

Rewi Alley's cousin invited to China

Taranaki's George Ralph (Digger) Alley has been invited to China to attend meetings in memory of his cousin, Rewi Alley, who lived and worked there for 60 years.

He is part of a delegation of 10 including Rewi Alley's relatives and co-workers who will be hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

When Rewi Alley died in Beijing on December, 27, 1987, at the age of 90, the Chinese described him as an old friend of China.

He had been there since 1927 working to improve the lot of the ordinary Chinese people. He estab-

By JUDITH HILL

lished the Shandan Bailie School for refugees and orphans which later formed the basis of village industry.

Associate Foreign Affairs Minister Fran Wilde will head a parliamentary delegation which will also attend some of the functions as the occasion is significant to the Chinese and New Zealand governments.

The friendship visitors will spend two weeks in Beijing, Shanghai and Gansu Province.

Digger Alley says they will visit Shandan, Lanzhou

where there is a 3m statue of Rewi Alley with Chinese children and Chengdu in Sichuan where there is a 100m mural of his life's work.

He visited China on a day-trip from Hong Kong two years ago and is looking forward to seeing more of the country.

Digger Alley's father Henry and Rewi Alley's father Frederick were brothers who settled in North Canterbury.

Rewi was one of seven children.

"His father was a spartan man, who demanded a lot of his children and got it," says Digger Alley.

Digger was the youngest of 16 children in his family.

"Our families saw quite a lot of each other. Last time I saw him (Rewi), I was seven or eight."

But he kept in touch while Rewi was in China. He says Rewi came from a tough family and had a great ability to endure. He admires his self-sacrificing and sincerity.

Rewi Alley's sisters Gwen Somerset, Kath Wright and Joy Alley were unable to travel so appointed Roland (Buck) Alley, Palmerston North, Digger Alley, New Plymouth, and Bruce Wright, Christchurch, to attend in their place.

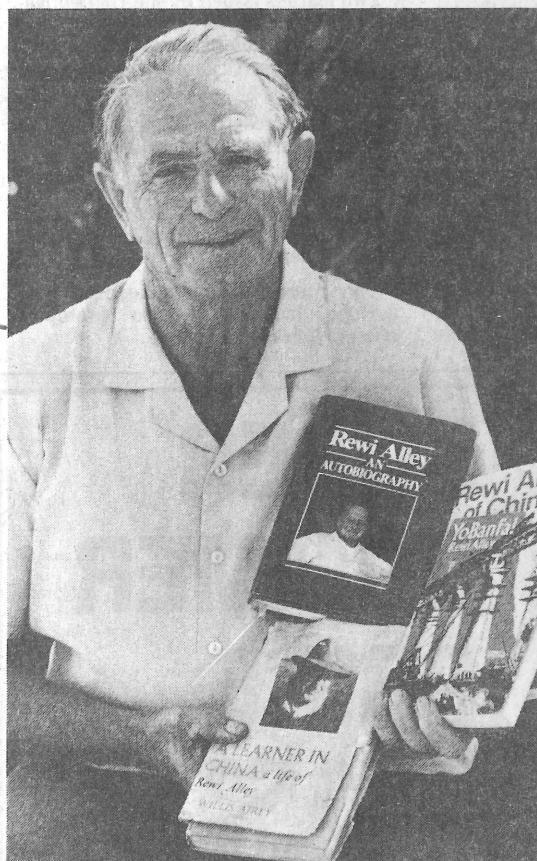
Courtney Archer, Rangiora, Bob Spencer, Whangarei, and Max Wilkinson, Wellington, — veteran workers with Rewi Alley in China — were also selected.

Digger Alley says he will be thrilled to meet them.

Other delegation members selected by the New Zealand China Friendship Society are Molly Elliott, Jack Ewen, Cecil Fowler, all Auckland, and Bill Willmott, Christchurch.

The delegation leaves New Zealand on April 19 and returns on May 3.

A meeting on April 21 in Beijing will mark the 61st anniversary of Rewi Alley's arrival in China.



New Plymouth's Digger Alley with books about and by his cousin Rewi Alley. Digger is off to China to attend meetings in memory of Rewi who died last year.

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