WILLIE APIATA
VC
THE RELUCTANT HERO
VIKING

Published by the Penguin Group
Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale,
North Shore 0632, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd)
Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street,
New York, New York 10014, USA
Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto,
Ontario, M4P 2Y3, Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)
Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London, WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd)
Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell,
Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd)
Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, 11, Community Centre,
Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110 017, India
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue,
Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa


First published in 2008
13579108642

Copyright © text, Bill Henry Apiata 2008

The right of Paul Little to be identified as the author of this work in terms of
section 96 of the Copyright Act 1994 is hereby asserted.

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no
part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval
system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of
both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

Designed and typeset by Pindar (NZ)
Printed in Australia by McPherson's Printing Group

ISBN 978 0 67007320 7

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the National Library of New Zealand.

www.penguin.co.nz

All images courtesy of the Apiata family except the following:
Dave Woods: Insert 1 page 8 (below)
NZSAS: Insert 2 pages 3, 4 (above), 5, 6 (above), 7 (above);
insert 3 pages 3, 6 (above), 7, 8
NZDF: Insert 2 pages 7 (below), 8; insert 3 pages 1, 2, 6 (below)
Willy Süssman: Insert 3 pages 3 (below), 4
Palmerston North Boys' High School: Insert 3 page 5 (above)
area and not offend anyone. But I only took out of what he wrote for me what I thought was applicable, because I knew that both peoples wanted to hear something – not just Maori. And it came out how I felt they wanted to hear it. I think you can prepare for these things too much. The best thing is to feel what everyone's feeling, and then what you want to say will come to you.

Everything I said came from my heart. I don’t rehearse a speech or write anything down. I like to absorb the atmosphere, feel what people are feeling, listen to what they are saying, because then you can reply in a manner that you know they will be able to appreciate.

A lot of what Maori say in speeches are poems, and I finished with a small poem that went: 'Pull out the centre of the flax bush and where will the bellbird rest?' Meaning, I say, what is the most important thing in life? It’s the people. That poem means a lot to me, and I wanted to let everybody there know what was important to me.

A lot of fence mending was happening that day – the history between Nga Puhi and Ngati Porou at Te Kaha is quite ferocious. Way back, Nga Puhi went down there and basically slaughtered their way to East Cape, because they had muskets, then went back home again. It wasn’t until later, when they got muskets of their own, that the tribe retaliated. Last time Nga Puhi travelled down was for war, but now they came for peace.

This was the first time that those two tribes had stood on one mare in about 100 years. And when they referred to the history on that day, they did it in a jovial way. There was nothing vindictive about it. So I guess it’s good that what happened to me has had such a positive effect.

At Te Kaha, Nga Puhi kaumatua (elder) and 28 (Maori) Battalion member Tamati Paraone asked Te Whanau-a-Apanui to bring Willie home to the north. He died before it happened, but his wish would be carried out.