

**IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL      WAI 2500**  
**WAI 1344**

**IN THE MATTER OF**                      The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

**IN THE MATTER OF**                      The Military Veterans Kaupapa  
Inquiry

AND

**IN THE MATTER OF**                      A claim by Turi Stone, Tamati  
Pohatu, Most Reverend  
Archbishop Brown Turei and  
Nolan Raihania.

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**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF TOM WILSON**

**DATED 21 OCTOBER 2015**

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**Te Mata a Maui Law**

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## **MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL**

- [1] My name is Tom Wilson and I am the eldest son of Walter Wilson, 40310 22<sup>nd</sup> Battery C Company.
- [2] I was only very young when Dad left for the war in 1940. I remember going to Murdoch Road railway crossing and seeing my Dad on the train. He threw a bag of lollies out of the train window for us kids.
- [3] My father wasn't Maori Battalion. When he was over there Dad and Frank Kerrigan were asked to join the Maori Battalion as reinforcements because they had lost many men but the next day they were captured. Dad was caught along with other freezing workers and was a prisoner of war for 4 years.
- [4] My father starved while he was a POW.
- [5] He was repatriated and swapped in exchange for German soldiers. He was sent to Margate hospital in England and when he was well enough he was sent home. This was after all the other soldiers had returned, so he missed out on any parade or parties. He was sent back on a hospital boat and when he got home he was not in uniform but in his pyjamas and came home in an army car.
- [6] When Dad got out of the car I didn't recognise him. What I saw of my father didn't match up with what people had told me of my father. I was told that he was 6.1 and a strong strapping man. Before leaving for the war my father was a Maori All Black and played 30 games for them. He also played for Hawke's Bay and Wairarapa. He was a strong, fit person. He went to England, Scotland, Wales and France (they beat the French). He was an athlete. But the man that got out of that car was no athlete. He was stooped over and sickly.

- [7] There was only my sister, my Mother and I while Dad was away.
- [8] Before leaving for war my father worked at Tomoana freezing works. Alex Kirkpatrick promised all those working at the works that their jobs would be waiting for them when they got back and that all those who didn't return would have an oak tree planted in their memory. All those who enlisted were given a watch from him. I still have my father's watch.
- [9] True to his word all those who returned got their jobs back. But my father couldn't work for very long. He used to cycle to work but his body couldn't take the stress and he was unable to work and had to stop. So my mother became the sole income earner for our family. She had to work but she didn't receive the equivalent of what men were getting paid. The pressure on Mum must have been horrific. My father was a very proud man and it hurt him being unable to provide. He said to Mum, 'I hate having to see you go to work'.
- [10] Things were tough and we didn't have much meat to eat. Dad's best friends were Billo Mohi and Matt Love. They would both come over all the time and would always bring food with them and it was always very much appreciated.
- [11] Every Wednesday night we would go to Nanny Peti's house in Paki Paki and it was like Christmas because she had plenty of kai and she always said that my father was her favourite.
- [12] Dad never went to ANZAC parades when he got back. He said, 'I know I was there'.
- [13] My father was always sick when he came back. We had no telephone and no car so we had to bike to Doctor Wilson's at Railway Road to tell him that Dad was sick. Dad

would get malaria and all types of illnesses. Dad was very proud and when photos were taken he would hide his walking stick because he found it humiliating. From being an athlete to having to use a walking stick must have weighed heavily on his pride.

[14] For five years Mum was the sole provider before someone from the RSA came to our house. He had heard about Dad and came to see him. He put Dad onto a war pension but before that he had no money for five years. Why did it take five years for someone to come see Dad? We suffered unnecessarily for five years.

[15] I think the POW's were the forgotten soldiers. In some countries I've heard that POW's got medals. I think POW's should be given something. He was starving for four years and had to work in an underground petrol mine/installation while he was a POW. They should be recognised as being part of the war.

[16] Dad was too proud to talk about being a POW. For him being a POW took away his mana.

[17] Dad went to standard 4 at Waimarama School. I never heard him speak Maori and thought he couldn't speak it. At his sister's tangi, Aunt Marnie, he not only spoke Maori, but Italian and German. I said to him that I didn't know he could speak those languages. He replied, 'hunger teaches you to learn all languages'.

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Tom Wilson