

Epilogue

October 2020

Sadly, on 26th September 2020, Meg passed away peacefully at the age of 96. As much as she loved life, she said this year, “No one should live to be 96”. She was still mentally alert and able to say her good-byes. Meg wasn’t afraid of dying.

Meg Coten had achieved so much and was a woman before her time. In her nineties she finally completed *Meg: A Memoir* and was happy to have a typed, bound copy showing the many hours she had spent telling her story.

Unfortunately, Meg didn’t get to document some interesting family connections that evolved in November 2017. During their lives, Meg’s sons Ned & Jim had wondered about, and searched for, the family of their father John, Meg’s husband. They were unsure that they would ever find the family, or learn more about his life.

Through genealogy research, they finally discovered they had family in Wellington, New Zealand. On investigating, they found John’s sister, Helen, her children and grandchildren. It was a massive shock for Meg and Helen to learn of each other. Meg, Ned & Jim learned that John Francis Coten was actually born Maurice Joseph Graham. He had never disclosed his New Zealand nationality and shared few details about his family. In short, the man Meg loved and married had a history she did not know.

We have outlined significant detail about the discovery and the events leading up to it in *Appendix G* of this book, titled ‘Finding John Coten’.

Confronting the situation took great courage, understanding and reflection. It is a puzzle with missing pieces that can never be completed. Meg and Helen had many phone calls, emails and exchanging of photos. They finally got to meet in May 2018 when Helen and her son Roderick travelled to Perth from New Zealand for a weekend to meet all the Coten’s.

Needless to say it was an emotional, wonderful and exhausting weekend for all concerned. Meg and Helen discussed together the parts of their lives that involved John/Maurice respectively. For both ladies, the meeting provided a connection that healed feelings of emptiness, bewilderment and betrayal.

Meg and Helen soon realised they could never answer questions about John’s reasons for leaving behind his biological family and never disclosing their existence to Meg. However, Meg and Helen being similar in personality and intelligence, accepted each other whole heartedly and moved forward to embrace the new family members they had found as did the next two generations of Cotens.

The situation was extremely painful and exhausting to Meg. You may wonder why she did not share her new story with many. She said, “I can’t answer the questions, and it would be too exhausting trying to”.

Ultimately, Meg remembered John as the kind, intelligent, hardworking, good husband and father that she got to spend seven special years with. John had told Meg on their engagement that she had kept him hanging on for ten years. What they had was real in spite of the omissions on John’s part. Meg never remarried which was a testament to their love. We hope as Meg now joins her beloved

John that the answers she didn't have in life can be found. John would have been proud of the men Meg mothered to the end. Helen gets to continue to be an Aunty to her nephews, and new family who she never knew she had.

Helen's email to Ned and Jim after being told of Meg's passing:

"Dear Ned and Jim

I am finding this very hard to take.

Meg had become so important to me.

I regret the loss of the years we might have known each other and shared our experiences.

I liked writing to her and am pleased my letters gave her some pleasure, but now I cannot do anything for her and it hurts.

Thank you for the photos – I see her as she was the day we first met. With sympathy, Helen."

Rest in Peace Meg.

Written with great love for Meg – Kylie Coten and Therese Groen