

President Madeline, Fellow Rotarians

I moved to Howick in 1972, 130 years after my Great Great Grandparents arrived in Auckland on the Inchiman and lived in Howick. He was a Chelsea Pensioner and Fencible.

I grew up in Glendowie; went to Selwyn College and left school at 15 having obtained a job typing despatch labels at Ross & Glendinings, a soft goods warehouse in the city. My father died suddenly three years later.

During the six years I was there I had several promotions ending up as the secretary to the warehouse manager. I left there when U.E.B took over the company and closed the warehouses down. I got a job at U.E.B in Panmure.

During the time I was there I married. We bought a house in Birkdale. David was born there and two years later when I was pregnant with Steven we moved to Howick.

Whilst the boys were young, I was a stay-at-home Mum. To bring in some income I had a soft toy business. A traveller took sample toys into country stores and got orders.

I also took in typing and that was how I ended up as the voluntary secretary to Pointways Pony Club and spent many a Sunday afternoon judging cross country jumps although I had never ridden a horse.

I joined the Pakuranga Labour Party and started up the Stockade Hill Branch and the Howick Women's Branch. When both the boys were at school, I started working part-time in the office of the Otara Labour Party taking the bookings for the Otara Fleamarket. With a small group of people, I started the Panmure Market and physically ran that every Sunday for several years. We also started markets in Ponsonby and I was the advisor to the group who set up the Avondale Race Course market.

Election time arrived and Colin Moyle was elected the Labour Party candidate. I ran his campaign and after winning the seat became his Electorate Secretary. I stayed for three years and left to get a full-time job at Permark Industries in Marua Road. Whilst there I was asked to run Richard Northey's canvassing in Mount Eden. I was also part of the very small group of people who ran the Labour Party computer system and were responsible for all the marginal seats. We won all the seats we managed.

I left Permark and went to work at IHC as the assistant to the Manukau Branch Administrator. A couple of years later Howick Branch was formed and I applied for and got the job as Branch Manager.

IHC Head Office and the N.Z. Committee then decided to combine two branches and make an Area and therefore only needed half the managers. I was lucky enough to get the Area Managers job for the combined branches of Howick and Manukau.

When I started at IHC I was the Chairperson for the Pakuranga Labour Electorate Committee and on the Labour Party Regional Council. John, who was the Branch President for Manukau Branch and later became the President of both Howick and Manukau, was the Treasurer for the Pakuranga Electorate Committee. Never the Twain shall meet; but somehow it did and we moved in together and were married in 1998.

We rented a shop in Uxbridge Road and opened Titles Secondhand Bookshop.

The scariest thing that happened was the night that Kelly Flavell's office next door caught fire.

Whilst I was running the bookshop, I was very honoured to be asked, along with Shirley Rutherford from National Real Estate, to be the first women members of Howick Rotary. When John and I moved to Katikati to open a country bookshop it was with great sadness that I said goodbye to the many friends we had made at Rotary.

We bought a very old house with a couple of acres which was an overrun market garden, 9kms out of Katikati. We had one of the two old glasshouses pulled down and a new large bookshop built.

I joined the local Herb Society who were looking for a place to have a public garden. We offered them the remaining glass house which they accepted. We had the roof taken off but kept the outside frame. John built 13 raised garden beds. The garden soon spread way beyond the glasshouse space. It was opened by the then Editor of New Zealand Gardener magazine and was featured in that magazine. The garden won a couple of awards and was featured for several years in the Tauranga Garden Fest.

A friend and I started up the Katikati Genealogy Society, which, I understand, is still going.

Meanwhile John became very ill and had a triple bypass and a new heart valve.

In Auckland my grandchildren had started to arrive and combined with John's ill health the family and I convinced him it was sensible to return to Auckland.

Steven and Karen had a flat downstairs at their place and invited us to move in which we did - I am still there today.

John and I joined the Bucklands Beach Bowling Club and three months later I was the Secretary and still am. A year later John was the Treasurer.

About three years ago my siblings invited John and I to go with them on a Baltic Cruise. The two days we spent in Russia John was most unwell and the night we sailed for Helsinki he was sick. Next morning, I could see he was struggling to breathe and rang the ship's doctor. He was taken by ambulance to hospital where he stayed for almost three weeks. Of course, I had to leave the ship and that is another long story.

His son, Philip who lives in London came and helped me and we finally got John back to London then I got him home. But he never really recovered. During the next two years he was in Middlemore several times culminating in a ten week stay starting in January of last year. To make way for the expected rush of Covid patients he was moved to a small private hospital. He passed away a few days later. Of course, we could not visit him or have a funeral although his two daughters and I were allowed, one at a time, to see him after he died.

Currently as well as the Bowling Club I work two days a week at Flairoma in Pakuranga making perfume sachets. I do voluntary work for the N.Z. Genealogy society, make soft toys for the children in Middlemore for Christmas and am working on a three-metre-long cross stitch which John bought for me a few months before he died.

I had been thinking that I would like, if it was possible, to return to Rotary and a chance meeting with Fred and Celeste motivated me to ask if I could rejoin Rotary and I am very honoured and pleased to be here.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for the wonderful welcome you have given me.