veronica, the eldest daughter, said "Dad, what is it?" He replied quietly "It's a letter wanting me to join the war" he paused and then he read the letter out to the family.

Dear Mr Manering,

Your name has been drawn from the ballot to serve in His Majesty the King's army representing New Zealand in combat. Your presence is required at 77 Trafalgar Street on the 1st of September to undergo a medical examination to ensure your fitness to serve and from there you will be formally enlisted.

Yours Sincerely

Colonel Sanders.

Mr Manering passed his medical examination, and was enlisted into the general forces and was taken away to fight for his King and country. A few days after he had gone off to war, the rest of the family went down to the shops to take their mind off their dad having to leave. As they were out Mrs Manering says

"I'm just going to pop to the loo, Veronica watch the children please".

As Mrs Manering was walking back from the loo she sees a poster that says JOIN THE WOMEN'S RESPONSE. She gets intrigued by it. When they got back home she thinks about joining.

A few days later she goes to join up but then realises that you cannot join the women's response if you have children under the age of 16. She was feeling annoyed that she couldn't join, she then thinks about it more. She looks around and she looks at all of her children. She notices Veronica tending to the younger children and thinks to herself just how much of a responsible person she has become. She then has a light bulb moment,

Veronica turns 16 next week so why doesn't Veronica join up. She calls her over and she asks,

"What do you think about joining the Women's Response? I can't join but you are turning 16 next week so you will be eligible, and it would be a great opportunity if you would like to."

Over the next few days, Veronica was trying to make everything seem as normal as possible however she couldn't get the idea out of her head and each day she became more and more certain that she wanted to join. The days passed quickly to Veronicas 16th birthday, It was a lovely day, she had a cake and they all went out shopping for the day.

The day after Veronica's 16th birthday her mum and her went to get her signed up to join the Women's Response.

It wasn't long after she signed up that Veronica had to leave home to go to the Women's Response. Suddenly she felt upset and she didn't want to go, but she knew that she had to go. She had no idea what she was going to have to do there, and she was worried she wouldn't know how to do anything as Veronica was more of an inside town girl than an outdoors farming girl.

Luckily for Veronica, on the first day, she met a lovely girl called Ida. She and Ida became good friends on the first day. Excitingly for Veronica and Ida, the first job she was given was being a ticket collector on the tram. This was something she knew she could do and a bonus for Veronica she got to do it with Ida.

"Hi, there where are you off to today?" Veronica had to say that over and over again, By the time she had been there for 6 months, she was getting quite sick of it. Soon after she moved on to her next job, which was working in a machinery parts factory. She thought that was a better job than just standing on a tram collecting tickets all day. At the car parts factory, she was learning all about different machines and how they are put together. This was a job that she would never have had the opportunity to do before the war. Veronica loved working there and would go home every night and tell her mum and siblings all about what she had learnt.

The next few years went by quickly, especially for Veronica and her Mum, who were both kept very busy with their work and raising the family. One day over the radio the Prime Minister of England announced that the war was over. Everyone was so happy and the celebrations went on for days. Very soon after they received a letter saying that Mr Manering was on a ship and he was heading home to New Zealand.

As the days went on Veronica was getting excited about her dad coming home. She knew that once all the men came back, she wouldn't be going back to work for the Woman's Response. She knew that the fathers and men would want to get back into a normal routine, of what it was like before the war happened.

The days passed and it came around faster than Veronica had imagined. It was her last day working at the Machinery parts factory. She had mixed emotions, inside she felt happy that she will get to see her dad but she also felt sad because she had made so many great friends over the years of working for the Women's Response. When it got to the end of the day it was time for her to go home.

She said goodbye to all of her friends but there was one friend who she was so upset to say goodbye to, that was Ida. She said goodbye and they said they will catch up one time soon. Veronica said:

"We will keep in touch, I will send you letters".

By the time Veronica got back to her house, she was excited to see her dad for the first time in years. Over the next few days, everything seemed to be back how they used to be. Veronica was redundant but she was happy to be back with a full family of happy Mannerings.



Photo of 3 women entering police training

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