# *From the Lucky Generation's cutting room floor*

Supplementary content to:

**Tales from the Lucky Generation:**

*The rise, fall and redemption of a Kiwi working class hero*

By Bob Calkin

The main volume: *Tales from the Lucky Generation* is available from bookstores or from Quentin Wilson Publishing, 105 Moncks Spur Road, Redcliffs, Christchurch 8081, New Zealand. Phone: +64 27 505 8383. Web: quentinwilsonpublishing.com. Also available from: luckygeneration.co.nz.

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## Introduction

Writing my memoir, Tales from the Lucky Generation, challenged all my capacities of self reflection and memory. A large part of the process involved casting my mind back to the various times of my life and deciding which were worthy of inclusion in my story. An initial tendency to want to not leave anything out resulted in a very comprehensive first draft of around 130,000 words.

The advice I received at this point – from Geoff Walker, the publishing consultant I was fortunate enough to find – was that this was much longer than any commercial publisher would be likely to publish for a first time author. Geoff's view was that while there was a compelling and important story to be told, my first draft included too much detail that distracted from the momentum of the main narrative. Geoff recommended a major edit which would trim the content down to a much more commercially-realistic level of no more than 80,000 words.

As soon as I digested this feedback I could see that Geoff was exactly right, meaning I was faced with some tough decisions about what to cull. When I looked at it closely, I realised that much of the expendable content was related to happenings in my family and personal life. This presented somewhat of a dilemma as one of my main motivations for writing the memoir in the first place was to provide a record of family events for future generations.

The solution I came up with was to go ahead with the cull, but then include all the unused material in a supplementary publication, not unlike a movie director resurrecting and compiling discarded film from the cutting room floor into a production that adds colour and context to the main movie. The chapter names and content of this volume mirror the Lucky Generation strand from the main memoir, hence the title: From the Lucky Generation's cutting room floor.

While I have done my best to weave this material together in as coherent and standalone a manner as possible, there will be times when the text is best read in conjunction with the corresponding chapter from Tales from the Lucky Generation, which can be obtained from the sources listed above.

**July 2023**

# 1. Emerging from the Slump and War

*1935–1940, Marton and Whanganui*

As part of the Lucky Generation, the cohort of Kiwis born just before and during the Second World War, I came into the world at a time when the two dominant social forces influencing New Zealand society were the Great Depression (always referred to by my elders as the "slump") and the war. I was born in 1935 in Whanganui, where my parents were living in a railway hut just north of the city at Kai Iwi, but my earliest memories were of Crofton, to the south of Whanganui, just out of Marton, near the Crofton store which was run by my grandparents.

Flowing through Crofton was the Tutaenui Stream referred to by the locals as "the Toot". Tutaenui is the Māori name for Marton and unbeknownst to me at the time, translates as "big turd", something I am sure would have amused my young mind had I been aware of it. About 400 metres from the store on the banks of the Toot was the Rangitikei Hunt Club, housing around 50 dogs, or hounds as they were known. The dogs were used for traditional hunts on horseback mainly in pursuit of rabbits and hares, which were inevitably followed by high-spirited social occasions at the club. The Master of the Hounds was Mr Goodwin, who was also Clerk of the Course at the Marton Racing Club. One day Grandad took my brother Murray and I to see the hounds and I remember the banks of the stream being alive with the scurrying of water rats. Just as we arrived, Mr Goodwin was in the process of shooting an old horse to provide food for the dogs. When the gun went off and the poor horse was bleeding to death, the hounds set up a chorus of frenzied barking as if to celebrate their coming feast. I was about four or five, with Murray a year younger, and I can still recall how distressed we both were by the incident, the cruelty of which haunts me to this day.

An incident in Crofton involving our dog, Terry, stands out in my memory. Mrs Barrett, who lived around the corner, came to our house one morning carrying some dead fowls complaining that our dog had killed them during the night. Mum assured Mrs Barrett that it couldn't have been Terry as he was tied up all night. Mrs Barrett accepted this assurance but was angry about the loss of her chickens. I still have an image of Mrs Barrett as a distraught, little old lady in a long dress covered in blood from the massacred birds. She and her husband were small subsistence farmers and I often saw them in Grandma and Grandad's store when I was visiting. I still remember Mum's concern for the setback Mrs Barrett had suffered with the loss of her hens. Mum gave her a hug and said how much she regretted the loss but there wasn't really anything she could do.

I started school in Crofton, at the Marton Junction School. This involved walking by myself about three kilometres each way every day. I was warned not to talk to strangers and on no account should I accept a ride from anyone I didn't know. Such a trek was common for even the youngest school children in those days, in stark contrast to modern times when it

seems children are often driven to school by their parents even where the distance to the school is nowhere near as far.

The Windleburns who lived opposite were special friends of mine. I would have been around four or five years old and loved wandering over to the Windleburns and spending time there. If I was a nuisance they never gave me that impression and always seemed to have time for me. Mr Windleburn was a drover whose job was driving livestock between farms, or to the Marton Railway Station to be transported to the freezing works. Mr Windleburn had many dogs and several horses. He had a gig to which he would hitch one of the horses when he went droving. Sometimes he took me with him, which was a great thrill. It was always an exciting day driving sheep to the railway station and seeing them being loaded onto the wagons, and then eating my lunch with Mr Windleburn and the other men. I marvelled at the dogs running across the backs of the sheep. This was in the days before the cartage of livestock by trucks. In those days it was a common sight to see large mobs of sheep and cattle being driven along the roads, something that continued right up until the 1970s.

I have vivid memories of the care that Mr. Windleburn had for his dogs. This was in a time when there were few if any vets and from time to time Mr. Windleburn's dogs would go down with distemper. He would spend ages nursing them back to health. One day I was walking on the main road into Marton and Mr Windleburn was coming down the road in his gig and the horse was trotting at a fair rate and about to cross a small bridge. The bridge must have been slippery, as the horse lost its footing and fell. The poor thing was injured and lost some skin. Mr Windleburn got the horse back on its feet and they continued on their way home. I remember Mr Windleburn tending to the horse's injuries for some time after this incident. He was remarkably tender in looking after his animals. From then on that horse always stopped trotting before that bridge and walked across, obviously keen to not repeat its stumble.

An English relation of mine, Graham Calkin, has done an amazing job creating a Calkin family tree and publishing it online at www.calkin.co.uk, providing fascinating insights into the family history that would otherwise have been lost to the New Zealand branch of the family. The earliest reference to the Calkin name found by Graham was to Sir Hugh Calkin, who brought four squires to the Battle of Crecy in 1346, a significant battle of The Hundred Years War. As far as our Calkin line is concerned, Graham has traced it back 12 generations to the mid-1600s. In the middle of the 19th century many Calkins earned their living as musicians, with the most famous being the composer, organist and music teacher, John Baptiste Calkin. His most famous composition was the music for the song for which the words were written by the famed American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day", which was subsequently recorded by both Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. On top of this, one of my grandfather's brothers, Arthur Calkin, was one of Britain's leading bass players during the big band era of the '20s and '30s.

It is thought that the origins of the name Calkin is derived from part of a horseshoe, suggesting that blacksmithing may have also played a role in the family history.  A calkin is a raised and squared thickening of the metal of the hind shoe at the outer edge of the heel, designed to increase the horse's grip on the ground. Every village had its share of Smith families, but maybe one decided to be more original and select a name related to a piece of equipment used in their trade?

One thing I learned from the family tree on www.calkin.co.uk is that before marrying Grandad, Grandma was married to Grandad's older brother Sidney, who died in 1904 only months after the marriage at the age of 23. In 1907, Grandma remarried; this time to Sidney's younger brother Herbert Jacques, my grandfather.

My Dad, whose name was also Herbert Jacques, despite always being known as Tim, was the eldest of five brothers, who were all born in England and came over with Grandma in 1923 to join Grandad who had already been in New Zealand for about a year. Following Tim from oldest to youngest were Ted, Cyril, Frank and Clem. My uncles spent most of their lives living and working around Marton, although Frank moved to the Wairarapa when he joined the police force some years later. All five brothers had marriages which lasted their lifetimes and provided Grandma and Grandad Calkin with a total of 22 grandchildren. I was the eldest of the 22, with the cousins I was closest to being the two eldest sons of Uncle Cyril and Auntie Joan – Ian and Brian, and the two eldest sons of Uncle Clem and Auntie Eva – Graham and David. All of Dad's four brothers had successful careers with Ted perhaps the most prominent, running a thriving painting and decorating company in Marton, before becoming mayor of the town from 1963 to 1974 and, ultimately, being awarded an MBE for his contribution to the community.

*Grandma and Grandad Calkin with their five sons. Back row from left: Clem, Ted, Tim (my father). Front row left, Frank, right: Cyril.*

Another of my uncles, this time from Mum's side, became mayor of Rangitikei's other main town, Taihape. My uncle Noel, who was married to Mum's younger sister Marge, was Mayor of Taihape from 1983 to 1989. Like Ted Calkin, Noel Byford was elected to the mayoralty after a successful business career in his town.

In Tales from the Lucky Generation I write about my early memories hanging around at my grandparent's store at Crofton, where Grandma was the dominant figure and the store's main shopkeeper. Much of Grandad's time was spent driving into Marton and beyond to collect the products that kept the store well stocked. The main produce merchant in Marton was B&As, whose headquarters were in Palmerston North, some 40 kilometres away. Grandad bought all manner of goods there, as well as buying flour in bulk from the local flour mill, which he would measure out into paper bags and put on sale. The soft drink factory was another regular stop and a favourite of mine to visit with him, as I would often come away with a bottle of fizzy to enjoy. Every day there would be deliveries of freshly-baked goods from Marton's bakers to provide the daily bread requirements of the Crofton locals. Grandad was typically a fairly reserved, agreeable character. The only time I ever saw him in an enraged state was when he received a hefty fine for driving his truck which was unlicensed and without a warrant of fitness, transforming his normally mild-mannered demeanour into a highly agitated and angry one.

*I enjoyed spending time with Grandad Calkin when I lived in Crofton as a small boy.*

Grandma was a great organiser, including the regular Sunday night poker evenings, played around the large kitchen table in their home and attended by family and friends. While there was real money at stake, the betting was modest, with standard wagers of a penny and a maximum of sixpence. I was allowed to sit behind the players and observe their

cards, as well as their strategy and tactics, so long as I never gave anything away. No one player dominated completely, but I do remember Grandma used to have more than her fair share of luck.

*Grandma Calkin was a real force to be reckoned with, at the same time as being a loving grandmother.*

I remember my mother talking about the first time she visited the Calkin household describing a self-confident and somewhat raucous environment with constant banter, swearing and good-natured arguments – a situation which was in stark contrast to her own, more reserved, home background.

My grandparents on Mum's side were Arthur and Clara Charman. My recollection of the family story is that Clara and Arthur were childhood sweethearts but at some point Clara went back to England for some time before she returned to marry Arthur in Ashburton around 1910. Grandad then had an opportunity to get into dairy farming and the newly-weds shifted up to Pahiatua in northern Wairarapa. This is where Mum, the eldest of two boys and three girls, was born. However, the dairy farming venture did not go well and the family moved to Taranaki and then to Mangaweka near Taihape, in the Rangitikei district, where Grandad was employed as a farm manager. From this point on both sides of the family put down strong roots in the Rangitikei region.

In the early days when we lived at Crofton, my memories of Dad are sketchy because it was Mum who ruled over our lives. I don't mean in a domineering way but just the fact that she was ever-present, attending to our needs, providing a sense of warmth and security. I can never remember feeling anxious or afraid. We just were. Mum was always very fair and even-tempered, but in keeping with many of her generation she was not particularly

demonstrative in her expression of affection. She was also very set in her beliefs about how people should conduct themselves, and could be very critical and blunt with those who didn't conform to her view of how the world should operate and how people should behave. Like many of her generation Mum was a real royalist and a strong supporter of New Zealand's place as part of the British Commonwealth. She often had images of the Queen and other members of the royal family around the house.

Mum and Dad both enjoyed going to the races. Mum loved the horses and Dad liked to have a flutter, much to Mum's displeasure. Grandma and Grandad Calkin were also keen on the races and they used to take me when I was staying with them. Before each race Grandad would look at the horses in the birdcage as they paraded around and say things like "that number 6 looks well" before placing a bet on it. He would then see another horse and say the same thing, that horse looks well. Sometimes he would back half the horses in the field. I don't know whether Grandma and Grandad made much money at the races, but they certainly enjoyed their day out. If there were no local race meetings on any given Saturday, Grandad would often be on the phone to his bookie, who also ran the fish and chip shop on the main street of Marton.

My brother Murray was a year younger than me and Joy was 18 months younger again. I was four years old when we shifted to Crofton, so Murray would have been three and Joy going on two. It was still quite a few years before my younger sister Ann appeared on the scene. Being so close in age we became each others' main playmates and generally got on well, although Murray and Joy used to wind each other up leading to the regular, minor scraps that can characterise the relationships of many young siblings.

Murray was a great companion in those early days, although I got the feeling from time to time he resented playing second fiddle to me, his older brother. Murray was no dummy academically and a very capable sportsman but as we grew older and went through school, he never quite matched my achievements in these areas. I don't believe he was any less capable, just that he wasn't wired the same as me in relation to achievement, typically adopting a more laid back approach. Having said that, we got on very well and were never at each other's throats like he often was with Joy. Murray was probably also more like our father than I was. He was very social and always enjoyed a good yarn and a laugh. Both Murray and I, like our father, were born with olive skin and dark complexions, which is a common trait among the Calkin family line. Family folklore has it that this was due to a Spanish connection in the family history, possibly from an extramarital liaison, but this has never been substantiated.

My sister Joy took after our mother – both in terms of complexion and personality – and always had a strong sense of her own place in the world, even as a young girl. Like Murray and me, she also became a very good hockey player not least of all because of the backyard games the three of us would engage in. I remember it being a source of contention for her that Mum and Dad would never go and watch her play, but would always watch Murray and me. Looking back, this was undoubtedly a reflection of the way

that girls were treated in those days, as this was well before the women's movement of the late 20th century that challenged this type of social and cultural inequality.

Sometime in 1940 we shifted to Turakina about 25 kilometres south of Whanganui where Dad and Uncle Frank went sharemilking. Uncle Frank was the fourth of the five brothers – nine years younger than Dad, who would have been about 19 or 20 at this time. As a young boy in Turakina I looked up to Uncle Frank, even though looking back he was barely a man himself despite the fact that within a year or so he would be fighting in the war in Europe. Uncle Frank was a real character and had a nickname for everybody. He used to call Mr. Windleburn, Windy and Mr Wigglesworth, Wiggy. He called my brother Murray, Mull and my sister Joy, Josh. He called Grandma Calkin, his mother whose name was Eliza, the Old Dutch. At this time I was known to the family as Bobbie. Uncle Frank's girlfriend at the time, Norma or Auntie Norma to me, came with us and worked in the milking shed and around the farm. They weren't married so looking back I find it hard to reconcile this with the moral standards of the day which frowned on de facto relationships. I remember the house we lived in and I always look out for it whenever I pass through Turakina these days. The house looks as though it could do with a coat of paint, but as far as I can tell it is still occupied as a dwelling.

# 2. The Turning of the Tide

*1941–1952, Castlecliff, Whanganui*

When Uncle Frank was called up to the war, it put an end to the milking partnership with Dad in Turakina, so Mum and Dad made the decision to move to Castlecliff in Whanganui where there was a range of employment possibilities. We moved into a house on Heads Road that was to be Mum and Dad's home for the best part of 30 years.

Murray and I shared one bedroom and our sister Joy had her own bedroom, with Mum and Dad in the third bedroom. Our section was about a quarter of an acre and Dad always had a good garden where he grew many of the vegetables we ate. However, gardening was always a struggle in the summer as the soil was sandy and the long hot dry summers presented a real challenge. We also had about a dozen hens for a supply of eggs, as most people did. Murray and I took turns feeding the hens. Dad was very proud of his fowls and he figured on breeding his own replacements so he acquired a white leghorn rooster and some bantam hens. This rooster was an aggressive devil and would attack you when you were feeding the hens. On one occasion he came up to attack me and I pushed him away with my foot, causing the rooster to fall over. When Dad came home I told him what had happened, so he went down to the fowl run and found that the rooster was dead. I swear that I didn't kick the rooster, I just pushed him away. I expected Dad to be angry but he acknowledged the aggressive nature of the rooster which became our meal for the next Sunday dinner.

Whenever the boats carrying coal from the West Coast of the South Island to Whanganui arrived at the wharf it was a signal to get out on the road and pick up the pieces that fell off the trucks taking it to the gasworks. We would go out onto the street with sugar bags picking up the valuable fuel. The coal was very high grade so it was very welcome on our open fire during the winter. Sometimes the truck drivers would push some coal off the trucks onto the roads aiding our gathering efforts.

Some of the coal was carted to the gas works in railway wagons by the Castlecliff railway and if the wagons sat over-night some of our neighbours would help themselves to a little. However, because Dad had been a fireman on the Castlecliff railway, he would have none of this and forbade us from taking any coal off the wagons.

Several years after we moved to Castlecliff, Mum's parents, Arthur and Clara Charman, came to live just around the corner, moving down from Utiku, south of Taihape. Until then, I'd had more to do with Grandma and Grandad Calkin, so this provided the opportunity to get to know my other set of grandparents as well. While I have very fond memories of all four of my grandparents, there were marked differences.

Unlike Grandma Calkin whose dominant personality could border on bossiness, Grandma Charman was a gentle soul and very lady-like. She had been brought up to observe formal

table manners and etiquette, so there was a sharp contrast in dinner table behaviour between the Charman and Calkin homes.

*I got to see a lot more of Grandma and Grandad Charman when they moved to Castlecliff from Utiku, just south of Taihape.*

The Calkin household was a much more boisterous place, where swearing and raised voices were not uncommon, as opposed to the Charman's where civility and politeness were more typical. Grandma Charman was an excellent cook and baker and would always have a smile and a treat for us when we would visit after school. I also enjoyed visiting Grandad to play chess and listen to his recollections of his many and varied life and work experiences. Like all of my grandparents, Grandad Charman had a strong work ethic; often talking about a decent day's work for a fair day's pay. He was very suspicious of large corporations like banks and insurance companies, who he reckoned were out to rip us off. He treated his wife with great respect as the lady she was, and worked tirelessly around the house and garden to create a peaceful and comfortable home environment for the couple.

Arthur and Clara had five children; Mum was the eldest, followed by Len, Marge, George and Sylvia. Mum was especially fond of, and close to, her two sisters who were a lot younger, with Sylvia only about seven years older than me. Marge lived with her husband, Noel Byford and family in Taihape, while Sylvia lived across town in Whanganui, eventually

marrying Frank Gaudin, and having a family of her own. The only time we tended to see Len and George was at Christmas time, when they returned home from working in forestry up north. Unlike their parents, who were teetotallers, Len and George would spend their holiday drinking, before usually ending up fighting, with Len invariably giving the younger George a hiding. Some years later, we were shocked to hear that George had been killed in a forestry accident, crushed by a tree that fell the wrong way.

I had already started school by the time we shifted to Whanganui, so Castlecliff School, which Mum enrolled me at, was my third school, after Marton Junction School and Turakina School. In 2017 Castlecliff school held a 125 year reunion which my sister Joy and I attended. At the reunion I fossicked around among early documents and found the enrolment details for Murray, Joy and myself. It was fascinating to go through these records and see the names of those who were enrolled as pupils around the same time that we started.

I was reminded in particular of Ian Stewart who was my best friend in our early years at school. He was the son of the local harbour master. Not surprisingly, Ian was keen on ships and even at school he could do the most remarkable detailed drawings of them. He became a ship broker involved in surveying cargoes and was the author of several books about the ships that served around New Zealand. We later met up when we were both living in Invercargill for a period. I met Ian's younger sister Ailsa at the Castlecliff school reunion.

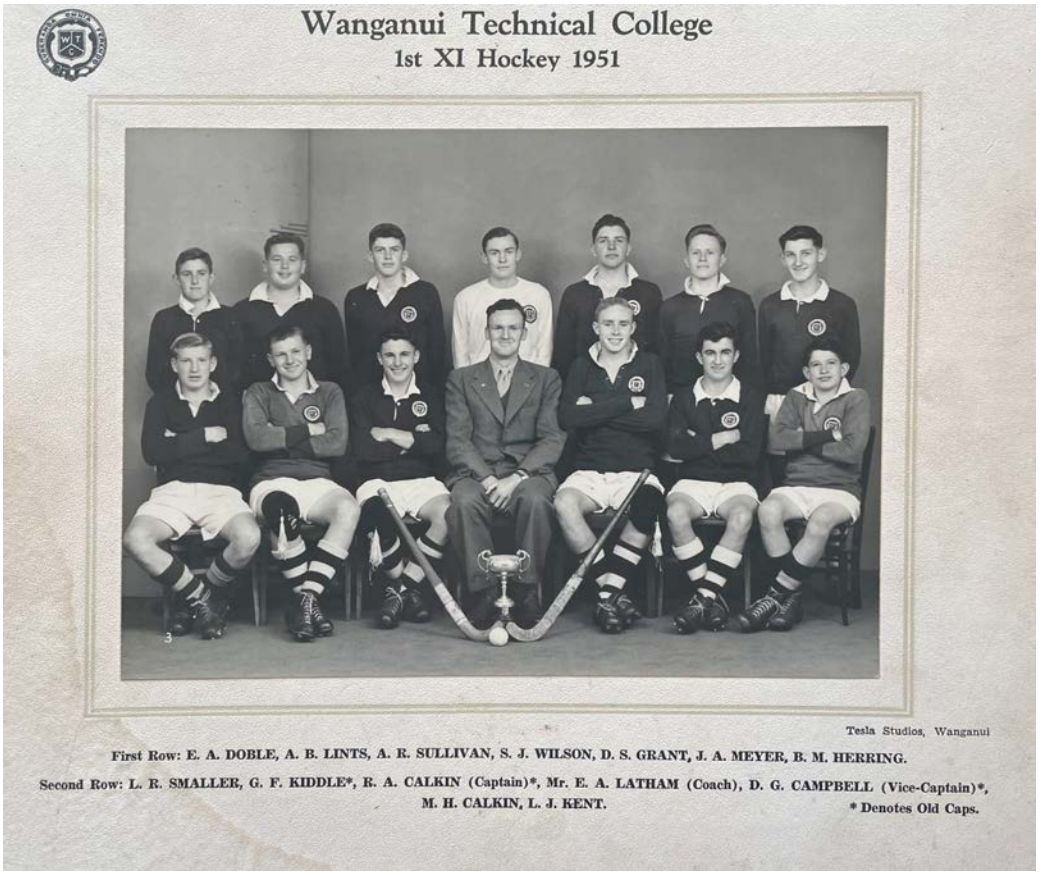
I have memories of mainly female teachers at Castlecliff school, partly because the younger male teachers were away at the war.  It was remarkable that one of our teachers, Miss Rutherford, had taught Mum in the Taihape area when Mum was a young girl. We were encouraged to do our best and the first, second and third places in the class were always announced at the end of year assembly. I never achieved the top spot, but I was often in the top three and, at the time, I tried hard to excel and stand out.

There was always competition between me and Desmond Cosgrove who lived a few houses down the street from us. Desmond liked to think of himself as the smartest kid in the class and had a demeanour that didn't endear himself to the rest of us, gaining the reputation as a know-all. This presented a challenge to me to try and finish higher than Desmond in the class rankings. Sometimes I achieved this but at other times Desmond prevailed. Not only was Desmond unpopular with his classmates, the Cosgroves were not well-liked in the neighbourhood. They lived next door to the Smiths and there was constant conflict between the two families, including a dispute over their boundary fence that ended up in court. One day Mum had been visiting the Smiths and ended up in an argument that I witnessed with Mrs Cosgrove who was standing at her gate as Mum walked home. I am not sure of the exact content of the row but it ended up in an ugly shouting match that sparked the passion of both women.

Like many Kiwi boys the first sport I played was rugby. I remember playing for the midgets at Spriggens Park, the city's main rugby venue, on a Saturday during the interval between senior mens' games. I also played rugby for the school during the week at the Wanganui Racecourse. However, Dad played goalkeeper for the Castlecliff hockey team so we were attracted to hockey. My first hockey team, which also included my brother Murray, was a Castlecliff school-aged team that was not directly affiliated with the school.

Hockey became a central part of our lives during the winter and our backyard was converted into a hockey field. This frustrated Mum who loved her garden, but struggled to compete with her children's sporting interest. It was only when we left home that Mum was able to establish a beautiful garden oasis in the middle of Castlecliff, an interest that she followed for the rest of her life. Hockey was to remain a passion for me well beyond these times, as I would become a top provincial player for Wellington and Southland, representing New Zealand Secondary Schools, New Zealand Universities and ultimately the North Island senior men's team in 1954 at the age of only 19. It was always a disappointment that I was never selected for the full New Zealand team, one that was partly assuaged when my second son Richard made the New Zealand Black Sticks team in the late '80s. My oldest son Bruce was also a top provincial player, like me representing New Zealand at schoolboy and university levels.

In those days Wanganui produced many very fine hockey players. Of my contemporaries Alan Lints and Mike O'Connor both played for New Zealand. Interestingly Alan's son Alan Jr or Stumpy as he is known, played in the Black Sticks alongside Richard, and Mike's son Greg played in the New Zealand indoor hockey team with Richard. Alan McIntyre, a contemp-orary of my younger sister Ann, was selected as a 15-year-old for New Zealand while playing for Whanganui and went on to become a member of the Olympic gold medal winning New Zealand team of 1976. Later when Richard was a member of the Hutt Hockey Club in Wellington, Alan coached the team to a string of Wellington premier grade titles and Richard was a teammate with all three of Alan's boys, Rob, Alistair and Ian.




*The Whanganui Tech first XI hockey with me as captain and Murray also sitting in the front row. Alan Lints, who went on to play for New Zealand is in the back row second from the left. Both of our sons (Alan Jr and Richard) also played for New Zealand.*

Before we got bitten by the hockey bug one of our main recreational activities was to go to the Saturday matinee at the pictures in town. We would travel in on the tram with one shilling and one penny. It was two pence both ways in the tram, sixpence to get into the pictures and three pence for an ice cream at half time. We liked the cowboy films and we were attracted to the recurrent theme of the heroic goodies triumphing over the evil baddies. We also enjoyed shorts like The Three Stooges and the various serials and hated soppy girl films.

Another sport Murray and I got involved with was wrestling. The owner of the wrestling gym, a local Māori chap called Mr Hogg, had a son called Tui who was about our standard when we started but his father put a lot of time into him and he became a very good wrestler. On one occasion Mr Hogg asked me to get into the ring with Tui, but he gave me such a hard time that I never did it again. He was much too good for me and I didn't enjoy being beaten. Mr Hogg arranged for several of us to have bouts as curtain raisers for a professional heavyweight event – the type of which were held regularly in Whanganui. The bouts were held in the Opera House in St Hill Street and we were regular spectators. I won my bout that night as well as a cup for cleverest wrestling which I still have to this day.


*Murray, Ian Townsend and I were all members of the Aotea Wrestling School.*

There was a new arrival in our family in April 1947 when our sister Ann was born, making a family of four children, two boys and two girls. Ann was the first baby boomer of the family, being part of the postwar population explosion that helped drive the period of economic growth that was about to come. Ann was 12 years younger than me and was immediately everyone's favourite. It was very exciting to have a baby sister, not to mention educational, finding out how babies acted and developed.  Ann was soon tagging along with her older siblings, especially Joy.

When Mum was in the nursing home with Ann, I stayed with the Sansons who lived close to the town centre in Whanganui. I was going to Whanganui Intermediate at the time which was close to where the Sansons lived. The Sansons were long-time friends of Mum and Dad's and they were frequent visitors to our house and we visited the Sansons often. One of the Sansons' grandsons, Hamish McDouall, was the Mayor of Whanganui up until recently.

Another event that altered the dynamics in our household a few years after Ann's arrival was when Ian Townsend came to board with us. Ian and his four brothers and two sisters had grown up nearby in Castlecliff. The boys were all sea scouts with Murray and me and trained with us at Mr Hogg's wrestling gym. Ian was also a good hockey player going on to

play, like Murray and me, for both Castlecliff and Whanganui. Ian was Murray's best friend and they remained close friends until Murray's untimely death in 1987. As a boy Ian was quite small for his age and acquired the nickname "Squirt", which has stuck to this day despite his size catching up with the rest of us before long.

Ian's father suffered from tuberculosis for several years before passing away in 1945. I remember that he lived on the verandah of their house where there was a canvas awning used to shield him from the weather. This was in the days before there were drugs that could treat TB. Ian's Mum remarried several years later and shifted away from Castlecliff. Ian needed somewhere to live, so Murray invited him to come and board with us. By this time Murray was an apprentice carpenter and Ron Brown, his boss, was building an additional room to our house. This room became Murray and Ian's bedroom and Ian became very much part of the family. At this time Dad's painting business was growing so he offered Ian a job starting his lifetime career as a painter and decorator. Ian eventually took over the business from Dad and ran it as a very successful operation in Whanganui until his retirement. Ian boarded with Mum and Dad for 10 years, leaving when he was 26 to get married to Pat, who he met through the local surf club. I have remained close to Ian and Pat and visit them whenever I am passing through Whanganui. On a recent visit with my son Bruce and daughter-in-law Heleni, Pat recollected with pleasure visiting Mum and Dad for Sunday "high tea" which was a feature of our home life in those days, a practice that had been passed down to my mother from her own.

When I was in the third form at Whanganui Tech I experienced the death of a family member for the first time when Grandad Calkin passed away after a period of poor health since suffering a stroke several years previously. Since his stroke he had difficulty with speech and mobility and over time became weaker and weaker, eventually succumbing while only 63.

My family, and most of our neighbours, were staunch Labour supporters. On one occasion shortly after National took back power from Labour in 1949 Warren Freer, the Labour MP for Mt Albert and a future cabinet minister, came to speak at the Castlecliff town hall. Dad was a keen Labour supporter and he took me, a teenager, to the meeting to hear Freer's talk. He was an excellent speaker and didn't hold back in his criticism of the government knowing he was on safe working class turf. The crowd lapped it up and there was much cheering and clapping. There was no doubt where the political allegiances of the Castlecliff people lay and Freer certainly convinced me that National was a bunch of rogues. I came away from the meeting wondering how the New Zealand people could be so silly to have voted in a National Government.

Our high school, Whanganui Tech, was led by principal Johnny Dash, an old fashioned disciplinarian who used the cane to reinforce his rule. But despite the harsh disciplinary measures there was a strong school spirit and we were generally proud of the school. We also had a strong belief in our own capabilities and that we were as good as any secondary school in the country. In hockey we were among the top half a dozen schools. I remember

that we played Auckland Grammar only once in my time and went down by one goal in a very even, hard-fought match.

In 1950, in my fifth form year (year 11 in today's terms) I was selected for the New Zealand Secondary School's Hockey Team to tour New South Wales. This was a great honour and I remember the pride that this created for my parents and wider family. The team gathered in Auckland in mid-August for a few days of training before our ship set-off on the five day trip to Sydney. There were boys from all over the country, including three: John Abrams, Ian Kerr and Noel Hobson, who would go on to play for the New Zealand men's team. I would encounter these players and others from the team in club and rep hockey around the country for the next 15 years. Later still, Noel Hobson's sons, Mark and Scott would play alongside Richard in the Junior Blacksticks and Wellington men's team respectively.

*The New Zealand Secondary Schoolboys Hockey Team with the Kiwi Waratah Trophy earned following a 3-1 victory over New South Wales in Sydney. I am in the middle row on the far left.*

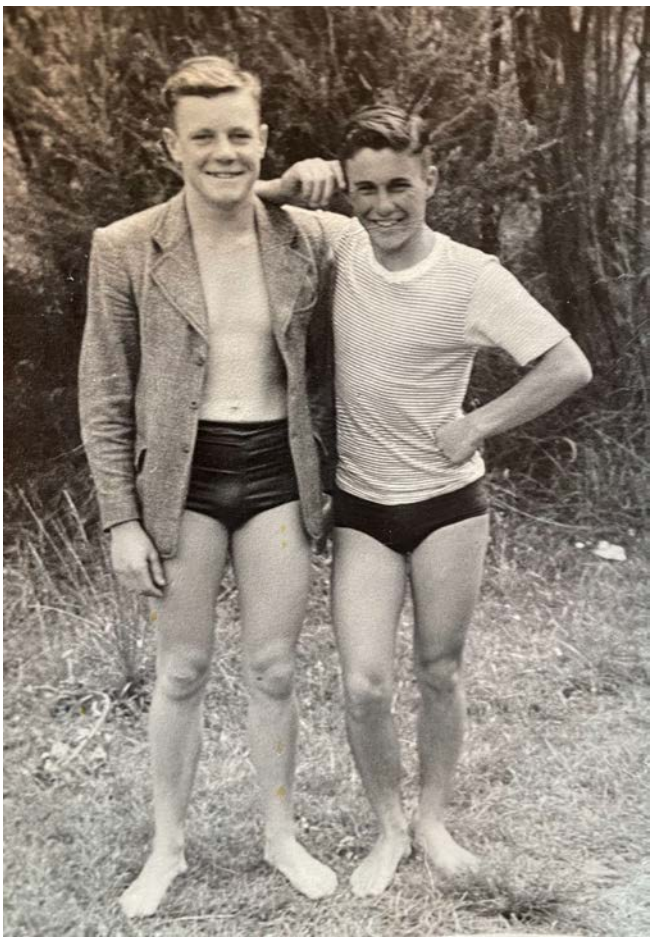
The boat trip was made on a very rough Tasman Sea with most of the team, including me, being afflicted with varying degrees of sea sickness. Safely back on dry land, our first of 11 matches was in Sydney against Epping Grammar School. I managed to get on the score sheet for my first of nine goals on tour in a comfortable 6-2 victory. As it happened we went on to win all 11 games tripping around the state and venturing down to Canberra. The two most important matches were the last two against, firstly, Tasmania who travelled up to Sydney for the match, and finally against New South Wales for the Kiwi Waratah Trophy. I scored two goals in a comfortable 5-1 win over Tasmania, and one in a very close 3-1 victory over New South Wales, meaning we would be bringing the trophy back across the Tasman.

My most enduring memory of the trip was that, while there were differences in the weather and landscape, how similar Australia was culturally to New Zealand. We were billeted by locals who were, in the main, working class families similar to those I was used to

associating with. One thing I did notice was the enduring influence of the war, which had only been over for five years. There were many references to the war dead and to the ANZACs, although I was struck by how few Australians knew that New Zealand was also involved, never stopping to consider what the NZ in ANZAC stood for. The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose within the team continued to grow throughout the tour, bolstered with each successive win over our Aussie opponents. It was a great thrill to be representing New Zealand and wearing the silver fern, fuelling a desire to achieve more in hockey in the future. I'm sure the experience of representing my country overseas also boosted my self-confidence in terms of what I believed I was capable of achieving in other areas of life as well and set the scene to aim high in the future.

Two years later, New South Wales would return the favour and toured New Zealand. I was again selected for the New Zealand Schoolboys team which played New South Wales in Palmerston North, this time going down 2-1. The team that year included a boy from Whangarei Boys High School called Brian Maunsell, who would become a good friend in the 1970s when we both found ourselves living in Palmerston North. Brian would go on to represent New Zealand at the Tokyo Olympics, and then act as trainer for the Olympic gold medal-winning New Zealand team in 1976, before taking on the Blacksticks head coach role in the late '70s. Brian's sons, Bruce and Mike, would end up playing a lot of hockey together with my sons in the Manawatū and Richard and Mike would become lifelong friends. Sadly, despite being one of the fittest men I have ever known, Brian's life was cut short far too early, suffering a fatal heart attack on the hockey field in Whangarei in 1987 at the age of just 51.

My best mates during this time were Brian Tunbridge, Colin Benbrook and Ronnie Whitlock. There is an account of the North Island cycle trip I undertook with Brian at the end of our third form year in Chapter 4 of Tales from the Lucky Generation. Colin Benbrook was as strong as an ox and always very loyal to his mates, so was a good guy to have on your side if a fight was ever looming. He was a great swimmer and very prominent in both the sea scouts and the surf club. Colin was also loyal to and protective of his mother who he felt was badly treated by his father, but despite this he also used to tease her mercilessly as she was rather deaf. Colin was never interested in school and during the polio epidemic of 1947/48 when we were in a lockdown of sorts, we were required to do our schooling at home. I remember being around at Colin's one day when his Mum, who he called by her first name, Sybil, was trying to help him with his lessons, but it descended into a comical case of the blind leading the blind. I had to contain my laughter as neither of them had any idea what they were talking about and just ended up arguing with each other about the answers. Such was his lack of interest in education, the day he turned 15 Colin left school and became our postman. Then, when he turned 18, he joined the railways, starting as a cleaner, before taking on the role of fireman and eventually engine driver. He was a proud and able railwayman for the rest of his working life and was one of the managers of the Whanganui locomotive branch by the time he retired.



*Colin Benbrook (left) pictured next to me was as strong as an ox and an excellent swimmer.*

Unlike the rest of us, Whitty was no good at sport, but he was a keen member of the sea scouts. Whitty's real claim to fame was that he was extremely clever at making things. He became an electrician and amazed us by converting a two-engine Jowett car into a truck that took us all over Whanganui and beyond. Later Whitty joined the merchant navy as an electrical engineer and ended up settling in Vancouver, Canada.

From an academic point of view, despite the fact that it was a technical school, the benefits of study and scholastic achievement were still highly valued at Whanganui Tech. My final year in 1952 was a time of concentrated study and I forged good relationships with my teachers and achieved consistently good marks. My teachers were all men, they were Messrs Latham (history), Twaddle (English), Kinder (geography) and Nodwell (bookkeeping). These teachers encouraged us to believe that we could handle life at university. They also helped me develop a love of learning and to this day I feel a deep debt of gratitude to them. I especially remember Edgar Latham who was also our hockey coach and our history teacher. I owe him much.

On top of its academic role, Whanganui Tech was responsible for preparing young people for the roles they would take up once they left school. I remember the careers teacher at Whanganui Tech speaking at assembly saying things like: "If there are any boys who would like to be plumbers, electricians or motor mechanics come and see me after assembly."

I know a  number of my friends who became apprentices in this way and had successful careers in their chosen sector.


*Whanganui Tech School Council 1952, with me on the far left of the second row from the front.*

One of the most enduring memories I have of my childhood is the way adults kept asking me what I was going to be when I grew up. The adults of my world were very conscious of the security implications of occupations as many had lost their jobs in the slump. While I didn't know what I would do, the prospect of aiming high always excited me. For a time, I would tell my questioners that I was going to be a chemist. This invariably drew a response like, "that's a good idea, chemists get paid plenty of money and there'll always be a need for chemists". The chemist idea served me well until one day I started reading a book about chemistry and I knew immediately that chemistry was something that I was not the least bit interested in.

As outlined in the main memoir, I made the audacious decision to become a lawyer after a chance encounter with Mr Hector Christie, a local lawyer and client of my father's painting business. My daring, new objective meant I would have to start learning Latin which was a compulsory subject at that time for a law degree, and Latin was not taught at our school. I learned that Mrs Rock, who lived in Castlecliff and was the mother of one of our friends, Brian Rock, who we knew as Rockie, had been a Latin teacher. She agreed to coach me in

Latin. I am afraid that I was not a good Latin scholar and fortunately for me at the end of that year Latin was removed as a compulsory subject for a law degree. I thanked Mrs Rock but quite happily ceased my Latin lessons. Had Latin remained a compulsory subject I doubt that I would ever have made it to law school, let alone graduate. It was a matter of sadness that a few years later Rockie was drowned in a boating accident south of Whanganui when out fishing with friends.

# 3. You're Not in Castlecliff Now, Dr Ropata

*1953–1957, Wellington*

Early in 1953 I moved to Wellington to begin my law studies part time while I worked at the Ministry of Works, staying in the Public Service Hostel in Oriental Bay. There were two people per room and my roommate was Peter McNair who hailed from Auckland and worked for the Department of Island Territories. Peter was an excellent roommate, but apart from one trip where I took him back to Whanganui for a weekend, we didn't have a lot to do with one another and lost contact when the year ended.

The morning after moving into the hostel, I turned up at the Ministry of Works as instructed at 9am and reported to Mr Barton, the chief clerk. Mr Barton was an imposing figure and reminded me of our school headmaster Johnny Dash. He took me through to that part of the office that housed the legal section. My new colleagues were all surprised and pleased to see a new recruit and I was allocated a desk. Everything was strange as I had no previous experience of life in an office and had no idea of what to expect. My notion of the law had been gleaned from reading about the courtroom exploits of famous barristers from England such as Marshall Hall and Norman Birkett. It was apparent to me immediately that what I had landed in was a million miles from the life of these international legal celebrities.

The office was headed by Beau Beaumont, Mr Beaumont to me. Second in charge was Mr Stubbs, an intriguing person and a qualified solicitor. He had an amazing general knowledge having taken part in "King of Quiz" on the radio. Shortly after I started at the Ministry of Works I was taken by Mr Stubbs on a tour of the various places I would need to visit as part of my work, including the Land Transfer Office, known colloquially as the Kremlin, where I would spend a good deal of time searching property titles. He also took me to the Supreme Court where we looked in on a trial taking place. He also took me to the Magistrates Court where I watched a typical police court day. At times when I was not too busy I would spend time watching trials in both courts. I was intrigued by one case where someone was charged with misappropriating money from the TAB. The defendant was represented by Mr Hardie Boys, an accomplished courtroom lawyer and later a judge in the Supreme Court. This gave me a real taste for what court work was like. I found the Supreme Court with lawyers dressed in their wigs and gowns very intimidating and I wasn't at all sure whether I would be capable of operating in that environment. I admired Mr Hardie Boys' assurance and command of the courtroom and the way he was able to assert his personality in a way that commanded attention. At the time, I had a fear of public speaking and wondered whether I would be able to dominate situations in the same way.

Another fascinating character was Doc Schouller who had been a judge in Indonesia when it was a Dutch colony, known as the Dutch East Indies. As a member of the colonising ruling

class Doc had been interned by the Japanese during the war. After the war he emigrated to New Zealand. Despite having been a judge, Doc started life in his new country as a lowly clerk while he did the necessary study to qualify as a lawyer here. Doc was one part gentleman and one part old-world authoritarian, believing that there were some people like him who should be in charge and others who should do as they were told. Despite this worldview, which struck me as antiquated and undemocratic, Doc believed that even though the ruling class should be in control they had a responsibility and duty of care to make sure those over whom they ruled lived decent and meaningful lives. Doc was also very gracious and always treated me with the utmost respect. He would often bring his violin into the office to go to music practice after work. He was a big fan of the National Orchestra and would wax lyrical about how outstanding they were. Eventually Doc graduated, but to be admitted to the bar he needed to become a New Zealand citizen. This required making an oath of allegiance to the Queen, something he was very reluctant to do. Initially he took steps to try and bypass this requirement but eventually he relented and took his place in the local law profession.

The Ministry of Works no longer exists, but in those days it was the government department responsible for most of New Zealand's major infrastructure projects, undertaking the design and in many cases the construction work involved. Despite what some would have you believe about the inability of the public sector to deliver commercial projects, MOW built an impressive record during its time in charge of developing the nation's infrastructure. Its achievements included building the country's road and rail networks, as well as the South Island hydro-electric power stations, which to this day are a credit to the highest standards of engineering design. Their construction at the time was nothing short of visionary. The biggest projects in our office at the time were the Wellington airport at Rongotai and the Wellington to Levin motorway, which 70 years on is still far from complete. The airport project involved compulsorily acquiring many local houses and my job was to search the land titles of the properties involved.

A lot of the older guys at MOW had been with the department for many years and their memories stretched back to working under politicians like Bob Semple who was Minister of Public Works in the first Labour Government and was still an opposition MP at the time. I remember one of the old timers recounting a story that was passed down to him in his early days at the Ministry about the legendary former Prime Minister Richard John Seddon, a West Coaster who led the Liberal Government from 1893 to 1906. Seddon, or King Dick as he was known, was visiting Wellington and asked a senior official at the Ministry to find a job for the son of one of his constituents. The official met with the young man, but came back to Seddon complaining: "But sir, he can't even read!" Seddon was not at all sympathetic, retorting: "Well learn him!"

It was apparent from early on that the Ministry of Works was very sensitive to public opinion and the political environment. From time to time I would hear that there was a "please explain" request and the Minister of Works Mr Goosman was under pressure in

Parliament. As the most junior of junior clerks, I was nowhere near the real action but the fact that there were often issues of this nature added a certain spice to the office atmosphere. I enjoyed my time as a young bureaucrat, even though it was very clear to me that the civil service would not feature heavily in my future career. Having said that, I will always be grateful for the role the Ministry of Works legal section played in helping to ease my transition from Castlecliff to capital city.

As well as the routines of work, lectures and course-work my other preoccupation in that first year was hockey. While I was serious about my university work, I was also keen to make a name for myself in the local hockey scene. My first goal was to make the Varsity first team which played in the Wellington senior competition. The club was aware that I was coming as I had played for the Whanganui senior men's rep team the previous year against Wellington. I played pretty well that day and after the match one of the Whanganui officials told them that I was a New Zealand Schools player and was moving to Wellington to attend university the following year.

I put my name down for hockey at the university and subsequently turned up at Karori Park on the Saturday of the trials. The organisers made me very welcome, but didn't require me to play until well into the afternoon. By this time I was quite nervous and eager to impress. Thankfully I managed to make my first few traps and was able to display some skills. The combination of reputation and cameo appearance was enough to do the trick and I was named in the first team of the six Varsity teams selected.

In that era Varsity was a mid-table side the mainstays of which were Laurie Gatfield, who played left fullback for Wellington, Spank Hughes, a teacher at Scots College who played in the forwards and appeared occasionally for the rep team and Neville Compton our centre-half who, while not the flashiest player in the world, provided some real spine for us down the middle of the park. Our coach was a man who was to become one of my best friends. Herb Ford, who ran a successful art importing business and was a former New Zealand Universities hockey rep, was about 20 years older than me but we quickly developed a real rapport, and a friendship that would endure for the next couple of decades.

The two top teams in the competition in that era were Karori, who won the competition that year, and Wellington College Old Boys (WCOB) with Hutt and us not far behind. Tech Old Boys and Huia made up the six teams of the senior competition, with Huia usually taking the wooden spoon. These were the days well before artificial surfaces and the standard of grounds around the Wellington region varied greatly. The main ground at Karori Park was good, but the rest tended to turn to mud when the inevitable Wellington winter rain set in. Hutt was the team we had our closest battles with and they were especially hard to beat on their home ground, the Hutt Rec, which seemed to turn into a quagmire at the first hint of drizzle.

The Hutt player to stand out in my memory was their mouthy and niggly left half Gerry Gallen who, like many of his teammates, made up for a lack of finesse through sheer competitiveness. Later in life I enjoyed getting to know Gerry quite well on the sideline of matches involving Bruce and Richard in Manawatū age-group rep teams playing Wellington teams involving his sons Laurie and Kevin. Richard went to play in Junior Black Sticks teams with both Kevin and Laurie and in the Black Sticks alongside Laurie.

Karori was led in those days by one of the greats of New Zealand hockey, Jack Tynan. Jack was an outstanding athlete; well over six foot tall and solid with it. Legend had it that he could run 100 metres in around 11 seconds. Whether or not that was actually true, he was certainly very quick, but it was his hockey skills that really made him stand out from the crowd. In my opinion the only other player from that era to rival Jack for pure all-round hockey class was Manawatū's Bruce Turner, with Auckland's Guy McGregor just a tad behind the pair. I had played against Bruce for Whanganui Colts against Manawatū Colts and would strike up a friendship with him later in life when the family moved to Palmerston North. All three of these players were world-class and would be key members of the New Zealand team that finished just outside the medals at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

Again, in another reflection of how hockey is very much based around families across generations, Richard played in Junior Black Sticks and Black Sticks teams with Jack Tynan's two boys Mark and Peter, and both Bruce and Richard played in age-group and senior men's Manawatū teams with Bruce Turner's son Brent.

Karori was a skilful and committed team with the two other stand-out players I remember being Johnnie Smith, another New Zealand rep, who played in the halves and Phil Cassin, their fast and elusive right wing.

As mentioned, WCOB was the other team that year always near the top of the table. Their captain and centre-half was the nuggety and very skilful Reg Johansson, another Wellington member of the 1956 New Zealand Olympic team. Reg was a tough competitor and no doubt a fine player, although maybe not quite as good as the opinion he always seemed to have of himself.

WCOB was full of good players including Peter Englert, Bill Percival, Doug Tooby and Dave Burt. Peter Englert's brother Ginna, who would become one of my best friends several decades later, did not play that year due to falling from a scaffold through a glass house. Peter and Ginna Englert were fine players both earning the silver fern. In 1956, in a bid to further my hockey ambitions, I switched clubs from Varsity to WCOB where I would get to know these men as fellow team members. It was then I had the pleasure of playing with Bill Percival, another regular in the national team and one of the best forwards I ever played with. He had great individual skills including that uncanny ability to be in the right place at the right time. On top of this he was a lovely bloke.

Tech Old Boys was a team that Varsity usually got the better of, but you always knew you were in for a real battle. Their best player was their goalie Ian McCutcheon, who also played

in goal for the Wellington rep team. I remember playing Tech Old Boys in one of my first matches for Varsity. I was really on song that day – on one occasion dribbling around Ian, leaving him for dead before putting the ball in the back of the net. I knew the Wellington selectors were watching that game which gave me hope I might be included in the team they were soon to announce.

Sure enough I was selected, the youngest player in the team by several years. Wellington was regarded as one of the top provincial teams in the country at that stage so this was a real thrill. In my first game we were defending the Challenge Shield, symbol of New Zealand men's hockey supremacy, against Hawkes Bay.  I played inside-left and scored two goals in a close victory securing my position in the team.


*Wellington men's representative hockey team, 1953. I am seated at the front on the left.*

It was very exciting to be playing alongside personal heroes like Jack Tynan. Jack, who also coached the team, was a man of real character who commanded respect by his very nature. He was a hard taskmaster and expected high standards but was also very encouraging and supportive of younger players like myself. I remember talking with Jack about hockey one day and he told me of the respect he always had for the challenge of playing Whanganui, especially on their home ground of Gonville Domain. He told me that he regarded Neville McIntyre, an early New Zealand representative from Whanganui and the father of Olympic gold medallist Alan McIntyre, as an idol of his in his younger days and one of the best players he could remember. On a subsequent visit to Whanganui I passed this onto Neville who was delighted to learn he was so highly regarded by one of the leading players of the time.

Later in 1953 I represented Victoria University at the national university winter tournament in Auckland. We took a relatively understrength team that year and didn't perform particularly well, finishing about mid-table. However I was selected for the New Zealand Universities team that played the Auckland rep side, featuring a number of New Zealand players, fighting out a closely-fought draw. That year I received the first of my three "University Blues", awarded for excellence in sport while representing the university at the same time as successfully progressing one's academic studies.


*I was selected for the New Zealand University Hockey Team on several occasions, including in 1954 when the team was selected by former New Zealand captain Cyril Walter. CV, as coach of Canterbury University and the Canterbury rep teams, was instrumental in developing the style of hockey that would ultimately see New Zealand win the gold medal at the Montreal Olympics.*

Over the following few years I continued to be part of the Wellington men's team and, in 1954, was selected for the North Island team, an annual fixture which often doubled as a New Zealand trial. The North Island versus South Island match was played at the end of the national tournament in Dunedin on University Oval, which is now used whenever the southern city hosts international cricket.

I started the match at right half but, only a few minutes into the game, Ken Nicholson, our captain – a New Zealand regular – and centre half got a ball over the eye and had to leave the field for stitches. I was moved into centre half and started coming under pressure –

including pushes and shoves along with verbals about my youth and inexperience – from the South Island inside forwards. I decided to take matters into my own hands so shortly after when the ball came bouncing towards me I stepped in aggressively and middled a huge speculator swipe, sending the ball whistling away in the air at great speed between a couple of my tormentors, narrowly missing them. These days that type of play would most likely earn me a yellow card, but back then it was just part of the game. From that point on, they gave me a lot more space and I was able to make some good contributions to our play, in what resulted in a narrow win for the South Island.

The right half for the South Island that day was Ian Stirling, who I would get to know later in life when he was coach of the Palmerston North Boys' High School first XI hockey, which either or both of Bruce and Richard were members of from 1975 to 1981, a period where the team enjoyed great success as one of the leading secondary school hockey teams in the country. Ian's sons Derek and Simon were not hockey players but played cricket with and against Richard at various levels, with Derek going on to open the bowling for the Black Caps for several seasons. Like me, Ian narrowly missed higher honours; unlike his brother Johnnie who also played for the South Island that day and earned his silver fern several years later.

One of my hockey teammates, Trevor de Cleene, would become a close friend and eventually business partner. Trevor hailed from Palmerston North and we had played hockey against each other when Whanganui Tech and Palmerston North Boys High School, or Whanganui and Manawatū rep teams, clashed. Like me, Trevor was from a working-class home and this is undoubtedly part of the reason why we were drawn to one another, along with the fact that we were both hockey teammates and university classmates.

As we entered the third term of my first year, with the hockey season over, almost the whole of my waking time was absorbed with either work or study. I was determined that I would have a 100 percent success rate by passing all three of my papers – and so it proved. I managed a B average, more than just scraping through but hardly setting the world on fire. More importantly I came away from my first year with a real sense of accomplishment, that I was up to the intellectual challenge and could handle the pressures of university-level academic work. With exams done and dusted, I decided – with Mum and Dad's agreement – to leave my job at the Ministry of Works and go back to Whanganui for the summer. The plan was to work for Dad over the break before returning to university, but this time as a full time student. The dynamic with Dad always worked well and there was very rarely any tension, and throughout his life our relationship was always harmonious. When I left my position at MOW I was presented with the autobiography of OJT Alpers, a judge of the Supreme Court of New Zealand – a book which I have treasured to this day.

While I had enjoyed my first year in Wellington, it was great being back on home turf in Whanganui. If anything, my period of absence had made my heart grow fonder for Whanganui's charms and reinforced the connection I felt to the river and surrounds. I knew even then that I would never live long term in Wellington, and – while it never eventuated –

I could have easily settled back in Whanganui in the future. As it happened, I would spend most of the rest of my life living in provincial cities, not unlike my home town. My return also coincided with the first year of summer hockey in Whanganui allowing me to re-acquaint myself with the hockey community, and play for Castlecliff alongside my brother Murray and good mate Ian Townsend.

After an otherwise uneventful summer working and saving as much money as I could, I returned to Wellington in early 1954 for my second year and my first without the distraction of employment. During the holidays I teamed up with Dick Barry, another law student from Whanganui, who was also returning to university. Our plan was to get a flat together which was being organised by one of my hockey mates. However at the last moment the flat fell through, so we had to hurriedly change tack. Dick answered an ad to board with a Mrs Dunne in Island Bay and she agreed to take both of us. We soon fitted into life in Island Bay, going to and from university each day on the tram, a trip of about half an hour. Mrs Dunne was a widow in her late 40s. She had one married daughter and two children about the same age as me and Dick still living at home: Melville and Patricia, or Mel and Pat. Mrs Dunne was well-suited to having a couple of 19-year-olds board with her, being a warm, motherly character. Even though she had a full time job she always had our washing done and folded and an evening meal to look forward to on the table at night. I never really gave it too much thought at the time, but I hope the extra income we provided made it worth her while taking on all that extra work.

Dick, Mel and Pat were all great companions that year and we regularly attended dances held around Island Bay on the weekends. My girlfriend for most of my second university year was Adrienne, who lived in Island Bay just around the corner from where we boarded. Adrienne was a trainee teacher so there were regular Teachers' College socials to attend. As alcohol was prohibited at these events a group of us would often share a flagon or two before the dance and take regular refreshment breaks throughout the night. I smile when I hear suggestions that the current generation of young people invented binge drinking. I can assure you that it was already a central part of the culture in the '50s and I would suggest for a long time before that.

Dick and I spent a lot of time together as we both embarked on the first law papers of our degrees. Our schedules were fairly similar so we would travel back and forth to university on the tram, providing an opportunity to discuss the lessons of the day. We were at about the same level academically which was good from the point of view of being able to support one another's learning. Dick's sporting passion was cricket. In his first few years of university he would return to play in the Whanganui senior competition and for the Whanganui rep team. In later years he would remain in Wellington and play in the senior competition there. I lost contact with Dick once we graduated, but I know he ended up practising law very successfully in Tauranga.

Mel was an outstanding rugby player, not long out of school and already competing in the Wellington senior competition. A loose forward, he would soon move to Canterbury to

complete an engineering degree, and represent the province at senior level, as well as playing for the South Island and having an All Black trial. Later he was a guest at our wedding and would always get us tickets to the rugby whenever Canterbury played Southland in Invercargill.

While things were going well for me in Wellington, there was some bad news from Whanganui, when I learned that Grandma Calkin had passed away. After Grandad Calkin died six years previously, Grandma moved to the beach at Tangimoana and since I had started university I had not seen much of her. I had, however, been kept informed about her declining health so it was no surprise when I got the call to say she had passed away at the age of 74.

I took four papers in my second year at university: Psychology 2, Philosophy 1, Roman Law and Criminal Law. This covered the five arts papers that were required and I was launched into my first law papers. Of all the papers I took that year I found Roman Law, which has since been culled from the law degree, the most difficult. The main issue was that I had no knowledge or understanding of the social conditions of the Roman way of life with which to consider the context of law in that society.

Professor Campbell taught criminal law using the case method. We were required to read the judgments of important cases before the professor, not unlike various TV law school dramas where the lecturer puts students under the microscope, would interrogate individual students about the cases. Professor Campbell was a brilliant teacher and commanded the respect of his students, so the last thing you wanted was to make a fool of yourself in front of him and your peers. Early on, not unlike most of my fellow students, I would tremble in my seat wondering when my name would come up and soon enough I was called upon for the first time. I had made sure I was well prepared for the eventuality and I think I negotiated the experience reasonably well, albeit somewhat tentatively. Professor Campbell was a hard taskmaster in one sense, but also a gentleman. Part of his job was to put us under pressure and teach us to think on our feet. While he could be quite scathing if it were obvious that you simply hadn't done the reading, he would never humiliate someone who was doing their best. From that point I realised that solid preparation was going to be essential if I was to develop the courage to express my own voice in public.

The case method of learning was a real challenge for me that year. However, through the process of getting my head around it, I again built confidence in my ability to figure out the important concepts of a situation. This helped me establish a foundation to deal with all the legal principles I would be exposed to throughout the remainder of my law degree.

Being a full-time student meant I could enjoy more leisure time and not be studying in every spare moment after work. The Psychology 2 class decided to enter a float in the capping procession, which was a lot of fun. I don't remember the theme of our float, but I do remember seeing a person in the crowd I knew from Castlecliff who was astonished to

see me acting the goat and happily making a fool of myself. I passed all four subjects in the final exams, again with unremarkable marks, and returned to Whanganui at the end of the year to work for Dad again during the summer break. When university resumed in 1955, I returned to Wellington where Dick and I once more boarded with Mrs Dunne at Island Bay. This was my third year and again I was a full time student. I took five law papers, Property Law, Contract Law, the Law of Torts, the Law of Evidence and International Law. This was a busy year but with much the same routines as the previous one.

When lectures finished in October I went back to Whanganui to study for exams. I had arranged with the secretary of the Whanganui Law Society to be able to use the Law Society library at the Whanganui Court House, providing an ideal environment to study, complete with access to all the law reports and statutes I needed. This was a perfect arrangement for me to prepare for my exams except for the fact that Audrey, my girlfriend, and I were missing each other terribly. To remedy this, I arranged for her to travel up on the train for the Labour holiday weekend so she could meet the family and I could show her around my hometown. As I expected she made a very positive impression with my parents and siblings and we enjoyed a few days taking in the sights in and around Whanganui. I particularly remember a great night out we had at a dance run by the Aramoho Boating Club. Trevor came over from Palmerston North and I reconnected with a number of my Whanganui friends, with everyone enjoying each others' company.

Studying in the Law Society library clearly agreed with me as I managed to achieve very good grades in all my papers improving on the mediocre results I had managed in previous years. I felt I was really hitting my straps with the academic work and it was no longer the mystery it once was. I had also developed solid work habits and enjoyed reaping the rewards from putting in the hard yards. After three years of study I now had 12 papers towards the 19 needed for my law degree so was right on track to complete it in five years as planned.

My fourth year, 1956, saw me change tack in a number of ways. Firstly Dick and I decided to break the apron strings with Mrs Dunne and go flatting. We found a suitable flat in Tinakori Road; ideally placed as it was reasonably close to both the university and downtown Wellington. Secondly I went back to part time study, taking a job in a law office – Leicester, Rainey and McCarthy – with the hope of gaining practical experience. Unfortunately the job was not a success. I hated the work which involved little more than being a message boy around various law offices in Wellington. Moreover the wages were insufficient to live on, given that the rent in the flat was quite high. I made inquiries and found I could get a job back in the legal section of the Ministry of Works, so I moved back there.

Around this time, Audrey and I and our group of friends enjoyed going to dances where the new genre of rock 'n' roll was starting to make its presence felt. However I was mainly gaining a love for classical music, largely due to Audrey's influence, who was herself a promising cellist. I remember going with Audrey to the National Orchestra's, the forerunner to the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, 10th anniversary concert with Audrey in 1956.

There were also many sporting events to attend in Wellington and two that stand out in my mind were, firstly, seeing New Zealand Universities defeat the Springboks at Athletic Park in 1956 with All Black and Wellington superstar Ron Jarden scoring a famous “try that wasn’t”. As part of a record 42,000 midweek crowd I cheered as Jarden received the ball on the halfway line before beating five or six defenders in a scintillating run to the try line. However the touch judge ruled that his foot grazed the line, so play was called back for a lineout where he went out. The second sporting highlight to stick in my memory was watching English cricketers Tom Graveney and Colin Cowdrey both score centuries against Wellington at the Basin Reserve the previous year. I remember the standard of skill and stroke play being much higher than anything I had ever seen and have very rarely witnessed since.

I left Whanganui on Christmas Day 1957 at a time when tensions were running high in our family. Dad’s business had failed and a creditors’ pool was set up so he could pay off the outstanding amounts over a realistic period of time. He had taken a job back at the freezing works on the chain doing work he had done much earlier in life. Now at 48 years of age this was a physical challenge, but he was able to earn good money and therefore make swift progress paying off the debt. Later he secured another well-paying job as a boilerman at the Whanganui hospital. This was shift work but much easier on the body. Over the next two years he was able to settle with all of his creditors, which was a tribute to both Mum and Dad’s tenacity and integrity.

# 4. Lawyer, Husband, Father

*1958–1967, Invercargill*

Before I started work as a lawyer in Invercargill following my graduation with a law degree, I, along with three friends; Trevor de Cleene, Brian Whitehead and Colin Riddet embarked on a summer holiday tour of the South Island. After a few days, we encountered a group of four young ladies at the camping ground in Te Anau, where I met Claire, my future wife. The day after we met up, my three male companions and I drove away for a few days of outdoor adventure before an agreed rendezvous back in Te Anau with our new female friends.

First stop was Milford Sound where the grandeur of the scenery went up another notch. There had been more rain and it was awe-inspiring to watch the water cascading from the enormous peaks. I remember the feeling of exhilaration and romanticism at nature's splendour no doubt enhanced by the excitement of meeting a new and exciting romantic interest the previous night. We then doubled back to the Hollyford Valley and camped the night there before walking the Hollyford Track. We hiked into the track staying in a hut at Lake McKerrow, before walking back out the following day. It was quite a feat and another tribute to our fitness. As young, fit men we loved testing ourselves against the elements, but at the time we were probably a little blasé about the sheer beauty and majesty that surrounded us. It was only after living in the south of the South Island for a period of time some years later that I truly learned to appreciate the awe of the mountains, rivers and plains.

The locals were concerned about our lack of equipment and preparedness to undertake such a hike, but we put our trust in Trevor who was an accomplished bushman and hunter. This time the deer were plentiful and Trevor shot four. He cut out the back steaks and tenderloins from the animals which we took back and barbecued a meal for ourselves and our lady friends at the Te Anau camp. I couldn't wait to see Claire again and was delighted that she seemed equally happy to see me. We spent another charmed evening together, drinking and talking the night away as we got to know each other a little bit better. I knew I didn't want this to be just a fleeting encounter and, given we were due to set off for a quick tour of Invercargill and Bluff the next morning, I was racking my brain about how to orchestrate a situation where I would be able to see her again soon. As Trevor had also teamed up with Barbara, one of Claire's friends, it was suggested and agreed enthusiastically by all parties that we would meet up in Dunedin on our way back up the island.

When we got to Invercargill I called on Mrs Officer who Mr Tait, the senior partner at the law firm I was joining, had arranged for me to board with. Mrs Officer showed me the room that I would have and I could see that I would be very comfortable and well looked after. It so happened that two of Mrs Officer's sons were clients of the legal firm I would be working

for. On our way back up to Dunedin we made a trip to the new hydro power station that had just opened at Roxburgh and which I was familiar with from my time at the Ministry of Works. Brian Whitehead, who was a newly-qualified engineer, was able to explain to us how the power station worked and this made the trip to Roxburgh well worthwhile.

That night we caught up in Dunedin with Claire for a meal at the flat of one of her friends, Barbara. Although there was a group of us, I can remember only having eyes for Claire. It was apparent to me, and I am sure to Claire as well, that there was a real magic between us. We had both had relationships in the past but for me this was on another level; there was a passion and spontaneity in how we related that enlivened me. She exuded a zest for life together with a strong sense of self which made it clear she would never be any man's doormat. I found her sense of independence and optimism for what the future held intriguing and somehow inspirational. Since my relationship with Audrey had ended, I had been somewhat tentative with women, but meeting Claire made me realise I had fully healed from that break-up and there were no longer any residual feelings holding me back. Even though we had only known each other a matter of days, I felt sure that I would be seeing a lot more of Claire Shaw.

Despite the fact that her family occupied a somewhat higher position within the social hierarchy I felt we had a lot in common, on top of the chemistry and undoubted physical attraction that existed between us. Claire had done well at school academically being the dux of her primary school before excelling at Timaru Girls High School, then going on to fly through Teacher's Training College in Dunedin. It was obvious she had a sharp intellect and enjoyed engaging with ideas as I did. She was also an accomplished sportsperson, doing well in everything she turned her hand to. She had been in the Timaru Girls High first teams for softball, basketball and tennis and was a champion athlete, excelling in the sprints, as well as long jump and triple jump events. In addition, Claire was an accomplished pianist, and while I had no experience or even talent as a musician I was developing an ear for classical music that had started during my relationship with Audrey and that I would be able to share with Claire.

The next day Claire was returning to Timaru, so she hitched a ride with us as we travelled north. She had phoned ahead and arranged for her mother to prepare a sumptuous lunch for the five of us. Unbeknownst to me, my future mother-in-law had asked Claire if any of the four young men were of particular interest and Claire gave her the heads up, describing me as "the dark one". Mrs Shaw gave no indication of this prior intelligence as I quietly took in the surroundings, gaining an impression of a comfortable and happy middle-class home. I did not get to meet my future father-in-law as he was in hospital recovering from a minor operation. However, I would get that opportunity soon enough as Claire invited me to stop off in Timaru on my way back down south as there were a few spare days before I needed to be in Invercargill to start work, and I could stay in the spare room at the Shaw home.

I hoped that Archie was impressed with me, but either way I certainly was with him. He was somewhat older than my parents and accordingly was a member of the generation before

the Slump and War Generation, often referred to in the literature as the Lost Generation. Archie was part of a line of Shaws which immigrated to New Zealand from Scotland in the 1860s settling around the Canterbury province. I learned that he was a very able sportsman in his day, being a member of both the first XV rugby and first XI cricket at Timaru Boys High School in the early 1900s. He served in the army in the First World War and was badly wounded during the Second Somme Offensive in March 1918.

The legacy of his war wound left him with a pronounced limp for the rest of his days, but wasn't enough to stop him becoming a very proficient tennis player, a passion which he passed down to Claire and her sister Marion. Archie would continue playing tennis well into late middle age saying that he would only retire from the sport when he could be beaten by his daughters. Despite the fact that both Marion and Claire were more than handy with a racket, this never happened. Archie was hugely loved and respected by both his daughters who very much admired and looked up to him.

Archie started his career as a stock and station agent with Pyne Gould Guinness before saving enough to buy his first farm in his 40s. He was able to trade up several times and eventually farmed two separate cropping blocks: one at Seadown just outside of Timaru and the other in prime cropping country halfway between Timaru and Temuka. Later he would make good money subdividing the Seadown property, where there are now around 30 or 40 houses. He was very well respected within the South Canterbury farming community, a reputation which was only enhanced from his time chairing the South Canterbury Catchment Board, the forerunner of the Regional Council, as a director of the Primary Producers Coop which would become Silver Fern Farms and as President of the South Canterbury branch of Federated Farmers for a number of years.

Claire's Mum Kathleen was also from the finest Scottish stock; her maiden name was Bruce, another family line, like the Shaws, which immigrated from Scotland in the middle of the 19th century. Kathleen's parents had a sheep farm at Lowcliffe near Ashburton, where coincidentally my mother's parents, Arthur and Clara Charman, had first settled when they came to New Zealand from England. The cult of respectability ran very deep with Kathleen and, like my own mother and others from the generations before mine, she had very firm views on how people should behave and how the traditional order of society should be maintained. I always found Kathleen to be a genuinely kind person, but you also sensed that under the polite and pleasant exterior was someone with a deep strength of character who would be a formidable force to come up against if you were to cross her – something I was fortunate to never have to test personally.

The fourth member of the Shaw family was Claire's sister Marion, who was five years older and already married. As if there weren't already enough Scottish references, her husband was a Canterbury farmer named Jock Fairbairn, who hailed from another family of Scottish immigrants to settle in the region. Jock's parents began life in Scotland, with Jock being the first generation to be born in New Zealand. Marion was also a qualified teacher, and had a similar background to Claire, being strong in academia, sport and music. I wouldn't get to

meet Marion and Jock for another few months, but I could already tell from how Claire spoke about Marion that she and her sister were very close and fiercely loyal to one another.

*Claire's older sister, Marion was already married to Jock Fairbairn and both would be a great support to Claire and me.*

On Friday, the day after I arrived, Claire attended the wedding of a friend and I spent the afternoon in the Timaru library. That evening Claire and I attended the wedding dance at the Caroline Bay hall, where I met a number of Claire's friends including Shona McKerchar and Lindsay McDougal, a couple who would feature in our lives for many years to come. The following day Shona and Claire put together a picnic lunch and the four of us headed off to the trots at the Timaru racecourse. I don't think we won any money but we had an idyllic day out as Claire and I continued to fall further for one another. We had such a good time that we decided to do it all again the next day. Claire and Shona put together another picnic lunch and this time we headed for a picnic spot on one of the local rivers. I learnt that picnicking at the river was a favourite Shaw family pastime and in the years ahead we spent many happy hours at different picnicking spots on the South Canterbury rivers.

Spurred by the post-war baby and economic boom, Invercargill's population almost doubled from 1946 to 1976, which equated to around three percent per year, creating a strong demand for, and a healthy turnover of, houses. The Southland Building Society was a major mortgage financier and played a role in the high proportion of home ownership in Southland. There was also a considerable turnover of farms and both of these trends created lucrative sources of income for WG & J Tait, the law firm which was my new employer, which had a large base of support amongst both the urban and rural communities.

Thankfully I didn't have to wait long before I saw Claire again. She was to be a bridesmaid at a wedding in Dunedin and her friend Marilyn Brown who lived in Invercargill was also

attending. Claire came down to Invercargill after the Dunedin wedding with Marilyn and stayed at the Browns for a few days. Again we had a wonderful time and didn't want the visit to end. Our next get-together was in February when Claire, Lindsay and Shona came down to Dunedin from Timaru and I took the train up to Dunedin. They borrowed Claire's mother's Ford Zephyr and Lindsay drove. We had a great weekend staying at the Hotel Dunedin, Lindsay and I in one room and Claire and Shona in another. While she was certainly not backward in coming forward in our private moments together, I couldn't convince Claire to share my accommodation, such were the conventions of the day. Given that we were grown adults in our 20s, this might seem strange to the modern generation. However, this was in the late '50s before the sexual revolution that occurred in the '60s and '70s, and would be just one example of how more prosperous times, together with technological advances such as the contraceptive pill, would provide the impetus for the old, traditional ways – like the social condemnation of sex outside marriage – to be challenged.

Several weeks after starting at WG & J Tait, I visited the Supreme Court to listen to a damages case where all the lawyers involved were based in Invercargill, allowing me an insight into the calibre of my legal peers and future adversaries. They all seemed to convey a sense of authority and dominance and I realised there was a lot I needed to learn if I was to stand amongst them as a respected participant. This was a useful antidote to the pride I felt a few weeks earlier and a reminder that I had a long way to go and couldn't afford to get ahead of myself. During this session of the Supreme Court an admission ceremony was held and six of us were admitted as barristers or solicitors or, as was the case for me, both. Justice Henry was the presiding justice and he congratulated us all, reinforcing what I had witnessed in saying that the standard of the bar in Invercargill was very high before wishing us well in the profession.

A few days later some instructions came from a firm of solicitors in Dunedin for us to make an appearance in the Supreme Court to move for a decree absolute in a divorce – the final decree which in those days was required to dissolve the marriage. As it was a very straightforward matter, Mr Tait suggested this would be a good opportunity for me to make my debut in the Supreme Court. So when the time came I donned the bib, wig and gown for the first time before making my appearance. All I had to do was simply say I appeared in support of the motion to ask for the grant of a decree absolute. The judge, who no doubt sensed my trepidation, treated me with courtesy and duly granted the request, much to my relief.

Early on, Mr Tait offered some advice about dealing with judges and magistrates which helped put things into perspective and cope with the pressure of what can be a very intimidating environment. He had been in the army during the First World War and had come under fire on a number of occasions. He made the observation that compared with that type of experience being in a courtroom was child's play and there was really nothing to be intimidated about. Mr Tait did a lot of pro bono work for the returned soldiers

movement and was awarded the OBE – an honour just one step down from a knighthood – in the early '60s for his work with the RSA. I learned a great deal from Mr Tait and he goes down in my memory as one of the finest people I have ever known.

Our firm was a general practice dealing with all the issues involved with facilitating the legal functioning of society on a daily basis. This included preparing wills, estate planning, property transactions including farms, business law, family law, litigation, police court work and disputes resolution. On top of this, a major client of the firm was the Invercargill Licensing Trust, so their work was always a priority. My understanding of such a broad range of legal territory was minimal to say the least and I was introduced to each area slowly and deliberately. In the early days I worked on several minor criminal cases and even had one defended criminal trial in my first year where I unsuccessfully defended two men on a burglary charge. Justice Henry made sure of their guilt in his direction of the jury after I thought I might have planted a few seeds of doubt. I started to overcome my anxiety of speaking in public and before too long I was more than capable of presenting a client's case verbally in a variety of settings. However I could also see that this was never going to be the area where I could make the best use of my legal talents.

Instead I began to see that I was much better suited to dealing with writing opinions on points of law and figuring out solutions to sticky legal issues. I also realised that I was confident dealing with the less dramatic cases that found their way to the courtroom. Like many lawyers I started off with a heroic and somewhat naive idea of what life as a lawyer would involve, before finding the reality was somewhat different. Even though the work didn't fit with my early romantic vision, I enjoyed the intellectual challenge and the fact that I was able to display a talent for an important aspect of the law that was valued by my clients as well as the seniors at my firm.

Before long I learned that Justice Henry's observation about the high standard of the bar in Southland was no exaggeration with several personalities standing out in my memory. John Mills was the crown prosecutor and senior partner in Macalister Bros, one the leading firms at that time in Invercargill. John possessed a formidable personality and took a booming, no-nonsense approach to his work. Another partner at Macalister Bros, Ivor Richardson, had a doctorate in law from an American university. He had a fine intellect and was an impressive performer in court. Ivor was a distant relative of Claire's and when he was a boarder at Timaru Boys High School he would visit the Shaw's home during the weekends. Claire and I had quite a bit to do with Ivor and his wife Jane, before Ivor left Invercargill in the mid '60s to join the Crown Law office. After a time he became a professor of law and then Chancellor at Victoria University and later a judge of the High Court, a member of the Privy Council, before being knighted in 1986.

Perhaps the best lawyer in terms of knowledge of the law and ability to argue cases at the highest level was Ian Arthur who was the head of Hanan Arthur and Co. His partner Ralph Hanan was the Member of Parliament for Invercargill, but as far as I could see was not particularly active in the law practice.

Colin Fraser was another partner in Hanan Arthur very much under the tutelage of Ian Arthur. Colin was diminutive in stature but a giant in legal talent. I had several cases against Colin and learned to admire his ability. He also became a District Court Judge and he was later elevated to become a judge of the High Court.

Noel French was the most combative opponent on the scene, because in his view he only acted for the righteous and the deserving. He was a true champion for his clients albeit a troublesome opponent to come up against. I learned much from a number of encounters in court with him. When Noel was on the other side the gloves were off and it was a case of "let the battle commence".

There were a number of younger lawyers including Pat Toomey who was admitted the same day as me. Pat became a District Court judge as did Graeme Noble, who along with his wife Jo became life-long friends of Claire and me.

An important part of my early work revolved around domestic disputes between husbands and wives. There seemed to be a significant amount of domestic discord in Invercargill and this work came with its challenges. My heart often went out to women who were on the receiving end of appalling behaviour from men who saw their wives as little more than part of their property to be exploited as they saw fit. On the other hand, there were plenty of occasions where women had the upper hand and wanted me to use the law to inflict as much emotional and financial pain on their former partners as possible. Increasingly, I found that legal work would bring me into contact with the worst side of human nature and highlight the fact that human beings were neither wholly good nor wholly bad, but a complicated combination of both.

At this time, because of the high tax levels, farmers and business people were setting up family trusts as a way of reducing tax and making succession easier in the future. I decided to learn more about this aspect of the law and carved out a satisfying and lucrative niche, as I found many clients willing to make the investment to set these up. I was very much at home figuring out ways that farmers and business people could organise their affairs to reduce their exposure to income tax and in particular death duties, which have since been abolished but at that time were a big issue in the succession of family farms. I was finding that I was able to master complex facts and see the general patterns. However, I was sometimes careless with the finer details and had to train myself to pay more attention after I made some mistakes. Fortunately none of these were serious and didn't cost our client, the firm or me any losses.

In the new school term that was soon to start things were about to get easier for Claire and I to see each other. Claire had been teaching in Ashburton but in the second term she shifted to Dunedin securing a position at Pinehill School. This meant she was only a couple of hours away rather than the six-odd hours it took to get to Ashburton. Claire moved into a flat with Barbara Main and Una Morgan, two of her friends from the summer trip to

Te Anau. From here on we were able to get together much more regularly, with me travelling to Dunedin as often as I could and Claire coming down to Invercargill on a few occasions.

Before long we decided to get married, and once we'd worked out what we wanted to do, I wrote to Claire's parents seeking her hand and a letter arrived back before long saying that we could marry with their blessing. I rang Mum and Dad with the news and they were also delighted having been taken with Claire a few months earlier at the capping ceremony in Wellington. Through some contacts of the legal firm, I arranged to meet a jeweller in Dunedin for us to choose an engagement ring. While I encouraged Claire to choose a ring she loved I think we both shared the view that there was no point in extravagance with such things. We were very much moulded by our experience of growing up in the shadow of the slump and Claire's Scottish heritage also contributed to a sense of frugality. Having said this, she chose an elegant, beautiful ring without breaking the bank that was more than capable of honouring the special bond that we shared and the journey we were about to embark on together.

I spent Labour Weekend 1958 staying with the Shaws in Timaru, this time not as a mere boyfriend but with the enhanced status of fiancé. It was a chance to spend time with Claire within the context of her wider family and also to meet my future sister-in-law Marion and her husband Jock. The family dynamic was harmonious and everyone seemed pleased with our decision to get married. In no time the Christmas holidays were upon us and it was Claire's turn to visit my family. She flew into Whanganui soon after Christmas, staying about ten days getting to know the Calkin clan whose name she would be taking as her own a matter of months later. I also enjoyed showing Claire around my old stomping ground and introducing her to family and those friends of mine who were still living in Whanganui.

As the time ticked down to the wedding day, I remember the excitement building. Trevor de Cleene was my best man with my brother Murray as groomsman. Trevor and Murray arrived in Timaru on Easter Sunday along with my parents and my youngest sister Ann, who were the only family members to make the trip down, as the travel and expense were prohibitive for my other sister Joy to attend. I spent my final night as a single man enjoying a few quiet beers with Trevor, Murray, Dad and George Wickham, another friend from Palmerston who was also Trevor's cousin. I also had three hockey mates from Invercargill attend on the day along with Mel Dunne, whose family I had boarded with at university, and another old hockey mate Herb Ford who made the trip down from Wellington. Apart from that, all the 150-odd guests were friends and relatives of Claire and her family. Claire's two bridesmaids were Una Morgan and Shona McKerchar. At the time of writing I am the only survivor of the six of us from the wedding party. However the memories of the day, slightly faded after 61 years, live on in the photos – many of which were taken outside Timaru's West End Hall, where the reception was held. The ceremony itself was a very traditional Presbyterian affair, with several readings and a song performed by Claire's Aunty Winnie. All in all it was a very happy occasion and everything anyone could expect

from their wedding day. Claire's parents lent us their car for the honeymoon and around mid-evening we set off, spending our first night as a married couple in a hotel in Geraldine. From there we moved on to Kaikoura, then spent three magical days and nights in Picton before driving back to Timaru.

When we got to Timaru we spent the Saturday afternoon loading up a trailer with furniture and bits and pieces that we were given by friends and family. Jock drove his car pulling the trailer and a carload of gear to Invercargill while Claire, Marion and I left a while later in the Shaw's car. We then had a very pleasant few days as Jock and Marion stayed helping to get everything set up in our new home. As they were about to set off back to their South Canterbury farm, it all became too much for Claire and she was suddenly in tears, quietly sobbing. I did what I could to comfort her, but I remember finding this display of emotion perplexing as it seemed out of character with the confident, "got it all together" person Claire had been up to then. Why was she not delighted that after some quality time with her sister, we would now be alone in our own home for the first time? Was she having second thoughts about the marriage and what lay ahead? She assured me none of this was the case and that everything was fine. I was coming to realise that while we had a lot in common, there were some fundamental differences in how each of us ticked. I was a rational intuitive type with much to learn about emotional expression whereas Claire was an empathetic, feeling person with a soft feminine side to her nature. I was also beginning to realise I had a lot to learn about relationships and the emotional sensitivity required and that my education in this area was just beginning.

When we first moved in together after getting married, our only means of private transport was Claire's bike, which she rode to her new teaching job at Waverly Park School, while I used the bus to travel to work. Private cars were becoming a lot more common, but it wasn't unusual for a young married couple like us not to have one, meaning the bike got a lot of use. I remember one Saturday night "dubbing" Claire on the bike to a party, while she sat on the seat holding our flagon of beer and dangling her legs in mid-air. I peddled the bike standing up on the pedals as best I could, but it certainly wasn't the ideal form of transport. What is even more remarkable is that we managed to get home late at night after having consumed the contents of the flagon! Fortunately we didn't have to use the bike again for both of us, as we received a phone call from Claire's parents to say they had purchased a Ford Prefect car for Claire to drive to school and that Jock was driving it down the next day to deliver it. The only thing we needed to do in return was to book him onto the train so he could return home to Canterbury. The arrival of the car made a huge difference to our lives and once again demonstrated the generosity of family in helping us on our way.

With the acquisition of the car, we no longer had to cycle to social events, but driving presented us with another problem if we wanted to partake of a few drinks. One night I drove us both to a party at friends, Bruce and Mary Evans. After an enjoyable night I think it was obvious I was in no state to drive home and that as a lawyer the implications of being

caught drunk in charge could be serious. We decided that instead Claire would drive despite the fact that she was barely in a better condition than me. The trip home was part drunken hilarity and part genuine terror as she proceeded to stutter and surge being anything but in control of the vehicle. The next morning we reflected on the previous evening with sore heads, vowing to not get into that situation again, something which, by and large, we succeeded in doing.

My main interest apart from work and marriage was hockey, which I continued when I moved to Invercargill. That was in 1958 and the year that Pakistan was touring New Zealand and scheduled to play Southland early in the season. I joined up for social summer hockey and was soon introduced to many of the local players. After they had seen me play and learned of my background, I was invited to join the Southland team and we started preparing for the Pakistan match training under a fitness coach from the YMCA. The team was not of the same calibre as Wellington, but we had a handful of very skilful players including one of our fullbacks Phil Robinson who was top class and would have been at home in any provincial team in New Zealand. I slotted into centre half and enjoyed the focus of training with my new teammates for the match against the touring Pakistanis. The match was played at the city's main sportsground, Rugby Park, and we attracted a healthy crowd of several thousand, putting up a creditable performance but ultimately succumbing to the international side by 5-nil. A few years later we had the opportunity to play another international match in similar circumstances, going down 5-nil again – this time to the touring Indian national team.


*I enjoyed getting into the Southland hockey scene, spending a number of seasons playing for the Southland rep team, including several seasons as sole selector, captain and coach.*

When the club season got underway I joined the Old Boys club, which was usually the strongest in the competition and I became a regular in the Southland rep team. Winter in

Southland did not make for ideal conditions on grass fields. We trained indoors at the Southland Boys High school gym and in some ways I enjoyed the indoor training more than the games on Saturdays. In all I played six seasons of hockey in Invercargill and for Southland, in two of which I acted as sole selector, coach and captain of the Southland rep team. Our main game of the year was our clash with Otago who were usually somewhat stronger than Southland but we always gave them a good run for their money. While we struggled to beat major associations like Otago, we had a strong team for a minor association. I've mentioned Phil Robinson who formed a very solid fullback pairing with Alf Thomsen, while the inside forward trio of Russell Eastwood, Max Caldwell and Peter Clark would have been a useful attack at club level in any major hockey centre in the country and formed a strong unit at the minor association level. Each year Southland played a tournament with a number of other lower South Island minor associations: Eastern Southland, North Otago, South Canterbury and Ashburton. We won this tournament twice, meaning we played the winner of the northern South Island minors tournament which involved Nelson, Marlborough, Buller and West Coast, beating Nelson on one occasion and Marlborough on another. Following these fixtures a South Island Minors team was selected and I was included each year that I made myself available, including captaining the team in a match against India. South Island Minors also played regular matches against both Canterbury and Otago which were always competitive encounters.

There was a healthy camaraderie amongst the local hockey community which formed an important part of Claire's and my social circle. During the season there would invariably be socialising of one sort or another after the Saturday game. We had many enjoyable evenings with our hockey friends and the night would often be capped off with an obligatory feast of Bluff oysters, which were a fraction of the price – even in relative terms – than they are today, washed down by a flagon or so of beer.

After the birth of our first son, Bruce, it was my task to telephone all the relations and friends. The grandparents were overjoyed by the news as were our close friends and relations. My sister Joy and her husband Peter had had a son, Paul, a few months earlier and my brother Murray and his wife Arthea had a daughter, Joanne, a few weeks before Bruce was born so it was a fertile period of grandchildren for Mum and Dad. I put the birth notice in the paper and in no time insurance agents were on my doorstep wanting to insure the baby.

While the whole process with Bruce's arrival went smoothly, things were very much different in our home with a newborn to look after. Claire had given up teaching so she could focus on being a full-time mother, something which was very much the norm in that era. While mother and baby were still in the nursing home I bought a refrigerator and when Claire saw it as she entered the house for the first time with Bruce in her arms she was overcome with emotion. Fridges are obviously taken for granted these days but in 1960 they were only beginning to become popular. Bruce's arrival was close to Christmas and during the holidays Marion and Jock came to stay with their two children Peter and Susan

who were both intrigued by their cousin, continually coming back to check him out and being captivated watching Claire feed “Baby Bruce”. We would enjoy many fun times, often during school holidays, with Marion and Jock’s family which grew to five when youngest son Andrew arrived in the early ‘60s.

*Our nephews, Andrew (left) and Peter (right) with niece Susan in the centre. We enjoyed spending time with Marion and Jock and their children when the opportunity presented itself.*

Claire and I soon settled into parenthood and life in Invercargill. Life with a new baby was very different and a routine around the needs of the baby soon fell into place. We were running into the limits of the Ford Prefect so we decided to trade it in on a Volkswagen. The Volkswagen dealer in Invercargill was a client of ours and they fitted us into a good deal. My income was growing and we were able to afford a better car. The Volkswagen proved to be a more suitable vehicle for our needs and it had an efficient heater rather than the Prefect which was cold and draughty. There was also a space behind the back seat which made a sleeping place for Bruce on longer journeys. Unlike these days, when babies travel in specially-designed car seats, there was little regard paid to car safety and we literally just made a bed of blankets for him on the floor of the car.

In early 1963 Claire found she was pregnant with our second child. However, this time it was not plain sailing as it had been with Bruce. About two months before the baby was due Claire was rushed to hospital with acute appendicitis requiring an urgent operation. The appendicitis struck at 8pm on a cold winter’s night, so I asked the neighbours to come over and look after Bruce who was already fast asleep, allowing me to follow the ambulance to the hospital. When I arrived the doctor seemed very concerned and told me they were confident they could save Claire but were not sure the baby would survive. I was not expecting that anything more than a routine operation would be required, so this news stirred up an immediate and palpable shock and fear, providing another lesson of the deep, primal instincts that only parenthood can summon. As it turned out, Claire had the surgery that night and thankfully the baby was not affected.

The next morning I rang Mum in Whanganui and she agreed to fly down to Invercargill to look after Bruce while Claire was in hospital. This was a great relief as I was very busy at work and, to be honest, since Claire was Bruce’s primary caregiver, I’m sorry to say that I

would have been somewhat out of my depth. In those days, parenting roles were much more clearly defined along gender lines than they are today, something that was accepted as much by the women as it was by the men. Having said that, I think there is no doubt that the situation nowadays, where many fathers are far more hands-on and capable in this regard, is a major step forward. Mum arrived and soon had things under control and it wasn't long before Claire was released from hospital. As there were still about six weeks before the baby was due, it was decided that Mum would take Bruce back to Whanganui so Claire could focus on the prescribed bed rest without the demands of an energetic toddler.

*With Claire recovering from surgery while pregnant with Richard, Bruce travelled back to Whanganui with my mother enjoying some time with his grandparents and cousins. Here he is pictured on the far left of the wheelbarrow being pushed by my Dad, along with Joy and Peter's older two children, Lyn and Paul.*

The time arrived for Claire to have the baby and on the 14th of August 1963 Richard John Calkin arrived safe and sound, much to everybody's relief. I experienced the same feelings as I did with Bruce on my first sight of Richard. There he was all peaceful and contented, and I experienced a real depth of gratitude that he had come through the scare unscathed and it was our task to keep him that way. To celebrate, Phil Robinson, one of my hockey mates, and I polished off a bottle of whisky. Claire and I felt like two very lucky Lucky Generationers with our two contributions to the Baby Boom Generation. In 1961, the year after Bruce's arrival, nationwide births peaked at 65,476, a number which to this day has still not been surpassed and more than twice as many as in 1935, the year of my birth. In 1964, the year after Richard's birth, another 62,304 babies came into the world in what was the official cut-off point for the Baby Boom Generation.[13]

With Richard's arrival our family had outgrown the house at Racecourse Road so we decided to look for a bigger home. Claire's Dad offered to lend us any shortfall that we might have over and above what we could borrow from the Southland Building Society. We purchased an older style of home at 11 Layard Street – a much bigger three bedroom house with generous living spaces.

Not long after moving into Layard Street we ventured back with the boys to Whanganui for Christmas, where Grandma Charman was in hospital due to her worsening health, as she had been suffering from diabetes and dementia. Before Christmas Mum and I paid her a visit but such was her decline that she didn't even recognise me. It was clear that her days

were numbered and sure enough she passed away between Christmas and New Year, aged in her mid-70s.

Not long after we shifted into our new home it was apparent that all was not well with Claire's health. Her whole appearance changed; she put on weight and her face became bloated and red. I was becoming more and more concerned but it wasn't until I went to a performance of Handel's Messiah by the Invercargill Choral Society of which Claire was a member that the extent of the changes really struck me. I could barely recognise her as she stood amongst the choir on stage. After several appointments with our doctor and then specialists, the diagnosis was that she had a rare condition called Cushing's Syndrome. This meant her body was producing far more cortisol than it needed and this was causing the physical changes in her body. Cortisol is best known as the body's "fight or flight" hormone which helps us deal with stress, but is also responsible for a range of other functions. Cortisol is produced by the adrenal glands, and regulated by the hypothalamus and pituitary gland. These days Cushing's Syndrome can be kept under control by various drugs, but in those days its treatment was very much in its infancy and because it was so rare the doctors were unsure of the best course of action. What they did outline to us, however, was that without adequate treatment Claire would have a life expectancy of no more than five years. The recommendation was to have extensive tests in hospital before a decision would be made about the best treatment. This was obviously very sobering news and we faced a challenging time as we came to terms with and steeled ourselves for some tough times that lay ahead. Once she got over the initial shock, Claire herself was incredibly brave in facing her new reality, fuelling me with the inspiration I needed to in turn give her the support that was going to be necessary.

In dealing with more practical matters, we wondered how we would cope with the boys while Claire was in hospital. Again it was Mum to the rescue who came down from Whanganui to take over the domestic and child-minding duties. Claire went into the Waikari Hospital in Dunedin in January 1965 for tests, a process which took about six weeks. I travelled up to Dunedin each weekend to visit, staying with Marilyn and Ted Dewes on the Saturday nights. Finally the decision was made to surgically remove both adrenal glands which would involve two operations performed about a fortnight apart. This is a far more invasive treatment than how Cushing's is dealt with these days, but at least this presented a way forward that we hoped would eventually allow us to return to our normal lives. While it was deemed at the time to be the best treatment for Claire's illness, the removal of the adrenal glands would have three main negative implications for her. Firstly she would have to take relatively high doses of steroid medication every day for the rest of her life, secondly she would always have a reduced capacity to deal with stressful situations due to her body's natural shock absorbers being compromised, and thirdly – and potentially most seriously – she would be forever susceptible to what are known as Addisonian crises. An Addisonian crisis is a serious medical condition caused by the body's inability to produce a sufficient amount of cortisol. Given Claire no longer possessed the hardware required to produce cortisol and relied on daily medication, any imbalances in the medication or highly

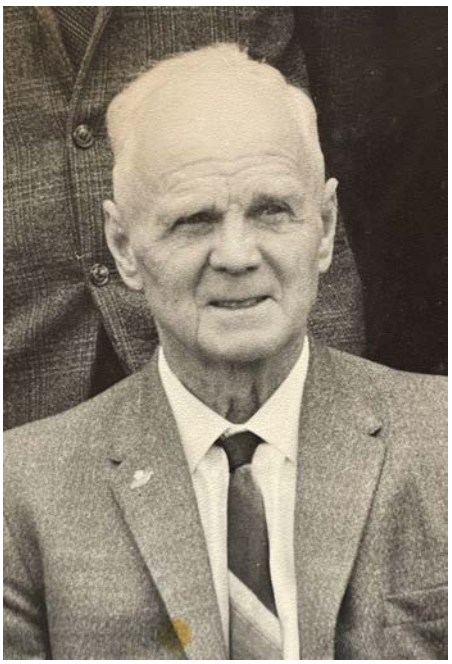
stressful situations could trigger a potentially life-threatening condition characterised by extremely low blood pressure, dizziness, vomiting, acute back pain and fever.

After the tests, Claire came home for a couple of weeks before heading back to hospital in Dunedin for the first operation followed two weeks later by the second. Both operations went smoothly and after about a week of recovery we decided that it was time for the boys to visit Claire in hospital. So Mum, the two boys and I set off in the Volkswagen for Dunedin. We booked into a motel with Bruce in one room with Mum and Richard and I in another. The visits by the two boys were very emotional for all of us, especially Claire who was quite tearful when she saw them – a combination of grief from having missed them terribly and happiness that she could finally spend some time with her boys. Hospital visiting is not an easy thing for small boisterous boys so Mum and I took turns to take them on walks and keep them entertained. After a few more weeks in hospital, I drove to Dunedin one final time to bring Claire home. We drove back to Invercargill at a leisurely pace, with Claire sitting in the back seat in as comfortable a position as she could muster. To make things easier for us to manage, Mum took Richard, who was about 18 months old by this stage, back to Whanganui for a period.

While it was great to have Claire home we were mistaken if we thought this signalled that easier times for her had arrived. Firstly, Claire developed infections in one of the operation wounds and it took several weeks for the infection to clear up, causing her a great deal of pain and discomfort. Secondly, it proved very tricky to arrive at the optimal combination of the various medications on which her life now depended. Several months of trial and error were required to find the right balance and there were some dicey situations while the side effects of the medications settled down and Claire's body retrained itself to make up for the loss of the adrenal glands. Over the years that followed I became very sensitive to how Claire was managing and I never hesitated in seeking medical assistance for her whenever an Addisonian crisis loomed. Mum eventually brought Richard back to Invercargill and we did our best to get back into as normal a routine as possible. It continued to be a real juggling act getting Claire's medication stabilised and while she struggled at times, she always put on a brave face and insisted on getting fully on top of her mothering and domestic duties.

Just when we felt that a semblance of normality was returning, we were blindsided by another bolt from the blue. One night we were awoken by the phone in the early hours of the morning; something which always strikes fear in your heart that bad news is coming. Sure enough it was Marion with the heartbreaking revelation that Archie, the sisters' beloved father, had died earlier that evening from a heart attack. This was a major shock as Archie, a teetotaller and non-smoker, was only 69 years old, very active and in seemingly good health. I really felt for Claire, who was inconsolable, as she adored her father and had been through such a hard time herself over the previous months that this was the last thing she deserved. Her health condition also meant that her body was less able to deal with this type of shock exacerbating an already difficult situation. I had also grown very

fond of Archie since meeting him seven years previously and to have my father-in-law and the boys' grandfather drop dead unexpectedly was very upsetting and another stark reminder of life's uncertainties.



*The sudden death of Claire's beloved father Archie was another blow, just as she was getting on top of her health issues.*

We arranged to leave the boys with friends and set off for Timaru, with the funeral scheduled in three days time. These days even the youngest children tend to be included at funerals but in those days the norm was for them to be shielded from such events. We stayed at the family home with Claire's Mum who, while clearly shaken, managed to hold her emotions together remarkably well in keeping with her Scottish Presbyterian roots. In the days leading up to the funeral there was a steady flow of visitors to the Shaw household paying their respects and offering their condolences. In contrast to the happy occasion of our wedding six years prior, which was my last visit to St Paul's Presbyterian Church, the event itself was obviously much more sombre. As I have mentioned, Claire's Dad was very well known in South Canterbury, especially in the rural community and accordingly the church was packed to overflowing. You could sense the shock of the community that one of their own whom they clearly held in high regard had been taken suddenly. A stream of speakers stood and spoke glowingly of a good family and community man who was universally respected by all who knew him.

*A new home in Chelmsford Street, Invercargill for our growing family.*

Gradually Claire worked through her grief and regained her strength following the operations and new regime of drugs. Partly because the house at Layard Street held bad memories associated with Claire's illness and Archie's death, and partly because of my insatiable appetite for advancement we traded up houses once more, moving around the corner from 11 Layard Street to 11 Chelmsford Street into a larger and even nicer home. Around this time, at the age of 32, I stopped playing regular hockey and took up the more sedate sport of golf, playing at the Invercargill Golf Club most Saturdays. Southland was a strong National party area and even though I had stayed loyal to the Labour Party many of those I associated with – for example at golf and within the legal fraternity and our clients – were National supporters. All three local electorates: Invercargill, Wallace and Awarua were safe National seats. National's stranglehold on power in the 1960s was reflected throughout the country as the party held strong majorities at each of the decade's General Elections of between eight and ten seats until the 1969 election when the majority fell to a still comfortable six seats. This didn't stop me sticking up for the underdog in discussions with my right-leaning peers and I never hid the fact that I supported Labour. Having said that, though, I was not particularly political when it came to many of the contentious issues of the day, like the Vietnam War. While I was never comfortable that Kiwi soldiers were serving and dying in the war, I bought into the idea that we needed to align ourselves with stronger allies like the US and that we needed to take affirmative action to halt the spread of communism.

Meanwhile my legal career was moving in some interesting directions and I was taking an increasingly dominant role at the firm which had been renamed Tait Ward and Calkin. The most high profile case I had taken on to date, and one of the most important of my legal career, occurred when an outrage erupted in the Southland rural community over the valuation of rural land. The issue started locally but soon had national ramifications and ultimately led to a change in the law. It originated when the Valuation Department adopted a valuation method that was extremely disadvantageous to Southland farmers and, as far

as my reading of the law was concerned, when asked to look at the issue by one of our clients, plainly wrong. The matter quickly caught the attention of the local Federated Farmers, as well as three local MPs, Ralph Hanan, Brian Talboys – who was the Minister of Agriculture and a future deputy Prime Minister under Robert Muldoon – and Gordon Grieve, all of whom relied heavily on the rural vote.

Our client's farm was on leasehold land based on a 24 year perpetually renewable lease, as were many Southland farms upon which returned soldiers were settled after the war. While the leases could be renewed by the farmers for as long as they wanted, their leasehold rent payments were reviewed at renewal time and the level at which they were reset relied on the current value set by the Valuation Department. Because of the way the Valuation Department went about their calculations, the values had come out much higher than the farmers were expecting, meaning there would be a devastating impact on rates and leasehold rents and this would be the ruin of many farmers. Also a number of other farmers with leasehold land wanted to freehold their farms and again the first step in this process was the Valuation Department's assessments. The crucial issue was that the Department was clearly underestimating the value of the improvements that farmers had made to the land, resulting in the "unimproved value" figure upon which rates and rents relied being far too high. I was advising my client that the Valuation Department had it wrong and they should be challenging their ruling.

Concern was growing throughout the local rural community, so a meeting was called by Federated Farmers to address the issue. Word had gotten around about the advice I was giving my clients, so I was invited along. The meeting was attended by the Federated Farmers executive committee, two out of three of the local MPs – Brian Talboys and Gordon Grieve – and Hugh Carswell of Macalister Bros who were the Federated Farmers solicitors. I liked Hugh and he was a very capable lawyer but on this occasion when he was asked for his opinion it was clear that he had no real idea of the nature of the problem. The meeting was on a Saturday night and he mentioned to me on the side that he'd left a great dinner party to attend and was keen to get back to the party as soon as he could. I was asked for my views and I stated emphatically that the Valuation Department was making a huge mistake in the way it was treating the difference between capital value, the value of improvements and the unimproved value of land. I explained why I believed this to be the case and recited some figures about the costs of improving different classes of land and that I could see no alternative but to test the matter in the Land Valuation Court. I could sense that my assessment and presentation of the issue were accepted by Federated Farmers and by the politicians who were embarrassed that the Government was making life difficult for their constituents.

On the Monday morning I received a call from the Federated Farmers secretary inviting me to another meeting a couple of days later, where they asked me to take the case over on their behalf, making it clear that they were instructing me directly and not through Macalister Bros. They asked me to prepare several cases to present to the Valuer General

who was coming down to see if the problem could be settled. In due course the Valuer-General travelled to Invercargill and I presented five cases to him which showed the revaluations would have serious implications for many farmers, and that they were not representative of a fair value. Unfortunately the Valuer-General was having none of it, and arrogantly dismissed our concerns as some sort of provincial uprising that was without foundation. His view was that the Southland farmers should get on with farming and leave the issue of valuation to the experts.

The impasse meant there was no option but to test the matter in court. Several months later the first hearing was held before the local Tribunal. At this hearing, we succeeded in getting the level of the unimproved value reduced, but not as much as we hoped, meaning we were headed to the Land Valuation Court. This was a big deal for Federated Farmers nationally, so a heavy-hitting Queen's Counsel, Mr R K Davison QC of Auckland, was engaged to front the case, while I acted as his supporting counsel. We made an excellent team and again presented a very strong case. Once more we succeeded in getting the unimproved values reduced, but not as much as we believed was justified. However, this was not the end of the matter. Because there had been high level political involvement right from the start including Minister of Agriculture Brian Talboys, it was now over to the politicians who provided a more acceptable and permanent solution by changing the law. I appeared before a Parliamentary Select Committee to give evidence together with the Federated Farmers representative. The upshot was that the term Unimproved Value was dropped from the legislation and in its place a new term called Land Value was adopted. This led the Valuation Department to change their approach resulting in land values that were much more acceptable to the farmers. And so ended one of the most high profile cases I would ever be involved with.

# 5. The End of the Golden Weather

*1968–1979, Palmerston North*

Upon moving to Palmerston North from Invercargill I initially focused on getting established at the new law practice I had formed with Trevor de Cleene, named de Cleene and Calkin, while Claire settled Bruce and Richard into College Street School and Milverton Kindergarten respectively. I reconnected with some old hockey mates, joining the High School Old Boys club while Claire joined the Manawatū Tennis Club and the Manawatū Embroiderers Guild. Soon we had established a social circle and a routine based around work, family, friends and community.

To begin with, my workload at the law practice was very light compared with what I was used to in Invercargill. Initially I assisted Trevor with the many accident cases he specialised in. These were the days before ACC and, unlike today, individuals could make claims for damages against those who had caused accidents in which they were harmed. Trevor was right at home in the courtroom and was a fine advocate able to dominate like Hardie Boys did when I saw him in action back in my university days. I did a lot of the preliminary work drafting statements of claim and then arranging for the writs to be served by a local police officer. In Invercargill whenever I had an accident claim I would write a letter to the defendant making a claim for damages and then follow it up with a writ a few weeks later. Trevor's practice was to simply issue a writ as this sped up the process. His other tactic was to make an extravagant initial claim setting a high upper limit on whatever compensation could be achieved. And because he was so effective in the courtroom, he would often be able to convince the jury that a figure at or close to this starting point was justified. Every time this happened it helped raise the benchmark of what level of compensation could be expected and meant that when they came up against Trevor, the main insurers were keen to settle out of court for significant amounts as they were worried about what Trevor might be able to extract if he got in front of a jury.

As time passed I began to attract legal work of my own similar to what I had done in Invercargill; house transactions, commercial property, business agreements, asset protection and the like. This work was also very lucrative and before long I was more than holding my own with my share of the firm's billings. Not long after we shifted to Palmerston North Claire received a bequest of $15,000 from her father's estate, the equivalent of around $265,000 in today's money. We wondered what to do with the money and given my views on the potential of the travel industry we were attracted to a motel venture, called Trailways, that was being developed in Main Street, Palmerston North. We stipulated that one of the conditions of the investment was that I be appointed to the board of directors to enable us to have more control over the outcome. The development included a licensed restaurant which provided a real point of difference because nice restaurants, as mentioned previously, were relatively scarce. The motel was successful from day one,

appealing to commercial travellers not least of all because of the in-house eatery. Once the motel was trading well some of the directors including me wondered about establishing a full hotel. This would involve buying additional land and obtaining a hotel licence. In those days, before the reform of the liquor laws in 1989, bars could not operate independently of accommodation and running a hotel required a licence which was difficult to obtain. The way around this was to purchase an existing licence and transfer it. One of Trevor's mates, John Shaw, was the licensee of the somewhat rundown Central Hotel and after some negotiation with Trevor as intermediary he agreed to sell the licence to us. I chaired the board of directors and spearheaded the formation of a company that purchased the motel, financed the additional land needed to build the hotel and transferred the hotel licence. And so was born the Albert Hotel which would become a fixture on the Palmerston North pub scene and, while its heyday has long since passed, it still exists as a popular sports bar to this day.

The Albert Hotel project went very smoothly heightening my confidence and creating more hunger for success. The next project was the purchase, together with Trevor, of the South Pacific Motel on the banks of the Utahina Stream in Rotorua. The motel had spare land that we thought could be used for expansion in what we saw as an area where demand for high quality accommodation was sure to grow. I figured that if hospitality venues could be profitable in a city like Palmerston North, then there would be huge opportunities in tourist centres like Rotorua and Queenstown. The more I looked into it the more I believed there would be significant rewards in creating the facilities needed by the wave of domestic and international tourists that was coming. We had plans drawn up to build more units and, following the successful Trailways model, a restaurant. However, we ran into problems with the council and the planning permission that we believed would be a formality was denied. We appealed the decision but lost the case, which was incredibly frustrating given the potential of the business and the city's need for high quality accommodation. We ended up holding the land for a while before building townhouses which, unlike motels, were an allowed activity. This meant we could walk away from the development unscathed and with a small profit, only fuelling my desire to create leading edge tourist facilities in key areas for the oncoming age of travel.

Meanwhile back on the homefront the boys were both making good progress and their two very different temperaments were starting to emerge. Bruce, older by three years, was the more reserved of the two and Richard the more outgoing. Teachers would tell us that Bruce was quiet but very good at his work and that "still waters run deep". Bruce was also more compliant and happy to go along with the rules, whereas Richard was constantly questioning why things had to be done a certain way. Even as a young child if he believed he was not getting a fair deal he would dig his toes in, so we often needed to be assertive in dealing with his behaviour. The ultimate instrument of discipline in our home was the leather strap that Claire had from her time as a teacher and due to his refusal to back down, Richard's outstretched hand was regularly on the receiving end of the sting of this punishment. These days of course this method of disciplining children has been outlawed,

probably for the best, but even so I don't believe that there was any long term harm caused. Bruce tended to express his assertiveness in a much more restrained way. I remember an occasion when he had been in hospital and I was delayed in picking him up at the agreed time. Bruce was less than five years old, but he conveyed quite forcefully his displeasure at being kept waiting.

Both boys were strongly academically inclined, romping through the spelling levels and other tests at primary school. I asked my friend Ken Miller who was a lecturer at the Palmerston Teacher's College about the spelling tests and the level Bruce was on. Ken said that Bruce was in the highest percentile of children in his spelling and linguistic ability. I remember that our permission was sought from the kindergarten for Richard to be interviewed for a Massey University research project. Richard excelled himself in the interview and the researcher raved about his responses, filling his mother and I with pride.

Sports were another area where the boys did well. From an early age there were hockey sticks around the house and the boys would play in the backyard, but College Street School didn't offer hockey, so Bruce played soccer and Richard played rugby until both switched to hockey when they moved to Palmerston North Intermediate. Bruce made the Manawatū primary schoolboys rep team in his first year playing and Richard would tag along to all the games with a stick and ball on the sideline. When Richard graduated to intermediate, I remember encouraging him to continue with rugby such was the promise he was showing, but he had already been bitten by the hockey bug from watching Bruce and playing with him in the backyard so there was no stopping him. His switch to hockey was soon justified as in only his second year playing the game he was selected for the North Island primary school team, following the national tournament. Both boys played cricket, but Richard more seriously than Bruce. Richard's competitive spirit was also stronger than Bruce's and he had an insatiable appetite for playing and practising. The boys would play for hours in the backyard where Bruce, being three years older, would inevitably hold the upper hand, but it was Richard who would typically want to continue the game for longer. Once Bruce had had enough, Richard would try to recruit me or Claire to throw or hit balls to him.

As well as a big backyard, our home in Victoria Avenue had a pool and soon after we arrived we enrolled the boys in swimming lessons, enabling them to enjoy the pool safely. We had a rule that an adult had to be present whenever they were in the pool. It didn't take long before they started making friends with other boys in the neighbourhood and when the weather was nice there always seemed to be a crowd of boys using the pool. It meant quite a lot of pool minding for Claire and me, but it was a source of pleasure for us to see and be part of the fun they were all having.

Because of Claire's health situation we were advised that it could be risky trying for another child, so we wondered about adopting. In my early days as a solicitor in Invercargill I handled quite a few adoptions which were common in those days. However, ten years later the pool of children for adoption had dried up. Young single women were being encouraged to keep their babies and this was shortly before the introduction of the

Domestic Purposes Benefit in 1973. I spoke to one of my hockey teammates, Bryan Yuile who worked for the Social Welfare Department. Bryan was an outstanding hockey player despite the fact that hockey played second fiddle to his main sport, cricket. A fair-haired, bespectacled left arm orthodox spinner and handy batsman – a 1960s version of Daniel Vettori you could say – he played 17 tests for New Zealand, a figure that would have been quite a bit higher if not for his refusal to play on Sundays due to his faith. I spoke to Bryan about adoptions and he asked if we had ever thought about fostering children instead. He said that he had a four year old girl, Debbie, and her two year brother, Michael, available for fostering. They were currently living with a family in Bulls, but this family was in the air force and they were being transferred and the children couldn't go with them. Bryan explained that Michael's mother had died when he was a baby and an older brother had been killed in a car accident before Michael was born. Michael's father was unable to cope with the double tragedy and the family was taken into care. Claire and I met Debbie and Michael at their home in Bulls together with the foster parents who felt bad about not being able to take Michael and Debbie with them. Michael and Debbie were transferred to the Social Welfare family home in Palmerston North and they came and spent time with us to see how they gelled with Bruce and Richard who were now aged eight and five. The trial visits went well so it was decided that the pair would move in and we would give fostering a go.

*Michael and Debbie with Claire.*

*The two new children fitted into the family seamlessly.*

Debbie was enrolled in Milverton Kindergarten down the road where Richard had gone. I remember attending a father child day one Saturday morning and Debbie was proud to tell the other children who her Dad was. Michael was a cute chubby little two year old who captured the hearts of all he encountered. Debbie and Michael had an older brother Larry who lived in the local Social Welfare family home and regularly came for meals at our place in an attempt to keep the family as close together as possible. During his short life to that point, Larry had attended many schools and he had a reading age well below his years. Claire agreed to give Larry some extra tuition and he came to Claire for remedial reading.

However, Larry was never able to catch up the lost ground. It was quite an eye opener for Claire and me to realise the learning difficulties that some children experienced. Debbie and Michael were very close and Michael relied heavily on his older sister who he called "Bebbie". One morning not long after they joined us Claire dropped Debbie down the road at kindy, taking Michael along for the ride. Later in the morning Michael went missing from home and, following an initial panic, Claire found him striding down the footpath towards the kindergarten where he said he was going to "find Bebbie".

Unfortunately after a time it became obvious that Claire was struggling. Her coping mechanisms were badly impacted by her health condition and there were days when she barely had the energy to get out of bed, let alone manage a household of four exuberant young children. We agonised over whether we should let one or both of Debbie and Michael go, but on several occasions we resolved to stick it out as they had both become very much part of the family. However, following a particularly bad spell of ill health it became clear that it was in everyone's interests that something had to change. Because Michael fitted in so well with the activities of the other two boys, we raised the possibility with social welfare of whether alternative accommodation could be found for Debbie. After some investigation a family in Auckland who lived not far from Debbie's father was found and she was transferred up there. While this was very difficult, especially for Debbie and Michael, not to mention Claire and the rest of the family, it was undoubtedly the right decision. We have kept in contact with Debbie ever since and have enjoyed following her progress as she established a family of her own, providing us with regular updates of her children and then grandchildren's activities.

As time went by Michael became more and more a natural part of the family – one of three brothers. We did consider adopting him so he could take the Calkin name. However, this would have required the permission of his father and we felt he had been through enough without being asked to forfeit his son, and at the end of the day it was a case of "if it's not broken, don't fix it." Michael proved to be proficient at sport and did well in hockey and cricket, which meant he fitted in extremely well with the boys' backyard games and play at home. However, it's fair to say that, unlike the other two, Michael was no scholar and while Claire did the best she could to keep Michael abreast of the other children with his reading and writing it was always a struggle. You would never catch Michael reading a book, but he would often be found playing with his hockey stick and ball or watching TV. When he got to intermediate he too was selected for the Manawatū primary schoolboys rep team, and in his final year was selected for the North Island "B" team, putting him in the top 50 players in the country for his age group. Each of the boys had private piano lessons and while they were all competent, none of them showed any real enthusiasm and eventually gave up. This was a disappointment to Claire who would have loved at least one of them to have shared her passion for the piano.

By this time Claire and I were now around ten years into our marriage and like many couples we coasted into a new phase of our relationship. While there was never any

suggestion that we were drifting apart, life increasingly revolved around the children, household and, in my case, business, rather than solely around each other. Claire's health situation did restrict her energy levels but she always put on a brave face and we enjoyed an active social life, involving a number of overlapping social circles. Firstly there were those associated with business and the local horse racing scene, secondly friends that Claire had made as a member of the Manawatū Embroiderers Guild and finally those from the hockey community. It would be fair to say that Claire did not really enjoy the first group, despite the efforts that I, and they, made to include her. While she enjoyed having a few drinks, Claire didn't care for the raucous boozing and big-noting that tended to go on with this crowd. The other fundamental issue was that Claire had never really gelled with Trevor. She considered him to be a bit of a show-off who was out first and foremost for what was best for Trevor, and she didn't like the way he treated and spoke to his wife, Gwenda. For this reason, we increasingly gravitated to the other two groups when socialising as a couple and I would meet up with my business and racing mates on my own. As far as the embroidery crowd was concerned, three couples – Margaret and Hugh Morrison, Sue and Ron Munford and Patsy and Barry Gregg – stand out in my memory as folks we shared many fun times with both at our home, their places and out on the town in Palmerston North.

While my best hockey playing days were behind me, I was still well up to the standard required for senior club hockey so I enjoyed joining the HSOB team. I slotted in at centre-half in a team that was always in contention for the senior title. I was also asked to join the Manawatū rep team but I declined, thinking it was time to focus on career and family. I did, however, act as a selector for the Manawatū team for several seasons. The other mainstays of the HSOB team were Bill Morrison, a doughty left half and stalwart of the Manawatū side for many years, Bryan Yuile and former New Zealand hockey captain Bruce Turner. By this stage Bruce was around 40 years old so was also past his best and no longer in great shape but was still usually the most skilful player on the field. In those days the Palmerston North and Whanganui senior teams played against each other and one day Bruce – a former great of New Zealand hockey – was up against a 19-year-old youngster from Whanganui called Alan McIntyre, who in the future would go on to be a great of the game in his own right, winning an Olympic gold medal in 1976. It was fascinating to watch two such fine players at opposite ends of their careers do battle with each other. It was fair to say the honours were shared although Bruce came off the field absolutely shattered but proud that he had managed to show the young heir-apparent a thing or two. The other highlight in playing the Whanganui teams was coming up against my brother Murray and great mate Ian Townsend when we played Castlecliff. We spent many evenings with hockey friends like Bill and Jill Morrison, Bruce and Thelma Turner, Dave and Ngaire Craven and, when they moved to Palmerston North in the mid-'70s, Brian and Robin Maunsell.

The other sporting interest I developed in Palmerston North was squash. I was never that serious about the sport, but enjoyed regular and competitive matches with a number of men who were around the same mediocre standard as me. My main squash opponents,

both of whom became good friends, were Bill Bendall, who ran Hopwoods Hardware, one of the city's largest retailers, and Tim Loughnan, a leading local lawyer. For me squash was a way to stay active and keep as fit as I could. I remember being surprised in the early 1970s when, in my mid to late 30s, I weighed myself and found I was well over a stone, or nearly 10kg, heavier than I had been around five or six years previously, the last time I had weighed myself. I knew I had put on weight but the extent of it gave me a real shock. I had definitely started the slide into middle-age and wanted to stay active to keep the "middle-aged spread" at bay as much as I was able. Like most, I would never regain the weight or body shape of my younger days and my personal battle of the bulge was one where I would have some wins where the graph would dip but the overall trajectory was in an upwards direction.

Moving back to the North Island created many more opportunities for regular contact with my extended family. My little sister, Ann, had moved to Palmerston North with her husband, Geoff, buying a house not far from us. Claire and Ann got on well and the boys enjoyed having their aunty nearby. Being based in Palmerston North only an hour's drive from Whanganui meant we could easily visit Mum and Dad and would regularly head up to Stratford where my sister Joy lived with her husband Peter and three children – Paul, Lyn and Simon – who were around the same ages as the boys. My brother Murray and his wife Arthea and daughter Joanne were living in Whanganui before later moving the family to Tauranga. Unlike many situations one hears of, our extended family dynamic was almost always positive, and while sheer good luck always plays a part in such an outcome, I also think a big factor was the solid family foundation that my parents had established back when we were growing up in Castlecliff. Mum and Dad certainly loved having us back in the vicinity and were always happy to travel over from Whanganui to help out or look after the kids if necessary. It felt good that my parents were so proud of what I had achieved. I remember they were scarcely able to believe the upmarket house we bought when we arrived in Palmerston North and the contrast between it and their house – the one I grew up in Castlecliff – was stark to say the least. With the law firm doing well and making money I was able to help them out financially here and there, including buying them a late model car to replace their old one which was continually breaking down. Claire was completely supportive of this, and I found it incredibly satisfying to be able to help make my parents' lives that little bit more comfortable.

*Bruce (back) and Richard enjoying the pool with my niece and boys' cousin Joanne (front) and her friend. Joanne is my brother Murray's daughter.*

Mum and Claire also enjoyed the races so Claire and I, along with Mum and Dad, would often make a day of it. Mum was renowned for her passion and knowledge of the horses, despite the fact that she would never bet. I remember one day at Trentham she saw a horse in the bird cage and said: “By gee, that Tara’s Pride looks well, I think he’ll be hard to beat today.” I replied something along the lines of that old nag was older than Methuselah and didn’t have a snowball’s chance in hell. Of course Tara’s Pride bolted in and the reason I can still recall the horse’s name to this day is that Mum would never let me forget it, often referring to the incident as evidence of her superior horse sense!

Meanwhile, Mum’s father, Grandad Charman, was still alive and since Grandma had died he split his time between each of daughter’s homes, Mum’s, Marge’s and Sylvia’s. Living well into his 90s, he kept his wits until the end and was always pleased to see his grandchildren and great grandchildren and was invariably good company. Eventually, age caught up with him and after a short stay in Taihape hospital, he passed away.

The three boys were all doing well at school, especially Bruce and Richard. As they graduated from intermediate to high school, they would both excel in the two areas of school work and sport. All three boys played age group rep hockey for Manawatū and Bruce and Richard both made the Palmerston North Boys’ High first XI in the fourth form, meaning they were both in the team for four years, with Bruce’s last year coinciding with Richard’s first. In their seven years of involvement with the team, they won Founders Cup, India Shield and, having gone close a number of times, the pinnacle of secondary school boys hockey, the Rankin Cup in Richard’s last year as captain. Both boys made the Rankin Cup tournament team, the de facto for the New Zealand secondary schools hockey team. Richard also played cricket, playing at age-group rep level and for the Palmerston North Boys’ High first XI, also first playing for that team in the fourth form. Scholastically, Bruce and Richard were typically in the top half of the top class in the top academic stream, and one year Richard won the school prize for all round excellence in scholarship and sport. Both boys were prefects in their final years with Richard being deputy-head prefect as well as house captain.

When it came time for Michael to attend high school, because of his lesser interest in academia we decided not to have him follow Bruce and Richard to Palmerston North Boys’ High School, but instead he attended Freyberg High School, where there would be more emphasis on a more rounded approach to his schooling. Michael was the type of student who would have benefited from the modern NCEA approach, where credits and subsequently passes, can be earned in a variety of ways. Exams did not suit Michael and this contributed to his rather patchy academic record at high school. Sport however was Michael’s forté, making the Freyberg first eleven hockey from his third form year and the first eleven cricket from the fifth form, as well as Manawatu rep hockey teams right up to under-21 level.

All three boys were well adjusted socially throughout their teenage years, with healthy circles of friends and girlfriends appearing on the scene once they got to about 15 or 16. As

teenagers, Bruce and Michael were the more compliant of the three. Bruce didn't tend to rock the boat and went about his business in a very even-tempered manner, seeming to relish the responsibility that came from being the oldest child. Having said that, Bruce was never a push-over and would happily share a dissenting opinion with anyone who he felt needed to hear it. I remember being on the receiving end of a lecture from my oldest son about how I lacked respect for the loud rock music he and his friends enjoyed and that I would benefit from a more open-minded attitude. While Bruce and Michael were largely co-operative, Richard could be disobedient and argumentative, leading to tension in the family. He was the classic difficult, middle child and would often be involved in sibling squabbles with both Bruce and Michael, and his stubbornness created challenges for Claire and me. It always surprised us that teachers would report he was well-behaved at school, and we were reassured that he always had a loyal circle of close friends, many of whom he is still in regular contact with to this day.

*Richard (right) and Michael skylarking around the pool on a summer's day.*

Michael was a happy chap who always seemed to have a smile on his face and as long as he was being fed and looked after didn't tend to have any complaints. He did have a tendency to be easily influenced and led by those around him, which resulted in a few relatively minor disciplinary scrapes at high school. Claire's and my relationship remained solid through these years, albeit without the same spontaneity and passion as the earlier days. I was often distracted by work and I think that at times this was at the expense of prioritising our relationship. Having said that, I never wavered in my fundamental commitment to Claire and the fact that as far as I was concerned she was, and would always be, my one and only.

Most summers around this time, I would head off with the boys to the camping ground at Motuoapa, on the southern banks of Lake Taupō. Despite the fact that we were both camping when we first met, Claire wasn't the most enthusiastic camper by this stage, so when she came up to stay she would often bring a friend, or perhaps her sister Marion, and they would stay at the local motel and visit us at the camp during the day. Apart from swimming and sunbathing, the main activities were fishing, water skiing and visiting the hot pools at Tokaanu.

*Bringing in the boat from another successful morning trout fishing on the lake are, from left in the boat, Bruce, me and Michael, with Richard out the front.*

My business interests around Taihape at around this time, which are chronicled in Tales from the Lucky Generation, included the purchase of a farm, into which funds could be channelled in order to reduce my taxes. To find the property, I made some enquiries about rundown properties and found one of around 1,400 acres about 20 kms to the west of Taihape – the Adlam farm at Tiriraukawa. The farm seemed to be an ideal candidate, as the stock was in poor shape, there was a great deal of manuka scrub and no fertiliser had been applied for many years. We organised a mortgage to purchase the farm and found an experienced farmer, Bill Coogan, to manage the property. Bill lived at Mataroa, a settlement near the property which enabled him to remain in his home and travel to the farm each day which was just as well given the dilapidated nature of the two houses on the farm. I spent a lot of time with Bill working out a plan of attack. The first port of call was a programme of aerial top dressing and the results in terms of grass growth were incredible. The next thing was to deal with lambing which was just about upon us. The lambing results were poor which was not surprising given the condition of the ewes. We next looked at purchasing new stock and Bill had clear ideas about what we needed. We developed a

scrub clearance plan and made a successful application for a government loan to cover the cost of this. Today the manuka scrub would be regarded as an asset because of its potential for producing manuka honey but at the time it was considered an obstacle to increasing the farm's productivity.

*Bill Coogan, pictured here with his wife and children, along with me, Bruce, Michael and Richard, slowly but surely turned around the run down farm.*

The farm at Taihape was also more than just a business proposition, and for several years became the family's holiday home. We renovated one of the cottages on the farm and would use it as a weekend getaway and as a base for fishing expeditions up to Lake Taupō. One summer holiday, Bruce and a group of his mates formed a scrub cutting gang to help make a dent in the manuka, at the same time as earning some money for the upcoming university year. Richard and Michael enjoyed exploring the remote outback of the property, taking the old farm hack horses and staying in the shepherds' huts in the back blocks of the hill country. There were rabbits to shoot, possums to trap, eels to catch, farm bikes to ride and hills to climb. Claire and I loved the peace and quiet of the place and it became a sanctuary to escape the cut and thrust of the business world in which I was immersed.

*The cottage on the farm in Taihape was very basic, but its remote locations and stunning views of the surrounding countryside made it the perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. The photo on the right of Mt Ruapehu is taken a short walk from the cottage.*

As outlined in Tales from the Lucky Generation, my failing Taihape business interests were the catalyst for the offending that resulted in my six year prison sentence. Once the writing was on the wall, I had to break the news to Claire, one of the hardest things I've ever had to

do, and which is covered in the main memoir. The next day I had the inevitable job of telling Bruce, Richard and Michael. To help with this task, I first broke the news to Brian and Robin Maunsell, friends of ours who the boys knew well. Brian and I had known each other since the early ‘50s when we were both members of the New Zealand Secondary Schoolboys Hockey Team. Brian was also a former New Zealand hockey player and at the time was the head coach of the Black Sticks men's team so he was someone the boys held in very high regard. I asked Brian if he would break the news to the boys which he did, while Robin, Claire and I watched on. Brian was amazing, explaining to the boys that all families face hard times and this was an opportunity to show how much we all meant to each other by sticking together and supporting one another. Not unlike Claire, the boys seemed to take it in a very matter-of-fact way, no doubt needing time to get their heads around what it all meant for us as a family and for them as individuals.

My extended family was next, so I asked my two brothers-in-law Peter and Geoff to come down from Taranaki as soon as they could. They arrived the next day when I broke the news to them, and they were soon followed down to Palmerston North by my sister Joy and mother. I was half expecting to be copping abuse and derision, such was the way I was feeling about myself and the situation, but everyone was rallying around and were universally supportive. The local grapevine was working overtime and news of my arrest spread like wildfire around Palmerston North. During that weekend a number of our closest friends called to offer support. I particularly remember the compassion and solidarity from friends like the Maunsells, Bill and Gillian Blackwood and Graeme and Helen Grenside, as well as hockey mates Bill Morrison and Dave Craven, who were both great friends during that difficult time and beyond.

So began my prison term which is chronicled in the Crime and Punishment strand in my memoir, Tales from the Lucky Generation.

# 6. The road to redemption: Bob Calkin V2.0

*1984–1997, Christchurch*

After serving four years of my six year sentence I was finally released, whereupon Claire and I decided to move from Palmerston North to Christchurch for a fresh start and to be closer to her sister and mother. The first thing we needed was somewhere to live and before long we bought a house in the suburb of Mairehau. Our new home was very reasonably priced and had sat on the market for some time because it was affected by a major roading project that was proposed to cut through that area of Christchurch. The planned route of the Northern Arterial road, as it was known, was to come very close to our new home, so there were fears this might adversely affect its future value. We decided to take a calculated gamble that it would be years before the road was actually built, if in fact it ever was. The gamble paid off as several years later the project was abandoned, as the authorities finally bowed to the protests and resistance from the local community.

*We would be very happy in our home at 243 Weston Road, Mairehau, Christchurch for the next 13 years.*

Soon after we moved in, as a way of getting to know our neighbours as well as protecting our investment, Claire and I joined the community group that was campaigning against the new road. The group was headed by Garry Moore who I had met in Palmerston North when he worked as an accountant on the Albert Hotel development that I led. The anti-road group was Garry's first foray into what would be a very successful career in local body politics. Five years later he was elected to the Area Health Board, before becoming a city councillor in 1992, and then going on to win the Christchurch mayoralty in 1998, which he held until 2007, when Bob Parker took over. Garry and I had a good rapport and similar views on many issues and he would be a great contact and help for me in the future when I became involved in various community initiatives around the city.

Richard, who was almost 21, and Michael, just turned 18, were both well settled into their lives in Palmerston North and chose to stay there. Since leaving school Richard had remained living at home to support Claire, and when we relocated south he moved into a student flat. He was in his third year studying social sciences at Massey, enjoying the subject and achieving consistently good grades. Because I had done many of the same papers several years earlier I was able to provide him with some useful guidance and we enjoyed discussing the material and the strengths and weaknesses of the various theorists. Michael was also in a very good space, moving in to board at the home of his girlfriend Jenny's parents, while working for Tisco as a TV and aerial installer. Meanwhile, 23-year-old Bruce had shifted to Dunedin several years previously to add another degree to the business degree he earned at Massey, this time in physical education. While in Dunedin, Bruce's life took a significant turn when he was baptised as a Christian and his faith has continued to play an important role in his life ever since. As we settled into our new life in Christchurch I remember feeling relieved and grateful that the three boys had been able to flourish in spite of having had their father in prison. I like to think that the environment that Claire and I provided during their formative years helped the boys to weather the storm associated with my imprisonment.

Claire was very pleased to be away from Palmerston North and leave behind the stigma that my offending had created, even though it meant leaving several close and supportive friends behind. She busied herself establishing a base of piano pupils, who she would teach in the after school hours, and spending a lot of time with Marion, which opened up a group of female friends for her to get to know. Now in our late 40s, our relationship was in a very good place, in many ways the fresh start and adventure of new beginnings was not unlike a second honeymoon.

My own social network initially consisted mainly of the catholic parish of Our Lady of Fatima Church. While there were elements of catholicism I was not completely comfortable with, the sense of non-judgemental community I had experienced from a number of catholics while in prison encouraged me to choose this path as the best way to continue my spiritual journey. At the first mass I attended, the priest was standing at the door welcoming his flock. He sought my name as a newcomer and during the service made a point of welcoming me. The public acknowledgement of being warmly welcomed into the fold made a significant emotional impact on me at the time, such was the deep sense of exclusion that had been ingrained from four years in prison. From that point on, this community became a crucial element of my reintegration back into society. The catholic rituals had a soothing and calming effect on me and I felt I had much in common with many of my fellow parishioners. I took an active part in parish affairs and even served a term on the parish council. I had a lot of respect for most of the priests, particularly Father John Curnow, who was the assistant to parish priest Monsignor Harrington. I admired Father Curnow's deep commitment to justice and peace issues, and it was a great shock when he died suddenly a year or so later from a heart attack while only in his early 60s.

About a year after we moved to Christchurch, Claire's mother, Kathleen, who had been living in Ashburton moved into a retirement village in Christchurch so she could be closer to her daughters. Claire and Marion very much valued having their mother nearby, and she soon became a central part of our extended family for the years that followed. Kathleen, at this time in her late eighties, was a regular weekend lunch visitor at our place, when I was usually the one to collect her and drop her off at her flat in the village. On these occasions I enjoyed getting to know Kathleen better than ever before, gaining a renewed respect for my mother-in-law.

Shortly after moving to Christchurch I started at Canterbury University, studying for a Masters in sociology. In those first few months as I became busy with course work I was also organising the South Island-wide survey of the social class questionnaire which I had been contracted to do by Massey University sociology lecturer Chris Wilkes before leaving Palmerston North. I carried out most of this project in the university holidays between the first and second terms. This meant travelling to every city and major town in the South Island from Invercargill in the south to Nelson in the north to organise the completion of the questionnaires.

My first year masters study programme involved a number of papers, including Sociology of Religion taught by Richard Thompson, a writing project about my prison experience supervised by Geoff Fougere and a sociological theory paper delivered by Rosemary Du Plessis and Louise Harvey. These latter two were both extremely bright and were excellent teachers so this paper was a real highlight. Louise, who was a recently graduated PhD, introduced me to the work of Roy Bhaskar and his realist theory of science which has continued to have a significant influence on my own ideas. By this stage Rosemary had already carved out an impressive academic record mainly in the field of feminist studies and would go on to further enhance her reputation in the future. She received the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2020 for contributions to the advancement of women and education.

The sociology department had a seminar meeting every Friday morning where all academic staff members, as well as post-grad students, were invited to attend. I valued these meetings and was a regular attendee, presenting papers on several occasions. Of the other senior academic staff I found department head David Thorns to be very supportive and he would become a tower of strength as I worked on my PhD several years later. It was with great sadness that I learned of his death on Christmas Day 2020.

There were two other people in the sociology department whose work I admired; Geoff Pearce who was doing a PhD, and Brian Roper who was completing an MA thesis under Rosemary Du Plessis's supervision. Geoff was very helpful to me by making data he had collected in his research available for my PhD. Sadly, Geoff died from cancer at a young age several years later when he was working for the union movement. Brian Roper went on to complete a PhD through an Australian university before securing a position in the Politics Department at Otago University, where he continued to establish an impressive academic

and publishing record. A highlight around this time was a paper, entitled Joe Lunchbox: Punishment and Resistance in New Zealand Prisons, that I had published in a newly created journal Race Gender and Class.

One of the organisations I became involved with at around this time was the Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society (PARS). My connection to PARS was through a tremendous bloke named Don Prince, a methodist minister who worked in hospital and prison chaplaincy. I met Don at a Salisbury Street dinner and he encouraged me to come along to a PARS meeting. Don and I hit it off and before long I had been co-opted onto the local PARS committee of which he was a member. I found Don inspirational as an individual in that he operated from a deeply spiritual base but in a way which translated into practical action that had a direct, positive impact on people's lives. I think I was drawn to Don because even though I probably couldn't have articulated it at the time, this was a combination I was seeking to emulate. Don and his wife Deidre would become good friends of Claire and I, and as Claire approached death many years later she asked if I would contact Don to officiate at her funeral, despite the fact that we had lost touch some time previously. It was then that I made contact with Deidre only to learn that Don had passed away about a year previously.

Once I began studying for my PhD I was soon into a regular routine, cycling to university each day, arriving at my small office in the graduate student section of the Sociology Department around 8.30am and keeping regular office hours, returning home in time for dinner. About half my time was spent on my research with the other half on tutoring and marking essays. In the first six months or so, there was a tremendous amount of reading involved as I grappled with establishing the theoretical underpinnings of my research. I would summarise and formulate my ideas by making notes and writing informal essays about how I saw the various theories working together.

While I was delighted to be undertaking full time research along with my marking and tutoring duties, it certainly wasn't the best paying job in town. My scholarship was $9000 per annum for three years, and I was able to earn another three or four thousand from the marking and tutoring work. On top of this, Claire earned another four to five thousand from her piano students, meaning our household income was a meagre $17,000 or so, which equates to around $40,000 in today's money. Having said that, we were mortgage-free and were happy leading a modest lifestyle so by and large were able to live quite comfortably.

I worked diligently and steadily for the next three years, firstly establishing the theoretical foundations before developing my own theories and conclusions. Such was the workload and need to balance the PhD with supplementary income earning activities, the project went somewhat over the three year period allowed for by the scholarship. While this added financial pressure I was determined that it would not compromise the quality of the thesis. Thankfully I was able to secure some social research contracts that I carried out concurrently with the final phase of my PhD research which allowed us to make ends meet.

The further I progressed through my research the more I was being asked to make presentations as the main findings began to emerge. At one such presentation, before I was really able to outline my main points, I was interrupted and taken to task by several women in the audience. Their primary issue was that my research was only concerned with male offending and was therefore just another example of the plight of women being ignored – and also that I had also used several examples of sexist language. I was not at all prepared for their attack, which is no exaggeration for how their interruption was pitched, and was only able to try and explain, somewhat defensively, that my research topic emerged out of my own experience in an all-male prison and that all research is limited in scope by necessity and that my narrow focus on young men was not in any way meant to minimise or neglect issues faced by women.

They were not at all willing to give this perspective any validity at all. I struggled through the rest of the presentation but was very upset by the encounter which I am sure was evident to all present. The episode affected me deeply and after the presentation as I pondered what the women had said I began to realise that I had a great deal to learn about my own biases. I talked this over with Rosemary Du Plessis, an esteemed feminist thinker in her own right and a former lecturer of mine, who I had great respect for, she admitted she shared some of the reservations of my research that were raised, but also that she thought it unfair to hijack me in the middle of a presentation. Indeed I reflected that while it was apparently me who was the sexist oppressor, there is no way I would treat others, especially those who I perceived to share my broad aim of reducing oppression and suffering in all its forms, with such blatant disrespect and hostility. However, at the end of the day, you could say they achieved their objective, as the incident did open the door for me to develop a much greater understanding and appreciation of the feminist position in the future.

The time eventually arrived for me to submit my final PhD  thesis, complete with 574 pages, 127 tables and 25 figures, for examination. David Thorns selected the examiners, who were Richard Le Heron, from Massey University because of his familiarity with French Regulation Theory which my work drew on heavily, and another senior academic, whose name after 30 years escapes me, from La Trobe University in Australia, due to his expertise in the deviance theories used. I put the finishing touches on the work and handed it in with a similar reverence and pride to presenting one's first born for inspection. The examination process was expected to take around a month, after which I hoped to be the proud recipient of a brand new doctorate degree. Unfortunately it was not to be that simple. Our Australian colleague came back with some issues around the deviance theory that he believed needed to be addressed before he would be happy to give it his seal of approval. This was highly disappointing at the time, because after more than four years' work I really just wanted the project over and done with.

I couldn't really see his point, which I considered to be no more than a trivial side issue, a view reinforced by David Thorns, but there was no choice but to go back to the drawing

board and rework that part of the thesis. After I got over the initial indignation I launched into the task, which took between two and three months to complete. There was more than a little urgency, not least of all as I needed to start focusing on earning income, but also because David Thorns was leaving to go overseas on sabbatical.

As it happened I managed to get the changes done just before David left and thankfully this time the thesis met with the approval of both examiners and I got the official word in time for capping in May 1992. While the academic ceremony was a great opportunity to celebrate the culmination of the journey I had started in prison 12 years previously, I didn't have time to get too carried away as I had to focus on what my next career move would be and how I would continue to make a living and hopefully a positive impact on the world.

Meanwhile, in the eight years since arriving in Christchurch, Claire and I had firmly established ourselves in suburbia. While our income was meagre we still managed to carry out some minor home improvements, including insulating our roof and recarpeting the lounge, both of which were a tribute to Claire's ability to manage the household on such a tight budget. Our home in Mairehau was burgled three times in the 13 years we lived there. After the first burglary we increased the security of the house with special locks on the windows and doors, but unfortunately this did not deter future intruders. As there was no neighbourhood watch operating in our area, Claire and I decided to start one up. Again this didn't prevent further burglaries, but did have the benefit of allowing us to form close relationships and friendships with many of our neighbours, as we held regular meetings and street parties.

In 1986, the national senior men's hockey tournament was held in Christchurch, with Richard competing as a member of the Manawatū team, providing us with the opportunity to watch him in action for the first time in several years. I had seen Richard compete for Manawatu in the 1983 national tournament in Palmerston North when I was in prison at Linton and working at Massey University, towards the end of my sentence. I asked the prison deputy superintendent if I could slip away from Massey to the hockey park to watch Richard's games, which he agreed to provided I went straight back to the university afterwards. Manawatū played title favourites Auckland on the Sunday and I was able to see this match because I was on home parole during the weekends. It was a great start to the tournament for Manawatū, managing to draw with an Auckland team packed full of internationals, including four of the 1976 gold medal winning team: Ramesh Patel, Mohan Patel, Jeff Archibald and Arthur Parkin. It was expected that Auckland would easily win so the draw was very much against predictions. Manawatū went on to comfortably beat Wairarapa and South Canterbury, before a clash with the fancied Wellington team which would decide a semifinal berth. Richard had a blinder, setting up a number of goal scoring opportunities which ultimately saw Manawatū beat the team from the capital and advance. After the match I ran into Ross Gillespie who was the head coach of the 1976 Olympic gold medal winners and also the manager of the New Zealand junior team, of which Richard had been a member, at the previous year's Junior World Cup in Malaysia. Ross said Richard had

stepped up his game since then, and was well on his way to succeeding at the very top level. Manawatū took on Canterbury in the semifinal, going down by a solitary goal in a hard fought match. The Manawatū boys were gutted but they played well and the hockey pundits hadn't expected them to get as far as they did, eventually taking third place after beating Hawkes Bay in the play-off for third and fourth. Richard again played very well showing he was competitive at the very top of provincial hockey even though he was still only two years out of high school.

In 1986 Manawatū again performed well, but couldn't quite match it with the teams from the main centres and narrowly missed out on the semi-finals. Richard, now 23, was continuing to improve and was certainly one of Manawatū's stand-out players. I thought he stood a decent chance of selection for the wider New Zealand training squad that was announced, but ultimately he missed selection. The following year, national tournament was in Whangārei and again Manawatū just missed the semis, with Richard keeping us informed on the team's progress with regular updates. On the final day of the tournament, we received a phone call from him to say that following the tournament final, the New Zealand team to play against the touring Australian Institute of Sport had been announced and he had been selected. Obviously Claire and I were delighted and we were even more excited to hear that the series would take place in Christchurch in October, about a month away, making it easy for us to attend. Richard performed solidly, if not spectacularly, in the series doing enough to win selection in the New Zealand team to tour India early the following year, primarily to compete in a tournament being held in the northeastern city of Lucknow; the Indira Gandhi Memorial Gold Cup, in which New Zealand would compete with 11 other top international teams from around the world.

*Richard went one step further than I was able to, being selected for the Black Sticks in 1987 and 1988*

Around the same time we were celebrating the news of Richard making the New Zealand team, the family had some terrible news to deal with. I got a phone call from my

brother-in-law Peter to say that my brother Murray had suffered a brain haemorrhage, while living in Australia. He had sustained irreparable damage and that he was unlikely to survive. Indeed, Murray passed away several days later at the age of just 51. This was a huge shock as there had been no indication of any health issues with the event coming out of the blue. We waited to hear about funeral arrangements, but several days later I heard back from Peter that the funeral had already been held, before any of his New Zealand family could make it over there. Murray was to be cremated with the ashes sent back to New Zealand, where a memorial and headstone were established. A year or so previously we had heard that Murray had remarried, but we were never invited to the wedding. I had never fallen out with Murray, so I wondered what was going on and just figured they wanted a quiet and private affair.

*The last time I saw Murray was at Lyn and Kerry's wedding. This photo from the wedding features Mum and her four children, from left, Murray, Joy, Mum, Ann and me.*

We had last seen Murray several years prior at the wedding of Joy and Peter's daughter Lyn to Kerry Coulton. We weren't aware of his new lady at that stage and there were no issues within the family that any of us were aware of. While I was somewhat confused and a little hurt that Murray would get married without letting me know beforehand, I assumed he had good reasons and that it would all come out in the fullness of time. Unfortunately his untimely death meant I would always have some unanswered questions, and more importantly would never again have the chance for a beer and yarn with my younger brother, who always held a special place in my heart since our days growing up in Whanganui. Not being able to attend the funeral was hard for me, my sisters and, especially, my mum. Accordingly Joy and Peter organised our own memorial service which took place a short time later in Stratford. It was a lovely event, attended by the family, as well as old friends of Murray's like Colin Benbrook and Ian Townsend.

*With the family not included in Murray's funeral, I took the opportunity of visiting his memorial the next time I went to Auckland.*

After completing his phys ed degree at Otago University, oldest son Bruce shifted to Christchurch to train as a secondary school teacher, meaning we got to see a lot more of him. Upon completion of the one year course he applied to work for Volunteer Service Abroad and, in 1987, was posted to teach for two years at a school on the Tongan island of Eua. After Bruce had been in Tonga for just over a year, we received a letter from him to say he had met a local lady, another teacher at the school, and they had decided to marry. This was very unexpected, but happy news for Claire and me, and we were very curious to learn more about Heleni, our future daughter-in-law.

*We were intrigued when Bruce wrote to say he was engaged to Heleni, a teacher at the school where he was working in Tonga.*

Bruce and Heleni were married in a traditional Tongan wedding on Eua in May, 1988, and at the time we decided not to attend given the expense and the fact that the couple was planning to travel to Christchurch for their honeymoon. They stayed with us for two weeks and showed us the video of their wedding ceremony with both Bruce and Heleni dressed in traditional Tongan attire.

*Bruce and Heleni were married in a traditional Tongan ceremony on the Tongan island of Eua.*

Our friends Elaine and Dennis Soanes made their holiday home in Akaroa available to the newlyweds, so they were able to get away for a few days by themselves. We immediately

warmed to our new daughter-in-law and when the couple moved back to settle in Christchurch about six months later it would not take long for Heleni to become an integral and loved member of the family.

*Bruce and Heleni spent their honeymoon in New Zealand, before settling back in Christchurch about six months later.*

Michael and Jenny were the next couple to marry, in fact barely a month after Bruce and Heleni. They had been living together for four years, and had been an item since their school days, so we felt it was only a matter of time before they tied the knot. Both Michael and Jenny had good jobs with a supportive circle of friends as well as playing an active part in Jenny's extended family which Michael was well accepted into and enjoyed being a part of. Claire and I both thought that Jenny was especially good for Michael, helping to give him added focus and direction, which he seemed to be thriving on. Michael continued to play senior hockey in the same club team as Richard, so the two younger boys still saw a lot of each other.


*Michael and Jenny's wedding was a great family affair, with (from left) Claire, Peter, Joy, the happy couple, Debbie, Melissa, Mum and me.*

Claire and I travelled up to Palmerston North for the wedding which was held on Queen's Birthday Weekend, staying with Graeme and Helen Grenside, while my mum and sister and brother-in-law, Joy and Peter, came down from Taranaki. The wedding was a great family occasion, the one downside being that Bruce was still in Tonga so couldn't be there. Debbie, Michael's sister, who had lived with us as a child, made the trip over from Australia with her young daughter Melissa so it was a great reunion for the siblings, not to mention for Claire who was delighted to reconnect with Debbie and to meet Melissa. I remember that Richard was late as he had been playing hockey for Manawatū against Wellington and got a ball to the head, arriving at the reception after a visit to the hospital with a shiner and stitches.

*Above: Chatting with the newly married Michael on the night of his wedding.*

*Below: Michael's wedding was a lovely reunion with Debbie (centre), especially for Michael (right), but also for Richard (left), Claire and me.*

At the time of Michael's wedding, marriage did not appear on the horizon for Richard, but that all changed very quickly after he met Tania Dally in late 1988. We had some inkling that it might be serious when he came down to Christchurch for a week or so over Christmas, but ended up returning early to Palmerston North, because he wanted to get back to Tania.

*Richard visited for Christmas 1988, including this afternoon in Marion and John's garden. From left, John, Marion, me, Richard, Kathleen and Claire.*

Things were moving very quickly for those two, because in early January they rang us to announce they were engaged and were planning to get married in December. Given they had only known each other for a matter of months and we had not yet met Tania, we were somewhat surprised, but also pleased that they seemed to be so happy and in love. However this wasn't the end of their news. In March we had another phone call announcing that Tania was pregnant with the baby due in December, so the wedding plans had been brought forward to four month's time in July – and still we had not met our latest, future daughter-in-law. That changed soon after when Tania had a work conference in Christchurch and Richard, who did not make the trip with her, arranged for her to stay with Claire and I. Bruce picked up Tania from the airport, also meeting her for the first time, and brought her home in what I imagine was a rather daunting experience for her, pregnant and engaged, and staying with her future in-laws having never met them before and without her partner present. Thankfully that initial visit went very well and Tania soon also became a dear member of the family. The wedding went ahead as planned several months later, with Claire and I, along with Bruce and Heleni making the trip north for the event which took place on a rare, beautifully calm, clear winter's Wellington day.

*Richard and Tania's wedding was another great family affair. From left, Joy, Ann, Richard, Mum (front), Claire (back), Tania, Steve (Ann's partner), front and Peter with me at the back.*

Meanwhile, Bruce and Heleni were also expecting their first child, our first grandchild, who was due in September, several months before Richard and Tania's. At the time Claire was on a trip to Australia to visit her friend, Una, who had been one of our bridesmaids, in Sydney and then up to Queensland to visit Debbie and her cousin Jan. I stayed behind in Christchurch because, as a convicted criminal, international travel was difficult and required a number of legal and bureaucratic hoops to be negotiated, which I couldn't be bothered with at the time, and anyway it was an expense we could do without and I was very busy working on my PhD. Then one morning not long before the baby was due I received one of those phone calls we all dread. It was Bruce and his message stunned me to the core. He said, remarkably calmly, that the baby was dead, having died in Heleni's womb. In a state of shock, I rushed over to Bruce and Heleni's home to learn more of what had happened. As it turned out it was a freak incident where the umbilical cord had wrapped itself around the baby's neck strangling her. Heleni noticed that the baby had stopped moving, so went to the doctor to get things checked, but by then it was too late. Everyone was devastated and Claire rushed back from Australia. In the next few days, Heleni delivered what was in all other respects a perfect, beautiful baby girl. Bruce and Heleni named her Grace. The young couple faced their grief with incredible resilience, I think bolstered by their strong faith as well as the love and support that their church community enveloped them with. While we remained living in Christchurch, Claire and I regularly put fresh flowers on Grace's grave and she continues to be in my thoughts to this day.

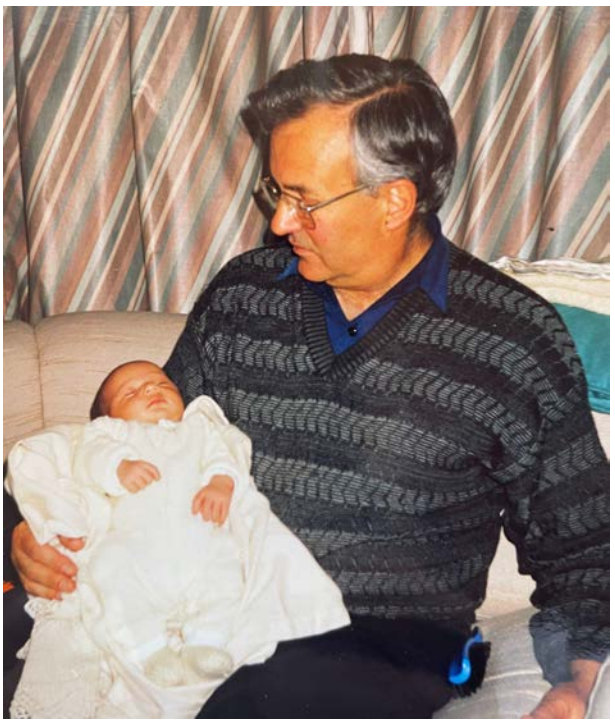
Given the shock of Grace's death, it was with some trepidation that we awaited the birth of Richard and Tania's baby. Thankfully Timothy Adam Calkin arrived healthy and hearty on 13 December 1989 just a little over three months after Grace's death. A couple of weeks later it was Christmas, so Claire and I took our car up to Picton and across on the ferry for a North Island road trip. We stayed a few, happy days in Wellington with our friend Carol Brownlie, visiting Richard and Tania's flat to spend time admiring our new grandson. We then took off up the island, visiting Michael and Jenny in Palmerston North before heading up to Taranaki to see my mother, sisters and families. We returned to Christchurch in mid-January being greeted with the news that Heleni was again pregnant. This time

everything went according to plan and on 15 August 1990, Claire Finau Calkin arrived safe and sound, being named after her two grandmothers, Claire and Heleni's mother.

While we were delighted to become grandparents, Claire's mum Kathleen was also enjoying her great-grandmother status, and particularly enjoyed having baby Claire around at family gatherings. By this stage well into her nineties, Kathleen was becoming increasingly frail with more and more health issues. While her mind remained sharp until right near the end, she was beginning to show signs of dementia, which was not easy for Claire and Marion. Eventually, in March 1991, Kathleen faded away, passing peacefully in her sleep. Marion got the call from the retirement village in the early hours and came around to tell Claire in the morning. While it was a very sad time for the sisters, they were also able to recognise the long and happy life that Kathleen had led and were able to give her the send off she deserved.

*Four generations of Shaw/Calkin women. From left, Claire (senior), Kathleen, Claire (junior) and Heleni.*

The year after Kathleen's death, when Bruce and Heleni's son, Robert Tulilatala, arrived on 24 May 1992, just as Claire had been named after her two grandmothers, Robert was named after his two grandfathers, myself and Heleni's father, Tulilatala. Claire and Robert Calkin junior would become very important in the lives of Claire and Robert senior as we, their older namesakes, enjoyed having two of our grandchildren in the same city as they grew into toddlers before both heading off to school.



*1992 saw the arrival of Robert Tulilatala Calkin.*

Later that year, the whole family gathered in Taranaki to celebrate my mum's 80th birthday. The happy event was attended by six of her great grandchildren – Tim, Claire and Robert from our side, as well as Lyn and Kerry's three – Amy, Andrew and William.

*Mum's 80th in Taranaki was a great event. From left, back row, Bruce, Tania, Ann, Michael, Richard, Claire, Pat and Ian Townsend. Middle row, Jenny, Claire, Heleni, Robert, Silvia (Mum's sister), Mum, Joy, me, Peter. Front row, Lyn, Sue, Amy, William, Simon, Andrew and Steve.*

Michael and Jenny took their time in starting a family, before their daughter Robyn arrived on 25 October 1993. At this point Michael and Jenny had shifted from Palmerston North to

Foxton Beach where they had bought their own house. Unfortunately the marriage would not last, with the couple separating in early 1997.

*Michael and Jenny had Robyn in October 1993.*

Several years before the separation we had an inkling that Michael was drinking too much and this may have been contributing to the growing tension in the relationship. When the whole family gathered in Christchurch for my 60th birthday in 1995, I noticed that Michael would start drinking very early in the day and was regularly dipping into my liquor supply. He was starting to have issues holding down a regular job and while we hoped he would get his act together the issues ultimately led to the breakdown of the marriage. Claire and I were very saddened by the split as we had a lot of time for Jenny and believed she was good for Michael. Claire kept in contact with Jenny and Robyn for some time after the separation, but as her health deteriorated the contact became less and less frequent. I have only recently reconnected with Robyn who is now married to Daniel and the pair have four delightful children, Lincoln, Lola, Coco and Casper.

Six and half years after their first child, just as they were in the preliminary stages of a programme of IVF given the lack of success in getting pregnant, Richard and Tania produced a second son, Henry, who made his way into the world on 6 April, 1996. Later that year we were expecting another grandchild as Heleni was pregnant again. One day, during a visit to their house, Claire and Robert were talking excitedly about the pending arrival of their baby brother or sister. However again for Bruce and Heleni it was not to be. A scan soon after that occasion revealed that the baby's brain had not developed normally and that survival beyond birth was unlikely. This was a devastating blow given what the couple had already been through with the loss of Grace, their first born. Not long after, Heleni gave birth at home to a girl, who they named Dale. In an incredibly moving speech at Dale's funeral, Heleni explained that when Dale was born, she knew God wanted her to care for her while she could still live. Soon Bruce arrived home and arranged for a friend to mind Claire and Robert, while they took Dale to hospital, where she lived for about 16 hours. Once more, I had great admiration for the character and strength with which Bruce and Heleni were able to face their grief. Despite the pain, their faith that somehow it all

made sense in God's plan was unwavering. While I struggled to be quite as steadfast as my son and daughter-in-law, the deaths of, firstly, Grace and then Dale, before they even had a chance to experience life, were sobering reminders of human fragility, not to mention the ultimate state of mystery and uncertainty in which we all exist. It also reminded Claire and me that we had a great deal to be grateful for and that the simple joys of family were a large part of what made life worth living. We loved getting updates about our grandchildren, which often came from our daughters-in-law as well as our sons, and Claire took great pride in decorating our lounge with dozens of photos of their progress and exploits.

# 7. Senior Moments in Timaru

*1997–2017, Timaru*

For reasons outlined in Tales from the Lucky Generation, Claire and I moved to Timaru, Claire's home town, in 1997. She established a piano teaching clientele while I worked on a number of projects helping the unemployed reintegrate back into the workforce. Part of this involved the Learning a Living seminar I write about in the main memoir and the detailed report we produced for each participant. Given the intellectual property we had created, we figured that we could take the material to a wider audience via the internet, so we started a website called futureproofyourcareer.com, where visitors could complete the questionnaire, receive a small subset of results for free, before being given the opportunity to purchase a "personalised ebook", which was essentially a version of the report we had designed for the seminar. Over the next few years, we sold several thousand of these ebooks to people all around the world, providing another useful source of income.

*The family gathered at Richard and Tania's home on the Kapiti Coast for Christmas, in 1997 just after Claire and I moved to Timaru. Above: Presents unwrapping with myself and Heleni.*

*Above: from left: Henry, Claire, Michael and Bruce.*

*Below: the four cousins, from left, Tim, Robert, Henry and Claire.*


By about 2005, the level of unemployment in South Canterbury had fallen considerably and so Work and Income discontinued funding for the seminar. However I was able to secure a contract from the department working one-on-one with those who had been on the register for more than six months and who were genuinely motivated to get back into employment. I was also able to use the profiling systems we developed to provide recruitment services for McCain Foods, who ran a large vegetable processing plant in Timaru. Through a combination of all these activities, together with our pensions and Claire's piano teaching work, we were generally able to make ends meet, although there were also some lean periods where the financial pressure made day-to-day life more than a little uncomfortable. In the meantime, Richard's new business, Web Genius, which provides digital marketing products for small to medium firms, was going through a growth spurt and needed assistance running the Google ad campaigns that formed a central part of their offering. I had learned some basic skills in Google ads through the online marketing of our ebook, so was able to take on this task. This role would provide an enjoyable and constant stream of work for the next 15 years, providing more than enough to fund our very modest, but contented, lifestyle.

At this time I went through some health challenges which involved considerable inconvenience and irritation, but they paled in comparison to what Claire was about to experience. One Sunday morning near the end of February 2008 I had left home early, before Claire was awake. I returned about 11 am and was surprised to find she was still in bed. When I entered the bedroom I took one look at her and realised all was not well. She confirmed she was feeling awful, so I immediately dialled 111 to summon an ambulance. She was rushed to hospital where she was diagnosed with pneumonia and eventually with a life threatening dissection of the aorta which required urgent attention if she were to survive. Needless to say this was a hell of a shock as we both got our heads around the gravity of the situation.

The plan was to fly her urgently to Dunedin Hospital by helicopter, but the weather was too stormy, leaving no option but to make the three hour trip by ambulance, while I followed down in the car. I hurriedly packed a bag, cancelled several arrangements that had been made for the day and made phone calls to the boys and Marion, Claire's sister, informing them of the situation before setting off for Dunedin. My intention was to check into a motel but the event coincided with orientation week at Otago University so all accommodation in the city was booked out. Running out of options, I rang some old friends, Dick and June Laverty, who kindly agreed to put me up.

The news I was greeted with at the hospital was as serious as expected. The urgent operation required was equivalent to a heart by-pass which did nothing to relieve my anxiety. The only consolation was that Claire was in the right place and everything was being done to ensure her survival. By this stage Richard had arrived from Kapiti along with 16 year old Tim who had insisted on accompanying his father. Bruce and Heleni, with Claire and Robert in tow, arrived soon after from Christchurch. I hadn't been able to contact Michael, as he and his partner Marie had moved to a new place outside of Timaru and I didn't have their latest contact details with me. However, my daughter-in-law Tania was able to track them down and they arrived later that day. Following a further scan that afternoon, the surgeons announced they would operate the next morning, as there was no time to waste; the dissection could burst at any stage and if it did, would almost certainly be fatal. They made it very clear that despite the fact that the operation was the only viable option, even that might not be enough to save Claire's life.

Through all this Claire herself was remarkably calm, given she knew full well the seriousness of what was in front of her. As I covered in a previous chapter, she had serious health problems at around age 30 while we were living in Invercargill, when she was told that without successful treatment she would not live past 35. She was now well into her 70s and regarded all of the intervening years as a bonus, facing the life-threatening situation with courage and a sense of peace and resignation that life had treated her well. While Claire was putting on a brave face, the rest of us were very worried, albeit confident that the medical team was on top of the situation. We were shown the intensive care ward where Claire would go after the operation and while the high tech and obvious efficiency were a little intimidating it was, at the same time, reassuring.

Early the following morning when it came time for the operation, we all accompanied Claire right up to the door of the operating theatre, before we said our goodbyes, each of us silently praying it would not prove to be a final farewell. We then returned to June and Dick Laverty's, who were away for a few days, to await the phone call following the operation. The atmosphere at the Laverty's that day as we waited was surreal. Time slowed right down and barely a word was spoken between us. We all retreated within ourselves; perhaps because the silence connected us with that deep, calm part of our being – the same dimension we access through prayer and meditation – helping to soothe our worries.

From what the surgeon had said I was expecting a call anytime from about 2pm onwards. When this time came and went I was able to reassure myself that this was neither good nor bad news, but as the minutes continued to tick away I struggled to keep the worrisome thoughts from surfacing. When the phone finally did ring at around 3.30pm, I stared at the surgeon's number on the screen for a few seconds before picking up the call, conscious that this was one of those pivotal moments where my life would go in very different directions depending on the information I was about to receive. With six pairs of eyes trained upon me, it was with massive relief I heard the operation had gone as well as could be expected, but somewhat disconcerted with the surgeon's remark that it was a close call as the aorta was "hanging on by a thread" and any delay to the operation would likely have been disastrous. As everyone gathered from my reaction that it was good news there was a palpable release of tension in the room and more chatter in the next five minutes than there had been in the previous five hours.

The surgeon was happy for us to visit, although Claire was still heavily sedated and was not aware of our presence. We were allowed into intensive care in threes and my three included my 15 year old grand-daughter Claire who, bless her, was sobbing deeply at seeing her Grandma in that state. Even though Claire, senior, was not yet conscious I already noticed a much rosier complexion in her face as if her circulation had received a boost. It was such a relief to see her in such capable hands, to watch in awe at the competence of the doctors and nurses and to feel so grateful for the New Zealand health service.

After the visit, Richard, Tim and I went to an Irish pub in downtown Dunedin, where we had a meal and some drinks while taking in a live, one day cricket match on the big screen. It was a euphoric time as I realised that the inevitable parting of our ways that death would eventually bring had been pushed back allowing me to continue sharing my journey with the love of my life for the time being. Claire was in intensive care for another couple of days before being moved into a ward for another week when she was transferred back to Timaru Hospital, where she remained in the rehabilitation ward for another couple of weeks before coming home.

Although Claire's energy levels were a little diminished during her recovery, we managed well enough, assisted by some home help and mobility aids provided at the hospital's expense. After three months Claire had a follow-up appointment at Dunedin Hospital, and while she got a good report that her recovery was on track, things were about to take a turn for the worse. On our way back from Dunedin our car broke down and while, with the help of the AA, we managed to find a garage to repair it, Claire was exposed to some cold, miserable winter weather, not to mention the stress of the breakdown. We were keen to get home as that night we were attending the wedding anniversary of old friends, Don and Pat Robertson, from which we returned home around midnight. My fears that we might have overdone things were confirmed when about two o'clock in the morning Claire woke me as she was not feeling well whereupon she started coughing up blood. I immediately

called the ambulance which rushed her back to hospital where she was kept in intensive care for a couple of days, before being transferred back to a ward and then discharged after about a week.

This episode began a series of ambulance calls and hospital visits over the coming years as Claire's health became an ongoing concern. I believe that half a lifetime of taking daily steroids since her adrenal glands were removed 40-odd years previously due to her brush with Cushing's Syndrome had taken its toll and weakened her system. I did my best to look after her and while she was always brave in the face of her challenges there was a constant worry that hung over our otherwise contented existence.

Soon after arriving in Timaru, to help integrate into the local community, I joined the Gleniti Golf Club. While I had played golf intermittently over the years this was the first time I had joined a club with the intention of playing regularly since we had left Invercargill 30 years previously. Playing golf became a treasured pastime and I met some great mates who came to form an important part of my circle of friends in our new city. Of the golf clubs in Timaru, Gleniti was not the most prestigious, despite the fact the course itself was top notch. The club has a lovely old homestead for a clubhouse and a membership that consisted of Timaru's trades and working people, reminding me of the type of folk I grew up with in Castlecliff.

My golf started off very ordinary, but gradually got better and better working down to a handicap of around 12. I was pleased to break the magical barrier of 80 and achieved two holes–in-one over the years I played there. I enjoyed playing in the over 50s Penney Salver interclub grade which was played on all the courses across South Canterbury on Mondays. We never won the competition but we did make the final on at least two occasions. While the interclub league was fun, perhaps the highlights were the "haggles'' we had amongst ourselves where the stakes were usually 50 cents for the first nine holes, 50 cents for the second nine and 50 cents for the match as a whole. While there was only ever a total of $1.50 at stake you would have thought we were playing for the crown jewels such was the intensity of the good humoured competition. All was forgiven and forgotten in the bar afterwards when there was much good humoured teasing and banter over a few well-earned beers. I also remember travelling to Taumarunui in the central North Island several times to play in a pairs tournament with Richard. On one occasion, we played his good friend Stu Bartlett and his father Rodger, for the exorbitant stakes of $5 for the first nine holes, $5 for the second nine holes and $5 for the match. This was 10 times what I used to and a bit rich for me particularly when we lost all three legs of the haggle.

At Gleniti I became especially good friends with Charlie Wilson and Frank Hughes. Charlie was the captain of my Penney Salver interclub team and over the years I enjoyed his camaraderie and company as we travelled around South Canterbury with a shared competitive mission taking on the other clubs in the region. Frank was my partner most days in the local haggle and we had some great tussles in particular with Bunny Christian and Alan Boulton. I look back on the days at Gleniti golf with the fondest of memories and

it was a matter of sadness when, having moved into our 80s, playing 18 holes became too much for Frank and me.

Around this time, my other main interest was my involvement with the Green Party. I was lucky enough to meet and work with figures such as Green's leader Jeanette Fitzsimons which I write about in Tales from the Lucky Generation. I also met and was impressed with a number of other prominent Green politicians. I admired and respected the work of Mojo Mathers, a Green list MP, who lived in South Canterbury and attended many of our meetings. Mojo is deaf and is a strong advocate for the disabled and marginalised. It was uncanny how she could take part in meetings by lip reading. I was disappointed when she failed to gain a seat after the 2017 election as I believe she has much to contribute to the Green caucus in particular and parliament in general.

Another Green Party MP I admired was Kennedy Graham, a former diplomat and UN official who visited Timaru on a number of occasions. Kennedy is the younger brother of former National Party cabinet minister Sir Douglas Graham, and was an early and strong advocate for policies to address climate change. When he resigned in 2017, party leader James Shaw praised his work in this area, commenting: "I don't think anybody else in New Zealand has done as much to build cross party consensus and change the conversation about climate change in New Zealand." The circumstances around Kennedy's resignation were very disappointing when he and fellow Green MP David Clendon resigned in protest at co-leader Metiria Turei's initial refusal to step down over her revelations that, many years before her parliamentary career, she had committed both benefit and electoral fraud, albeit both relatively minor.

While I believe her level of wrongdoing was blown way out of proportion, Turei's actions did a great deal of damage to the party, plummeting its polling from an all time high of around 15 percent to barely above the five percent threshold by the time of the 2017 election. This was extremely discouraging for the party rank and file, with Turei's lack of political nous, summed up perfectly by Clare de Lore in the New Zealand Listener when she wrote: "Metiria Turei's spectacular own goal in admitting to benefit and electoral fraud not only effectively ended her career but also took down two of her colleagues, savaged a healthy poll rating and led to Labour's changing of the guard and reversal of fortunes." Turei eventually resigned as co-leader and retired at the next election.

Over the years Claire and I became more and more ensconced in the Timaru community. Claire especially enjoyed having some of her nearest and dearest old friends around like Jan Young, Pat Robertson and Shona McDougal. It was a great shock when Shona was tragically killed in a car accident just out of Timaru in June 2015. From July 2013 onwards, Claire would also enjoy having her sister Marion in the same city. Marion's second husband John passed away the previous year, with Marion purchasing a unit in Timaru's Mountain View Retirement Village not long after. Claire eventually retired from her piano teaching, whereupon her friend and colleague at the New Zealand School of Music, Dale Davey, set up a prize called the Claire Calkin Medal which to this day is awarded each year to the most

promising piano pupil in the Timaru region. My own social circle revolved around the golf club and my friends and colleagues in the environmental causes I was involved with.

Although we didn't initially have any of our immediate family in Timaru, we were in constant contact with all three boys keeping up-to-date with their latest family developments. Our complement of grandchildren was completed in May 2000 with the arrival of Richard and Tania's third son, Adam Mathew Calkin, 10 and a half years after our oldest grandchild, Adam's brother, Tim.

*Claire and I made several trips to the North Island to visit family and are pictured here with grandsons, from left, Tim, Henry and Adam.*

By this stage Michael had a new partner, Marie, who had three children of her own, Alex, Temara and Mikaela. Michael joined the family in Foxton Beach in 1999, where he had been living at the time of his marriage split, before the family settled in Whanganui. In 2006 they made another move, this time down to South Canterbury, enabling us to see more of them. In around 2005 the family unit had been joined by three of Marie's grandchildren – another Alex, Duc and Blake – as an older daughter of Marie's was struggling to cope with the children. Eventually Michael realised that his drinking was adversely impacting his ability to perform his role in the family, not to mention hold down a full time job, so he was finally, around 2008, able to ditch the booze completely. The family settled in Makahihi, just south of Timaru, where Michael was able to get employment at the local garage. Michael and Marie did an amazing job providing a safe and secure home for those children. Such was the unsettled nature of how life might have been otherwise, especially for the three younger boys, they may well have ended up not unlike the lost boys of my PhD thesis.

In 2003 Mum turned 90 and the whole family assembled in Taranaki to celebrate the occasion. The event was held at my niece Lyn and her husband Kerry's farm in Inglewood, 20 kilometres east of New Plymouth. Mum was in great form and she enjoyed immensely

having her entire family around her. My nephew Paul, Lyn's older brother, and his wife Gill and two children Molly and George, made the trip over from the UK meaning Mum had 10 great-grandchildren at the event, ranging in age from three year old Adam, up to 17 year old Amy, Lyn and Kerry's daughter. It was a fitting celebration, but nothing more than Mum deserved such was the love and support she had given all of us over the years. Mum was a very straightforward, down-to-earth woman, and above all else, an outstanding role model reminding us all that whatever we may or may not achieve in life, it is your close family relationships that are the most important. Mum's health had been good right up to and beyond her 90th birthday, but after this there were signs that her trademark robustness was beginning to falter. Eventually Mum reluctantly moved from her flat and beloved garden in Stratford into care in New Plymouth after she had a bad turn. My two sisters in New Plymouth, Joy and Ann – along with their families – did an amazing job of caring for Mum in her final years, something I am deeply grateful for, given that distance prevented me from being able to make an equal contribution. Mum gradually went downhill and died in June 2007 at the age of 93.

Claire and I loved hearing about the exploits of our grandchildren, who were all doing well at school and in sports. Tim represented Wellington at various age-groups in hockey and Kapiti-Horowhenua in cricket, while Claire played netball and Robert, rugby – where he represented Canterbury at age-group level as a speedy outside back. However it was in athletics that both Claire and Robert really stood out. The pair competed in a number of Colgate Games, coming up against athletes of the same age from all around the South Island. While neither ever won a gold medal, they won a number of silvers and bronzes; Robert in the shot put, long jump, hurdles and relays and Claire in the hurdles and relays. One year in the shot put Robert was runner up to Tom Walsh, who went on to win shot put bronze medals for New Zealand at both the Rio and Tokyo Olympics. Claire, senior, was especially interested in their achievements as it was in track and field in which she had excelled during her days at Timaru Girls High. Henry also loved his sport, making the local Kapiti soccer reps as a goalkeeper as well as playing cricket, while Adam played hockey all throughout his school years.

*Both Claire and Robert were very capable athletes. Here Claire shows her prowess for the hurdles.*

More significant milestones for Claire and I were our joint 70th birthday in 2005 and our 50th wedding anniversary which came around in April 2009. Both were low-key, happy occasions with the family gathering in Timaru. Claire and I turned 74 in the year of our 50th anniversary and it was more than 12 months since Claire's major health scare, so we shared a sense of gratitude that our family was together, intensified by an awareness that there was a limit to how many more of these opportunities we would get to enjoy in the future.

*In 2005 Claire and I enjoyed a joint 70th birthday party surrounded by family and friends.*

Meanwhile the grandchildren continued to grow older and one-by-one their schooldays came to an end. On leaving school, Tim joined the family business working for Web Genius as a web designer, while pursuing his main passion of music. Claire senior's musical talent seemed to have skipped a generation as none of our boys displayed any interest, but Tim certainly did, something that Claire took a real delight and pride in. Tim plays multiple instruments, but it is as a musical producer that he has really made his mark, producing his own and other artist's music. His bands, The No Problemos and Seaside Sloths have produced multiple albums and developed a respectable following in the national hip hop scene. Henry started studying psychology at Victoria University but after one term decided that this subject was not for him, moving back to the Kapiti Coast to take up whatever work he could find while he planned his next move. Henry also developed a passion for music, mainly guitar and bass guitar, eventually playing alongside Tim in the bands I have just mentioned. Meanwhile Adam was still at high school, doing well and enjoying a close and supportive circle of friends.

Claire, junior, studied personal training at the New Zealand Institute of Sport in Wellington, while pursuing her new sport of bodybuilding, winning several titles at regional and national level. This was a real credit to her dedication and application as the sport takes incredible discipline, not only around the training but equally so regarding the diet needed to build the required muscle at the same time as reducing body fat. Robert followed in his father's footsteps by completing a Bachelor of Physical Education at Otago University, but it was his passion for barbering that would have more bearing on his future career. After graduating Robert moved to Melbourne and before long was managing several barber shops of which he was also a part owner of.

The first of the grandchildren to take the plunge into marriage was Tim, when in April 2015, at the age of 25 he married Michelle, with whom he had been for 10 years since their high school days. Claire and I made the trip up to the Kapiti Coast for the happy event which was held in a beautiful rural location on a stunning day. It was great to see Tim so happy amongst a very supportive circle of friends and his extended family. Unfortunately the outcome of the marriage was not as happy as the wedding day itself, with the pair separating only eight months later. Tim did not see the split coming so it was especially hard on him. Even though it was 60 years previously, I could still remember the sting of a broken heart from when Audrey finished our relationship, so I felt for Tim, but knew that he too would bounce back.

Claire and I both turned 80 the year of Tim's wedding, and in September the family gathered to celebrate Claire's milestone. As always, she loved having her family around her, this time sensing it may be the last major family milestone that she would get to enjoy, such was the nature of her deteriorating health. Sure enough, as I outline in the memoir Claire continued to decline and passed away several weeks before her 81st birthday.

The funeral was arranged for the following week and, while it was an emotional and sad time for all of us, I believe we were able to give Claire a dignified and very loving farewell surrounded by her friends and family. The only exception was grandson Henry, who was overseas at the time. Bruce, Richard, Claire and Robert made speeches. Tim sang a Bob Dylan song and Adam read a poem. Our friend Jan Young presented a gracious eulogy and Dale Davey spoke of Claire's contribution to the Modern School of Music in South Canterbury.

Not long after Claire's death I made the decision to move up to the Kāpiti Coast to live in a flat at the back of Richard and Tania's property.

# 8. Peaceful reflection by the sea

*2017+, Kāpiti Coast*

Since moving to Kāpiti, where I am within walking distance of the beautiful Raumati Beach, I largely take care of myself but I am also closely watched by Richard and Tania. Much of my contentedness stems from being part of a close knit family. As I write this I am about to go and watch Richard play cricket, as he still plays both cricket and hockey at masters level. I also take much pleasure in observing Tania making her mark as an artist, and the wonderful abstract paintings she creates. My extended family around here also includes Richard and Tania's three adult sons, Tim, Henry and Adam, as well as Tania's mother Carol and stepfather John. There is a happy ending to Tim's story as he has remarried and I have grown very fond of Megan, my granddaughter-in-law, not to mention her parents, Simon and Sharron who live locally and have also become integral members of the clan. I very much look forward to the regular family dinners, often when one of those mentioned here is celebrating a birthday or milestone.

*Happy family for occasions for, top, my 85th birthday in 2020, together with Graeme and Helen Grenside and oldest son Bruce, right. And, below, celebrating my 87th with, from right, Simon, Sharron, Tania and Richard.*

My old mate since our youthful days in Whanganui, Graeme Grenside, lives locally and we have enjoyed many Saturday afternoons taking in various race meetings from around the country on the TV. I am also close to Bruce and Heleni and I have enjoyed being at their home in Christchurch a number of times for very relaxing holidays, when I like to catch up with Michael and his new partner Mandy who still live down in Timaru. The other group I remain in contact with are my two sisters and families in Taranaki, as well as Ian and Pat Townsend in Whanganui

Keeping up-to-date with the progress and exploits of all my grandchildren is another favourite pastime. I've mentioned Tim, now 33, who along with his marriage to Megan has established a thriving cabinet making business, called Calkin Cabinetry, and continues to create, perform and record music. Henry, 27, returned to study and completed a three year fashion design course and is now contemplating his next move. Like Tim, music is a passion for Henry and the two brothers often collaborate in live and recorded music. After several years studying IT and programming, Adam, 23, has had several stints of working and studying with plans to establish a career in IT. Both of Bruce and Heleni's children – Claire, 31, and Robert, 29 – have made the move across the Tasman. Robert settled in Melbourne establishing a business as a barber, running a number of shops across the city. In 2021, he married Natalie, a lovely Australian woman of Assyrian descent, but unfortunately due to Covid-19 restrictions I was unable to attend the wedding. The couple now live near Sydney where Robert has established another barbershop, called Razor Rob's Haircut Shoppe. Claire moved to the Gold Coast several years ago, where she lives with her Kiwi partner, James. The couple have a wedding planned for 2024. Claire has established a successful online consultancy, called Plant Fuelled Muscle, advising clients on exercise and nutrition, with an emphasis on plant-based foods. While my grandchildren are the source of immense joy and pride, I like to joke with them that they are yet to produce any great-grandchildren for me – despite being in prime childbearing age – and that they should get a move on, because who knows how much longer I'll be around! At least now that the three oldest are happily living with their partners I have reason for hope that I might meet the next generation before my time comes.

Speaking of how much more time I have in the land of the living, a health scare in late 2021 at the age of 86, provided a stark reminder that despite the long period of mainly good health I have enjoyed, the body is ultimately fallible. It was a quiet Saturday morning in early December when I decided to pop around the corner to the local shops for some household supplies, but from that point on until the following morning when I woke up in Wellington hospital, the rest of the day is a blur. To cut a long story short I had a stroke while trying to park at the Raumati Beach shops and managed to bang into a couple of parked cars. The blockage in my brain caused a temporary inability to speak, so all I could do was blather incoherently. One of the affected car owners managed to get my address from my wallet and drove to our place alerting Richard, who was soon on the scene. Richard took one look at me and called the ambulance. The medics diagnosed a stroke and rushed me into Wellington hospital, a trip of about 45 minutes.

Following in by car, Richard was able to be with me while I was assessed by the neurologists. I have virtually no recollection of what transpired that day but according to Richard the prognosis presented by the doctors was not encouraging, with the most hopeful outcome being a period of weeks in hospital with a long road to recovery ahead. Apparently, we spent about seven hours in A and E, before a bed was cleared in the ward, and Richard left me around 7pm with the distinct impression that things were looking rather grim for his father.

The next thing I remember was waking in the morning wondering what I was doing in hospital, so I asked a nurse what was happening. She was very pleased to hear that I was alert and capable of speaking and immediately summoned the neurologist who was dealing with my case. He was also delighted, explaining that the blockage in my brain that caused the stroke must have cleared overnight and this was as good an outcome as could be expected given how I had presented the previous day and not something that most in my position were fortunate enough to experience. Naturally, the family, who were all fearing the worst, were very relieved and after just one more night in hospital I returned home. Since then I think it is fair to say I have slowed down a little, but to all intents and purposes there have been no major repercussions except to reinforce the finite nature of our existence and the importance of valuing every moment in which we continue to draw breath.

Life continues here and I have plenty to look forward to, not the least of which is a Calkin family reunion planned for Labour Weekend 2023 in Marton. The reunion will mark 100 years since Grandma and Grandad Calkin settled in New Zealand with their five sons full of optimism that exciting and fulfilling times lay ahead. The Calkin clan is now well established on these shores, and as I outline in the final chapter of Tales from the Lucky Generation I have great hope that the coming generations of humanity will overcome our considerable challenges and that the future will continue to be exciting and fulfilling.