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Ac K Nowledgements

As a child I remember noticing two things about my godfather 'Uncle Ian': his jangling-trouser-pocket generosity and his oversized brain. He seemed to know everything about anything. No matter the question, he always knew the answer. He would regularly pluck a wad of money from his pocket for ice creams or fish and chips.

Despite knowing Ian all my life (first as godfather, later as stepdad), I had no idea how richly layered his life has been. Peeing on thistles, making explosive devices at university, presenting forensic evidence in one of New Zealand's most notorious double murder trials… Ian's story has been both entertaining and enlightening. I feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to listen to his stories and shape them into a biography.

I would like to thank the friends and family members that I interviewed: Ian's sons - Paul, Dave and Michael; his sisters – Anne Marie, Clare and Evelyn; Rosie Devereux, Malcolm Jarvis, Beulah Johnson, Ross Garrick, Shirley Curtiss and Daron Curtiss. I would also like to John Ewan and Mait Manning for their contributions; Keith Lewis for writing the Foreword and proofreading the manuscript; Rod Oram for allowing me to publish his articles and testimonial for Ian; and Scott Technology for the 'Rocklabs Story of Innovation', published on their website and co-written by Ian and Jim Sullivan.

I am grateful to my mentor, Maria de Jong, for inviting me to become part of the Life Stories team. She has been a wonderful guide, advisor, editor and friend. Thanks also to Julie Swasbrook for layout skills.

I would also like to acknowledge my husband, Mike Currie, for his love and devotion (and fine proofreading skills), and my mother, Rosie Devereux, for her ongoing support and inspiration.

Mostly I want to thank Ian, for sharing his fascinating life story and giving me the chance to write my first biography.

Karen Jarvis

January 2017

Foreword

Karen has produced a vivid portrait of a true gentle man who has done, and is still doing, remarkable things. She has researched her subject well with input, not just from Ian, but from family and friends going back almost all of his 76 dynamic years.

I knew Ian first as a highly innovative research scientist in the late 1960s when he was documenting ancient climate changes from isotopes in microfossils. I knew vaguely of his childhood in Central Otago in the 1940s, but Karen brings it all vividly to life in its primitive but joyful remoteness – a world incomprehensible to later generations, but one almost designed to foster self-reliance and lateral thinking. From a school where he and his siblings more than doubled the roll, he made it to Otago University. I had heard of 'The Great McCahon Hoax', but had never before seen art as one of Ian's many talents; fortunately nobody in the chemistry department did either. At Otago, student entrepreneurship developed rapidly from the boyhood trade in decomposing baby rabbits' scalps to setting up a record label selling the latest vinyl hits.

Despite the promise of a brilliant career in esoteric geochemistry in Lower Hutt, Ian's vision was practical science and its commercial applications. Unusually for a scientist, he had both people-skills (empathy) and business acumen, which could have one day put him in the running for a directorship or Director General of the DSIR. But Auckland and commerce beckoned. At Jim Sprott's Lab, Ian was a key player in the quest for truth behind the Arthur Allan Thomas trials. He was even portrayed in the movie made about the case.

Karen richly describes how Ian's skills flowered when he founded his business, Rocklabs. It was billed by many, including me, as the epitome of a successful business – one where everyone shares a vision, works together as a team, and has fun as a family. Ian's enthusiasm sold his product personally to a worldwide clientele of over 1000, as he travelled to over 80 countries, producing some hilarious and seriously scary adventures. But it was never for the money, nor the frippery of cars, suits and status; it was for the challenge, the risks – and perhaps to repay the loans that would have turned most of us into insomniacs.

Ian aimed to become what he saw as a ‘global sole trader’. His focus was to provide unique equipment, easily available spare parts, excellent service and fast delivery. He aimed to become known as *the* supplier for sample preparation equipment for the mining industry. But it was far from 'all work and no play’, with some impressive achievements in sport, particularly tennis, and a devoted and adoring family life, now with his lovely Rosie. Many cherish his friendship and knowledge. With the onset of Parkinson’s in the last few years, Ian’s courage and fortitude have reached new heights. It is a tale well told.

Thank you, Karen

Keith Lewis

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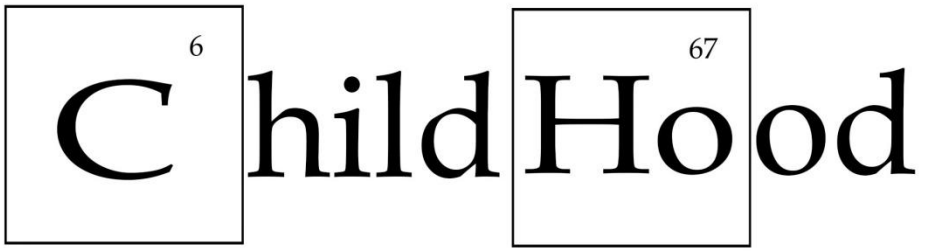

1940-1954

The most influential of all educational factors is the conversation in a child's home.

William Temple

Beginnings

‘The oldest memory I have is of playing in leaves that had fallen in the autumn from poplar trees down at the recreation ground,’ says Ian. ‘There were enormous heaps of these leaves and you could jump in them and make little houses in them.’

The quintessential image of childhood: a small boy at one with nature. But for Ian, playing in leaves also reminds him of a dark period in his childhood. A time he would prefer to forget. Tossing leaves and eating his honey sandwich by the river’s edge when he should have been at school. Why would an eager-to-please, inquisitive boy like Ian Devereux, a future PhD scholar, play truant?

‘It all started when my dad was overseas at the war,’ says Ian. ‘I was a gentle boy and I missed him. I developed a stammer and the kids at school started teasing me.’

It was a crisp morning – the start of another central Otago winter. Ian was living with his family in Luggate, a town on the Clutha River, 200 kilometres north of Dunedin. Like most small towns in New Zealand in the early 1940s, school comprised a handful of students ranging in age from five to fourteen, taught together in one classroom. ‘In those days a lot of people left school when they were fifteen to work on farms,’ recalls Ian. Two years at a secondary school was adequate for entry into an apprenticeship; unskilled work included labouring, retail and factory jobs. ‘There were boys up to fourteen years of age who were still in primary school – they never actually reached secondary school level. They kept them back each year if they didn’t pass the tests or couldn’t be bothered.’

It was one of those fourteen-year-old boys that entered the classroom that morning and whispered in the teacher’s ear. She was a mean-spirited, grouchy teacher with an alcoholic husband. Her mouth tightened into a scowl as she listened.

‘Thank you, Simon, you can sit down now.’ She hung her tartan scarf over the chair and faced the class. ‘There is a disgusting little boy in our classroom this morning.’ Everyone stopped. Ian could feel his ears burning. He knew exactly who she was talking about.

‘Ian Devereux. Stand up.’

Ian stood up. The burning spread to his cheeks, nose and chest.

‘What have you got to say for yourself? Hmmm?’

Ian opened his mouth. He tried to speak but nothing came out. The teacher grabbed a foot stool and marched down to the back of the classroom.

‘This is the seat for disgusting little boys.’

She ordered Ian to sit on it, facing the wall. Then she threw a heavy grey blanket over his head.

'You're just a dirty, nasty little boy. And you're going to stay there until you stop doing it.' Ian could hear his classmates shifting in their seats and whispering.

'You want to know what he did?' asked the teacher, her voice shaking now. 'He did number twos outside. That's right children. Ian Devereux did a poo, like a dirty sheepdog, behind the school.' It was stuffy under the blanket and the stool dug into his bottom. The children were giggling and the teacher was shouting at them to be quiet but Ian could hear only one thing: the voice of Simon that morning before school.

'You tell anyone and you're dead. You hear me, Devereux? Dead.'

The next morning it happened again. Simon defecated behind the school; Ian got the blame and spent the morning under the blanket. Days turned into weeks but six-year-old Ian was too frightened to tell the truth. 'I coped with it by not going to school,' says Ian. 'I would walk towards the school each morning but go and play in the leaves and eat my lunch until it was home time. I didn't tell anyone. My parents didn't know it was happening.'

Eventually he found the courage to tell his parents. The timing was perfect. Ian's mother was about to give birth and needed someone to look after him while she recovered. Within a few days he was on the train to Christchurch to stay with his mother's sister, Aunty Jenny, and his grandmother. 'I had a wonderful time – they spoilt me rotten. I was only meant to stay a few weeks but ended up there for a year.' He made friends at Mount Pleasant School and did so well there they put him up a year. When he returned to Luggate, both the teacher and the bully had left. The autumn leaves were falling and good news awaited him. Ian's eight-year-old cousin, Karl, was coming to live with them. He would have the brother he had always wanted…

But we have jumped ahead of our story. To understand how Ian ended up with a brother, we need to start with Maurice and Eudora, Ian's parents.