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BRUSH WITH THE PAST: Artist Bev Tosh is silhouetted in front of a slide image of a painting she completed of her mother Dorothy, a war bride.

War brides' memories wanted

By Angela Moriarty

New Zealand-born artist Bev Tosh is planning a special exhibition but she needs help.

The 53-year-old is the daughter of a war bride who emigrated to New Zealand after meeting her husband on the Canadian prairies during World War 2.

A 2.4m by 1.8m portrait of her mother Dorothy, titled *One Way Passage*, will be the centrepiece of a mixed media exhibition Tosh plans to hold in 2005, the 60th anniversary of the war's end.

"I'm looking at (war brides) in New Zealand because of my own links," she said.

Tosh wants to hear from war brides or their families so she can include their stories in her exhibition.

The exhibition would not focus simply on portraits, but would also include audio from her interviews and excerpts from the anecdotes of war

brides, she said.

Tosh teaches at the Alberta College of Art and Design in Canada. She is in Nelson to hold two week-long art classes at Fairfield House.

One student in last week's class knew a war bride who had travelled from Scotland, carrying some Scottish soil with her, and never returned, she said.

She had also spoken with a war bride who lived in Twizel and had the diary of another war bride who had lived in Australia.

"All over the world, women married servicemen. They had no knowledge of the country (they went to) and they left everything they had ever known."

Tosh said she wanted to tell the war brides' stories because she felt



Bev Tosh,
"passion"

their courage and bravery has been lost amongst the bravery of the soldiers they married. "It's just a real passion. I feel like I have to tell what I have learned."

She said her latest visit to New Zealand had been extra special because, with the help of Archives New Zealand, she had finally discovered which ship her mother sailed here on: the *Wanganella*.

"I'm really interested in passage from one state to another, one country to another and one life to another."

A former student of Tosh is helping her design a website to display the information and stories she collects.

☐ Bev Tosh can be contacted through (03) 548-2133 or bbtosh@hotmail.com.