

May I present to you – Gordon Tucker – This is his life!

Born 27<sup>th</sup> August 1978 in Hastings Hospital in the Hawkes Bay, to my excited parents and older sister.

My father, also born and raised in the Hawkes Bay was of English decent on his father's side and Northern Irish from his mother's side, and raised Presbyterian – a very conservative 3 children family, with his two sisters.

My mother, was of Southern Irish and Scottish decent, and raised Roman Catholic in Taupo, with her 8 siblings – so this is possibly where I get my more liberal and extroverted side of my personality.

It was my father's side of the family that saw me raised in the Hawkes Bay, in a small town called Clive.

My father came from a lineage of hard working woolscourers with my great-great-great grandfather Edward having been involved in the wool industry in Devonshire and then arriving in New Zealand in the 1840s as part of the New Plymouth Company settlers.

5 generations grew the Tucker Ltd Woolscourers name throughout the region, primarily on a site established by my great-great grandfather Richard Tucker in 1904, and the woolscouring business remained with the Tucker Family control for over 100 years.

For those who don't know, woolscouring is the process of cleaning the grease, dirt out of a sheep's fleece, and in modern times done in what is effectively a long washing machine, then dried, and pressed into a wool bale ready for transport.

Working hard is in my blood.

At it's peak my father was responsible for approximately 300 staff across two sites, and at the same time inventing new businesses, such as growing squash pumpkins on our 20 acre lifestyle block, where many years, my 2 younger brothers, sister and I would toil away weeding and harvesting in the roasting Hawkes Bay summer sun. He developed a use for a waste by-product of woolscouring, by using lanolin as a main ingredients for making into horse hoof cream, and my siblings and I would have to manually fill containers, label and box ready for distribution throughout NZ.

He designed new machines, one for turning log end waste from local sawmills into showjumping railings, and another to turn waste wool into tiny balls used in pet mattresses. Working smart was in his veins, and being the eldest son, it was expected of me too!

At age 11, I started employment at the woolscour, where every weekend for 4 hours I would mow the lawns with a mower that was possibly twice my size (or so it seemed at the time), and was so pleased to earn \$7/hour, so I suddenly had a lot more pocket money than all my friends.

By age 13, I was helping in the sorting floor, where different grades of wool were blended or separated for certain orders, and by age 15 I was able to be about as effective as 70% of an adult worker, and able to use a wool barrow and hook to move 140kg wool bales, and in most departments from the Dag shed to the press machines to driving forklifts in the store room. I would work occasionally on weekends during the peak summer season and then shift work every school holiday until age 20.

Sport was also a big part of my upbringing, and the work at the woollscour helped to keep me fit for the wide range of sports I was playing at the time, with cricket, basketball, rugby, volleyball, skiing and rowing. One of the biggest sports focusses in our family was my father's keen interest in horse riding, where he had been a former NZ representative in showjumping, both competitively and also in management as Chair of the NZ Horse Society throughout the 1990s, and as Chef de Quip for NZ Equestrian team at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, managing the team of Mark Todd, Bruce Goodin and Harvey Wilson.

As you can probably tell, I had some big shoes to fill and a major chip on my shoulder about it.

At age 15, I began to rebel a little too much, and got into a the wrong crowd at high school, my parents decided I was going to boarding school to finish my last 3 years of secondary school, and gave me the option of choosing between Kings College or Christ College. For me it was choosing

between Auckland and Christchurch, and I didn't like Auckland. Christ's College it was.

What a cultural shock to find a city that was even more conservative than Hawkes Bay. I went from a 1200 student co-ed public school, to an ultra-traditional, all boys' school where I almost had a different uniform for each day for the week. A place where teachers were addressed Sir or Miss.

My academic results did improve. I remained competitive in my chosen two sports of rugby and rowing (there were strict rules about having one summer sport and one winter sport only).

However for the first two years, I hated being there, and it wasn't until my final year, that I started to enjoy it, mainly due to trying something different – I gained two honours awards in my final year, by joining the school's chapel choir as a baritone/bass, and gaining the prized lead role in the school show, called Dear Felix, written and directed by Joe Bennett, who at

the time was my English teacher, but has since become a renowned author and columnist.

Having gained University Entrance, I decided to follow in the footsteps of my sister, by attending the best University in the country, and quickly learned the very difficult catch phrase “Otaaago”.

I chose to undertake a double degree, a BSc in Psychology and a BCom in Marketing, and for the first 3 years, I studied Captain Cook, Gardies, KCs, Bath Street, the University Rugby Club rooms and their famous court sessions, the House of Pain. I obviously had such a bad influence on them all as they have pretty much disappeared since then!

Although I did manage to maintain having a job as a kitchen hand at Studholm Hall, which was a very handy way to ensure I ate fairly well throughout the years.

In 1999, around the time of my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, I went back to the stage, performing as one of the

Jets gang in West Side Story at the Regent Theatre. I had some very proud parents, aunty and grandparents in the audience, although I’m not so sure they were proud of my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party.

Little did I know at the time that I had less than a year left with my folks.

In July 2000, while on holiday, driving my uncle’s pick-up truck across the US, they collided head-first with a campervan carrying a family of Mormons in Idaho, on their way to Salt Lake City. The campervan occupants survived, mostly unharmed, however we were told my parents died instantly, and the truck shortly afterwards caught on fire, so their bodies could not be rescued.

My world, and that of my siblings changed overnight when we were notified. My youngest brother, Stephen, turned 16 the next day.

A week after their funeral, I moved out of my Dunedin flat and returned home to become a guardian for Stephen, so he could continue with his schooling, and my other brother Greg aged 18 joined us too.

Being back in Clive, I did not want to go back to working at the woolscour, so I decided to learn my mother's passion – early childhood education.

My mother and some of her friend started a successful early childhood teacher and nanny training business, called PORSE, which has since become a nationwide brand. I completed the course my mother had designed and written, completing my ECE level 3 qualification, which allowed me to teach preschool for 6 months.

However after a year of being in Hawkes Bay, I was getting itchy feet to complete my degrees, and relatives had taken over the guardianship role for Stephen.

I returned to Dunedin, with a lot of focus and dedication to finish studies and go travelling. While studying I also trained on the winter weekends to become a snowboarding instructor, which was part of my travel plans.

In my final year of study, I went to an event with a friend who introduced me to Sarah Knowles – my future wife. While I was getting grief counselling shortly after my parents death, I was encouraged to do a dream board and list the key attributes I was looking for in a soul mate. I quickly listed 15 points – at the time I thought I was being too picky – things like challenges me intellectually and spiritually, has a great sense of humour, awesome dancer etc.

I quickly fell head-over heels for Sarah, and after only a few weeks of dating, I found this list that I had actually forgotten about. Sarah ticked every box. I knew she was the one.

After six months together, the diamond engagement ring was burning too big a hole in my pocket. I asked her – will you marry me, and she put her hands up to her mouth in shock, with a frozen stare at the box in my hand, repeatedly saying “oh my god, oh my god”, to the point I thought I’d made a huge mistake. She then screamed yes, and quickly apologised as it was 1.30am Christmas morning and our flatmates were sleeping in the next room.

Upon finishing studies we planned to go on our OE to Europe, but the US bombed Iraq and SARs broke out in Asia, so our OE destination was changed to Queenstown, where Kiwis were a minority. Sarah worked for Real Journeys, and I spent 9 months teaching in a preschool, followed by a couple of years with 4WD tour company Nomad Safaris, as their operations coordinator and sales and marketing rep.

We loved living in Queenstown, but we could see it being a great place to raise a family when we

were both only making a little more than minimum wage. So when Sarah found out she had caught Chicken Pox for the first time, and at the same time were told we were 5 weeks pregnant, we decided to return to Dunedin to be near her parents and 3 older sisters.

I must say I found returning difficult, as I missed the mountains, friends and connections we had made in Queenstown. While looking for my next step in my career, I worked part-time as an unsworn police officer, helping in the remand cells at the police station. I then had 2 uneventful years as a marketing coordinator for Silver Fern Farms, shipping and flying sheep, beef and venison to Belgium, Holland, Germany and Switzerland.

I left there as I was asked to join Select Recruitment to become their business development manager, where I briefly worked with Sarah Warhurst. However when another staff member made a substantial error with

Select's largest customer which resulted in losing nearly 1/3 of their business, I suddenly found myself restructured out of a job, with a wife and two kids at home to support. It was not a nice headspace to be in, but I undertook some career counselling and again was encouraged to mind-map a list of attributes for my ideal future job – within 2 months – I got that career pathway – I became an employee of Forsyth Barr.

About two years prior to my parent's crash, my father realised that none of his children were interested in a career in woollscouring, so decided to sell the business to a large carpet company, and is still operated today by Cavalier.

So as a result I had received a modest but early inheritance at the age of 21. From that point I was guided to invest this money for the longer term, i.e. not go and spend it partying, which I didn't fully comprehend what this meant at the time, but set me on a course to my destiny.

Joining Forsyth Barr allowed me to learn to invest myself, but also find my passion for helping others with their money and educating them along the way.

I feel blessed that this career path found me, and also led me to Rotary, via colleague and fellow member, John Gallaher.

Today,

I am now a proud father to 4 children, Leo aged 14, Nancy aged 12, Stasa aged 10 and Saul aged 5. They give me the drive to succeed and many moments to be humble.

I am a loving and supportive husband to Sarah, who continues to challenge and inspire me intellectually and spiritually.

My sports are now focussed on road and mountain biking, with occasional snowboarding, bodyboarding, underwater hockey and swimming.

I am an Authorised Financial Adviser for Forsyth  
Barr with many clients to help.

I am a proud Rotarian and your new president.

I am Gordon Tucker.