

SOUTH PACIFIC  
**VOICE**



**Letting Go  
The Killer Instinct**

# Grudges – Who Needs Them?

Brian Gernhoefer  
Eltham



I walked into the bar of one of my drinking hangouts and confronted the barman head on! He got on my nerves somehow. He always had. Made me feel inferior to him and I resented that. And the resentment only fuelled my dislike of him all the more. I really got paranoid about him; even counted my change each time I bought a drink just to make sure he hadn't short-changed me!

The bar had quite a few people in it and when they heard me tell the barman I wanted to talk to him outside their eyes lit up in anticipation of a great punch-up.

Outside we went. I looked this guy straight in the face and told him exactly how I felt about him. And then I asked him to forgive me for being so resentful of him! I don't know what he was expecting but it certainly wasn't having me ask his forgiveness. But he was OK. Said it was all right, forgave me and we parted the best of mates.

### Blots on the landscape

Now if you're thinking that such behaviour is a little strange, you'd probably be right. Especially in one as stable as I. After all, hadn't I worked for the same company for 20 years?

True. But there were a couple of blots on my life that always landed me in hot water. One was resentment — I bore grudges. Couldn't stand anyone getting the better of me. Always had to find a way to get back. And I couldn't let it lie until I had.

The other thing that ate me up was booze. Ruled me completely and broke up my marriage, twice. At the beginning it was OK. Just a way to relax. But after I joined the volunteer fire brigade I began to drink more and more. In fact all my spare time was spent on the bottle. Every night after fire practice I hit the drink with the guys and got home at all sorts of unearthly hours.

Same thing after the Sunday

morning practice; the rest of the day was given to drinking. There was never a thought for Marilyn, my wife, sitting at home with our two children. I thought more of my fire brigade mates and my booze than I did of my own family! Looking back on it I wonder how on earth I could have been so blind. But I did it.

In the end Marilyn could take no more and she split. Took the kids and left me to it.

### Downhill fast

Freedom at last, I thought. I could drink whenever I wanted and as much as I wanted without anyone nagging me. Life never looked rosier. That was for the first couple of days, anyway. After that things began to get lonely. Drinking mates are just that, drinking mates. But I had no real friends among them. And as the loneliness engulfed me I spent more and more time at the boozier. I wanted desperately for Marilyn to come back. I knew I was heading downhill — fast.

Without a good woman I wonder where I would have ended up. I promised Marilyn that I'd change. The story sounds familiar, doesn't it. I'd cut right back on my drinking if she'd come back to me. She agreed and we made a go of it together. For a while.

Marilyn had a friend in Stratford. She'd become a Christian and wanted us to go to her baptism. I couldn't believe my ears. Church had never figured in my life — apart from when I got married — and I didn't know whether I could handle anything as religious as a baptism.

But I needn't have worried. You see, in spite of my solemn promises to Marilyn it wasn't long after we got back together that I began to slip into the old drinking patterns again. And on that particular visit to Stratford I was so drunk that I couldn't remember a thing about the baptism. It signalled a return to the way things used to be.

## For keeps

Marilyn moved out a second time. For keeps, she said. I could tell she meant it and knew I'd better keep well away from her. So I resumed a life of boozing with the boys in an unrestrained manner while Marilyn moved out of town to live with her friend in Stratford. The same one whose baptism we had been too.

I knew no good would come of such an arrangement. And I was right. In no time at all Marilyn was going to church with her and on the third visit she too became a Christian.

I couldn't understand why anyone would want to do a thing like that. Marilyn tried to explain why to me over the phone, but to no avail. Then she began to pester me to come up and go to church with them. "I don't think much of churches," I told her. "They're strictly for weddings and funerals." But I agreed to go and spend my first Sunday sitting in a pew, listening to all the goings on and wondering what the dickens I had come across.

This was not one of these sit-quietly-and-mumble outfits. No. It was a clap-your-hands-and-make-as-much-noise-as-you-can organisation. Strictly for the birds if you get my drift. I was pleased to get out of there, I can tell you.

## Not my scene

Marilyn's pleas over the phone for me to go back with her the next Sunday were met with a steadfast "No!" But she persisted and the Sunday after that I was back again. After the service I went round to see some friends in Eltham who were also Christians. They'd always said to drop in if I was ever in town so I took them up. In the course of the afternoon they suggested that maybe I ought to give my life to the Lord. "Nah," I shrugged. "It's not my scene, but thanks all the same."

My scene or not, I didn't go back home after I left their home. No, I went to the night service at the church.

Something was happening and I didn't altogether dislike it. The preaching that night was on forgiveness and letting go of grudges because unforgiveness poisons your system and robs you of freedom and happiness. That got me thinking.

Following Sunday morning I was back again. The preacher was talking once more on forgiveness. It got to bugging me and I went back round to the Christian couple's place where I'd been spending a few Sunday afternoons. I knew over the years I'd used them and in light of what I'd been hearing I figured I owed them. I talked to them about it and I asked them to forgive me. I wanted to put things right. We cried together. Can you imagine it? But however silly it might sound, it certainly felt good to do it.

## In the swing

By now I was into the swing of things and really quite enjoyed going to church. I knew there were a few people round about who I needed to put things right with. One of them was the barman I'd spent a good deal of my time resenting.

My friends came back to me with the challenge of giving my life to the Lord. "No, no," I said. "I enjoy going to church and putting relationships right with people but that's enough for me right now."

I walked into church one Sunday evening and for some reason I kept seeing a wooden cross on the overhead projection screen they used for putting the words of the songs on. No matter how many times I closed my eyes or shook my head, the cross wouldn't go away. I wondered what on earth was going on. I couldn't seem to get it out of my line of vision.

What the songs we sang that evening were, or what the sermon was on, I couldn't tell you. But I do know this. At the end of the service the preacher asked for people who wanted



*Brian Gernhoefer on the job at the rennet factory.*

to give their life to Christ to come out the front.

I stood there literally shaking in my shoes. "This is not for me," I kept saying to myself through clenched teeth and clenched fists!

The next thing I knew I was up at the front, standing there with knees like jelly and being supported by a guy on either side of me.

The Lord had moved me somehow to respond to his claim on my life. I surrendered to him right then and asked him to forgive my sin. He did. And he's been my ruler ever since.

It was the most amazing experience of my life. I was reeling under the influence of it for quite a few days later.

Marilyn came back to me about a month after that. Talk about falling in love all over again! It was so good. And the booze went out the window.

I remember praying to the Lord a little while after becoming a Christian and giving him all my problems, all my desires, my possessions — the whole works. And in response to that prayer

such a sense of release and relief came over me. I felt like a great weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

Marilyn and I were baptised together a month later. What an experience that was too. I came up out of the water feeling so clean and new inside that I reached my hands to the sky.

It seemed God reached down, took my hand in his and said, "Put your trust in me."

As far as I can tell there's no surer way to get one's life straightened out. If it hadn't been for the Lord working in my life I would have ended up a bitter and twisted alcoholic, no good to myself or to anyone else.

*Brian is assistant manager of the rennet department of NZ Co-op Rennet Company in Eltham. He and Marilyn have two children: Lloyd and Michelle. One of Brian's interests is car restoration. He has restored two Morris 8's, one of which is featured on the title page of this story.*

*Brian is Vice-President of the Stratford chapter of FGBMFI.*

**P** at Cash I wasn't. But even so tennis was the number one love of my life. It left everything else for dead, including all the sad-faced people I'd seen at church during my enforced eight-year attendance at Sunday School, Bible Class and Youth Group.

Besides, the centre of everything at church seemed to me to be a dead Jesus on a cross and I couldn't see the sense in that; not when there was so much action to be had on the tennis court.

There was always a tennis racquet lying around our West Otago home and I was forever picking it up and belting a ball with it. Even though we were in the country there was still plenty of opportunity to play the game and I started competition tennis while still at primary school. I'd be on the courts at least three and sometimes four nights a week playing or practising.

I guess the game became an obsession with me, although at the time I didn't see it like that. Even while away at boarding school I was on the courts before breakfast each morning and then again between breakfast and school starting. And then on weekends, both at school and when I got back home, all Saturday and Sunday would be taken up with the game.

### **Winning is all**

Being an only child and pretty self-centred with it, tennis was the ideal game for me. I played single with just my own skill and cunning to depend upon for victory. No one else could let me down. And it was imperative that I succeeded. Winning was the aim of the game and I made sure I was well prepared for it.

Even after I was married I dragged June and the children around every weekend to my tennis fixtures. Their needs and desires didn't really figure in my thinking. Having to share my life with others, even my own family, was pretty much an inconvenience.

Tennis was my idol and I





# Letting Go The Killer Instinct

Alex Moody  
Gore

worshipped at its altar every opportunity I could. There was nothing I liked better than to be bobbing and swaying across the net from an opponent, analysing their every movement, isolating their weakness, while I waited for their serve.

When I hit the court an explosion of adrenalin burst inside me and unleashed the hounds of aggression! Usually by the time the first game was over I had sussed out my opponent's weaknesses and had worked out how to beat him.

A friend asked me once what it was I thought about on the court. I thought for a second then said, "I'm thinking about every possible way, fair means or foul, to beat my opponent." "Oh," he responded, "A real killer instinct."

Something pricked me on the inside. It bothered me to be told that. I'd never quite seen myself in that light before. I rather attributed my success on the court (I played representative tennis and wore the Southland County colours quite a few times) to an in-built drive to succeed! It sounded far more genteel and legitimate.

That same instinct translated to my work situation. I wanted to succeed, to be self-sufficient. To achieve my goal I ran three jobs at once. Shearing, farming and a night job as well. Needless to say, the situation wasn't the best for my health and after some time I landed in hospital with a strained heart which kept me off work for three months.

### **Killer instinct**

That was the trouble I found with the goals I set myself; they either nearly killed me in the drive to reach them or, having successfully reached them, I found them to be empty and had to set more to keep me going. Challenge was my life blood and I needed it to survive.

There was one challenge, though, which I had walked away from in my early days — that was the challenge to

become a Christian. But as I said, there wasn't too much that attracted me to God. It seemed to me that people had more joy outside of the church than they had in it. So I turned my back on it all.

Trouble is, I didn't reckon on God liking a challenge as much as me; and I was it!

June had been a Christian from an early age and continued to attend church after we were married. I had no objection to that. Church was her thing, tennis was mine and it was all OK.

Then sometime after we were married she received what they called the baptism in the Holy Spirit and that seemed to add a whole new spark to her belief. Gave her a lot more bounce. She even started having a ladies prayer group during the day at our home on the farm.

If it kept her happy I was happy, and besides, it didn't interrupt my work any. Until one time when I was walking across a paddock. I suddenly sensed a spiritual presence all around me. I knew immediately that June and her friends were praying for me to become a Christian. The presence was strong. You couldn't deny it, no matter how you tried to rationalise it away.

For two weeks that same sense stayed with me. I didn't do anything about it at first but I knew God was trying to get my attention. He wanted my life, of that I was sure; even without anyone telling me.

### **Game, set and match!**

Out the back of the farm planting trees I couldn't fight him any longer. I prayed to God and asked him to forgive me for ignoring him all those years. I surrendered my life to him and prayed that if what I was doing was real, people would see the changes in my life without me having to tell them I had become a Christian.

I was amazed at the effect June and her prayer group had had. Don't let

anyone fool you; there's power in prayer to change seemingly hopeless situations. I know. It worked on me.

I didn't tell a soul what I'd done. Not even June. Until three weeks later when June had gone out and was unusually late home. Under normal circumstances I would have taken my old self-centred self off to bed and not spared her a passing thought. But this time I was stewed up inside with worry about her.

When she finally arrived in she could see the worry on my face and made the comment, "Boy, Alex, the way you're concerned I'd almost think you'd become a Christian!" So I told her then.

I soon discovered that being a Christian involved being honest with God and being prepared to make changes in attitude. One of the hardest things for me was letting go of my "killer instinct" as it related to success, pride and material possessions.

Even as Christians we often measure the blessing of God on our lives in terms of material things and finances. It just shows how deeply the capitalist doctrine is ingrained in our make up; we end up putting a monetary value on God.

Anyway, I was taught a good lesson in these areas while away from the farm one time. I was in Alexandra and a winter storm blew up. June phoned me to say sheep were dying and I ought to make it back if I could.

Unfortunately I couldn't. The wind blew my legs from under me and I had to stay put in Alexandra and accept hospitality from friends. That in itself was a humbling experience for me. I never accepted anything from anyone. But all that was to change.

When I did finally get back home 200 of our sheep had died — that was out of a flock of 2000. A quick calculation showed I'd lost \$6000. But then there were the lambs the ewes had been carrying, so that took the loss to between \$10,000 and \$12,000.

In monetary terms it was very difficult not to get angry with God. But I didn't. I hung in there and to my amazement, at the end of that financial year the farm, in spite of that tremendous loss, had returned its best profit ever. I soon learned that God is bigger than our pride, our success or our possessions. He is not limited by them or dictated to by them.

## **A different sort of power**

I had to learn for myself too the power of prayer. I'd seen it work for June when she was praying for me but I was to discover its effectiveness for myself. One year on the farm the wool weight was way down, the lambing average was low and to top it all off contagious abortions began to rip through the flock with the result that I was losing more lambs than ever. Up to five in one morning.

This condition can destroy a flock in no time and there is no way to stop it. Spreading the flock was the only method of combating the condition but I didn't have enough feed available to do that.

The only thing I could think of to do was to pray. So I did. I prayed that whatever was causing the sheep to abort, whether a spiritual or physical condition, would be rendered ineffective. And the condition stopped immediately. I could have lost hundreds of my sheep but God, through my prayers, turned back the situation.

That experience forced me to think in another gear. It was humbling to see the power of God working on my behalf.

There was the love of God, too, that began to figure in my life once I'd become a Christian. I'd seen it in June. She was an amazing lady, so patient with me. And the look on her face was so different from what I'd first seen on the faces of those people in the church during by Bible Class days. If only they'd known what a gold mine they



*Luke, Alex, June and Aaron Moody outside their home near Gore.*

were sitting on! An experience with God would have made all the difference to them.

The love of God gave me a sense of worth in just being myself. I didn't have to prove myself on the tennis court any more. I didn't have to "kill" or "beat" to prove I was the better man. People accepted me for me. It was great. And I began to learn to do the same. Not to look at people for what I could get out of them. But to look at them as objects of God's love and desire.

And the difference the love and life of God has made in our marriage is out of this world. Whereas once our whole family life centred around me and my

desires, now it's centred around Jesus Christ. And now that way we all get a look in. All our needs and desires are accommodated with ease.

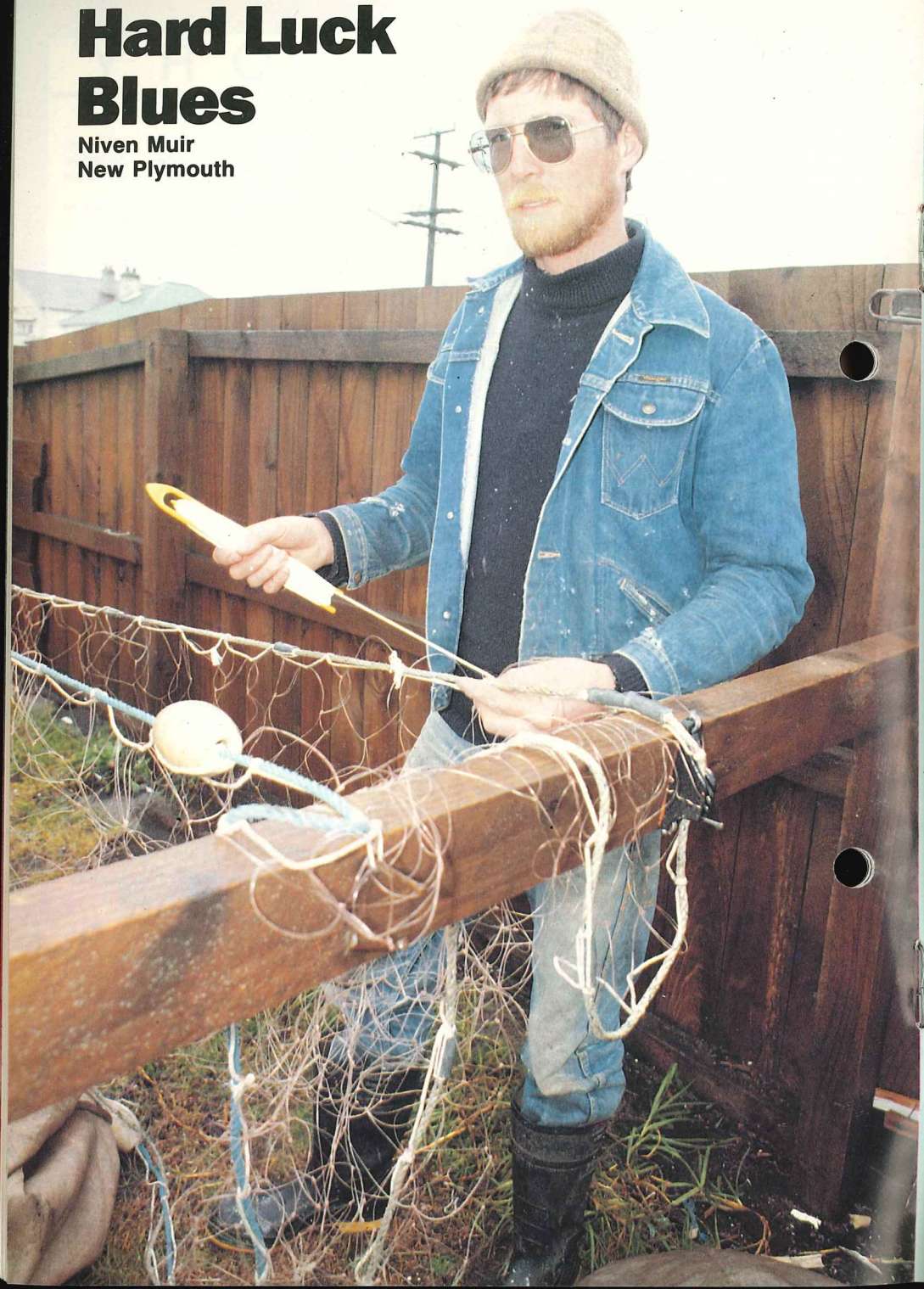
I know there's much more to learn in this Christian life yet. In fact, there's more to learn and experience than my time on this earth will allow. But for now I do know that I've been changed a great deal and more changes come day by day, week by week as I learn to trust God, ask for his guidance and live my life by the power of his Holy Spirit.

*Alex Moody has a 700 acre property on which he runs 3500 stock units. The farm is family-run by Alex, June and their two boys, Aaron and Luke. Alex is President of the Gore chapter of FGBMFI.*



# Hard Luck Blues

Niven Muir  
New Plymouth



**T**hey say in the eye of the storm there is peace and tranquility but I'm afraid in my case there was nothing further from the truth. The storms that raged around me left me tense and restless even from childhood.

From the beginning hard luck seemed to plague me and anything that I was associated with. And when you're down on your luck continually, bitterness begins to eat away at you until you haven't got anything left to live for.

That's my story anyway. It began down on the farm in Whataroa on the West Coast. My dad was a farmer, or at least he tried to be but I don't think he was cut out for the life. He had hassle after hassle trying to make it work. He continually lost cows and things always went wrong for him.

Mum seemed to suit the life better but I think dad found it difficult accepting her judgement on farming matters. The result was tension in the family with squabbles and bitches a frequent occurrence. I was in the middle of it getting more and more upset as the years progressed.

The flood came in 1968. That finished us. Mum and dad had to sell up and move. But, ever the optimists they went and bought another farm at Harehare! The location may have changed but the hassles continued, only on a greater scale.

It was bad. So much so that my own mental state deteriorated to the point where tranquillizers were prescribed for me. A kid at primary school on tranquillizers! Hard to believe but it was true.

It wasn't that mum and dad didn't love us. They did and I knew they did. What's more, they both worked their guts out to give us a decent start in life — including four and a half years at boarding school in Christchurch. It was just that the life they had chosen didn't make for very smooth sailing. And the rough seas continued into my own

working life.

I returned to Harehare after high school to work with my brother on the farm, then branched out, taking a job at the timber mill before setting up on my own as a scrub cutter and post feller. Following this I did a chefs course at Polytech in Dunedin and returned to take charge of the kitchen in the Harehare hotel after I had completed the course. I was 19 at the time.

Some time later I set out for Dunedin again and began another course in the cheffing line but never got to finish it as I bought a coffee lounge and spent two and a half years running that and doing catering on the side. It was long, hard work and I put many hours into it.

Being single I found it pretty restricting on the social life and all for nothing. At the end of the time I made little or no money for all my effort.

A six week working holiday at a friend's restaurant in New Plymouth ended up being for keeps. I never got back to Dunedin. I liked having friends who shared things with me. To me, friends did things together. So when this guy who I'd come up to work with decided to go into a fishing venture without me, I was rather put out. So was Jill, my new-found lady.

In fact, she was rather bored, so we decided that we would embark upon a fishing career of our own. She put up the money to buy a boat and we launched our venture. Probably more out of spite towards my friend than anything else, but we did it.

## **Holed**

Having to learn the trade as we went along meant that we didn't do too well. We didn't catch too many fish; they caught us instead! Well, nearly. I put the boat on the rocks one time, holed it badly and thought that was the finish of our career as fisherpeople! We had both worked on the boat full-time and were at a bit of a loss as to what

to do once it was wrecked.

Jill decided to head back overseas, but then we discovered she was pregnant and that changed the situation somewhat. It was no longer easy come, easy go. We realised there had to be a commitment towards each other and we wanted to be true to that.

Once bitten twice shy didn't apply and we opted to get back into the fishing. We pulled our old boat to pieces and sold the parts for what we could get and along with the insurance money we put it into a new nine metre craft.

Jill worked on board until she was six months pregnant and only stopped then because she lost her balance when the boat rolled while we were unloading. She fell into the ice box and dislocated her shoulder. We employed a young guy to help on the boat and carried on.

### Daily grind

In some ways it was a pretty pointless existence. I was neither happy nor sad with life. I just lived without too much thought for anything other than to make some money.

Jill and I talked about it a bit. The whole routine of waking up, having breakfast, going to work, coming home, going to bed, getting up etc. And all that just so we could earn enough money to spend on the weekends and pay the bills during the week.

There was no purpose. It was just a matter of gritting your teeth and doing the daily grind day after day, week after week and hoping for a lucky break.

At least when I was a kid there seemed to be some sort of purpose to it all. Some vision or sense of destiny. Something greater to believe in than the daily routine. Mum instilled in us good Christian values, being one herself. And as a teenager I got into seances and got a glimpse into the spirit world.

In fact, I got into those things pretty deep. Trances were common and

eventually we didn't even need the glass to contact the spirits; we could just think them into the room with a common purpose in our hearts.

It all got beyond a joke in the end and I left it behind, beginning to wonder if there was really even a God.

But back to the present. We got our new boat into the water with just a few hassles and it didn't take too long until things started to go right for us. The new boy settled in well and we got the gill netting and long-line operations running smoothly. We fished off Cape Egmont taking in terakihi, snapper, warehou, grey shark and gurnard.

It was mid-October in 1982 and we were coming back in from setting the nets when the steering broke. We managed to limp into port and had the gear repaired in time to go out the next day to lift the nets. I took along my crewman as well as his brother. They were both in their teens.

We had one heck of a haul in the nets; the biggest I'd had and I was rapt. We got it all on board and were heading back to port when the wind cut up rough and started to blow its guts out.

It was a dickens of a job trying to gut the sharks on deck as we ploughed through the heavy seas towards home.

### Sinking!

I was in radio contact with Jill and kept her up to date with position and all that. I called as the storm got up and told her we were OK, had a big catch and were taking it quietly.

Next thing I noticed the boat wasn't handling too well. It responded only sluggishly to the helm.

Making my way forward to the hatch my heart leaped into my mouth as I discovered the hold full of water, only a few centimetres below deck level. There was no way to get rid of it and I raced back to the CB and radioed port. Told them we were taking on water and going down. Get help to us quick.

It was dark now and we were in a bit of a predicament.

The boat started going down by the stern and we scrambled up on to the bow as all the lights bar the navigation one went out. We were still perched up there when an oil tender tug from the oil rig arrived to rescue us.

Fortunately our navigation remained operational and the tug was able to locate us. As it approached we slipped off the bow and swam to the boat all in one piece.

Throughout the ordeal I didn't give God a passing thought. My only concern was for the safety of the boys. And now that it was over Jill and I were left with this great hole in our lives. We had lost everything and even through we were insured we ended up back at the bottom of the heap with the daunting task of having to claw our way back up again. Hard luck and bad news all the way!

Ten days later our baby was born. Called him Roy. Then it was back down to the West Coast for a holiday with my parents. It seemed things hadn't changed much from when I lived there. The same old hassles seemed to dominate, only this time they emanated from my brother who now had the farm.

I didn't like the way he treated our parents, and because he was supposed to be a Christian that made me angry. I got extremely aggro towards the whole set-up and thought to myself, "If that's Christianity you can stick it sideways." I saw plainly where I inherited my hassles from!

As a parting gift my brother gave me a book. Something called *The Happiest People On Earth* by Demos Shakarian. My mother gave me a Bible. Big deal, I thought. How on earth could they believe in God after all they had gone through? It was beyond me but I took their offerings and we headed back to New Plymouth to try and piece some direction together for our lives.

### **Enter God**

I landed a job on a pipeline, on dry

land this time! And then there was God. As simple as that. For some reason beyond my comprehension I just started thinking about him. I couldn't shake him from my mind and even began to think that maybe he did exist after all.

I read the book from my brother and found it fascinating. It was all about a group called Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International and I discovered there was even a local chapter in New Plymouth.

I rang them up without telling Jill what I was doing and went to a meeting with them. At that meeting I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ and became a Christian. Just like that.

I knew right at that point that God was real. Beyond all the mishaps and the misfortune that had befallen me throughout my life, God was there; a rock; a resting place in the midst of a storm.

With him I gained an incredible sense of peace in my life that didn't depend on circumstances. It was a good job too because, contrary to popular belief, God is not a ticket to a hassle-free existence. He just ensures that you have the strength and the peace to take whatever comes your way.

Jill wasn't impressed with my new move. She had had an experience with a cult a few years before and she wasn't about to open herself up again to anything strange. I went to church and read my Bible, which I found fascinating. I began to see that Jesus was responsible to the Father and that man was responsible to Jesus and in turn was responsible for his woman. Suddenly it hit me that I ought to be married. It was the way God had planned it to be and I felt real guilty about my slap-happy attitude to Jill.

I told Jill that we were going to be married and she knew enough to know that we both should be Christians before we did it. So she prayed a prayer and committed her life to God and we

# A freak wave caught me on the beam and over she went, as quick as a wink.

got married. It took a full six months, though, before it all clicked into place for Jill.

She found it hard going but hung in there and went to church week after week. It paid off in the end.

## Plain sailing

With my life finally taking on a sense of purpose and enjoyment we decided to go back fishing yet again and bought a small boat. Too small for me; too close to the water for comfort after my last experience! We eventually sold that and bought a bigger one and settled down for a life of plain sailing . . . Fat chance.

We struck problems with the new venture and had to lay off the crewman I had employed. I decided I would have to work the boat myself and did so.

It was a boat which rolled a lot and almost seemed top heavy. The thought that maybe it would roll one day was never far from my mind, but I decided that God was in control now and that he would look after me. It was a comforting thought as I ventured 15km out to sea voyage after voyage.

One day I was heading out in a big following sea. The boat was pitching and rolling and handling like a cow. Every now and then the thought popped into my mind, "What if she rolls?"

Each time the clammy hand of fear reached into my mind I would respond by reminding myself of God's power to protect his people. I'd be right for a while but then the old fear would

return.

It went on like this for some time as the weather steadily worsened.

Then it happened. A freak wave caught me on the beam and over she went, as quick as a wink. A clear case of "what they greatly feared has come upon them."

True to his promise, though, I was amazingly calm and had plenty of time to get organised.

First I released the life raft and secured it to the boat, then I crawled through the cab window of the boat to call up Jill on the CB. I told her what had happened, that I had plenty of time and there was no need to panic, gave her my position and asked her to get help for me.

Having made sure that help was on the way I went down and turned the engine off before I got into the raft and paddled away from my stricken boat. It was an amazing feeling sitting out on the water watching the boat settle further and further into the sea until at last it slipped right under and out of sight. Two hours later I was picked up after having lost everything for a second time.

We all make mistakes, that's for sure, but I reckon God does not want us to give up. That is why after a stint at a couple of land jobs and the birth of our little girl, Jill and I decided to have another go at fishing. People told us we were crazy but I can see the potential in it if we trust God and expect His blessing on everything that we do.

We've had our new boat for nearly two years now and we are making real progress. We are firmly committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over our lives and with that commitment bad luck just doesn't enter into it. The storms may rage round us, but now we've found a place of calm right in the middle of them.

*Niven and Jill Muir live in New Plymouth with their two children.*



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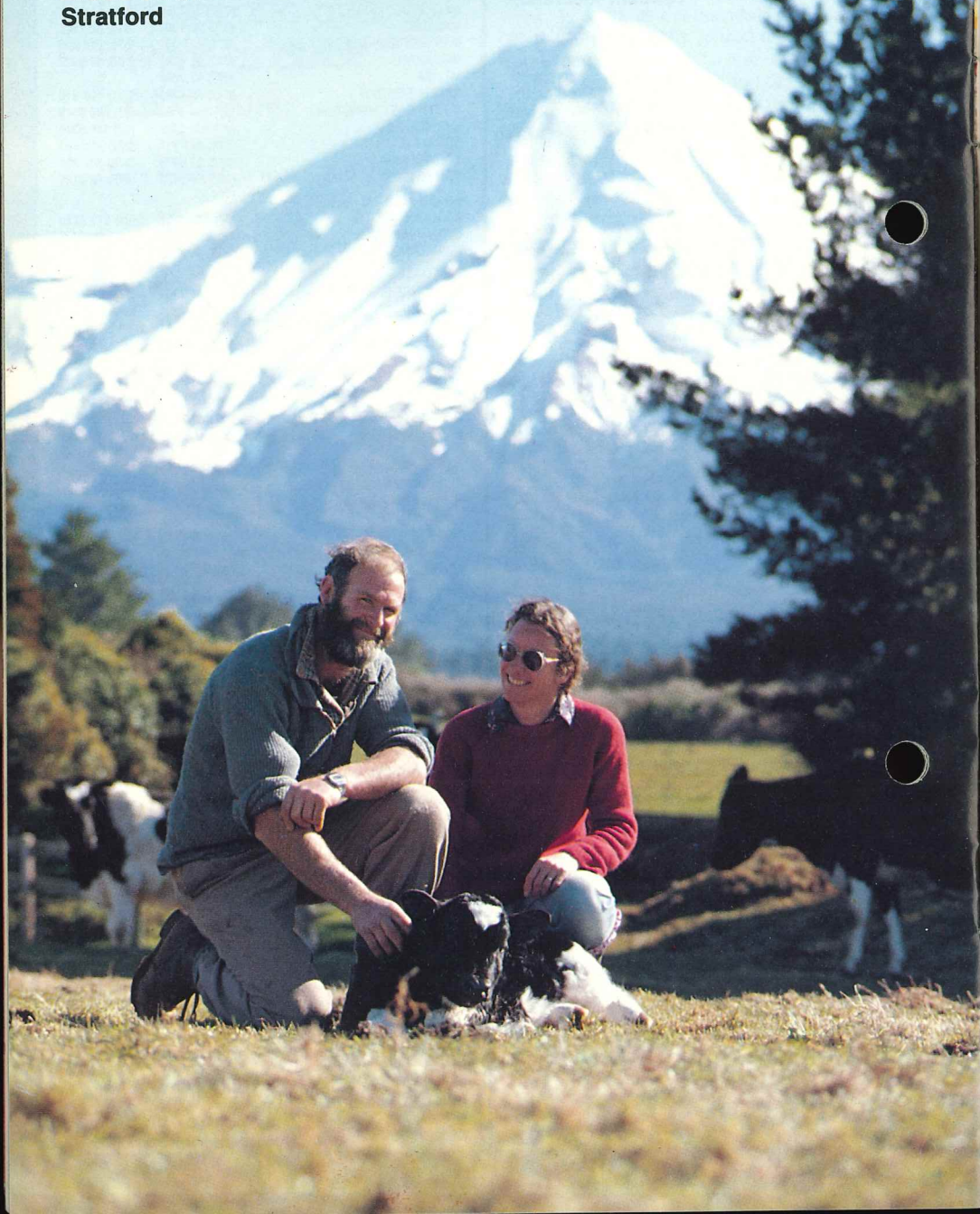
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# Love Lives On

Bruce Coull  
Stratford



**I came in from the farm to be met by my five children, home from another day at school.**

But there was something a little strange. Paddy, my wife, always made a point of being home to greet them when they arrived. But today the kids met me with, "Where's Mum? We can't find her anywhere."

A worried frown crossed my face as I tried to recall her movements for the day. Paddy suffered from epilepsy so we always made sure that we knew what each other was doing in case she needed me.

I remembered then that Paddy was feeding the neighbour's animals that day as they were away, so I sent one of the children over to see if she was still there.

There was no sign of her. Icy fingers of fear and panic began to creep up from somewhere inside of me. Round the back. Maybe she was around the back of sheds. But a search there turned up nothing.

Then, one of the children came racing in, yelling that they could see someone lying in the paddock down below the house. I dashed outside and sure enough, it looked like a body lying there, unmoving. I ran as fast as I could make my legs work and threw myself down on the grass beside my beloved Paddy. She didn't move. I put my hand out to her and she was as cold as cold. Dead.

I choked back the tears and pleaded, "Please, Lord, be gracious. Bring her back." I put my mouth on hers and tried desperately to resuscitate her but it was too late.

I don't really know how things happened next. I just sat beside her. Numb. This was the farm all our dreams were pinned on. God knows it took us long enough to get it. And against all odds, and advice, we had turned it into a profitable unit. Now it was to be Paddy's burial place.

The doctor arrived. He confirmed it

was far too late for anything to be done to bring Paddy back. A neighbour took over the milking of my cows until I could get over my grief and make arrangements for the children.

Being a Christian helped in that it gave me something to fall back on; a source of inner strength. And the children also understood about heaven and so it made it just a little easier on them to accept that Mum had been taken to be with the Lord.

It didn't ease the pain any; but it did provide a hope for the future and a caravan of calm over the next couple of years as we all sought to work things out in a rather hectic existence.

It was Paddy who first prodded me in the direction of Christianity. Not that God was completely foreign to me — I had been raised by godly parents who ensured I was exposed to a Sunday School upbringing and a whacking great dollop of rugby.

My father, as well as being a good community man who maintained a keen career in the dairy industry, was sports mad and a member of the unnamed All Black team that was supposed to tour South Africa back in the sixties.

### **Hard act to follow**

I used to read the pamphlets we got from Sunday School and try to understand them. But I didn't meet with much success. Had more of that on the rugby field where I was akin to my father, even though he was a hard act to follow in that department. Always felt I had to measure up to his standard, and that was a pretty heavy load to carry.

All my spare time was spent with a rugby ball and my dedication to the game was rewarded eventually with selection for the Taranaki Representative team. That was a crowning glory for me.

Career-wise things didn't quite go the way I intended them to. I wanted

to be a farmer and because the family farm couldn't support me I opted for a farm cadet scheme to launch me on my way. Wages for such projects were skimpy to say the least and in an effort to stay on a financial par with my bigger-earning mates I gave the idea away after a couple of years and took a job with the local dairy company.

I was pretty interested in the business because it was, after all, related to farming and it promised continued involvement with the agriculture industry. I undertook part-time study at Massey University and over three years I earned a diploma in dairy technology.

While playing rugby in Taranaki I met Paddy and fell in love with her. We courted for 12 months before we got married and started a family. Life was pretty good. It seemed very unlikely that we would ever be in a financial position to buy our own farm but that was OK. The dairy industry provided us with a good income and career prospects and we were happy with our lot.

That's not to say a few personal changes didn't take place in my life with marriage. Spending two or three nights in the pub was one of them. Paddy put her foot down about that and I was limited to victory celebrations or defeat commiserations.

Still, there was plenty to get into to occupy all the spare time I had as a result. Things like gardening and local body politics. At 22 I was voted on to the town council in Midhurst where we lived and headed up a committee that raised funds and built a new local hall. It was a great challenge which I thoroughly enjoyed.

A little later I took a promotion as manager of a dairy company in Ashburton in the South Island. It seemed to be the only way to get ahead and besides, the company was running in the red and the challenge to make it profitable appealed to my sense of

adventure. So away we went.

For some reason that she couldn't explain Paddy used to go to church on a Sunday right from when we first got married. Fortunately, because I worked most Sundays, I avoided getting dragged along; except in the winter when the cows were out and husbandly duties to wife prevailed. I used to sit through the meetings but never heard a thing. About the only thing that stuck in my mind was a image of this old canon chanting words like "Holy, holy, holy..."

Still, I was prevailed upon to get confirmed, so I did, without understanding a thing about what I was doing. But the vicar in Ashburton was a nice bloke who had a certain "something" that I could never quite put my finger on. He always greeted me like a long lost friend. I was still none the wiser about God for all my religious experiences and customs as a result of our two year stay in Ashburton, but I did manage to lift the company to profitability!

## Heart and soul

Then it was back to Stratford to try and grab hold of our dream. Paddy's father wanted a sharemilker on his farm and we decided we'd give it a go. So we returned north and almost took up where we had left off. I played rugby for my old team and Paddy continued her church activities while together we raised our kids and put our heart and soul into a new herd of cows.

Paddy always knew there was more to God than what she had experienced. She was like that. Inquisitive about such things. Me, I didn't give it a second thought. Unless it was to keep Paddy happy. Anyway, the vicar asked her to attend a "Life In The Spirit" seminar in New Plymouth and she jumped at the chance. I copped a full-blown description of all that happened at each session as soon as Paddy got home. I listened with one ear.

On the fifth week apparently they were coming up to the section about what they called the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I'd heard a bit about weird people who attributed speaking in a funny gibberish to the Holy Spirit and I found the whole deal quite amusing.

As Paddy told me about what was going to happen I scoffed at her and told her I didn't believe in that rot. It was a load of rubbish. And then to show my disdain I launched into a mocking sort of gibberish to prove my point.

Maybe the tears  
were God's way of  
letting me know he  
really did exist  
behind the facade  
of religion.

Trouble is, something happened. To me. Right in the middle of my mock display, tears started rolling down my face. Don't ask me why. I haven't a clue. But I did feel for the first time that perhaps all this stuff about God may have some validity. Maybe the tears were just God's way of letting me know

he did really exist behind the facade of religion.

After that I couldn't refuse Paddy's request for me to come to the seminar meeting. Things were hotting up, that was for sure and I was wondering what was going to happen next! At the end of the seminar they asked for people who wanted to give their life to Christ and be baptised in the Holy Spirit to go forward. I didn't. Not right then. Instead I got down on my knees right where I was and began to pray. It was a strange thing for me to do. But to cap it all off, while I was down there, a chap came along, tapped me on the shoulder and said I should be up at the front. So I went. Knelt at the altar and said, "Yes" to God.

I knew he was there; that he wanted to reveal himself to me through the person of his son Jesus Christ. It's funny, but in the instant I said "Yes" I knew that it was going to cost me my rugby. But I didn't care; it was no hassle. The immense joy and pleasure that came with acknowledging the claim of God over my life far outweighed the glory and the enjoyment of the rugby field.

### **A touch of class**

So I gave my life to God. I knew it had to be a total commitment. They prayed for me to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and away I went. Speaking in tongues, a strange language that not a few hours before I had mocked and laughed at! God's sense of humour has a touch of class about it!

That was the turning point. Paddy and I had a good marriage and had enjoyed each other's company from the beginning. But becoming Christians together and receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit created a bond of love and friendship that was far deeper than anything we had ever experienced before.

It wasn't too long after that experience that we found a farm that

seemed to us to be the perfect answer to our dreams. No one else shared our enthusiasm for the place, but we were keen! And besides, when Paddy's father died we decided it would be better if we left the sharemilking situation so that the family could do with the farm what they wished.

From the beginning we felt the Lord was with us in our farming venture. I was supposed to get outside work to supplement the farm income as we were told the property would not support us financially for a few years. But the need didn't arise. We put the farm into production and it gave back to us sufficient to live on. In five years we increased the farm's production by 50%. We astounded people who had watched us and the situation provided us with the opportunity to tell friends in the district about the goodness of God.

It seemed to me I had it all. I had the farm of my dreams; I was at peace with God and experiencing his life day by day; I had a beautiful wife whom I loved very much and five lovely kids into the bargain. Then tragedy.

Paddy lying dead in the paddock we had both worked so hard in. I don't understand why things like that happen. But I do know that I raced the clock for two years, running the farm and bringing up five children. I'd get up in the morning and milk the cows then rush back home to get the kids ready for school and see them off on the bus. Back out on the farm, fitting in a bit of housework where I could. Then in again to meet the kids from school. Back down to the shed for milking; home to prepare the evening meal before putting everyone down for the night. It was all go, I can tell you.

After Paddy and I had become Christians we joined the local Baptist church and got involved in outreach and fellowship there. I also joined the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International chapter in town. The

people we met were brilliant in their love and support and help. And when Paddy died I experienced an even deeper sense of commitment on their part towards myself and the kids.

I remember praying to God just a little while after Paddy's death and the name "Sharyn" popped into my mind. She was Paddy's friend, a matron at a girl's school. She used to be around our home a good deal and all the children knew and loved her.

It transpired over the next two years that her support and friendship came to mean a lot to me. We grew close together. I felt God was somehow engineering the developing relationship between us, almost as if he was bringing us together; writing another chapter in my life.

It was hard to imagine going on without Paddy. There would have to be an awful lot of adjusting on my part, on the part of the children, and on Sharyn's part. But it happened. A love grew between us all and I eventually asked Sharyn to marry me.

Somehow, through all the tragedy and heartbreak God held me together. I don't pretend to know why Paddy died. But I do know God knows. I trust him. He has given me a beautiful wife in Sharyn and for the children he has provided a lovely mum.

Life continues to be full of challenges; it is these challenges that bolster my faith in God, in the saving power of Jesus Christ and in the life-challenging strength of the Holy Spirit.

*Bruce and Sharyn own a 40ha dairy farm, milking 65 mainly pedigree Friesians. Bruce helped organise the 1987 National FGBMFI convention in New Plymouth.*

## SIX SCRIPTURAL STEPS TO SALVATION

Men still cry, "What must I do to be saved?" The Bible provides a clear answer.

- 1. ACKNOWLEDGE:** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23. "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" Luke 18:13.
  - 2. REPENT:** "Unless you repent, you too will all perish" Luke 13:3. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" Acts 3:19.
  - 3. CONFESS:** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" Romans 10:9.
  - 4. FORSAKE:** "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him ... for He will freely pardon" Isaiah 55:7.
  - 5. BELIEVE:** "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16. "Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" Mark 16:16
  - 6. RECEIVE:** "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" John 1:12.
- Why not make your eternal decision right now?**

"I am convinced by God's Word that I am a lost sinner. I believe that Jesus Christ died for sinners and shed His blood to take away my sins. I now receive Him as Lord and Saviour of my life and will, by His help, announce that fact to others."

**When you have made this greatest of all decisions, please let us know so that we may send you further information. Mail the adjacent coupon now.**

SOUTH PACIFIC  
**VOICE**

Number 59

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## The Threefold Purpose of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship

- 1. To witness to God's presence and power in the world today through the message of the total Gospel for the total man, and by this to reach men for Jesus Christ, especially those having the same social, cultural or business interests as the person doing the witnessing.*
- 2. To provide a basis of Christian fellowship among all men everywhere through an organism not directly associated with any specific church but cooperating with all those of like mind, and to inspire its members to be active in their respective churches.*
- 3. To bring about a greater measure of unity and spirit of harmony in the body of Christ, where members are united in a common effort for the good of the whole body.*

The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International does not start churches. Rather, we desire solely to be a service arm to existing ones.



### FULL GOSPEL BUSINESS MEN'S FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

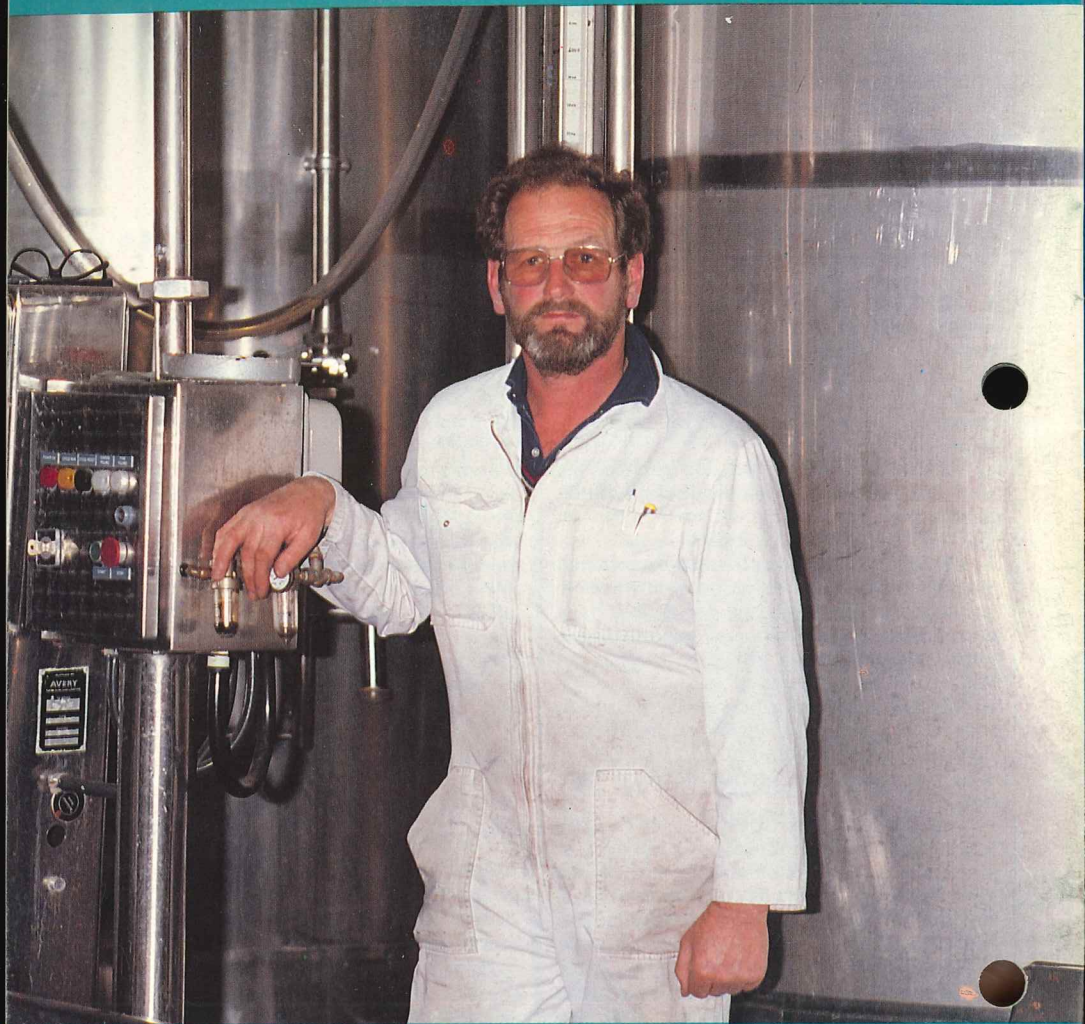
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- Please send me information on how to be a Christian
  - Please send me further details on membership
  - Please send me further general information about FGBMFI.
- NAME (print clearly)

ADDRESS .....

Phone .....

# BRIAN GERNHOEFER



## STORY PAGE 2

**FROM: FGBMFI, P.O. Box 33-424, Takapuna, Auckland;  
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