

Family secrets span

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An extraordinary trail of discovery has unfolded for a Paraparaumu woman involving jaw-dropping and heart-wrenching information about her grandfather's secret past.

Kathy Callaghan's grandfather Harald Oskar Andersen was born and grew up in Norway but an incident frightened him so much he left his partner and two children behind forever to start a new life and new family in New Zealand.

His family in New Zealand didn't know he had a family in Norway and his Norwegian family didn't know he had a family in New Zealand.

But an amazing coincidence brought these two families together.

The story of Harald jumping ship when he arrived in New Zealand in 1904 on the SS *Tomoana* has been repeated throughout the years by Kathy, and others, with a sense of excitement and pride, especially as they had been told the ship never made it back to Norway.

But the real reason for him jumping ship would only emerge in recent years when Kathy took a keen interest in family history.

Reading his naturalisation files, sourced from Archives New Zealand, she discovered her grandfather had a police record - something he had never mentioned.

Apparently Harald had stolen a suit from another crew member and was arrested when he first arrived in New Zealand and ended up spending two months in Mt Eden prison doing hard labour.

The police record said he did not want his wife and children to know he had been in prison.

"We felt quite emotional and could feel his pain and shame," Kathy said.

After that he spent his life



WELCOME: Kathy and Ross Callaghan had a special welcome at the Nannestad Community Centre.

PHOTO: KAP040215SPLWELCOME

working on various ships, helped construct railway tracks, and did labouring work.

He lived deep in the bush and was married to Andrina Andersen; they had six children Dorothy, Harold [who died 16 hours after birth], Eric, Olga, Fred and Keith.

While his life in New Zealand had been pieced together, information about his early life in Norway was minimal.

So Kathy's cousin Rose Wellington went to Norway and visited the National Archival Services, in Oslo, where she found Harald had been born in Nannestad and that the true names of his parents were Anders Mikkelsen and Karen Kristofferdatter.

Harald had referred to his parents as Johan and Karen Andersen, when he completed documents in New Zealand, which explained the difficulty in trying to find information about his parents.

In 2010 Kathy and her husband Ross decided to take a trip to Scandinavia that finished near Nannestad where they hoped to visit the church where her grandfather had been christened.

Three weeks before the trip, on a whim, she decided to write to *Eidsvoll Ullensaker Blad*, a newspaper which covers the Nannestad area, asking if they would be interested in a story about her family history search.

The story was assigned to reporter Magnar Haraldsen to write and he suddenly became the centre of his own story.

A cousin, after reading it, contacted him saying Harald Oskar Andersen had the same name as their great grandfather.

Magnar contacted Kathy asking if his great grandfather could be the same as her grandfather, she replied saying only if he had had a child before

he left Norway.

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MUG SHOTS: Police photographs of Harald Andersen after he was arrested for stealing a man's suit.

PHOTO: KAP040215SPLHARALD

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Official records showed he was the same man, and that he had two children before he left Norway — Karoline Haraldsen and Johan Haraldsen.

Magnar was the grandson of Johan Haraldsen and therefore Kathy's cousin.

When he emailed photographs of his family, Kathy was astounded — there were lots of Norwegians who looked just like her.

“I said to Magnar ‘why did my sweet granddad abandon his partner, his three-month-old son, and his nearly two-year-old daughter, and just disappear?’”

It emerged Harald and some friends were stealing strawberries in a field, in early 1903, which led to a fight where a man died.

“Harald must have thought he was responsible for killing this person [there would be capital punishment if found guilty] so he left on a boat and never came back,” Kathy said.

Harald's partner Anna Edvardsen struggled to cope after he left and placed their children into foster homes where they had happy childhoods.

His shipping records showed he travelled all around the world on different ships before arriving in New Zealand on the *SS Tomoana*.

“And he didn't contact his mother, his children, or his partner ever, that we know of,” Kathy said.

She learned that Harald was not blamed for the man's death, but he would not have known this, and must have lived in fear all of his life.

When Harald was dying, in Te Kuiti, he murmured things about people “coming to get me”, which was passed off as delirium.

“He was so frightened that he tried to get out of bed, and managed to get one leg into a pair of trousers, trying to escape, and then fell back and died.”



BLESSING: Kathy Callaghan in the Nannestad Church by the font where her grandfather Harald Andersen was baptised.

Photo: KAP040215SPLfont

When Kathy and Ross arrived in Nannestad they were welcomed by the descendants of Harald's two children and were shown where he lived, where his children went to live, and where the fight took place.

At the Nannestad Community Centre, where they went for lunch, they were greeted by a guard of honour involving 50 family members.

Then they visited the Nannestad Church, and stood at the font where Harald had been baptised in 1881.

“That was my moment where it all hit me,” Kathy said.

“This was one of life's most wonderful moments for me.

“Here I was standing at the place where my grandfather had been christened nearly 130 years

before, and through a remarkable coincidence, was bringing together two families from opposite sides of the world.”

Kathy and Ross returned to Norway in 2012 and were able to spend time getting to know their newly discovered family, yet another wonderful experience.

And now, 110 years after Harald first arrived in New Zealand, members of his Norwegian family have come to New Zealand.

Magnar [the reporter], his wife Rosa, and his brother Roar and wife Wenche, and their daughter Vera are in Kapiti to meet more of their New Zealand family.

Kathy and Ross will be showing them the places where

Harald lived and worked and there will be a series of family gatherings to cement newly discovered family relationships.



FAMILY BOND: Staying with Kathy and Ross Callaghan, third and fourth from left, are, from left, Rosa Haraldsen, Magnar Haraldsen, Wenche Haraldsen, Roar Haraldsen, Vera Haraldsen.

PHOTO: DAVID HAXTON/

KAP040215DHKATHY