

The background of the entire image is a repeating pattern of interlocking, fan-shaped scales. Each scale is a vibrant teal color, while the spaces between them are a solid black. This creates a strong, rhythmic visual texture.

BRUSH WITH LIFE

BLAKE LAWRY TWIGDEN

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It was during an interview to the press 35 years ago that a reporter said to me 'You should write a book' and my reply was 'It should be called 'Brush with Life '. Now the subsequent years of adventure and experience have made me realise that yes, it is almost my duty to relate my personal trip of life on this planet. I am a painter not writer so my approach has been simply to tell my stories and not worry about the pressure of venturing into the hallowed world of literary art.



BLAKE CLIVE ROGER
BARBARA MUM
PAUL AND DAVID, ABBOTS WAY, REMUERA.



ROGER, BARBARA, BLAKE, GRANDMA + GRANDPA LAWRY
AND MUM AND DAD.

I was born on April 20 1945 at a private hospital on Remuera Road in Auckland and am the third child of Moina and Garth Twigden. The eventual family of Roger, Barbara, Blake, Clive, David and Paul lived 3 kilometres away at My grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins all played a major role in our lives and with friendly neighbours I enjoyed a wonderful upbringing. We holidayed at Lake Tarawera near Rotorua where Mother's parents and other members of her family the Turners and Hardings also had holiday homes. At school I reflected my artistic talents by winning prizes in writing and painting; these included books and clothing from John Courts for the design of a building of the future, a trip to Norfolk Island for an interior painting of the drawing room at home, and a horse for copying a range of drinks released by Innes Drink company. Remuera Primary, Remuera Intermediate and Auckland Grammar School were the sources of my education. On leaving school with my preliminary Diploma of Fine Art I spent a year in Insurance before trying out something a bit more creative at Inglis Wright advertising even though it meant \$4.00 per week less in my pay packet! My talent was soon recognised with a transfer to Wellington to work on the Ford and Griffins biscuits accounts. Soon the idea of adventure hit me and I left NZ in 1966 for Sydney Australia becoming a fulltime artist there 4 years later and returning to Auckland in 1988. In 2013 I made my final move to Nelson with Scott White my partner since 1995..

Before you read much further on I'm going to give you an example or two of my wavelength to certain things. If you can't bear to understand these attitudes then you'll be free to pass this epistle to someone else. Firstly, ever since I was a child I was presented, very nicely I have to say, with the indoctrination of Christianity. I've thought how ridiculous it is symbolized by a cross, the mechanism of death, when the believers of that religion expect Christ to return to Earth one day, to see the image of his torture sticking up all over the western world like a trophy. I mean, if your Mother was hung by a rope would you remember her by hanging ropes around the house? Probably not.



VIEW FROM THE BATCH AT TARAWEA



MUM AND DAD FAREWELL THE SHIP AND
BLAKE JAN 1966 - ORCADES TO SYDNEY.

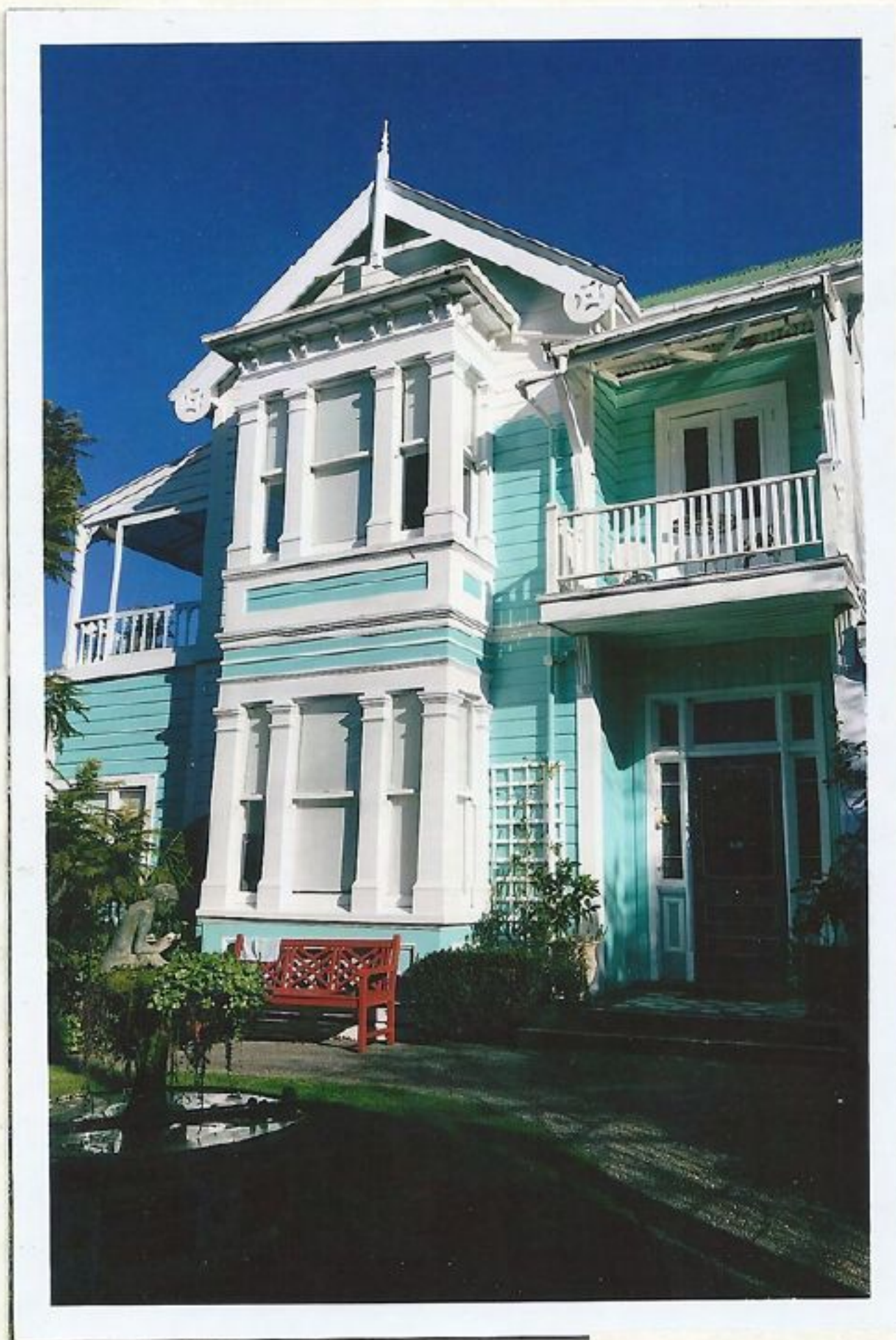
Just quickly, another of my views of humanity is the stupid drive to reproduce and dominate this beautiful, magic living giant, Planet Earth we are fortunate to have been a part of. If your home gets some ants in it you can live even for a long time without noticing it. But when the ants invade and plunder your home, what happens to your building and what do we do? Well its obvious, the building gets rot, smells, food is contaminated or lost and we end up killing the ants in order to save life and property.

Mathematically it is the same for planet Earth. Covering it with humans re-arranging its time proven balance is ridiculous and yet religion and politics which are both inventions that are 'for the people' ignore that fact that we should be gentle on our world and not threaten its existence. Encourage sex not babies and encourage productivity with finesse not greed should be the natural instinct. I am sorry I have to say this but all you religiously indoctrinated people have to realise that your need to dominate others has often led to wars and death.

Lastly in this tirade of opinion I am going to mention our society's attitude to criminals particularly the irresponsible drivers on our roads. The news always says 'The car crashed head on' or 'over the cliff' instead of saying 'a driver crashed his or her car into' or 'an idiot on drugs or alcohol' drove into an innocent person's vehicle and killed them.

This idea of being soft on humans who do things they would not like being done to them is just stupid. Call me right wing I don't care, just grow up humanity and become responsible for yourselves and your planet. Now if you are broad minded enough to have got this far, you may enjoy the following experiences a man with that attitude has had during his oh so wonderful life.

I'm going to start by telling you where I am this February 2017. My house is a large gracious 2 storied Villa white with a green roof, nestled on a large piece of land amongst its garden of large trees and terraced gardens, looking over the city of Nelson and surrounding mountains and ocean. Being at the top of the South Island of New Zealand, Nelson nestles in a



THE NELSON HOUSE,



THE BENTLY MAULSANNE .

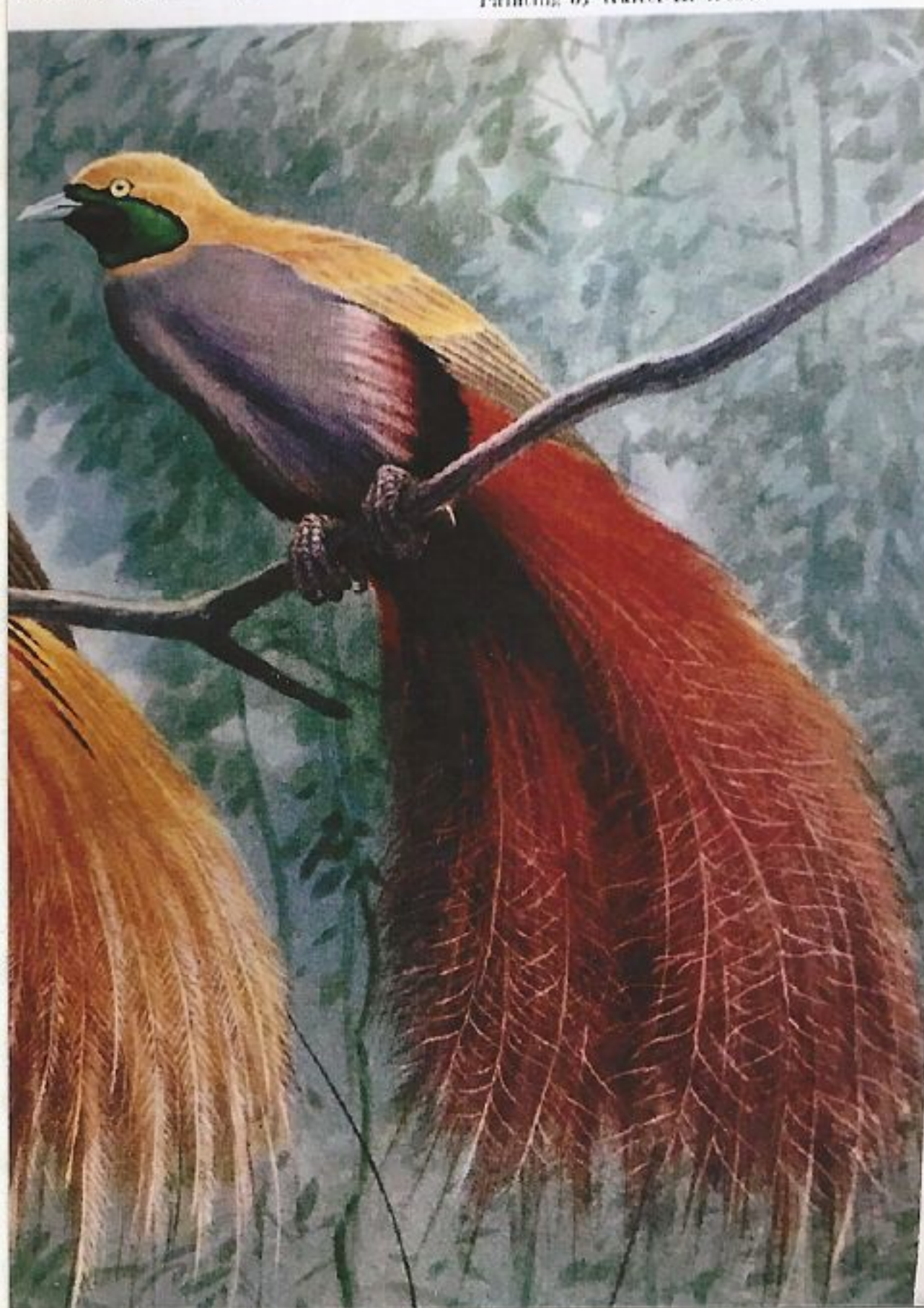
very sheltered crescent of coastline sheltered dramatically West and East by mountains which deviate the worst of the weather directly North to poor Wellington the capital. My garden is just warm enough to reflect my love of plants that remind me of my travels over the years to 43 countries. Banana, Hibiscus, a five hundred year old Australian grass tree and orchids feature amongst the ferns and large temperate trees.

The house is decorated with eclectic reflection of my life, paintings by myself and others, sculptures and furniture from my days in Sydney in the 60s up to additions suitable for the house bought more recently. So picture me in the classic tower above the gentle life of Nelson gardening mainly, the vegetables, flowers and lawns. Turning wonderful food into delicious meals, driving my Bentley Mulsanne and writing this restoration of memories when the mood takes me. My most artistic ability has branched from the 47 years of professional painting to making ceramic bowls for our local wildlife sanctuary, a predator proof environment behind a fence surrounding a large mountainous area of native bush. I've loved realizing my visions of emerald geckos and black and white Orcas straddling the lids and bowls I create. These I give for the Waimarama Sanctuary to sell towards their funding of this desperate venture attempting to preserve our country's unique wildlife for future generations and the good of our land. When you are old it's an extra nice feeling giving something back to the world after enjoying the trip for so long.

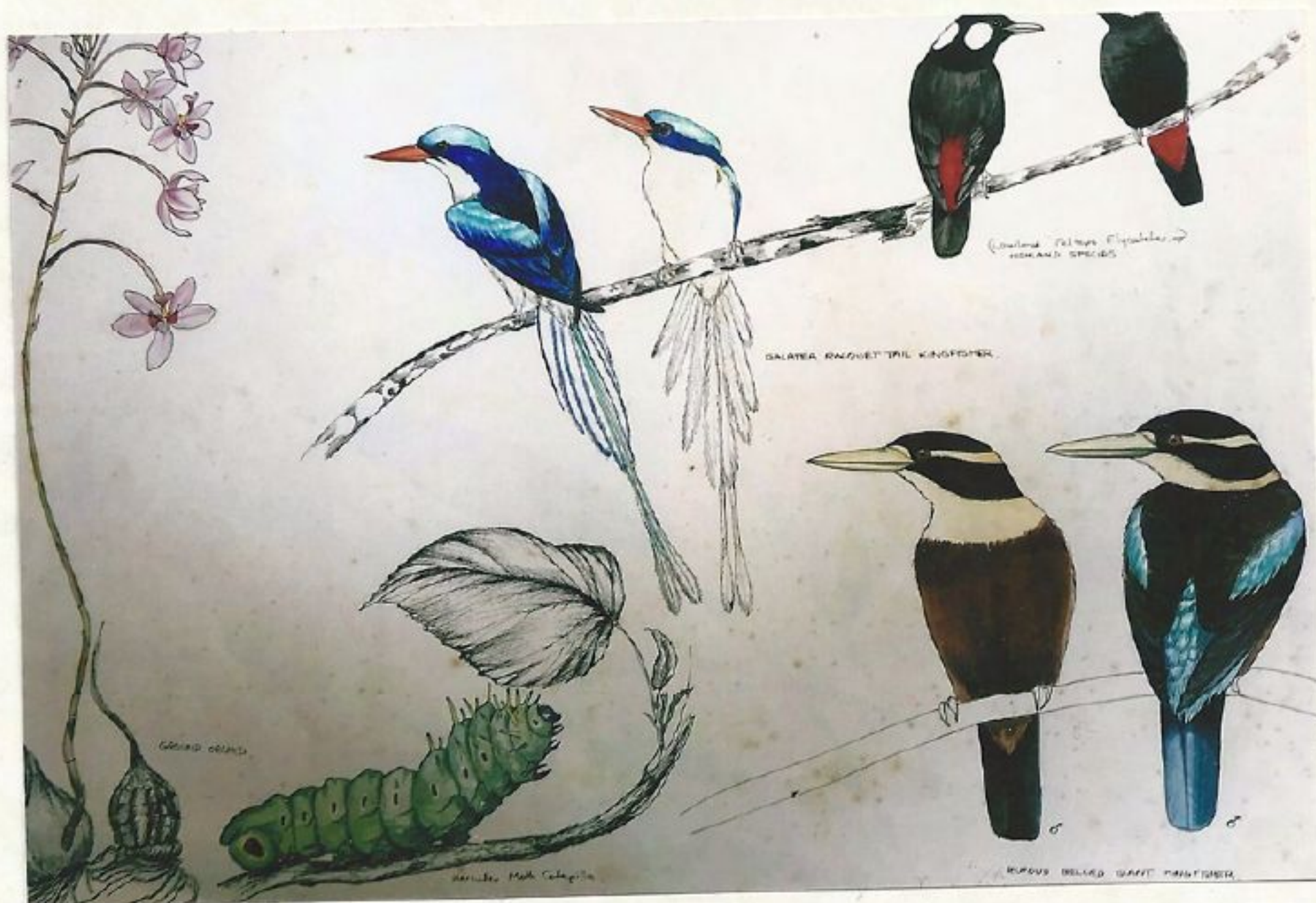
That's enough about how I live these days for the moment. I've decided to make you aware of more of the present between my stories from the past..

An early memory I have from 1954 at 9 years old led eventually to one of the most important aspects of my life. My family of six children plus Mum and Dad, were visiting our cousins at their property called Long Ashton, situated where Manukau City now stands. I had found their recently received February Edition of National Geographic and was fascinated by Walter Webers paintings of Birds of Paradise. Lost in discovery of their sensational beauty, I was

Species of "Plume Birds"
 in plumes mark a separate species, the Graybreasted (right).
 Painting by Walter A. Weber



WALTER WEBER'S ILLUSTRATION 1954 NAT. GEO.



FROM ONE OF MY NEW GUINEA SKETCHBOOKS,

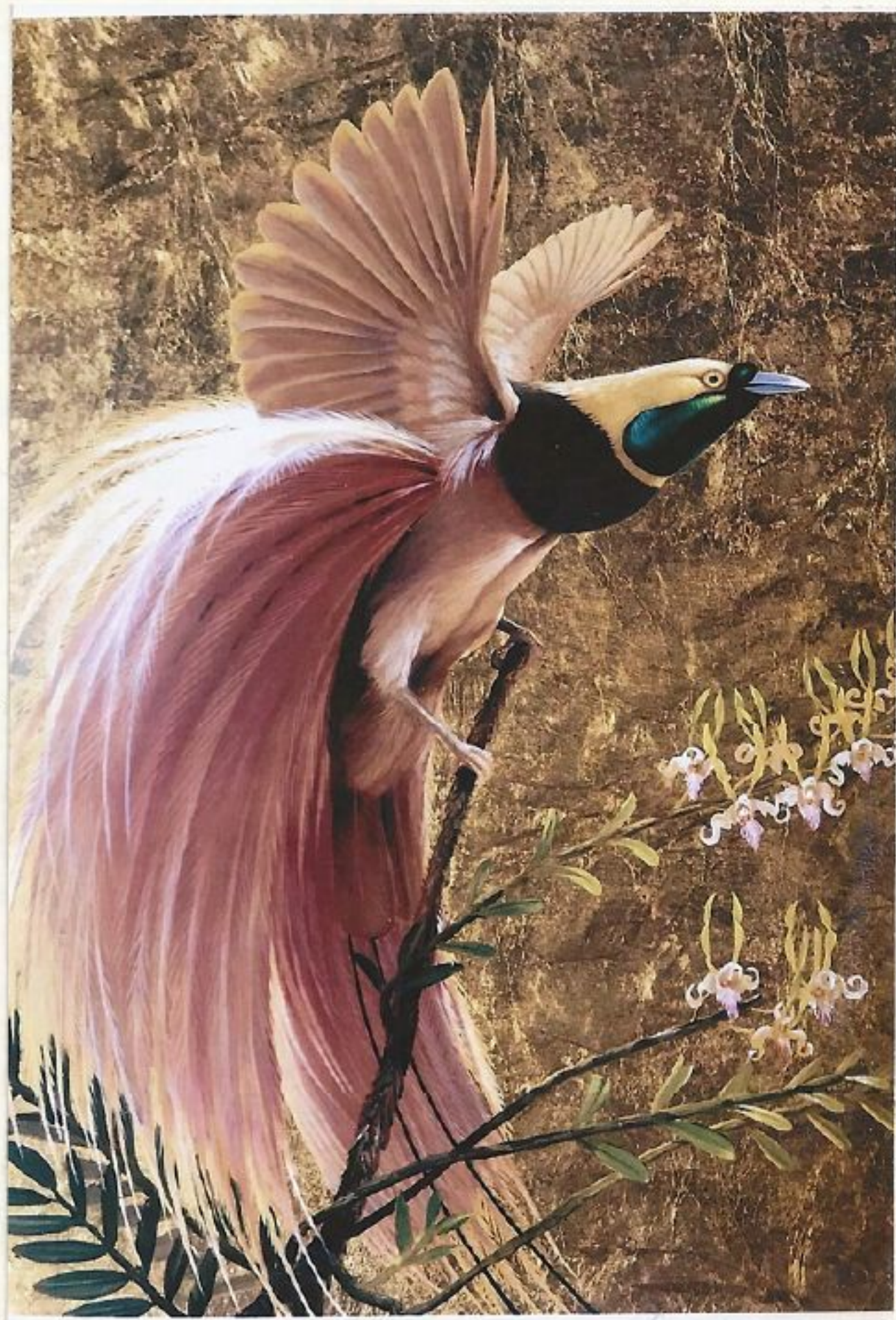
oblivious that lunch had been served and that my cousins - eleven in their family and seven in mine were waiting for my attendance at the table. With what I can only imagine now was the greatest of reluctance, I was dragged to the meal and thence a yearning for more education of such magnificent creatures was established.

You can imagine my excitement therefore many years later in 1973 when I was invited to join Walter Greenwalt, a board member for the National Geographic, and a few other people to go far into the hinterland mountains of Papua New Guinea in search of Birds of Paradise. Walter was renowned as the first person to photograph the still wingbeat of a hummingbird, featured in National Geographic years before. These days when I enjoy Sir David Attenborough's TV programmes, I relive my own experiences all those years ago. The media/internet drenched youth of today could be forgivably envious of the era of wildlife discovery with modern conveniences, just as I was envious of the early naturalists discovering exotic countries and creatures in the earlier centuries. It was journeys into the wild that I could embrace, bringing sketches back to my home in Sydney of the most beautiful plants animals and birds particularly. The Art scene was wild with OP and POP and so I quickly became uniquely identified as a painter of graphic studies of visually dramatic species. When in Moscow and Leningrad in 1969 I had seen old icons of religious theme and the important ones had gold leaf haloes around the heads of the subject - Christ and the Virgin Mary. It was during this expedition to the Bismarck ranges in central Papua New Guinea and seeing 17 species of Birds of Paradise that the two events merged. That's why I started painting Birds of Paradise on pure gold leaf. I had thought that if mythological deity can be illuminated with gold these magnificent creatures surely deserve it too. Walter Greenwalt was married to Elizabeth DuPont so I gained extraordinary insight into their private life, for instance the era when Castro took over the DuPont estate in Cuba.

I knew Walter was the first person to capture the wingbeats of a hummingbird on film but the amount of work to prepare was extreme. Hummingbirds beat their wings at 80 times a second



MY GREATER BIRD OF PARADISE OIL -



COUNT RAGGIS BIRD OF PARADISE
ON 24ct GOLD BY BLAKE.

so he designed cages made from metal rods and the DuPont product lycra. These folded up of course for easy carrying anywhere so after the wild birds were caught in nets they could be housed in these cages with perches added, and the high speed camera could film them as they passed through a beam. We had local natives with us and they called out through the valleys and mountains at night letting other inhabitants know that we were in the area and wanting live birds for study. Often I could hear distant calls repeating the information to even more distant communities. It was something I could never forget. When birds came into our camp Walter could photograph them and I could paint them and let them free. The natives caught the birds by rigging a system of insects on a stick below a bundle of soft rotten wood which would fall and trap the bird when the insect was attacked. This was ingenious as the birds were not harmed in any way. Orchids, butterflies, parrots, caterpillars were all subjects I recorded in my sketch book. Insects and sweat on my hands were most distracting though! It was these sketches I worked from when returning to my studio in Sydney. I loved being able to relive the atmosphere of the PNG jungle when referring to my sketchbooks. The composition of the final paintings from this trip evolved from what's called thumbnail sketches which I would do first. I returned to PNG on seven occasions doing a series of stamps (the subject was Nudibranchs) for their Postal Department, judging their Art Show and providing images for the launch of their Airline. The advertisements and the plane interiors and menus used my images "Now there are 43 Birds of Paradise" but I am interrupting this now because I'm going down to the city to visit my Aunty Jean Twigden. I have only two aunts left out of nine and she's a special favourite, alert as ever at 94 and so lovely for me to have in my adopted city. My uncle, her husband Jack died at 90 and my father Garth was so pleased to reach 99- nine more years than his eldest brother!

I am back again with the advantage of two Pinot Gris.

Two incidents from that PNG trip researching and painting for my next exhibition are worth mentioning. One was that our battery in the amphibious vehicle, which was our main

irrespective of the
jungle throbs with the
cries of the mating
some scream, others
ounds that are a

remember the incident
perfectly. The magazine was
taken away from me, because
they thought I might tear the
pages. The incident probably
implanted a subconscious

of wind.
He flew away when Blako
was painting in Papua New
Guinea recently, setting off a
full panic in the Twigden
household. But newspaper

paradise
Twigden
as a "sw
tribute to
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"Fish a
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WHITE MAN- WE LIAK PEINT"



A RAGGIANA BIRD OF PARADISE
DANCING ON MY HAND.

transport, got drained and I was chosen to walk to the nearest airfield at a mission, and have a plane fly in a replacement. The mission had a member of the flock in the stages of delivering a baby so I wasn't able to stay in their house – so conveniently for them there were three murderers in a lock up also waiting for the plane. How very fortunate for me! “Blake – you'll have to stay there with them until the plane arrives” A bamboo sleeping lodge and a fire in the middle of the hut was the only comfort. We had 2 days of solid rain until the plane arrived to bring me the replacement battery and take the prisoners to Port Moresby.

The other unusual incident was one morning after I had finally made the huge two day walk all the way back to our camp. I shared a tent with a reptile scientist from California and he had caught a 3 metre Amethystine python, secured in a bag, and left it in our tent. I woke up one morning to find it between my body and the side of the tent. The scientist was researching reptiles all over the world to try and find the source of a pathogen which was infiltrating zoo specimens. The rest of the party were most amused whereas I just thought how lucky I had been.

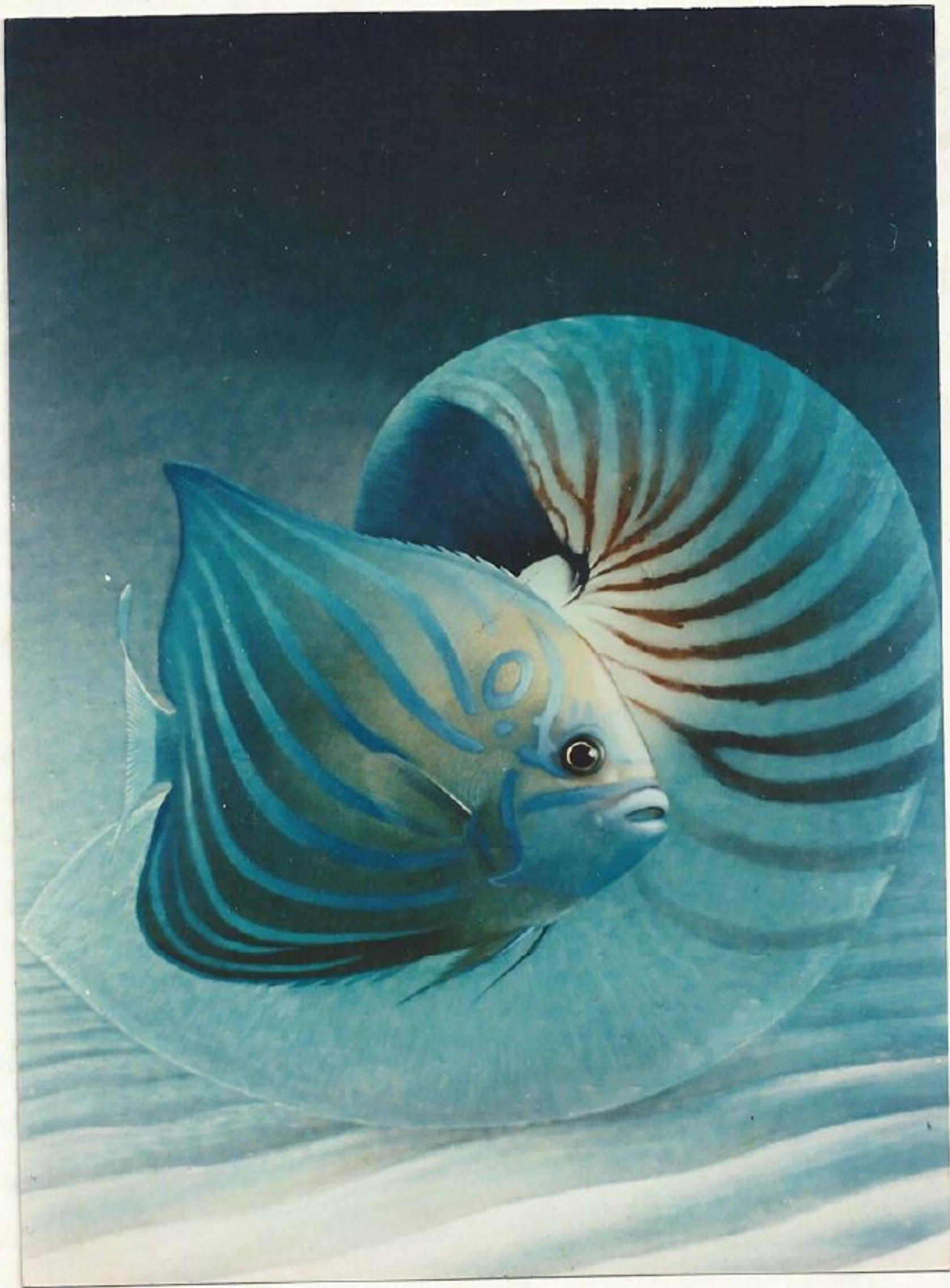
While on the subject of incidents in PNG I'm reminded of a request to partake in a benevolent act which ended up being one of my most life-threatening situations. I was in Rabaul, New Britain, to judge the New Guinea Art Show and local identities, the Clarkes, were kind enough to let me stay in their home. Don and Margot were lovely hosts and when her sister Pattie arrived after two years rehabilitation in Australia I was told of the reason for her absence. Pattie and her family had a large property well up the coast of New Britain, very isolated but obviously very productive. The main house was back from the beach and another one built mainly of bamboo was down on the sand and regarded as the 'holiday house' used mainly when their children and friends went to stay during holidays. One Christmas night the beach house was full of family and guests when they thought their dog knocked over a kerosene lamp. In the resulting fire Patties husband died and she was severely burned over most of her body. She showed me her rebuilt skin and my heart went out to her. Having met my buoyant



ROGER LUTZBOCK RIGHT AND ME AT THE
OPENING OF THE LONDON EXHIBITION.
1977.

personality she asked me to accompany her on a boat trip back to the scene of the disaster obviously having not been there since the fire. She booked a local water taxi and we were due to go the 50 odd kilometres the next day. However she couldn't face the idea and asked for me to go alone and tell her all about the trip when I returned I guess to soften the images of her memory with another person's description of the place. The lady who owned the boat brought her reporter husband along as he was visiting from Port Moresby. In gorgeous weather we sped through the harbour around the coast to the Bining Peninsula where the Hopper property was. I decided to snorkel while the couple with me went fishing, so I was dropped off to a beautiful beach, totally alone while they disappeared across the ocean. The big house was up near the forest in front of me, so I walked up to familiarise myself and to be able to report to Pattie that it was safe and sound. In the kitchen I found an old box of WeetBix and not much else, but I thought how good it would be to use it to attract tropical fish when diving. After meandering around the house and garden in the 35degree heat, the cooler sea beckoned and before long, with snorkel, I was esconsed on a coral bombie feeding old WeetBix to the jewel like inhabitants of the reef. Bombie is the local word for the big brain coral structures, formed like a huge ball and nice to sit on under the sea. My head would have been about a metre from the surface as I sat watching what came up from below to eat the food.

It wasn't long before I sensed something and turned my head to the left to see a huge mouth of teeth and large eye of a barracuda just centimetres from my gaze. I pushed myself off the coral and faced the monster, then noticing I was surrounded by a shoal of others looking like aqua torpedoes. Putting my arms and legs out to make myself bigger I faced the fish in front of me and slowly turned my back to the shore. The close fish suddenly flicked away into the circle of the others and thus surrounded I went up for air fully aware that I may feel an attack en masse. Thankfully no, so returning below the surface I slowly flippered and hand waved myself backwards to the beach, hauled myself out and peeled off my wetsuit onto the hot sun drenched sand. All I could do was sit in my Speedos and look out to sea in a state of shock.



MY PAINTING OF THE BLUE-RING ANGELFISH.

Eventually my friends in the water taxi arrived and dejectedly showed me one small bonito which was all they had caught. 'Taiwanese fishermen is the reason' they said – 'they catch all the fish around here these days'

'Well' I said, 'don't even push the boat back out, just throw your lines off the back and you'll get barracuda galore!' We returned to Rabaul with three 1.6 metre Great New Britain barracuda dangerously lying with those huge toothed mouths on the bottom of the boat to be sold at the market next day. Pattie loved hearing my story of the day but it took a long time for her to go there herself.

One of the reasons I was so interested in snorkeling at various places around the world was because I was asked to have an exhibition of my paintings at the renowned Tryon Gallery in London. Situated in Dover Street, Piccadilly, the gallery was owned by Almer Tryon, brother of Lord Tryon the financial advisor to the Queen. Paul Jones, regarded as the world's best painter of flowers, had recommended my work and when they saw an example they decided they wanted to have their first showing of the beauty of marine fishes. During one of my visits to New Guinea I was staying in the central highlands town of Wau. Through Brian Parkinson a scientist friend based in Rabaul I had contacts all over the country and in Wau there was Gray and Steve Cutlack. At their home for dinner one night I met Roger Lubbock, a Don from Kings College Cambridge who was studying tropical fishes around the world. When I look back on this meeting I can hardly believe how the web of life connects seemingly impossible connections. Roger, highly experienced in the world of academia, wasn't the slightest bit interested in my vocation as an artist. He had never heard of me and he was highly respected as an ichthyologist worldwide. However dear Gray decided that he and I should get to know each other as I was a painter of fish and he was an expert on them. He agreed to let me dive with him at Submarine Base over on New Britain and later we shared a motorbike on the dusty trip to the place where the Japanese had hidden their subs during the Second World War. Roger had discovered a new species in one of these marine caves on an earlier expedition and wanted to

LAUNCHING OF
THE BOOK
"PISCES TROPICANI"



EXHIBITION AT TRYON GALLERY DOVERST, LONDON,

catch one for me. I stayed in the shallows with my snorkel gliding off the coral with stone fish centimetres from my chest while Roger armed with alcohol from the Rabaul hospital, dived into a cave to find and stun an example of his new discovery. From a groggy red and white striped example in a vegemite jar I painted this amazing looking small but stunning fish in my sketchbook. What evolved from this memorable occasion was quite astounding when I look back. As I had dived in Fiji, Australia and the Caribbean I had a broad appreciation of how beautiful fish can be but never imagined my paintings would show in London and become a subject of a leather bound book.

After my successful showing in London (on the first day they sold enough paintings for me to be able to buy a new E type Jaguar I had eyed in a showroom near Berkeley Square if I had wanted to) a Melbourne publisher Landsdowne Press asked if they could produce a book of the paintings. As my current dentist in Sydney had photographed all the works before they were sent to Britain and my contact with Roger Lubbock solved the problem of text, I was all set up for the production of the publication. The initial approach of my choice for the name of the book *Pisces Tropicani* was approved using Rogers connections at Kings College Cambridge. This necessitated my staying in a room overlooking the Quad at Kings- with the famous chapel opposite my window. Roger, being a Don of the college, had pulled strings to arrange my accommodation there. I will never forget listening to the Choir at Kings practising on a Sunday morning while there.

The book *Pisces Tropicani* sold out in Sydney in 12 hours. I found this out because a Sydney Morning Herald reporter rang my home the day after the launch and requested a copy. I had to tell her the suede bound book of glossy plates of the worlds' most beautiful tropical fish was sold out.

While on the subject of fish a story comes to mind from the coast of Venezuela. I had flown to Caracas in 1976 and was met by my cousin Libby and her husband Robin who distributed religious publications in South America. They took me to their home in

Barquisimeto and from there Robin and I drove to the coast to a place called Chichrevechi. Robin had heard of a small island out in the ocean called Borracho where I would be able to study undisturbed marine life. Driving towards the coast we passed over huge expansive swamps with emerald islands in the blue water with orange sand ringing the small to large domes of land covered with palms. What astounded me was the added drama of white and scarlet ibis flocks feeding and flying lazily over the stunning landscape. After getting permission from the local police barracks we were allowed to engage a rower to take us out to Borracho. A huge muscled African agreed on the price negotiated and in the darkness we left the small village on the shore and he rowed out into the prevailing waves. Robin, the religious one, had to be calmed by me as we crashed and rocked through the waves in total darkness. My treasured sketchbook was my main worry but eventually the sound of surf warned us we had reached the island and the moon lit the beach as we got nearer. Our oarsmen promised to come back and pick us up in two days and we took our gear up the moonlit beach and waved him goodbye. It didn't take long after hanging our hammocks to discover that the large round pyramid shells all over the ground under the trees were actually live hermit crabs and their rustling amongst the leaves was only secondly annoying to the rats. Imagine lying in your hammock looking straight up to the moon above and seeing rats crawling up the trees and on to the hammock rungs. In the morning after an honestly sleepless night we discovered that all our food which we had suspended from branches had been soiled or eaten by the frenetic rats.

That morning was calm, hot and beautiful. I circumnavigated the island by foot first and came across lime and aqua lizards, flamingoes flew out from the mainland later that morning and hummingbirds buzzed the foliage- so idyllic, in the daytime.

After lots of diving I regretted the thought of another night of hell and Robin commiserated with me. I just couldn't imagine another sleepless night with the rats and crabs. Then the unbelievable happened. I walked around the island again that afternoon and saw two figures huddled close together opposite the side we were based at. I cautiously approached



LORD KHADOORI , JOAN JONES, LADY KHADOORI.



BOULDER LODGE, HONG KONG.

them and discovered they were having a clandestine meeting as they were married to other people and that a boat was coming back for them before sunset. Oh so thankfully Robin and I could get off the place earlier than planned and advise our oarsman he wouldn't be needed again. One of the species I had painted from the sea around Borocho is in the Pisces Tropicani book. Often I think of Jan Jitts my dentist at the time who took the 4 x 5 inch photos of my London exhibition and thence made it possible for Landsdowne to produce such a wonderful publication recognizing a few of the most beautiful creatures of our tropical oceans.

Back to the present, we've just had the remains of Cyclone Debbie which caused so much damage in Queensland and New South Wales finally reach our shores and I'm taking a break to clean up the lawns and garden which are covered in shred of leaves and branches. The wind has been 120 kmh and it's the second time we've had the aftermath of such storms from the North. Three years ago, in 2014 one came from Cairns straight down the Tasman to Nelson and it uprooted a large tree on our front lawn, causing it to fall right over a pond, fountain and statue of my partner I had recently built. I feel I get looked after so often as again this time none of my hard creative work was damaged even though the branches were all over the structure. Thankfully this storm is not as bad...

I'm going to take you now to Hong Kong in 1983 when a dear friend of mine Joan Jones and I went to spend Christmas at the Peninsula hotel and have the actual day with its owners Lord and Lady Khadoori, their son Michael and his wife Betty. Because of my connections I was allowed into the Zoo at 7.00 am and even into certain cages which is always wonderful for my observations. Christmas dinner at midday was at Boulder Lodge, the Khadoori home which, by the way, had been taken over by the Japanese as their headquarters during World War II. The family was sent to protective confinement in China during the war. I was taken to St Georges building which they owned and high up in a special lift I was taken and shown a vast collection of jade and ivory and panels from the Forbidden Palace in China. This was a mind blowing

experience – imagine a cream corn cob with a pink mouse straddling across it all carved out of one piece of jade. After the Christmas lunch Michael took me out to his old go kart track, surrounded by trees with a huge concrete dragon winding around the perimeter. Sitting gloriously like a yellow dragon fly on the centre lawn was his “whirly bird” as he called it, a bright yellow Hughes helicopter in which we flew across the ocean to China to see the nuclear power station his family was building in association with Britain and the Chinese government. Michael was famous for his flying ability in competition, apparently banned from some events for always winning. It wasn't long after that Lord Khadoori went with Margaret Thatcher to sign the resumption of China's hold of Hong Kong. Another neat thing that happened on that trip was our visit to the races at Happy Valley. I sat with notables like Sir Run Run Shaw in a special private room for lunch overlooking the racing horses. I guessed the places of the horses in the five out of seven races and one of the rich young gamblers at our table had taken my suggestions and won a total of \$22,000- needless to say I never saw any of it! Joan Jones introduced me to many wonderful people as she was the widow of Norman Jones, head of Amatil in Australia. When her friend Barbara Catts my neighbor in Neutral Bay passed away, Joan moved in on my friendship feeling that she couldn't while Barbara was alive. Barb was a fabulous woman and we had lots to do with each other. Like when my partner of 14 years left with one nights warning, Barb brought French champagne every morning at 8.00 o'clock. Anyway, Joan fundraised for Foundation 41, Dr McBride's set up which he established with the money given to him I believe by the French for discovering the terrible results of thalidomide on pregnant women. My exhibitions helped raise money and Joan loved my company. It was through this association I was invited to a dinner at the American Club in Sydney for Audrey Mars, President of World Cancer Research. After the dinner Mrs Mars was standing at the large window in the dining room, famous for its view of the back of the Opera House. She was as commanding and handsome as a woman of her age could be. Silver coiffed hair, white silk suit with fine pleated skirt drizzled with the tiniest web of climbing roses. I felt for the look of her



ADRIENNE,
LINDA,
AND ME.

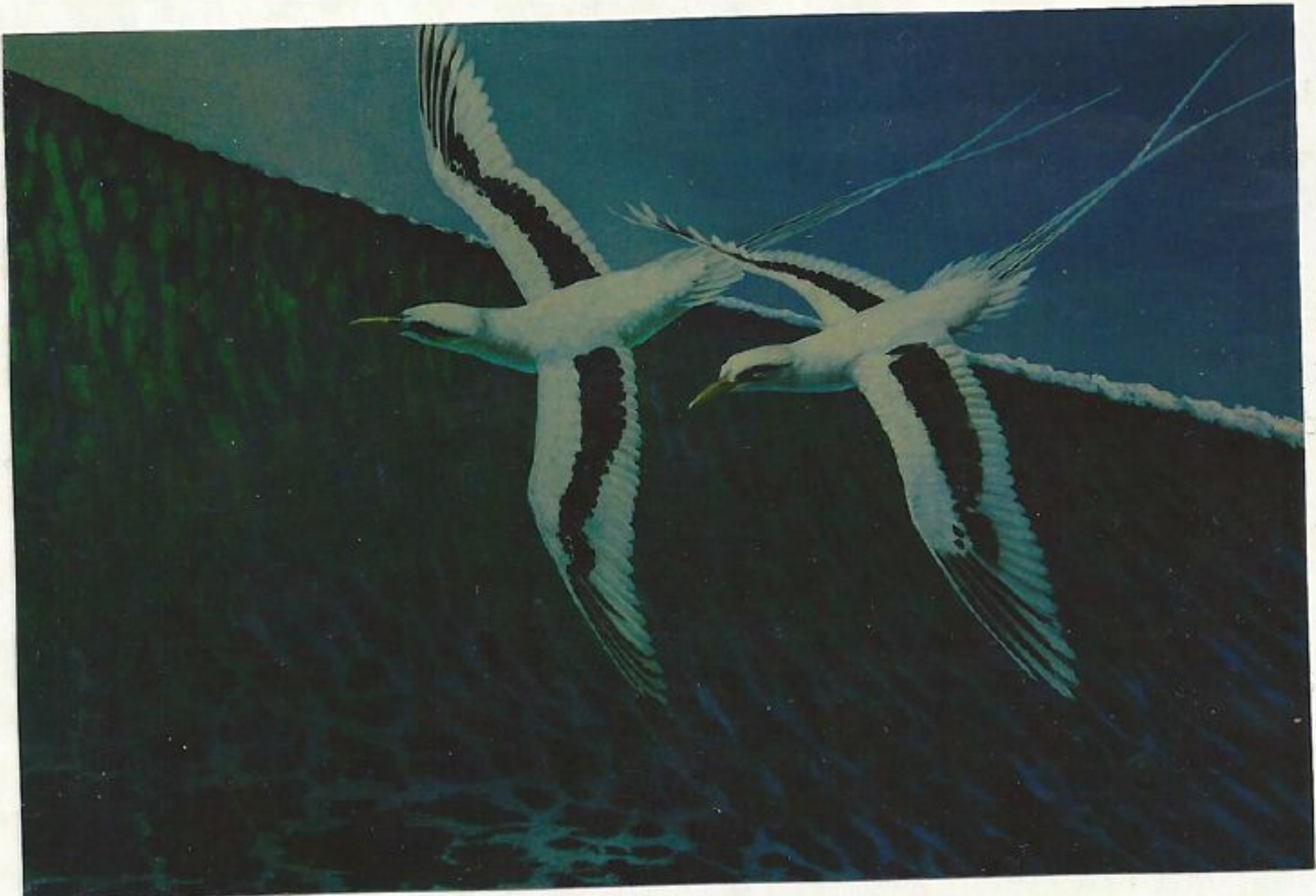


ADRIENNE AND JOHN MARS
WITH ME, NELSON 2018.

and went up to stand beside her. I don't know how I could have said it but I did. 'Audrey, you are such a wealthy and powerful woman but you seem so sad '. Audrey slowly turned, put her hand on my arm and spoke in a soft classy Chicago accent. 'So would you be Blake, if your husband had been having an affair for 43 years'. A bond was created and we communicated for the next few years until she passed. She told me that when you stepped from the lift into her apartment on the top of the Watergate building , one of my paintings of Prince Rudolph Bird of Paradise on silver leaf greeted your arrival. By 1988 Audrey was too ill to attend a Bicentennial dinner in Sydney to which she had been invited. Instead she sent her son John and his wife Adrienne and my meeting them led to many more years association with the Family. Almost annually John and Adrienne would visit Sydney and later Auckland for business and often I would host them or Adrienne would sometimes stay in my home. Having been accepted into what is described on Google, in this year of 2017, as the third wealthiest family in the United States, has led to many wonderful situations. A major event happened when John and Adriennes daughter Linda declared she had fallen in love with me. As I had spent the preceding 9 years alone (you might remember my partner of 14 years had left me in 1980) I decided to give the Linda partnership 5 years to see how it developed. After that period, when I had experienced exactly what it would be like marrying the heiress to the biggest fortune I could imagine we were due to fly to Washington for Christmas and an announcement. However sadly a very personal and vital issue regarding trust had evolved and I had to terminate such committing plans. I have to say Linda and the family are still in my life 22 years later. I was invited to John and Adriennes party in Bermuda, Lindas fiftieth birthday at the Melbourne Cup and her parents celebration of reaching 80 years, cruising up the Alaskan coast in the National Geographic Explorer. These occasions are genuine and warm events the Mars give to their most loved friends and we all feel like we belong to an exclusive club. To give you an idea of my bond at these occasions, one night at dinner on the Explorer the entire table toasted my partner of the last 22 years, Scott, with red wine and recognition. I had had the pleasure of



IN BERMUDA WITH JACKIE MARS, MICHAEL
MARS AND HIS FIRST WIFE.



PAINTING OF TROPIC BIRDS FOR
FORREST MARS YACHT.

being commissioned by John's brother Forrest during the party in Bermuda. One hundred of us were having lunch on board his yacht and he called me down to the main saloon to tell me about two White Tailed Tropic birds which had sheltered on deck off the coast of Africa. 'I want a painting of them there', he said pointing to the largest bare wall. I complied when returning to Auckland and received US \$35,000 for the work. Subsequently his yacht's Captain built a new home in the Caribbean and, knowing how much he loved the painting, Forrest gave it to him. Two years later during the Alaskan trip he commissioned a replacement for a new ship he had purchased. Very sadly Forrest died a couple of days later but his widow Jacomein honoured the commission much to my surprise and I received US \$38,000. Scott is due home soon so I'm off to the airport to collect him. We have a business auditing retail stores mainly in airports for service standards and cost comparisons, and he's been managing staff and doing checks in Cairns, Brisbane, Newcastle, Gold Coast and Christchurch airports. It's always a great reunion!

Back to memorable stories, this time South America. A local had agreed to take sixteen tourists out to a couple of outer islands in the Galapagos group, in his fishing boat. At one of them where we were to see flamingos, he anchored and the young amongst us swam the couple of hundred yards to the shore. Terribly hot day and the water is quite cool and therefore refreshing. Everyone assembled on the sand when the zodiac arrived with the older visitors and crew. It was only a few hundred yards to the lagoon where the birds were feeding but the dead looking trees and muddy water didn't appeal to my senses, so after a few moments the cool of the sea beckoned and I went back to the beach. Now when I got there, another chap was already chest deep in the sea, cooling off so I went in about five yards away from him and enjoyed the relief from the heat. Further out were lots of giant green turtles, some of them mounting each other and some quite close to us. Obviously these turtles were oval shapes to our sight because we were at sea level. However, suddenly I noticed a torpedo shape coming through the water straight toward us. As it got closer I said to Jerry (that was his name I discovered later - an American missionary from Peru). 'Hey I think that's a shark', and quickly



BEING SHUTTLED BACK TO THE
BOAT WHICH MEANT AVOIDING
THE INQUISITIVE SHARK.



DARWIN FINCH AT MY
BREAKFAST.

retreated to the beach whereas he just stayed where he was until I had to rush in, grab his upper arm, and haul him towards safety. The shark continued straight for us and we only just escaped its jaws. The fish cruised back and forth long enough for us to get all the others to witness the threat, and indeed we had scary shuttles back to the fishing boat and the shark escorted us. I had the presence of mind to get a photo of it cruising next to the boat. Jerry never thanked me.

The impact of Cyclone Debbie is receding at last so Scott's plane was not blown to pieces on the flights back to Nelson. Myself, after having visited 43 countries during this exciting life have had a good share of memorable events in the air or associated with flying. In the Galapagos, the aircraft I was due to depart on a couple of days before Christmas, was seconded by Ecuador's President and that led to real drama. Those of you who have been there know that the airfield is on the island of Baltra, a long bus and boat trip from the big town of Peurto Aroya, so imagine tourists and locals from the boat trips and hotels etc all wanting to get on the next days plane which was already going to be full from our missed flights passengers. Luckily, and wisely, I rose the next morning early enough to get a seat on the bus to the airport only to find that that days aircraft landed so heavily that the undercarriage was damaged. Now Galapagos is on the Equator and in 40 degree heat and no working toilets in the lounge/shed, pressure was building as we all got shuttled back with the new load of passengers. Third day was going to be a bunfight – I could see it, so that evening I met the crew of the next departing plane, did some local wildlife studies for them and received the information of how to get on that next days plane. 'When the queue starts for baggage get in as early as you can and then walk straight out to the aircraft when the last passengers have disembarked. Don't do this in an obvious way''

Baltra is an aircraft carrier shaped deserty island of low scrub and cactus. I quietly walked around looking at the plants and acting like I owned the place until I got behind the big plane- then quietly walked up the ramp stairway and into seat 1A. Twenty minutes later, two



GALAPOGAS — THIS JET DAMAGED
ITS UNDERCARRIGE SECONDS
LATER — BIG DELAY.



THE TWO BLONDES WHO EVENTUALLY
FLEW OUT OF GALAPOGAS WITH
ME .

gorgeous blonde girls from L.A. came on board and sat in 2A and 3A. 'How did you do this too'? I asked. 'We slept with crew members' they replied. An hour later the other passengers came into the oppressive heat and couldn't believe we were on board. Of course after so much time spent shuttling back and forth we were familiar to quite a few of our fellow travelers.

During that visit to Galapagos I had been given an address, by the Wildlife Rangers, of a place "You have to try to get to in Equador". I was given the name Tina of Tinalandia and told to get a certain bus from Quito to God knows where but just tell the driver to drop you off at Tinalandia. Well after hours in the bus witnessing orchid and epiphyte cliffs hitting the windows on one side, and stupendous drops to oblivion on the other plus seeing a bus being hauled up by men with ropes retrieving it after crashing – memorial crosses recording accidents every now and then, and the road ahead a blur of diesel fumes, we finally stopped at a driveway rising into the jungle. I grabbed my bag and thanked the driver as the bus disappeared in a plume of black smoke, and walked up a tunnel in the tropical forest. Suddenly before me was a stone, glass and bronze building, rather austere and Frank Lloyd Wrightish. Big double doors loomed above the steps. I knocked. It was 1.00 pm. A door opened and a short local woman dressed as a maid peeked out at me, "Senora Tina Gracias" was all I could think of to say. Door closed. When it opened again I was beckoned to follow into a large long dining room, silver candleabras and two people sitting at the far end having their lunch. 'Sit,' brief introductions, a bell pushed under the table by the grand lady who was wearing a hat! Silver domed plates were brought in for me to choose my food, wine was offered and then finally proper conversation. Tina was wonderful- probably 78 and her other guest was a handsome possibly older man who had heliconia farms. Tina later explained to me that her husband had been unfaithful to her with their, at the time, maid. She forgave him. When a second child was born to the girl she said OUT! So this man Alfonso was a recent companion of convenience. Why the men on Galapagos had recommended I try to stay at Tinalandia became evident after a superb welcome lunch. We all drove in shark like finned 60s Plymouth coupe, up a long drive

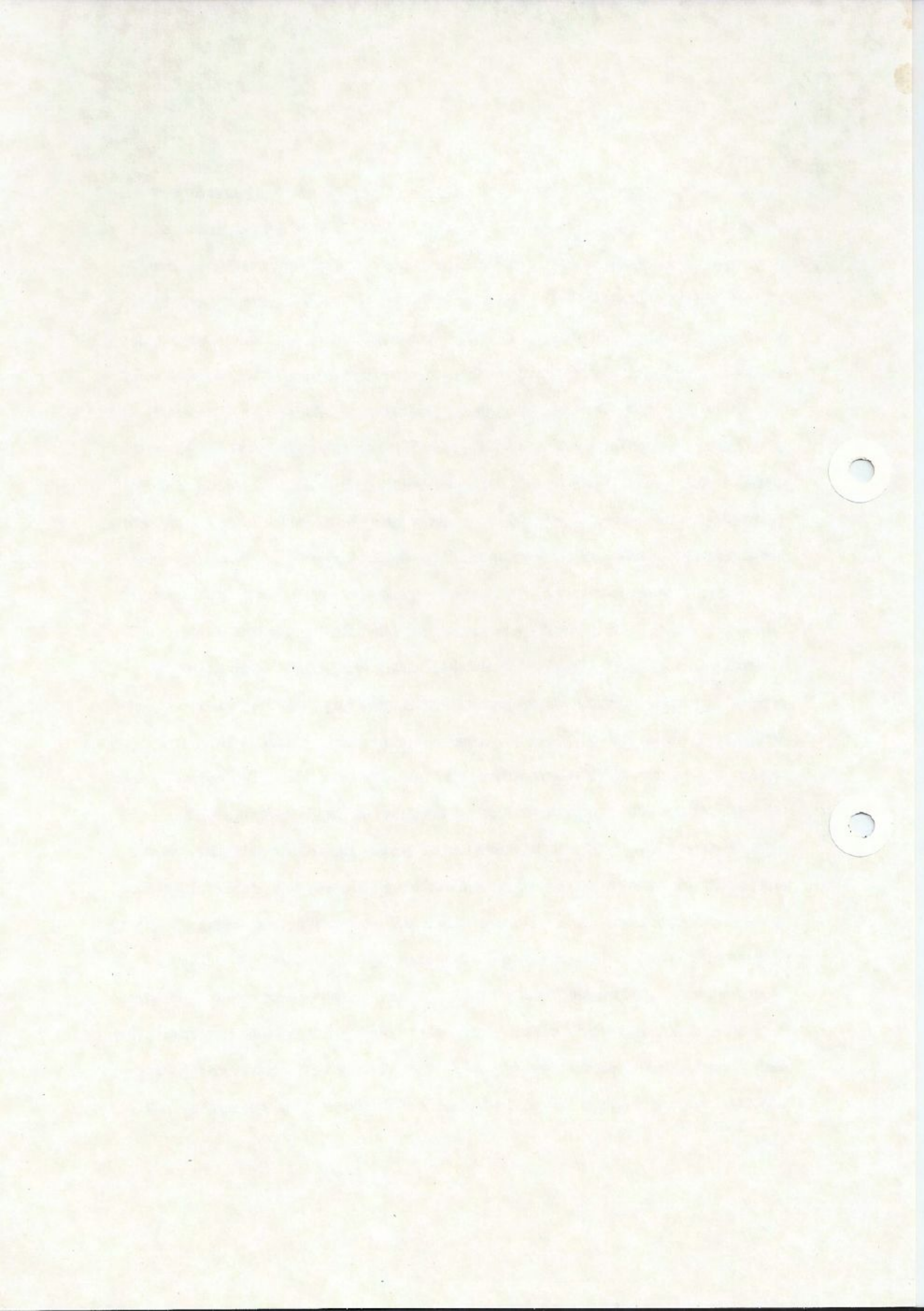
from the main house, onto a more level acreage of golf course and two storied cottages surrounded by lofty palms and wild jungle. I spent three days in super comfort (American bathroom) with spectacular views of valley and mountains, venturing out by myself seeing armadillo, Toucan, Trogons, these giant iridescent blue morpho butterflies and of course hummingbirds. Way up in the hills it started to rain and I sheltered under the huge heliconia leaves by a running stream. Suddenly next to my head- a couple of feet away, was movement and I was thrilled to be in the company of a gorgeous blue and purple hummingbird. I had plenty of time to digest its colours and features. Going back down to my digs I came across a jungle track and after a while a small truck rumbled up behind me. As it was still raining I accepted the offer of a ride, the driver signalling me to jump in the back, over the high sides of the tray. Well I couldn't believe my eyes. As I straddled the high walls to enter it became fearfully obvious there was a large cow already there and before I could stop my entry, the truck jerked off on its way down the hill. I don't think anyone has much advice on how to survive being in a small moving high sided truck with a heavy beast stumbling this way and that as the vehicle twisted and turned its way down the muddy track I might say a bit towards where I needed to go. I was really, nearly squashed to death but did prove how nimble I was then. A good bang on the roof finally released me from a pretty scary hitchhike and I made it back to Tinalandia. That night I painted the hummer I had seen and gave it to Tina after dinner. Thanking me she said my bill would be on the hall table next morning as I was leaving too early to see her. The bill read- no charge and thank you!

From South America come with me to Africa where I have had several visits. Way back in 1974 having kept the address of two Scottish guys we had met in Switzerland in 1969, Bill my partner and I arrived to stay mainly in the Serengeti, Tanzania. One of those chaps ended up being high up in the running of all the hotels there- Lobo, Manyara, Ngorogoro Crater etc and after an amazing time at the different accommodations (including sleeping in the same



THE BRILLIANT THUNDERSTORM
FROM ROOM AT BUMI.

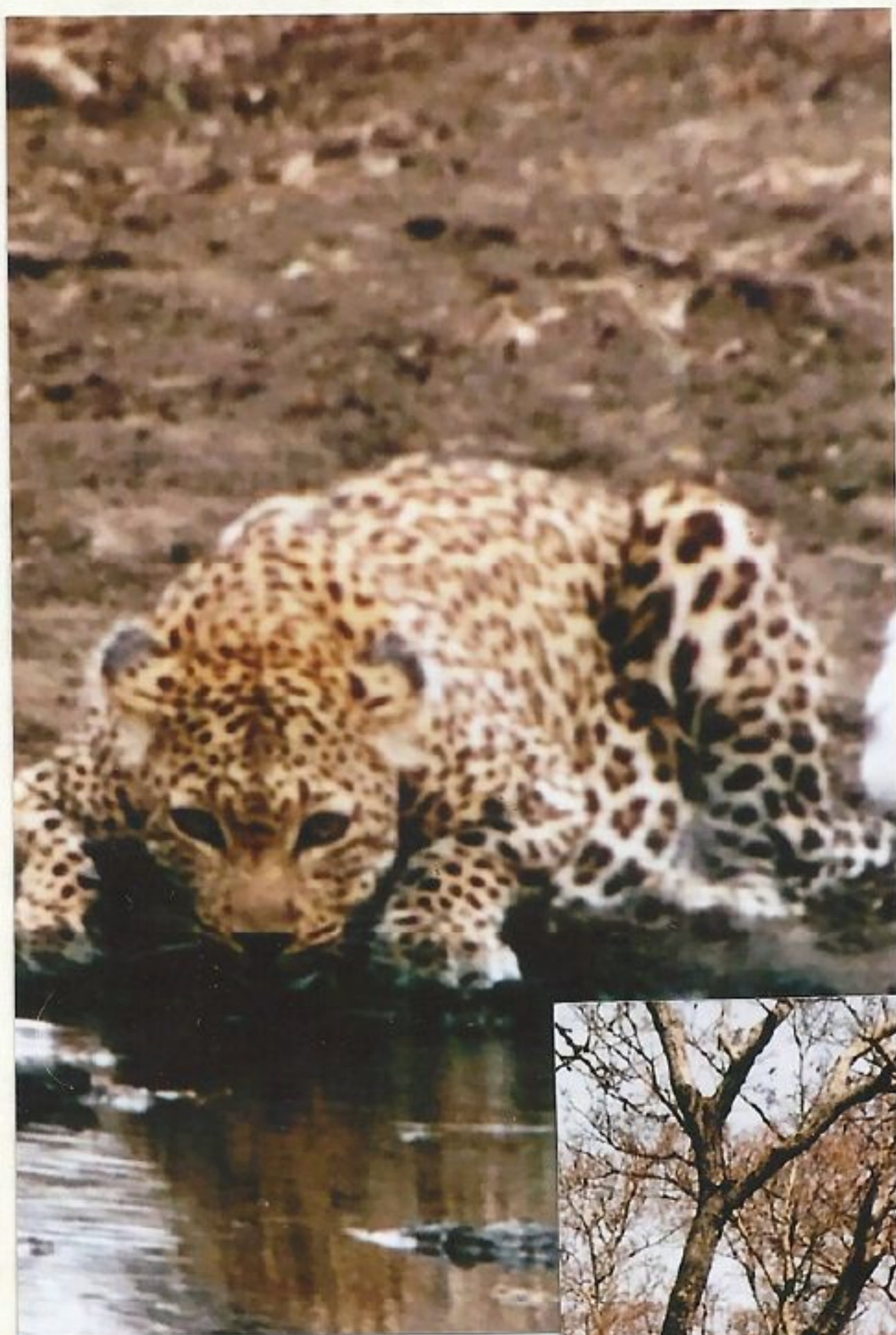
bed as President Johnson and Lady Bird) the night after them and seeing a huge range of wildlife we were told we didn't have to pay anything. How about that! Years later, in a desperate attempt to flee the pressure of Christmas invitations in Sydney, and living alone since the break up with Bill, I flew to Zimbabwe to spend the festive season at Victoria Falls. I was met at Harare Airport by a prominent Vet and his male partner who, when dropping me off at the hotel, suggested I might like to attend a party that night. The men had been introduced to me by the President of the World Veterinary Association and I had no idea of the sensational event I was privileged to attend. A truly magnificent English style home in beautiful grounds was the venue, and mainly gay friends welcomed me into their world. It was one of the most enjoyable occasions I have ever attended. A couple of guys who mixed their ranger work with delivering mail, asked me to join them on their trip down to Botswana and I remember one stop at a wonderful scene where Gary Player was restoring a burnt-out golf course. I wonder now if it ever got finished as the site was magnificent. I then flew to Bumi Hills Hotel – accommodation on the Zambezi River near Lake Kariba, where I spent five days, a record according to the management. Being an artist it never takes long for my hosts to treat me a bit differently to the normal tourists and I was escorted alone with guides on many occasions. One trip in a Jeep got interrupted when suddenly out of the right hand side of the elephant grass we were plowing through, a giant elephant lunged in front of us, huge ears flaring and a screaming trumpeting came from its raised trunk. My guide slapped the vehicle into reverse and roared backwards into the track we had made. Using a cracked mirror as his reference we bumped and crashed away from the furious animal until we couldn't see it chasing us anymore. That evening I told the other guests, at dinner by a roaring fire, my version of the days excitement and the guide added 'Well you couldn't blame her she was obviously in pain from her cracked tusk. Can you believe he noticed those details during my moments of terror? After dinner I returned to my room to find the outdoor light had been left on. Now accommodation was rather 'motel' like units, unfenced and in a row along the cliff edge. The masses of all



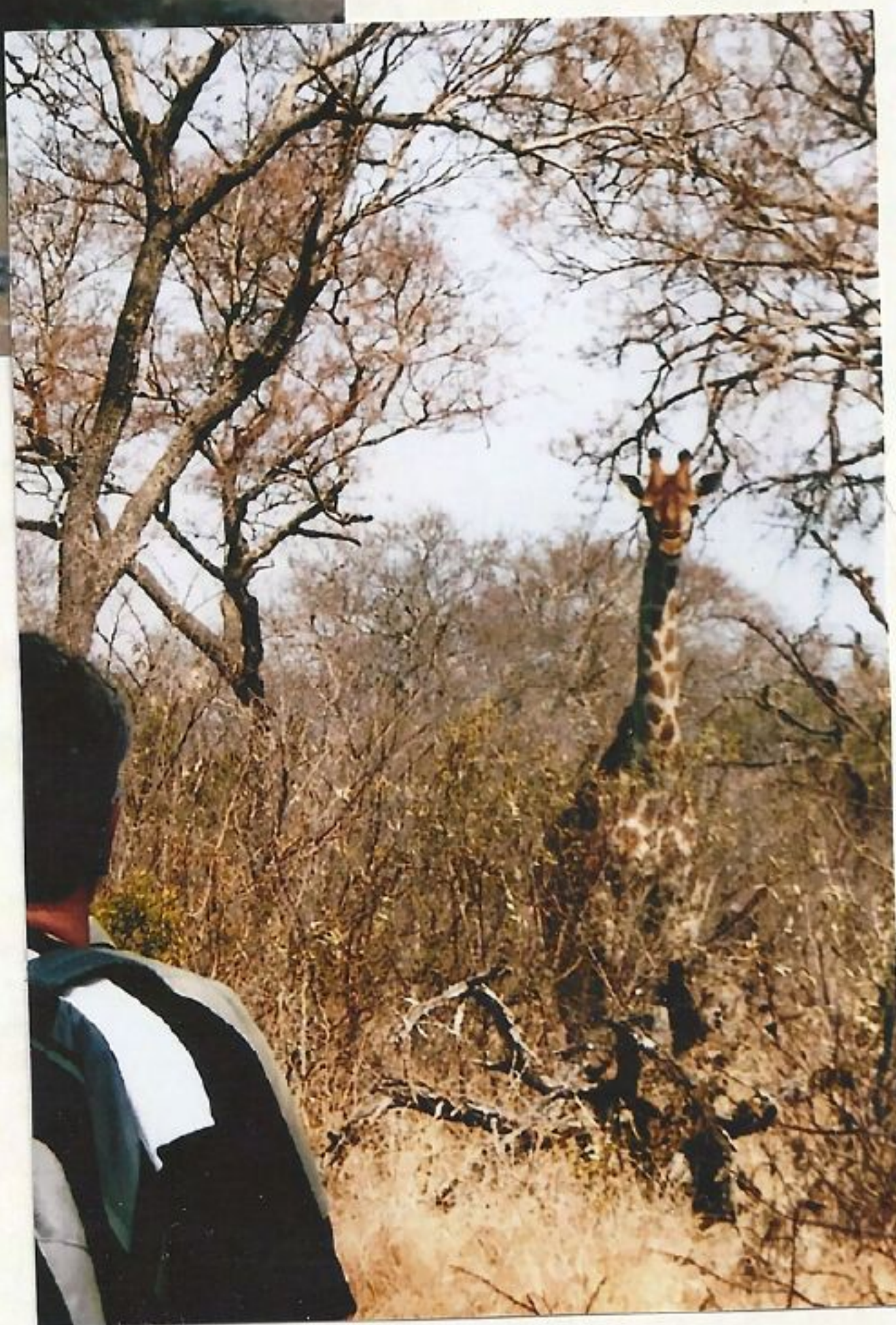
sorts of insects around my entrance and door attracted by the light was intimidating and it was almost impossible to get into my room without a cloud of bugs following me inside. Once in, before finding the bedside lamp, I noticed several fireflies cruising my dark room, the wide Zambezi River over distant Zambia, and huge storm clouds were being illuminated by dramatic lightning. I wanted to ring my home in Sydney which was being looked after by Danny Smylie my usual house sitter so finally getting a light on and phone call through to see if all was well in Sydney, I turned the light off as I chatted, so I could watch the storm and the fireflies.

Suddenly a vibrating rubbing noise started as I talked and when I investigated from the small terrace I found an adult elephant scratching himself on the side of my building. Danny who was on the other end of the phone couldn't really believe my description of the scene before me – it was indeed wonderful. The next day the guide took me to a huge tree with a ladder to a high up observation platform. I asked if I could be left up there alone for four hours as it seemed to be a great site to watch butterflies, birds and animals in their wild habitat. This was well away from the hotel but he promised to return by five pm that day to collect me. By five thirty it was getting darker and although I had seen quite a few of the areas' inhabitants, the only fright I had had at that stage was a sudden and deafening crash very close to where a rotten forest giant finally succumbed and only just missed the tree I was in. Then not long after that and by now getting a bit worried about my pickup, quiet rustling on the forest floor revealed a troop of baboons, obviously aiming their intention at the base of 'my' tree. As you may know Alpha male baboons can be very protective and very dangerous, with canine teeth longer than a lions. The animals started climbing the tree towards me, probably 40 feet below. Picture me scolding them to go away in animated English – I felt scared but ridiculous. Obviously I didn't get attacked and they reluctantly left the area as my driver arrived to collect me, thinking it was rather funny!

The next day I was taken out into the wetlands in a canoe with the by now very friendly guide. It is wonderful having such experiences in the wilderness, seeing a huge range of



TWO SHOTS
TAKEN ON
TRIP TO KRUGER
WITH SCOTT.



tortoise, fish, birds, insects and animals in their personal world. Quietly paddling around a clump of reeds, we saw a large heron explode from the swamp and disappear quickly over the vegetation. 'That bird shouldn't be down here its from Ethiopia' he said. Well what is it I asked, and he replied that he thought it was a certain species of heron he had never seen before. 'Well' I said 'let me draw it on the back of your map and we can check it back at base' That's what I did and when checked we proved that a new bird had been able to be added to their local observations. Eight years later my cousin Elaine Conway was visiting Bumi and during a group tour of the wetlands, the guide told the story of this artist who drew the detailed observation on the back of his map, showing the tourists the drawing. Elaine had the presence of mind to video the event as she couldn't believe her eyes. My last story from Africa was 12 years later when my now partner Scott and I were in Kruger National Park in South Africa. I had booked tent accommodation as I knew that for Scott's first trip in Africa the closest to the wilds I could get us, would be the best possible experience. However, on arriving at Thornybush Reserve we were told that another party had extra members and all the tents were being used. Would we mind being accommodated in a lodge? Oh well I supposed so and we ended up as the only guests in a wonderful establishment 2 hours drive into the bush, four lodges, central facilities, pool, bar etc just wonderful. The new manager and his wife at this place had recently replaced the previous couple who had lost their 4 year old boy to a leopard there. As we were the only guests we were especially well treated and had a marvellous stay. The only story that justifies relating though came from an incident after a couple of days. We had a guide with a gun for cats and the Manager behind him with a gun for elephants (just in case- not for hunting of course) then Scott followed then myself. We went on a long walk through the thorny veldt for hours but it was interrupted suddenly by Tambo the guide who stopped and motioned for us to backtrack. We were Indian file in a dry riverbed surrounded by thornybush and without turning around we paced backwards quietly because as I saw in front of Tambo was a fully grown leopard crouched and looking at us. As pre-arranged we walked

PICTURE DEREK FLYNN

... it's an incredible car, with a lovely feel.

"People ask me, do I feel superior? And I say, no, I feel rewarded. Because I do, I've had a good life and worked hard and I feel that it's my reward," says the colourful artist who is about to open a huge bird garden he's creating at his Whitford country home.

Having a Rolls-Royce doesn't really help his image, he says.

... it's so effortless."

He's had the 7.5-litre V8 up to 220km/h ("in driveway"), and says it just hugs the road. The speed, however, goes up to 240km/h.

"Things I like about it? The smell of the leather, good looks and the security. Things I don't like? Washing it — it's huge.

"And it's not cheap to keep: it's like a beautiful woman or a country estate. You pay to have beautiful things. Hardy Amies once told me you should maintain friendships. So I do."

The paint colour is very important to an artist. It's oyster (like the Rolex).

"You know, I just can't imagine an orange Rolls-Royce."

— Brenda W.



I CAN HEAR MY MOTHER SAYING
"BLAKE DON'T BE A SKITE"

backwards over 100 yards to escape the danger, the incident probably the result of our being so secretive on our walk. Our minds were full of the memory of the four year old boy taken days earlier.

I am going now to give ourselves a break from physical adventures and dwell on a different subject for a while – coincidence. Some of these occurrences in my life have been somewhat unbelievable, like the fact that the family who lived behind my house in Woollahra, Sydney unknown to me for 7 years were the new neighbours in Whitford, Auckland when I moved there in 1988. It took a visit from friends in Sydney to recognize my neighbours for me to find out. On separate visits to London in the 1970s I twice saw Glynn Christian who had worked for Inglis Wright a New Zealand ad agency with me in the 1960s. The first time was just walking through crowds on the footpath – next time a year later he was in his car. In 1990 I bought a beautiful Silver Spirit Rolls Royce, which I absolutely loved for another 20 years. However at that stage we had trouble keeping the special wheel trim connected to one of the wheels. I am not talking about the centre hubcap but an extra ring of trim clipped on to surround the hubcap. On one occasion I returned to Whitford from Auckland city and sometime after discovered the trim missing from the front passenger wheel. I thought I had remembered a flash of silver in the mirror when driving back from the city so decided to drive all the way into town and retrace my route. I found the expensive trim leaning against the concrete wall of the motorway near Mt Hobson. Months later I noticed it had disappeared off the wheel again and of course this time I had no idea where it could be. However that day I received a phone call from an employee of my Publisher to say she had witnessed the ring flying off the car when passing me driving through Flatbush. When it happened for the third time I was lucky enough to see it again in the passengers side mirror and could retrieve it from a ditch in the countryside. Needless to say the RR service centre at Giltraps adjusted the clips enough for it to never happen again.



SCENES
FROM
THE
WHITFORD
BIRD
GARDEN



In 1991 I had developed a large, vermin protected garden in my five acres at Whitford. Pheasants of eight varieties, a huge 10 metre high aviary fairly well hidden amongst the jungle effect of palms and exotic and native trees, creepers and pond which held all sorts of tropical fish etc. I had all my life wanted a tortoise, something virtually unprocureable in New Zealand. The story of how one came to me is unbelievable. In my garden were twelve Red Eared Turtles and although the garden had been well established for five years and often opened to the public to raise money for various charities, I finally realized I could earn money myself by vermin proofing it with underground concrete walls and a four and half metre electrified fence. During construction my previous four foot wire netting perimeter fence was demolished and digging etc began. My turtles pretty quickly strolled off their previously secure enclosure and were often seen by locals in their paddocks adjacent to my five acre property. Then over the ensuing years, the fence completely finished of course, I found the eleven females one by one returning to the new perimeter. The coincidence happened when Scott and I were leaving home one day and there on the road outside our driveway was the male turtle, a full twelve years after he originally wandered off. Amongst the neighbours who would see my turtles and think they were cow pats sometimes was a Mr John Granger who finally left his adjoining property and moved to suburban Howick. One day he rang to say he had found a turtle in his backyard and would I like to add it to my collection. Well imagine my thrill when he turned up with a tortoise which I duly named after his wife and Patricia has been with us for over 10 years and lives with us here in Nelson.

I guess you can't really call these following episodes coincidence but they do illustrate just how surprisingly magic life can be. When first arriving in Sydney in 1966 Bill, my partner and I rented for the first year and then my friend Julie Coutts had friends who were leaving their harbour frontage flat on Kurraba Point, Neutral Bay. We moved in inheriting their lovely furniture. Easy as pie. Three years later after our first world trip I noticed an advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald saying "Why pay rent"? That stimulated me to look at some brand



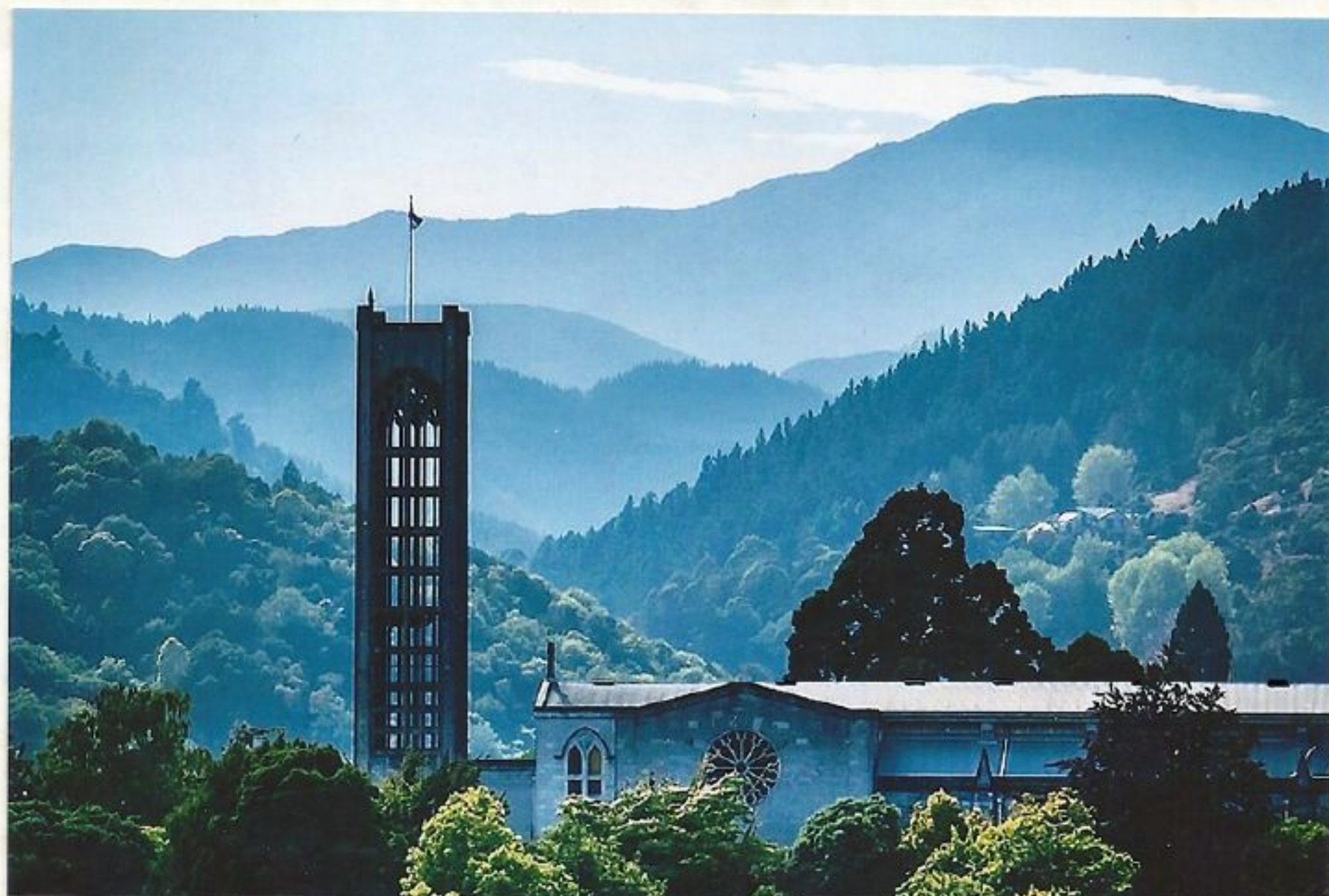
THE RUSSELL ST
HOUSE IN SYDNEY
BEFORE AND
AFTER I DID
MY IMPROVEMENT.



new Parks Development apartments on the water at Chiswick, by the Gladesville bridge. Two bedrooms with pool and two garages on the Parramatta River, for \$17,000. We bought it immediately, hadn't looked at anything else and again easy as pie. About 6 years later I noticed an ad again in the Sydney Morning Herald advertising a brand new apartment block in Neutral Bay just built by Mirvac, the big commercial building concern. As it was near Bill's office in Young Street we looked at it and loved it. A 2 storey penthouse at ground level with the rest of the building below following the hill. Fabulous views, didn't look at anything else, bought it for \$116,000 and sold the Chiswick place immediately for \$46,000 easy as pie. The purchase was in my name only and I was paying it off so when Bill left me in January 1980 I immediately put it on the market for \$205,000 so that I could start afresh in a new environment. Bill had his multi million dollar advertising agency and the 200 acre lifestyle Farm up in the Hunter Valley and all I could think about was preserving my dignity and girding my loins with the profit of the apartment. He got a shock when he and his new boyfriend were told 'We have the perfect place for you in Neutral Bay' – and it was our old address. If you think I was a bit tough let me advise you that after 14 happy productive years I was not told who, how, where or anything except "I have found someone I want to spend the rest of my life with" and in the morning he was gone. It took 6 years to get over it but meanwhile I was telling the staff at 'my' gallery Barry Sterns in Paddington that Bill had left me and a famous architect Ross Bonthorne who was in there perusing the works on display said "I've got a place at Palm Beach – would you like to rent? Fabulous- new environment to live in away from our old stomping grounds. Within the next few months, Martti Koski a dear old friend of mine who I'd met at my first Exhibition in 1971 through my cousin Jenny Biss, said 'You've got to pull yourself out of this depressive state – where could you live in Sydney if you bought something for yourself?' The only suburb close to the city I could imagine being possible was the impossibly expensive Eastern Suburbs. Martti dragged me around five or six real estate agencies and we left my priorities- garage, garden, 2 bedrooms etc. One of these was David Glasgow in Double Bay and by huge luck, fortune or



SCENES IN THE WHITFORD BIRD GARDEN



A VIEW FROM THE NELSON HOUSE.

coincidence his sister was at a dinner held at Darling Point by none other than Bills auditor David and Sacha Dickson who amazingly had chased me up and invited me also. I am forever grateful to them because it was not like we were close. It was now at least 6 months since I had met David Glasgow and his sister had also been at the dinner. She was staying with him the night after the lovely dinner and told him she'd met me. He had to take her to the airport early as she was flying back to their property out west NSW. On arriving at the office earlier than usual because of that, David answered an early phone call from an old man who had lost his wife and was moving in with his son and now needed to sell his house in Woollahra. The house in Russell Street was really worth \$160,000 but David remembered I only had \$130,000 so valued it as such and rang me to ask me to immediately meet him there. I bought it that day for \$130,000. Eight years later my Dads friend Tina Harold said if you ever want to come back to New Zealand I can look for a house for you. After eight years of sad but productive painting in Sydney I needed new stimulus and told her to look for a place. She rang one day, I flew to Auckland and she showed me I told the owners to cancel the auction and I would pay them what they wanted which was \$375,000-deal done I then sold my Sydney house for \$750,000. Easy as pie. Now we come forward to 2013 and my new partner Scott and I had slaved over the Whitford Bird Garden which I established at for 20 years and although he had a wonderful job in Auckland, we thought Nelson might be a good town to move to. Less traffic, lovely weather, new South Island environment and money in the bank from the sale of the rocketing value of the Whitford property. I mentioned to my friend Paul St Clair that I was thinking of moving to Nelson and as a confident computer user he jumped onto his screen and said lets look at houses down there. The first image of houses for sale in Nelson was of a grand two storied villa with big trees, large land, good views and close to the city. I loved the look of it and when Scott was down there for work with STIHL he looked at it for me, saying 'Oh it's alright,' That was enough for me to fly down for the day, check it out with the real estate guy and buy it . Our Whitford home was sold immediately to a Chinese man who had



MY LARGEST GOLD LEAF PAINTING.

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Published weekly to 5600 homes. Ph 536-5715, fax 536-5714, Box 5 Beachlands, Email: pct
FREE to Beachlands, Maraetai, Whitford, Alfriston, Brookby, Ardmore, Clevedon, Hunua, Pap



Blake Twigden sets his paintings alight.

Blake burns his art to save planet

Internationally renowned Whitford artist Blake Twigden made the "ultimate artistic sacrifice" for the planet this week when he burned 12 of his works of art at the stake.
The offbeat message was filmed and will be shown on TV.



The Woolshed's



A SAMPLE OF THE PUBLICITY GAINED FROM "THE BURNING"

visited the Bird Garden and with the \$1,600,000 I received we moved to Nelson to the new wonderful property which cost \$630,000. Yet another purchase of the first property I had looked at. Easy as pie. The only obvious thing that struck me as negative when I returned to move in to the house was that on the front lawn was a large Indian Bead tree which although a lovely shape I immediately felt should have been a Jacaranda. Within a year an horrendous cyclone came from Cairns across the Tasman Sea and straight into Nelson, thrashing the city and causing never before seen damage to houses, trees and beaches. At 3 am that April day our Indian Bead tree was uprooted and crashed down over the new fountain I had just finished building, the front gate and out onto the driveway. Not one tiny bit of damage was done to my fountain sculpture and pond. After cutting up trees all over the property for a couple of years worth of firewood we then went to buy a Jacaranda. A perfect two metre high one was chosen and we joined the Labour Day queue to pay the \$380.00. We couldn't believe it when the barcode read \$100 and when I protested, the cashier said the queue was too long to hold up and so just pay the \$100.00. Thanks Mitre Ten! Now four years later I have the magnificent tree I wanted dripping with Spanish moss and staghorn fern. It marries beautifully with the handsome 1893 house.

Now that I am not painting like I used to for 47 years, I am making ceramics for the Brook Waimarama Sanctuary being established very close to my adopted city. I will give my little productions of Gecko, Eel, Seal and Bird lidded bowls to them so they can sell them and benefit fully from their sale. Of the paintings I have done over previous years "Silver Fish" 1970 from my first exhibition "Consider our Heritage" is one I would love to own today. It depicted a large silver side of scales appearing through the foam of pollution. Qantas paid \$22,500 AUD for a large work of Birds of Paradise in a late evening moonlit scene in New Guinea way back then, I love that one too. One piece which the owners were proud to have is of the Kakapo, the image which appears in my book "The Fifty Rarest Birds of the World" apparently whenever the President of the WWF visits he goes straight to the work to admire it.



"RED WINGED BLACKBIRD"



DENNIS CONNER WITH ONE
OF MY PRINTS AS HIS PRIZE
IN "ETCHELL" RACING.

Another favourite is a recent commission which realized \$52,000 NZD. Often I painted Birds of Paradise and the other rare and beautiful subjects on 24 carat Gold Leaf. One such painting was conceived in the grand foyer of the Kahala Hilton in Honolulu. It was the largest painting on Gold Leaf I ever did and years later at a very glamorous dinner I mentioned to the beautiful woman next to me that it was at that stage one of my favourite works. Stunned she walked over to her husband and I found out that not only had they missed out on purchasing it from the Gallery in Sydney, their company had actually built the Hotel where I had conceived it. My last exhibition in Sydney was at the Barry Stern Gallery, under new ownership and it consisted of twelve species of Birds of Paradise painted on silver leaf. It had amongst it some of my best works ever. When this collection of many species painted on silver leaf was finished I was reminded of my first exhibition in 1971 which conveyed the negative images of our pressure on the planet. These later paintings were iconic reference to the extreme beauty in nature's genius and we've reached the stage of development where these universal treasures are really seriously threatened. So I decided to burn the collection to shock people to compare what I did, to the much more important but less considered effect of our destruction of the world's natural environment. The media covered the event on TV and in the press so they did get the message across for me. I heard a video of the burning was even shown in schools in Finland.

At the showing in Sydney I had the originals for sale as they had not actually been the ones I burnt. Even though the video was playing in the crowded gallery no one enquired how it was possible to be able to hang for sale paintings which they could witness going up in flames!

You are now privy to the fact that I had each image printed the same size and framed the same, the backgrounds silver leafed perfectly and believe me they looked the same as the originals.

Many years before that show, Barry Stern who had been my foremost dealer for fourteen years, had, on the Gallery wall, some paintings on gold quite like mine actually, but signed Blake T. "Oh a new young Artist I'm going to give a chance to" was his reply to my



AFTER THE CYCLONE
NELSON 2014.

Consider our Heritage

An exhibition of Wildlife paintings by TWIGDEN
Galleries, Argyle Art Centre, 18 Argyle Street, Sydney.
June 9-21, 1971. Open 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

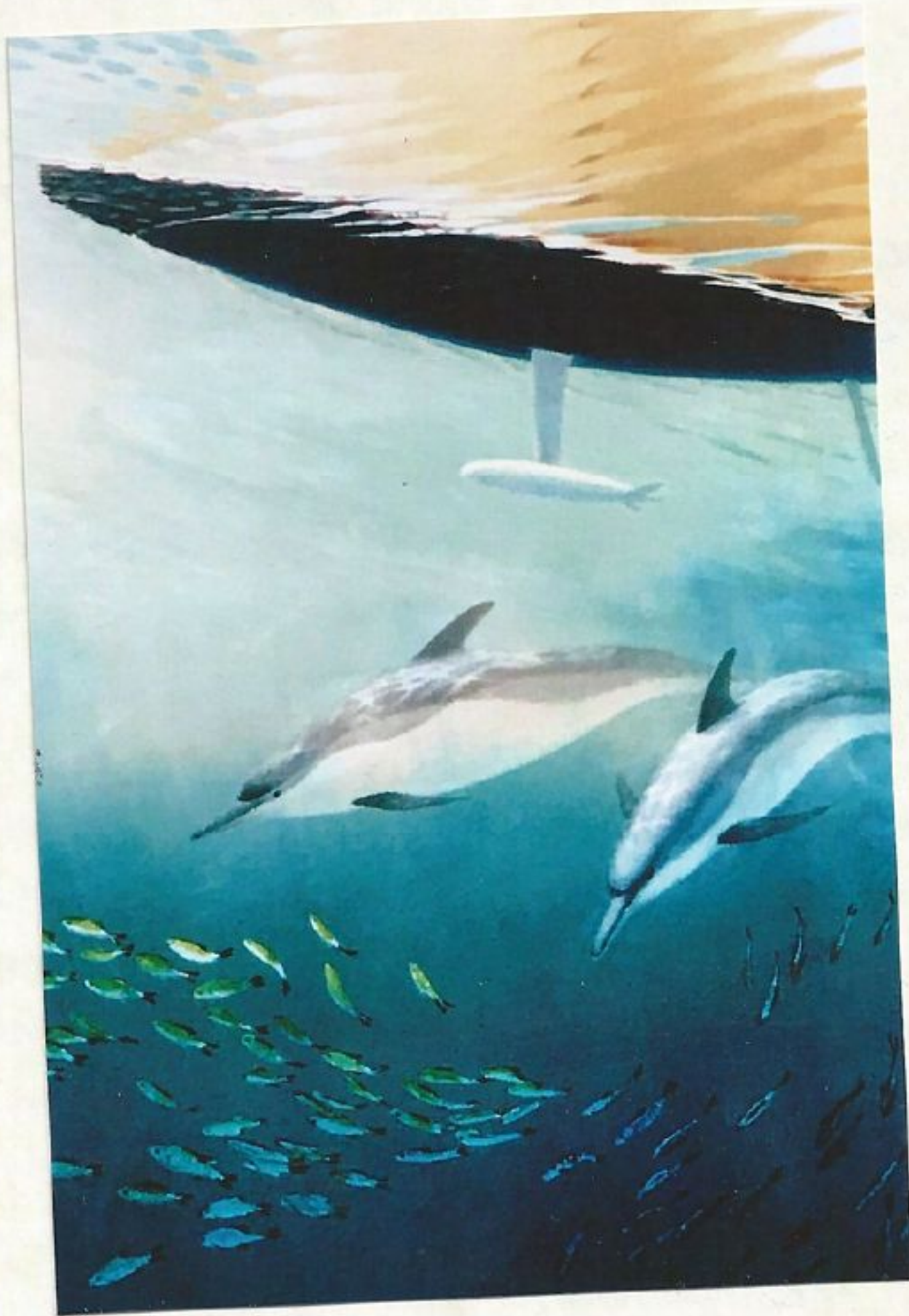
* The Artist wishes to express his thanks to the following: The National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney; C.S.I.R.O. Animal Research Division, Canberra; The Australian Museum, Sydney; Taronga Park Zoo, Sydney; Department Customs and Excise, Sydney.

Blake Twigden, a 26 year old New Zealand artist, now settled in Sydney, feels vitally concerned with the conservation and anti-pollution issues and has combined his talent as a painter with these themes. The exhibition is not a blatant outcry against pollution, nor an apathetic attitude towards our animal life. Rather it is a probing look at the effects this will have upon our heritage and an effort to increase public awareness of the problems involved and ways in which help can be given to prevent further waste and extinction. Twigden has fulfilled over 200 private commissions in Australia, Britain and the U.S.A. over the past 5 years.

THE INVITATION TO
MY FIRST EXHIBITION
1971.

shocked enquiry. Needless to say it was a fraud, and that incident plus a couple of others to do with monies owed to me led to my moving to his previous manager Eddie Glastra's new Gallery in Paddington. Another story from that era was this. I had gone for 6 months to Seattle Washington to explore the Northwest of the USA and paint. I returned with around 40 paintings and when showing them to Barry, he noted that a small oil of a Red Winged Blackbird and Gold Leaf waterfall was the gem of the collection. At the opening it was purchased by a noted Artist who surprised all of us by discovering it hadn't been signed. I collected it and after a week or so returned it to the Barry Stern Exhibition Gallery in Mary Place. The Manageress put it upstairs behind a curtain high up in the store room. A while later Barry rang and when I told him I had delivered it back already he accused me of selling it to someone else, and at my protestations said anyway it wasn't insured because they were between insurance companies. When I went to Eddie Glastras' Gallery a few years later with the Exhibition of the Fifty Rarest Birds of the World, there on the floor ready to hang with all my new work was the little Red Winged Blackbird. Eddie told me the Mary Place Manageress, Henrietta, had died and her boyfriend had brought the painting to sell when he saw the publicity for my latest show. Eddie sold that little gem for \$5000.00 and we shared the money three ways. He also said that when it had disappeared the Barry Stern Gallery was not going through a change of Insurance company, after all he was the Manager of the main Gallery in those days and would know.

At this stage I feel I should recall a list of some of the institutions and personalities who have purchased or own my work and known to me over the years, from 1971 to 2016. Qantas, the Duke of Edinburgh, The King of Tonga, Dennis Conner, Syd Fisher, Sir Russell Coutts, Kamahl, Sir Warwick Fairfax, Baron Von Thyssen, The Mars Family, Lady Fisher, New Guinea Postal Department, Air New Guinea, Toyodas of Toyota, Sir Peter Scott, Crown Prince Bernard of the Netherlands and Sir Robert Stewart, the generous and brilliant businessman. A memorable incident occurred in Sydney involving Sir Hardy Amies and the Fairfax family. The story really began in Perth when I had driven over from Sydney to 'look after' the BMW agency



"STARS AND STRIPES"
COMMISSIONED BY DENNIS COWNER,

while the family of John Trivett went to Mauritius for a holiday. I might as well add here that I lectured the children Pettina and Justin to be very careful of stone fish while swimming and Pettina did indeed get stung by the dorsal spines and with the help of a witchdoctor and hospital staff only lost part of her big toe. Anyway, while in this delightful city, living in their stunning apartment on the edge of Kings Park and overlooking the Swan River and city towers I met a vast range of people including those in the apparel industry. Later returning to Sydney I received a phone call from one of them saying he was over for a meeting with Hardy Amies and Hardy would like to meet me. I declined as I was quite busy enough with my world. However a year later I did go to the Hardy Amies suite in the Sebel Townhouse , Kings Cross. There Hardy asked me to spend the weekend at James Fairfax's country property but as it was a Friday evening I said 'What about my car- parking is impossible around here' When I went down to move the car I told a meter maid about my problem and she said 'No problem- if you let me feel your bottom I will make sure you don't get a ticket over the weekend and you can just leave the car here' Well much to the astonishment of the bellhop at the Hotel entrance, I let her do just that, and when we returned in the limousine on Sunday evening, my car was there still unticketed. Neat eh?

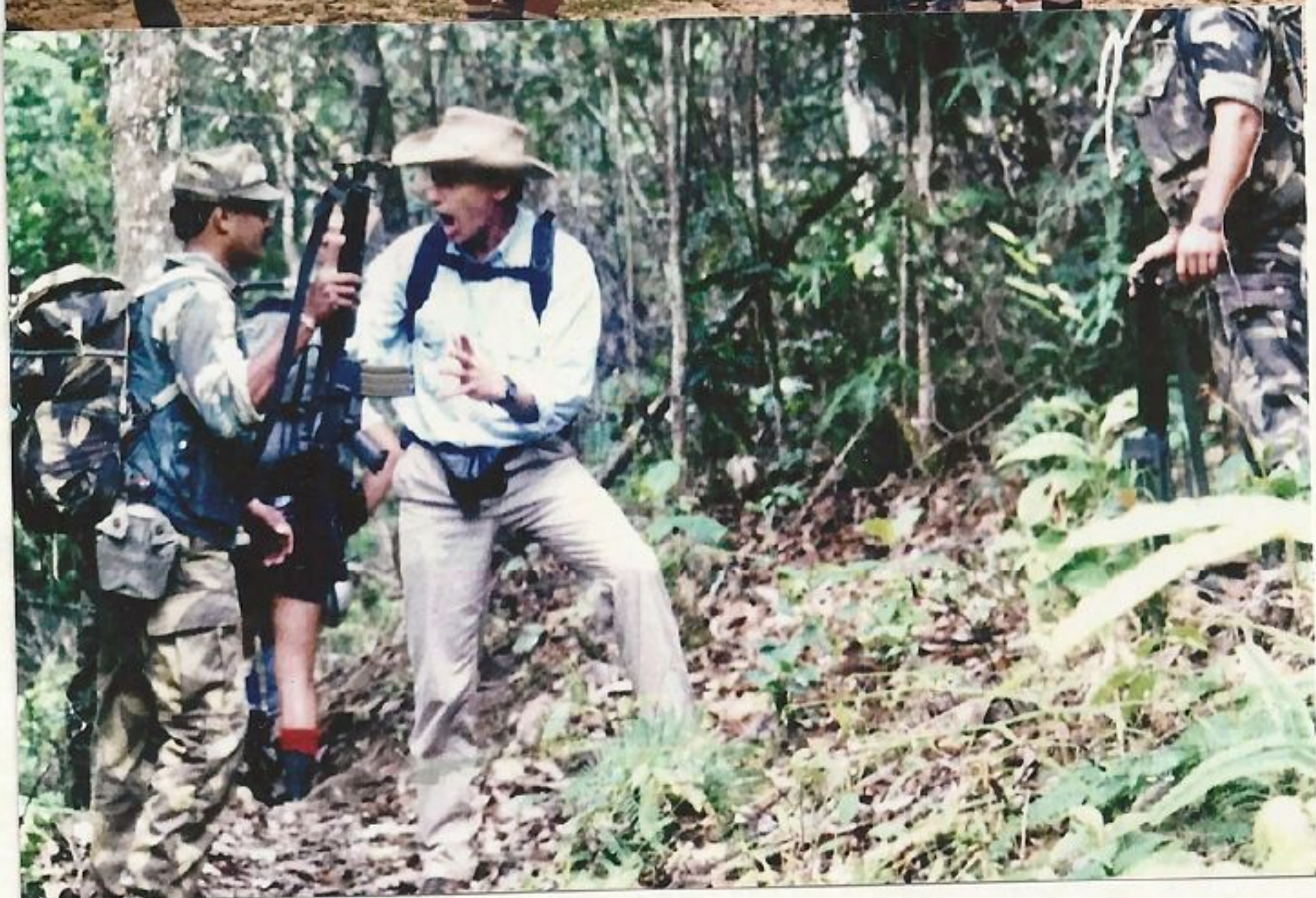
You may remember my mention of a trip in 1969 to Moscow and Leningrad (St Petersburg then), and there was an incident of which I am not particularly proud but was very exciting. Bill, my partner then and I had been secretly followed by four students who initially wanted to speak English to us and were very scared to do so. They begged for jeans, our BOAC travel bags, and couldn't believe our red Speedos . So when these requests were made I was reminded of my then agent in Sydney Kevin Hambly of the Saints Gallery saying "try to bring an icon back from Russia as it will be worth a fortune here" as he was a Catholic. The students said they would arrange the swap for our items and get an icon. Hiding in a taxi the five of us were driven well out of Moscow to a village in the forest where down under a church a student's grandfather had hidden an icon behind the furnace. We then went to St Petersburg by



HORNBILL



BORNED
ADVENTURE



train for a few days and returned to Moscow to depart the next day for London. Forgetting to retrieve our passports at the Hotel reception we made the airport by 8.30 for the 10.30am BEA flight. Thankfully the Japanese airline representative heard of our predicament and arranged for our hotel to put our passports in a taxi and I stayed out on the road while Bill got the bags through with the JAL mans help. At 10.30 the jet was out at the end of the runway waiting and when our passports arrived we had to be escorted by our good samaritan through an unofficial way to a second floor access then to a bus waiting to take us out to our plane. We had to climb and jump down to the ground. All the time the icon was strapped to my tummy and I was wearing as many clothes as I could and a coat to cover the evidence . Streaming with sweat we settled in and the plane took off. Ten minutes later the Captain came to our seats to see if we were ok and I said how wonderful he had been and that I would like to write to Head Office to acknowledge his kindness to which he replied "Please don't do that" and of course now I realise why. Running out of money when I went to Los Angeles to stay with my cousin Sue Harding, I sold the icon which had had to be restored because my sweat had clouded the varnish, needless to say Kevin Hambly was very disappointed!

In conclusion I thought I would recount the most life threatening episode which all started with being invited to participate in the Malaysian Arts festival in 1988. My press agent Rea Francis took over all the details and I met many people of power and note during the trip to Kuala Lumpur and Cherating. Subsequently the President of Shell Oil Company, Malaysia, included me in an invitation to an expedition in Borneo, with six others from around the world. The adventure was to explore a wild mountainous region in the North which he had heard was due to be deforested for timber. It all started so well, with a small plane departure from Kuching to a jungle airfield from where we started our trek. I am the sort of person who absorbs nature very deeply and with inquisitive interest. Needless to say, after four days of trailing the others, and the armalite rifle carrying soldiers escorting us, and the bearers



BORNED
ADVENTURE.

carrying all our gear, and the sleepless nights due to the weird noises, full moon above my hammock and the constant smoke and foreign chat from around the nightly fires. I was in an exhausted state more mentally than physically I thought. All I wanted to do one day was crawl into the mossy bosom of the tree trunks and sleep. The soldiers carried me on that afternoon and the others forced electrolytes and drink into me as I wafted off into dreamland. With much help I got to the little plateau where we were to spend the night. The bearers and soldiers made camp and the President of Shell Malaysia got in touch via a satellite phone to the nearest helipad on an Oil Rig, hundreds of kilometres away in the ocean. The next morning they cut down enough jungle for a huge six crew helicopter to land and take me to the Shell Clinic at Kuching. I was stunned with the scene of it coming down near me throwing up leaves, branches etc, -so much drama. I at least had the presence of mind to take photos as I lay huddled on the ground by the tent they had put me in the previous night. During the flight I wasn't healthy enough to take photos of the huge scene of clay mountains and rivers below for ages as we flew an unapproved flight route to the Clinic. I was on drips and supervised care for four days in the hospital and I will never forget when I recovered and a nurse took me out for a drive and the doctors said 'We have lost people in the condition you were in when you came to us'. The memory of the Rhinoceros Hornbills and Orangutans almost pales to the memory of my mental and physical exhaustion.

All my experiences and study of birds in the zoos and jungles of the world, from the Amazon to Indonesia led to my decision to paint an exhibition of the Fifty Rarest Birds of the World. I arranged to go to Tring in England where Lionel Walter, 2nd Baron Rothschild's gracious home is now an impressive museum of his huge collection of animals and birds. They gave me permission to study the collection of the chosen species I had commissioned from the International Council of Bird Preservation in Cambridge. I lived in the town of Tring but spent my days at the museum photographing and painting the list of species brought to me one at a time by the staff. On the way back to my home in Auckland, I stopped at Kauai in the Hawaiian



"FIFTY RAREST BIRDS"
LAUNCH, AUCKLAND



OBVIOUSLY I
LIKED LADY
SONIA M'Mahon.

Islands to try to see the last ŌŌ which had been included in the 50 rarest birds. Sadly by the time I got there the Bishop Museum people told me a recent hurricane had probably killed it but at least I was able to visit its environs - misty mountainous forests. At Honolulu Airport my wallet containing passport, reading glasses, credit card and worst of all the film of the preserved birds I had photographed at Tring was stolen from the x-ray conveyer belt. Lady Barbara Stewart later told me that she knew a person who had the same thing happen to them at the same airport but they found her handbag emptied of valuables (except for a black pearl necklace hidden in a zipped compartment) in a rubbish bin outside the terminal. I wish I had known that then so I could have done more to look for the film. I had to paint my 50 works based on what was left on another roll left in my camera, my sketchbook and any other published references. During painting the works, a magazine sent a photographer and writer to do a story on me and when the photographer told his wife about the job and what he had seen they decided to publish a book of the paintings. I had the International Bird Preservation Council Cambridge at hand to do the copy and the photographer Reece Osborne took the photos for printing in the book but right at the beginning I recommended that it be a smallish, economic publication because of the New Zealand market. However the Osbornes wanted to emulate the previous book *Pisces Tropicani* published by Landsdowne in Melbourne and my persistent argument went unheeded. The end result was wonderful but very expensive and as the printing and suede binding was done overseas the poor Osbornes were cheated by a middleman and that eventuated in only 1000 being produced not the originally planned 2000. A little like Audubon's controversial and complicated publication of the *Birds of America* in 1827 we were less than rewarded or filled with joy at the resulting sales. However most did sell, often to important people including the Duke of Edinburgh and after Baron Von Thyssen the steel magnate of Germany bought a few he actually ordered several more due to the reception of the people who received them.



SOME OF MY CERAMICS - NELSON.



"HARE HATCH" THE KHAT'S HOME IN ENGLAND.
WHERE I DESIGNED THE AVIARY PLANS
FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD
PHEASANT ASSN.

Now that we have sold the Auckland property 'The Whitford Bird Garden' and have lived in Nelson since 2013, I have done few paintings but support the Waimarama Sanctuary by making ceramic bowls through the facilities of our local pottery school and the well known artist Owen Bartlett who does my firing. Most of my life is taken up with looking after the house and garden of visitors who love staying with us and keeping up a daily regime of walking 6 kilometres a day. As you can see I have loved my Brush with Life.

THE END

Before I sign off I thought I would leave you with a few things I am proud of...

- 1 George Washington's great, great, great, Grandmother was Amphyllis Twigden
- 2 My winning prizes in my school years ranging from clothes to books, to a horse and a trip overseas for Mum and Dad and myself.
- 3 Being moved from the Auckland office of Inglis Wright Advertising to Wellington at the age of 19 to work on the Ford and Griffins accounts- the agency's largest clients.
- 4 Finding four properties to buy which have all proven to be great investments.
- 5 My uncle Jack Turner first coined the name Kiwifruit for the Chinese Gooseberry.
- 6 My first relationship lasted 14 years.
- 7 My idea and supervising of the first Art Dealers Exhibition in the Sydney Opera House to benefit the Opera Auditions committee which helped the training of future opera talents.
- 8 The sale of a painting through Barry Stern Gallery to Qantas with my share being \$22,500 in 1984!
- 9 I designed the principal for the aviaries for the President of the World Pheasant Association at his huge Georgian estate near Reading U.K.

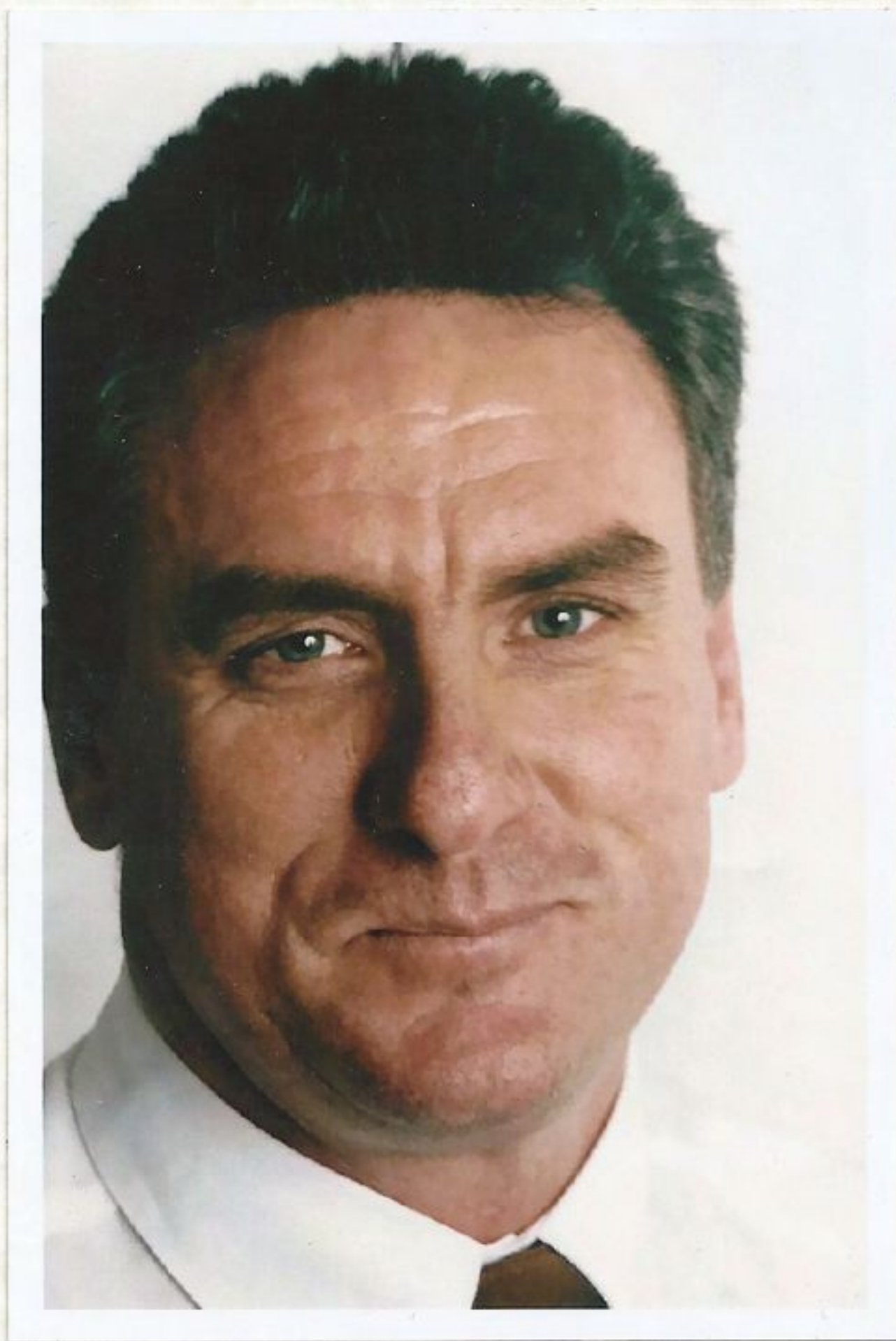


STAMPS FOR
NEW GUINEA
GOVERNMENT.

DANNY SMYLLIE
AT MY 50th.



- 10 To be invited to the Malaysian Arts Festival.
- 11 To be invited to Borneo as part of an expedition into vulnerable jungles by the President of Shell, Malaysia.
- 12 To be invited to an expedition to the Bismarck ranges in Papua New Guinea with a National Geographic board member and his wife Elizabeth DuPont.
- 13 Invited to supply paintings and organize several other artists of my choice to paint for the new Hayman Island resort.
- 14 Invited to design Bird of Paradise plates for Wedgewood and making two blue and white original Bird of Paradise small ashtrays.
- 15 My friendship with Sir Hardy Amies for the last 7 years of his life.
- 16 A commission for Americas Cup boat Stars and Stripes from Dennis Connor and subsequent commissions from several Super Yacht owners.
- 17 Winning a business excellence award from the South Auckland council for the Whitford Bird Garden.
- 18 My forty year association with the Mars family including the sale of a \$50,000 painting.
- 19 A letter to me from Elizabeth Taylor secretary thanking me for looking after Danny Smylie and a personal letter to him from Miss Taylor.
- 20 It has taken many years to put in perspective my care for Danny Smylie who succumbed to the virus in April 1995, four days after my 50th birthday. He had arranged secretly with my neighbour Helen Fransham to buy and wrap presents in gold and silver paper with balloons as a spectacular arrangement on the dining room table. He had also planned for me to go on a picnic with my cousin Elaine Conway who had accompanied us both to Greece as a last distracting trip for him. Elaine and I returned from lunch and found the surprise he had orchestrated from his bed and with that achieved he died four days later.



SCOTT WHITE.

- 21 'There is just one other event I want to record and that happened at the same dining room table. On my arrival back to New Zealand in 1988, the first guest to a meal was my brother Rogers widow Carol. I had felt the urge to bond with her as she had brought up two boys, Philip and Godfrey, single handedly after his death in 1967. As I carried our desserts from the kitchen to the table, and while we talked about Roger her wine glass cruised down the glass topped table more than a foot and came to rest near mine. Both of us hugged and we will never forget that moment. .
- 22 My 26 years to date with my partner Scott White

20.4.2021

BLAKE LAWRY TWIGDEN.

