



# ME, MYSELF AND I

**Ngaputu Adam Watling**

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## Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

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Published by the Ministry of Education 2014

ISBN 987-0-478-43933-5 (Online)

ISBN 978-0-478-43936-6 (Print)

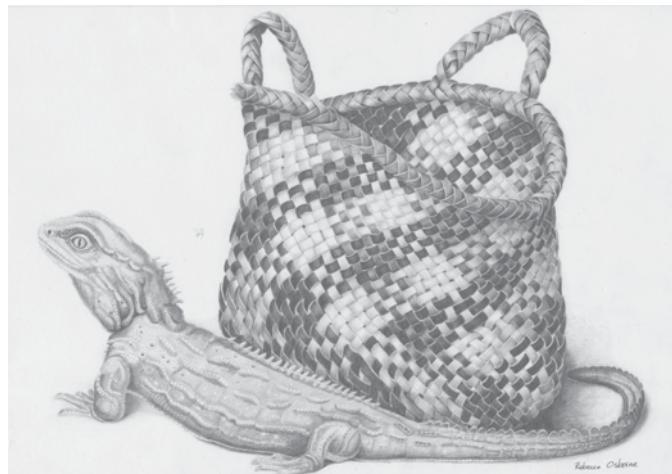
1997 manuscript edited for publication by Nigel Beckford

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: FitzBeck Creative

COVER IMAGE: Adam and Glenn Watling, nephew

**To my scribe, Sarah**

Thank you, I couldn't have done it  
without you!



*"Expect nothing, but be expectant of everything."*

NGAPUTU ADAM WATLING

ME AND MY DOG SILVER



# THE ACCIDENT

**Tūwharetoa e! Kia āta whakatere i te waka, kei  
pariparia e te tai, kei mōnenehu te kura nei.**



1999 AT HOME IN MY BRICK, BUNGALOW IN PAPAKURA AUCKLAND, WITH MY DOG SILVER

# Kia ora koutou katoa.

## My name is Ngaputu

### Adam Watling.



MY DAD JOHN WATLING AND  
MY MUM JULIA TURI WATLING

I was born in a small town called Rawene just west of Kaikohe in the North Island on 20 April 1958. My parents were John Watling and Julie Turi Watling.

I remember my accident so clearly it's as if it happened only yesterday. The year was 1976 and my accident happened in Wellington. At the time I was living in a suburb of Lower Hutt.

It happened on a Sunday afternoon. I hadn't planned on going anywhere that day and had intended to stay home and spend some time with my girlfriend, until another friend suggested going to Eastbourne Beach.

We were lying on the sand and Victor and I decided we'd go for a swim. We ended up walking down the wharf. The water surrounding us was dark green so we assumed there would be depth and decided to dive off the wharf. I was a bit hesitant at first so I asked an old guy who was fishing at the time if he had seen anybody diving off the wharf that day. He replied 'yes' and so we thought it was safe.

Victor dived first from the lowest part of the wharf. As soon as he surfaced he warned me that the water was shallow and that I should make my dive shallow. From where I was standing the water still looked deep. I thought for a while and decided that since I was so tall I would more than likely hit the bottom. However, I stepped up to a higher part of the wharf and gazed around. I remember thinking it was too high for me but when I looked to the right of where I was standing I could see people watching me and in my mind I could hear them saying, "come on we're waiting for you to dive". I summed everything up and decided that to clear the bottom I would staple the dive, which is almost a belly buster.

After I hit the water, I knew I was lying face down and thought I was winded but to know for sure where I was and if I was alive I opened my eyes. All I could see was the sun's rays coming through the water. I knew I wanted to gasp for air, yet all I could do was hope that I would get feeling back into my body so that I could roll over and take a breath. I thought if I could hold my breath a little longer, I'd roll over. However, it was my mate Victor who eventually rolled me over.

The time between hitting the water and taking that desperate breath had seemed like only seconds, but I was later told it had been about three minutes. Consequently I had taken in water, which collapsed my right lung, making it difficult to breathe.

After Victor had floated me back to shore and I was lying on the sand, everyone crowded around to see what had happened. Then I heard a male voice coming through the crowd saying he was a doctor. He told me to relax; he was trying to find the problem. He began tapping at my body asking me if I could feel this or that.

I couldn't feel a thing. Even though I was still on the ground, I was experiencing what it must feel like in space. I felt like my arms and legs were wrapped around my neck.

The doctor immediately dug a hollow in the sand underneath my neck. He slid a rolled up newspaper behind my neck and wrapped it around like a collar. By that time the ambulance had arrived and they put me onto a stretcher and rushed me to hospital. Victor came along with me and on the way I asked him "anyway man, was it a good dive?" He replied "yes, it was a great dive".

We arrived at the hospital and doctors asked me questions I didn't understand. For example, they asked me if I'd passed water or had a bowel movement. It was a completely new situation and I'd never experienced doctors asking me questions like these before. They went on to explain the procedures that were going to take place.

They were going to give me an injection, which I assumed would put me to sleep or ease the pain of the surgery to follow. The injection, however, was only a local anaesthetic and I became anxious when I realised that I would be awake throughout the theatre procedures. I wanted to talk and tell them I was awake, but I couldn't.

All those operations I had seen on television became a reality. I could see and hear everything, but I couldn't make sense of the sounds.

When I saw a doctor walking over with a shaver I became even more worried. He began shaving my hair on both sides, just on the top of my head, for reasons unknown to me. The nurse standing beside me must have noticed I was petrified and she tried to calm me down by reassuring me that everything was all right. There was a doctor standing nearby with a drill, testing it out and putting a drill bit in. Then from behind, he began drilling into my head. I couldn't feel any pain, but I could hear the drill inside my head. I don't have any words to describe that sound, but I wouldn't want to hear it again!

Just as I thought it was all over, they attached skull tongs with a 20–30 pound weight to my head. I had broken my neck and severed my spinal cord. A vertebra in my neck had slipped out of place and the weight was applied in the hope it would realign the neck joints. The pressure from the tongs produced an irritating pain in my neck and I imagined my head would be pulled off.

After my surgery I spent the next five hours in intensive care resting. Eventually, a doctor came

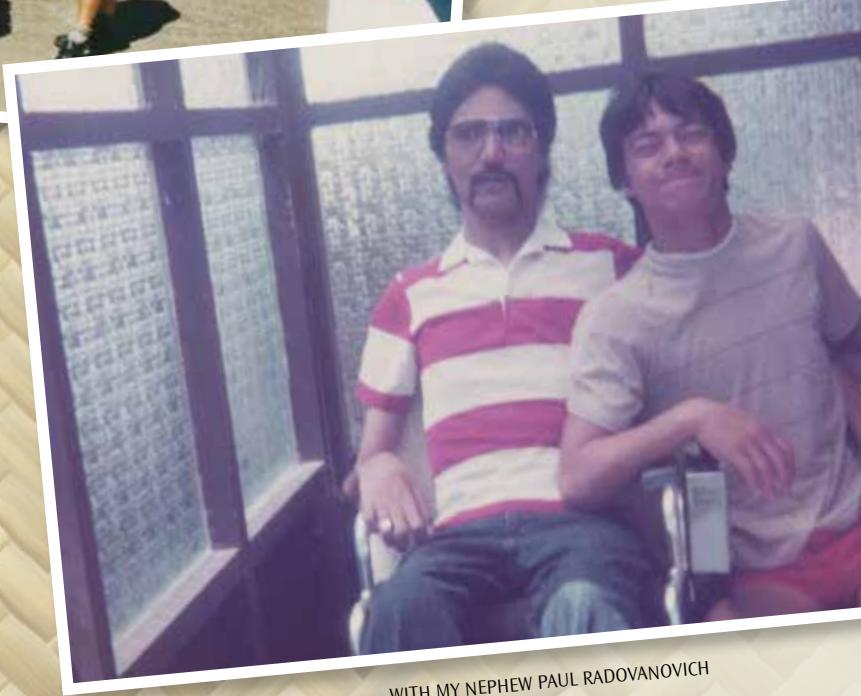


EASTBOURNE WHARF AND THE PYLON I DIVED OFF.

to see me. He told me that he had bad news. Although they wouldn't be able to tell for certain until the swelling in my spine went down, he said my chances of walking again were very 'slim'.

I realised then that my accident must have been serious, but the word 'slim' to me still seemed as wide as an open door. The doctor hadn't said I'd never walk again and so I thought it would be all right.

*"The time between hitting the water and taking that desperate breath had seemed like only seconds, but I was later told it had been about three minutes."*





CHANGE  
CHANGE  
CHANGE

**He haka kia titoia?**



THE HUMBLE BOY FROM THE NORTH

## I had the accident probably at one of the most exciting times of my life...

Prior to the accident I had been working in Wellington for about nine months. Before this I'd been living in Auckland, but I'd left because I had ended up physically hurting my father. We were both drinking and I realised things weren't right. I wasn't proud of myself at the time. I had humiliated myself, so I left.

I had three jobs in succession in Wellington. The first was making cars, the second, making batteries and the third job was with Freightways, an express package service. I enjoyed the third job the most. I felt secure and happy with the work and I liked the people I worked with.

Wellington was a city of opportunity for me. I had a job I liked and was renting my own place with others. The friends I had, both old and new, were all around the same age and were all out 'living the life'. I was young and single in a single man's town. I had a sense of starting out. It was all new and exciting. No one knew me and so I could be who I wanted to be. I acted like 'the boss' and I guess like a lot of young guys I rebelled as a way of getting recognition. I was loud, proud and stubborn. In hindsight, I suppose I took things for granted ... people and money, for instance.



AT THE SPINAL UNIT WITH MY CAREGIVERS

Towards the end of my first nine months there, sports became a priority again and the training brought me back into line. The discipline required of me as a team member extended into other parts of my life and I began settling down in my attitude, financially and at home.

I had found my niche and was just starting to feel like things were peaking. Two days before the accident I had been offered a job in the export area, complete with pay rise. In the ambulance after the accident I remember saying, "Bummer man, I just

got a raise." I was annoyed because I wouldn't be going to work.

Within 24 hours of the accident I was flown to Middlemore Hospital in Auckland. I was still unaware of what had happened and even though doctors and practitioners tried to explain things, they talked above my level of understanding. The word 'paralysis' had no meaning to me.

Even later on, I still had little real understanding of the implications of my injury. I was still trying



MY 21ST BIRTHDAY AT THE SPINAL UNIT, OTARA



MY PHYSIO/CAREGIVER FELICITY

to make it through on ‘good looks and charm’ as I’d always done. My physical prowess may have been temporarily on hold, but the vain me, the ‘Casanova’, was stronger than ever and I socialised with two or three nurses at a time. Looking back, I realise I was just searching for security. The one thing I knew I could rely on was a charming persona.

I ended up staying in Middlemore Hospital for a year, which was long enough for me. By then I was becoming impatient to regain movement. Even when someone said to me that I would never feed myself again or push my own wheelchair, that just made me more determined than ever to prove them wrong.

I gradually developed the attitude that life must go on and I told myself and others, “If I don’t walk in this life, I’ll walk in the next.”

During this time I began a relationship with a nurse which continued for two years and almost ended in marriage. However, because of the accident, my family were very protective of me. I knew I needed the love and security they offered, but found their attention overbearing. We argued about the relationship and it ended shortly after. The emotional impact hit me really hard and I turned to drink as an escape.



# MY DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

**Kua e hinga mai ki runga i a au, ka pā īana  
he urunga oneone, ko te urunga mau tonu.**

## I spent the next eight years in the Otara spinal unit. Eight years.

Initially, I had some movement in my left arm, but I was still unable to move my other limbs. However, after two years I also began to get twitches in my right arm.

Even though I was determined to regain movement in both my arms, sometimes I couldn't face the physiotherapy. I was frustrated by people telling me what to do. I was angry at my lack of control and angry that I had no power to stop people pushing me to places I didn't want to go.

But I guess it was that same frustration and anger that motivated me to push myself to do more weights and exercises. Over time, this greatly improved my breathing and physical condition, beyond what even the doctors had expected.

It wasn't just the physical rehab which I found frustrating. I also disliked being told not to swear every second word and to watch my manners. Not everyone was falling for my 'good looks and charm'.

I slowly began to understand what paralysis really is. I developed a much better idea of the sort of care I needed and how to look after my body. I realised that my independence was gone to such an extent that I couldn't even scratch my own nose.

I realise now that my aggressive language was simply an attempt to regain independence and power over my life. All that anger, frustration and vulgarity I expressed was just part of the trauma you experience in the early stages of spinal injury.

Gradually, without even knowing it, I began to make big adjustments to my personality. Rather than trying to get what I wanted in an aggressive way, I devised other ways of achieving things. It made me realise that throughout my time in the spinal unit, I was undergoing emotional as well as physical change. It was 'rehabilitation' in every sense of the word.

But even though I was healing, after a while the rules in the spinal unit began to frustrate me. I was 28 years old. I didn't want a regimented life and I resented feeling like a child. I saw the way others with similar disabilities to mine lived in the unit and I decided it wasn't the right place for me.

I wanted more from life than to watch television and stagnate. So I decided to move out of the unit and go and live in a house of my own.

I found a place in Papakura. The man who had lived in the house prior to me was also disabled, so some alterations had already been made. An occupational therapist organised some additional renovations for me and I shifted in.



MY GODSON ROBERT JOHN WATLING

*"I wanted more from life than to watch television and stagnate. So I decided to move out of the unit and go and live in a house of my own."*



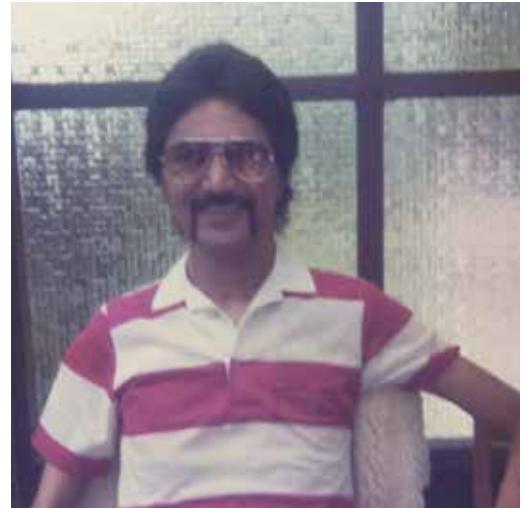
MY ELDEST SISTER MARTHA

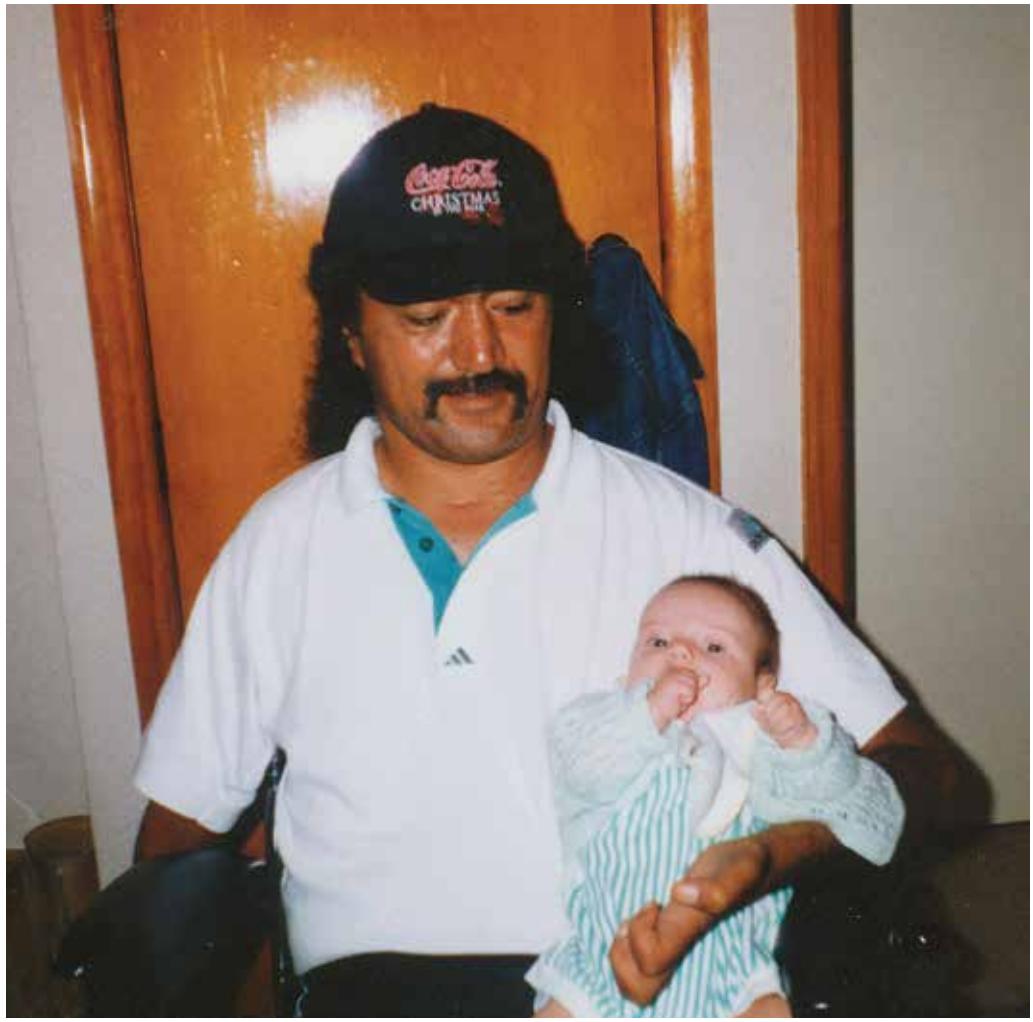


WITH ANDREA, MY SISTER-IN-LAW



HERE'S MY TRUCK AND MY DIGGER FROM MY FIREWOOD BUSINESS





WITH MY GODSON, ROBERT JOHN WATLING



SHARING A JOKE WITH SISTERS HELEN AND HILA PUMPI

ROBBIE DOWNES, MY CAREGIVER AND TRUSTED FRIEND FOR OVER 20 YEARS



# PAPAKURA - GOING IT ALONE

**Tangahoe tangata, e haere;  
tangahoe ia, e kore e haere.**



GETTING A TRIM FROM MY NEPHEW COREY

**I moved to Papakura in June 1984. The first night I spent there I thought I'd made one of the biggest mistakes of my life.**

At the time many of the residents in the street were affiliated with gangs. I was very wary, and for the first year, I startled at every bang or creak I heard outside.

After living alone for a year with minimal hours of care and much of my life crammed into the 11 hours of the day that care attendants were available, I returned to the spinal unit for two weeks' respite care. I stayed only a week and a half.

The rules and regulations of the unit seemed more stifling and ridiculous than ever. Many of the young guys I had met before were still there. I found myself answering their questions about living independently.



HAVING MY MORNING COFFEE BEFORE A BIG DAY

I soon discovered that the doctors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and patients had all expected me to return sooner and were surprised I had lived alone in the community for so long. The nurses said they had expected me back within 12 months. That lack of faith only made me more determined to stick it out.

But the second and third years in Papakura became harder and harder. I had problems getting the right care, particularly at Christmas time when carers from outside my family wanted time off to spend the holiday with their own families.

Also, once my family and friends, who had visited a lot in the first year, realised I was okay, they began to visit less often.

Since some of my family were also my carers, sometimes this became a real problem. For example, if they failed to come in the evening to help me to bed I would spend the night awake. If my leg bag was full and I needed to urinate during the night, I would have to spend the night wet and uncomfortable.

Incidents like this made me feel hurt and resentful towards them. I felt they didn't understand how much help I needed and that they expected too much from me. At the same time, however, I wondered if I had the right to ask them for their time and help. It was a real dilemma.

In those days I didn't know what I was entitled to under ACC. I didn't know about the equipment and the amount of care I could have. So I made friends with two street kids to help get me up, put me to bed, cook my meals and generally keep an eye on me.

It was still very challenging. After six years of living alone, my poor quality of life led to the worst depression I had ever experienced. I was bed-ridden because of pressure sores. I would go without food until the kids in the street came home from school to cook a meal for me.

I refrained from asking my family for help partly because I was too proud and partly because I felt guilty for already disrupting their lives. I wanted them to think I was doing well.

Similarly, I was reluctant to ask for medical help, since this would mean a return to hospital.

In the end, however, I became tired of just staring at four walls. I was tired of trying. I wanted to go back to the spinal unit to die.

And then my mother died. My poor health meant that I was unable to go to the funeral with the rest of my family. On the day of the funeral I was

lonely, until a good friend came round to share my grief.

Mum's death was the last straw. After her funeral, I was determined to go back to the spinal unit and just give up. I told my sister my plans and asked her to give me one reason why I shouldn't go.

She replied that she wouldn't be able to cope with another death so soon after our mother's funeral. Grieving for two family members would have been too great a pain to inflict on her.

But I had to do something. At this point, I was without 24-hour care and my physical deterioration and depression needed treatment. So I went back to the spinal unit. But it wasn't to die.

It's easy to go down and hard to pull yourself out of depression, but that's what I did. During those three months my family came to visit and meeting all the different people in the unit started to put my depression into perspective.

I realised for the first time that I was the only one putting myself down. That my family cared for me and wanted the best for me. I decided I was going to give it another go. The moment I made this decision I started to improve physically. As soon as my attitude improved, so did my life.

I still didn't know what I was going to do when I left the spinal unit, but I knew I didn't want to live like I had before. After receiving three months of total care, I was worried about my return to independence. I wondered how I would be able

to cope. I was afraid of going home and facing the same insecurities I had experienced previously.

I also knew I couldn't allow my living conditions to become as serious as they had before. So in 1990, some time after my final stay in the spinal unit, I began a struggle to secure 24-hour care.

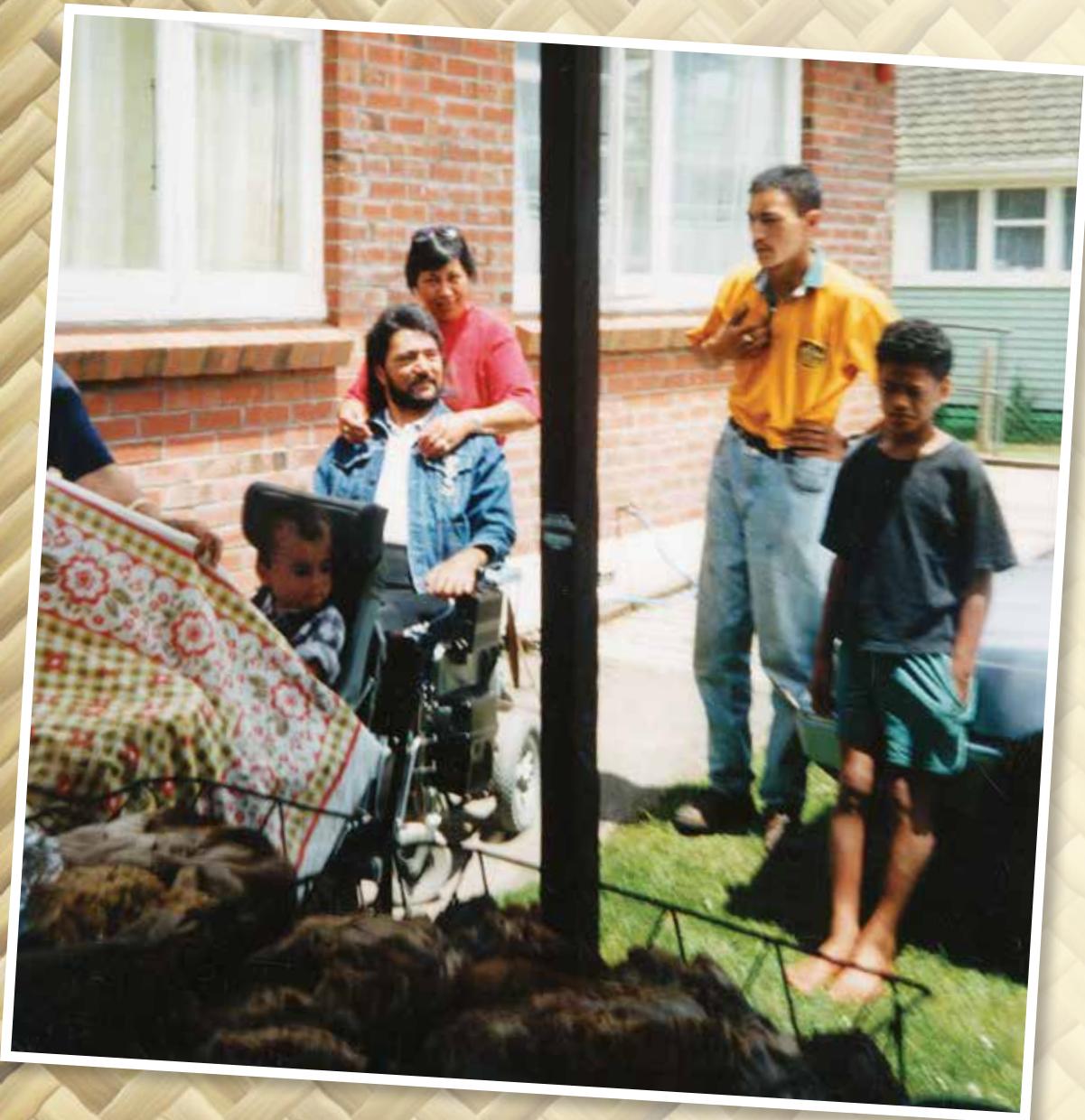
It wasn't easy finding out about the care I was entitled to. I got most of the information by talking to other tetraplegics and piecing together information from various ACC booklets. Finding the information was one thing, making it all happen was another.

It took almost nine years for my entitlement to 24-hour care to be acknowledged. That battle for information and assistance still leaves a bitter taste.

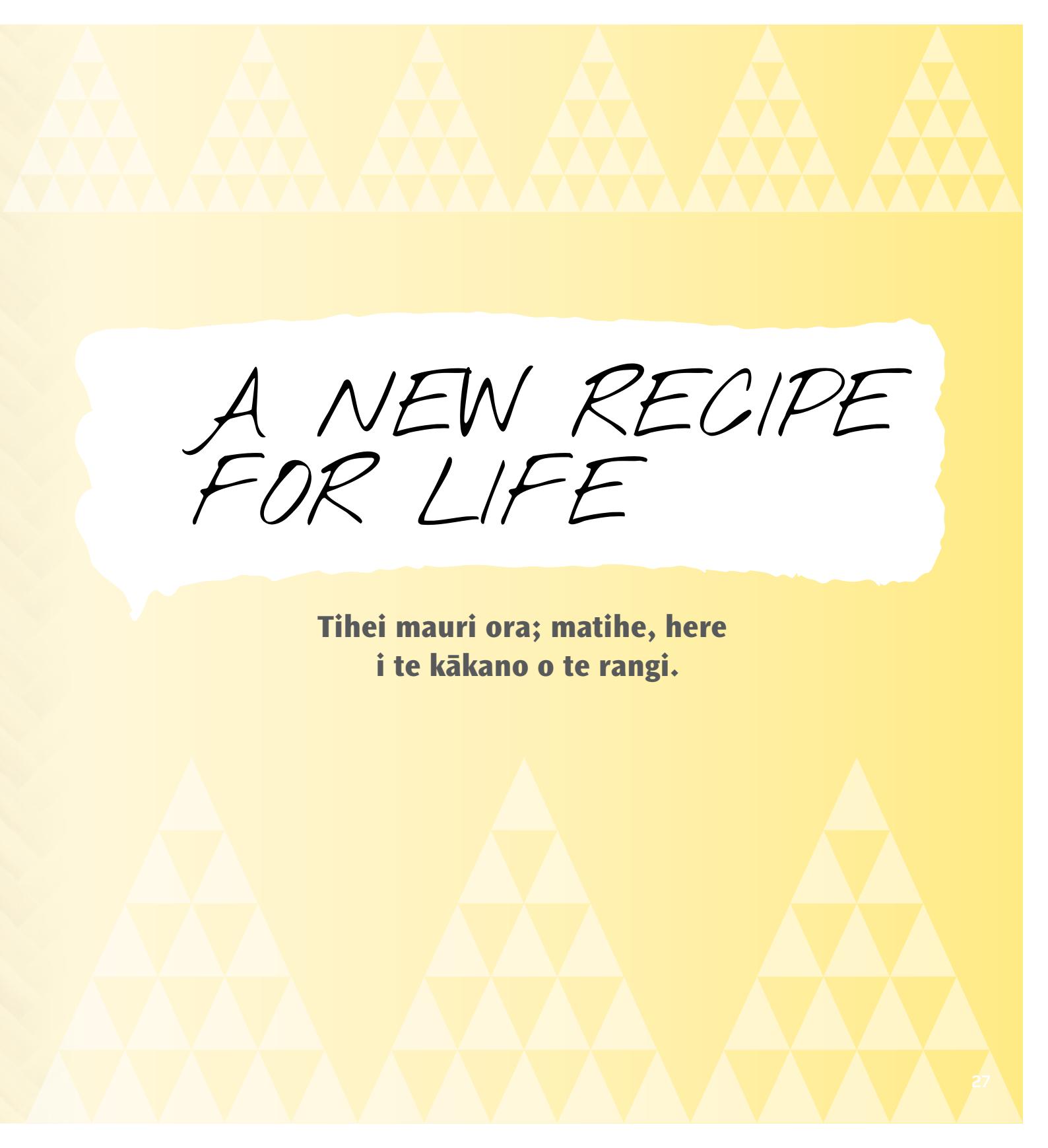
*"I decided I was going to give it another go. The moment I made this decision I started to improve physically. As soon as my attitude improved, so did my life."*



GETTING THE DAY STARTED WITH ROBBIE DOWNES, CAREGIVER. ALWAYS A BIT OF A MISSION TO GET ORGANISED.



HANGI AT MY PLACE IN PAPAKURA – THE  
WHOLE STREET ATTENDED



# A NEW RECIPE FOR LIFE

**Tihei mauri ora; matihe, here  
i te kākano o te rangi.**



WITH MY FAMILY ON THE MARAE AT PAPAKURA. WITH ME ARE NEPHEW GLENN, MY BROTHER PAUL, GLENN'S WIFE, AND NIECE JODIE.

*"There is a lot of guilt associated with asking for things. You feel guilty about disrupting the lives of your family and begin to feel demanding."*

## **I have chosen to start this section as a selection of 'gripes'. These are the parts of my story which have caused tension, not just for me, but for others around me.**

It's impossible to go through what I've been through, without noticing all the stresses and tensions along the way. They don't happen every day, but they are part and parcel of your journey towards recovery. Maybe these reflections will help someone else in my situation. I hope so.

About six months after my accident I began to experience the first of these stresses. I noticed that I became tense in hospital whenever I was left alone, or as alone as you can be in a hospital ward!

The absence of constant interruption left me time to ponder the extent of my injury and the reality

that I could not walk. I suddenly realised that as much as my mind urged my body to do things, my body was not going to obey it. This meant that anything I wanted, whether I was in hospital or living at home, I was going to have to ask for.

There is a lot of guilt associated with asking for things. You feel guilty about disrupting the lives of your family and begin to feel demanding.

I was continually asking for things to be done. This eventually became very frustrating and strenuous. However, the only way I could get things done was to ask, even basic things able-bodied people take for granted, such as making a cup of tea.

At the other end of the scale, I have also had carers who have anticipated my every need to the point where it felt like an invasion of my privacy and independence. This was just as bad because it stopped me making decisions for myself.

In some ways, being disabled is like running a small business. In retrospect, the source of many tensions came from employing people to look after me. I had difficulty finding reliable staff, getting them to work the right hours and getting them to stay for longer than twelve months.

Training them was also frustrating because many lacked previous care-giving experience. Then I'd train them up, only to have them leave a year later. Some left to fulfill family obligations, others to pursue further training as nurses or other health professionals.

Like any workplace, I also came across my share of people I didn't get on with. I recall one degrading and humiliating incident, where a disgruntled worker walked out leaving me naked on the bed. I was embarrassed to think that a stranger might walk in and see me. I was in emotional turmoil, but physically I was motionless. There was nothing I could do except wait with numb resignation for someone to help me. That made me a lot more careful about who I employed!

I had previously only interviewed applicants to see if they were capable of doing the work. I now interview prospective employees two or three times to learn about their personality, read their resumes and verify their references. I need to be able to trust them to go into my bank account, listen to my telephone calls and open my mail.

Trust is a big thing when you need 24-hour care. Because you can't physically take control of situations, it's easy to feel like people are taking advantage of you.

But over the years I have built up a mental protection system and my family and others have got to know my limits. They know when I say something I mean it!

In my early years of living independently these tensions often led to tantrums. That was just the frustration of being unable to get things done when I wanted them done.

In truth, I was annoyed at the loss of my personal independence and control. I used tantrums and sarcasm to get attention and get things done. I imagine my carers found me as difficult as I sometimes found them!

Looking back, all these gripes and tensions were part of me becoming de-institutionalised and learning to live in the community again. In the spinal unit I'd had very little responsibility for myself. Out in the community I came to realise that I was the only one who could make things happen. I had to drastically organise my life and the people in it, if I was to achieve anything in the day.

This process is very much like learning a new recipe. Initially, you use every dish and utensil in the kitchen, no part of the dish is ready when it should be and everything takes twice the time it should. But the more often you prepare the dish, the better you get, until you use only two dishes, minimise the washing up and perfect the timing. That's what recovery's like too.

*"...it took a lot of motivation, perseverance and determination to find the routine that worked."*



MY OFFICE, ALWAYS PLENTY HAPPENING

Eventually my days became a habit, they began to flow and my frustration lessened. However, it took a lot of motivation, perseverance and determination to find the routine that worked.

Organising my daily activities meant adapting to the wheel chair and the limitations it posed. But after a while I simply regarded it as a contraption to get me from A to B.

I still don't totally accept the disability. Maybe I never will, At times I ponder the whys, the hows and if onlys. But at least I've come to terms with the answer. I don't dwell on my physical limitations

or incapacities, but I don't ignore them either. I accept the things I can no longer enjoy and involve myself in the things I can do.

For example, I don't enjoy watching live sports any more, not just because I can't get up and play the game, but because I can't get up and ya-hoo at the rugby and physically participate in the atmosphere.

So, I've chosen to dedicate my time to other projects instead, like writing this book in the hope they will benefit others in a similar situation to myself.



ME AND ROBBIE ARRIVING AT OMANIA MARAE, HOKIANGA, WHERE I WAS BROUGHT UP.



WITH MY CHURCH PASTOR AND 'CAMP MOTHER' CARER AND CONFIDANT BETH.

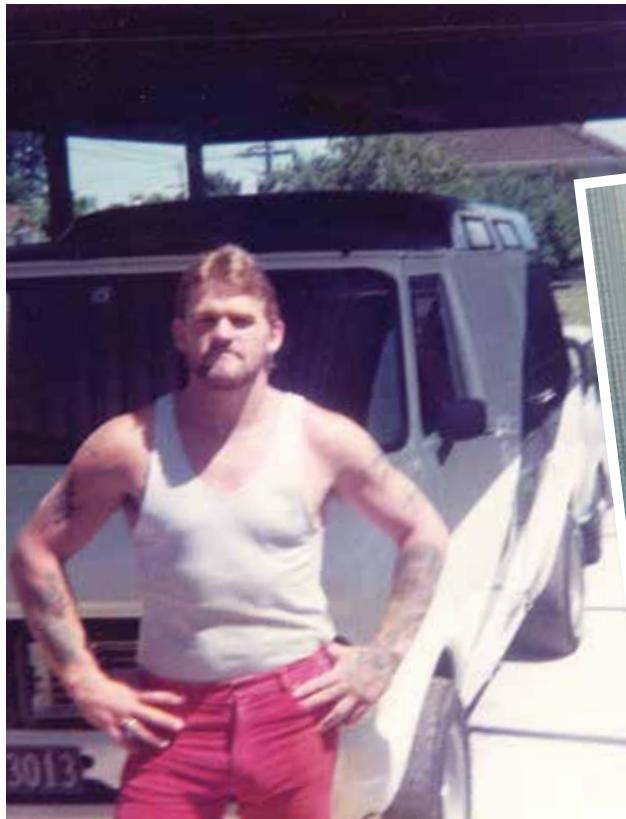


**ONWARDS**

**Whāia te iti kahurangi, ki te tuho  
koe me mounga teitei**



STEVEN DAY, THE CAREGIVER WHO INSPIRED ME TO WRITE



TONY LYNDSEY, ONE OF MY CAREGIVERS



GORDY MUNROE, MY FRIEND FROM THE ARMY PRESIDENTS RUGBY TEAM.

## So that's the condensed version of my life. My injury and my recovery have taught me a lot.

By writing this book I want to encourage further discussion, thought and understanding.

Here are some things I've learnt along the way.

A huge part of recovery happens in your head. Your attitude and outlook are everything. At first, it's like you're going through an identity crisis.

That was true for me. In the beginning, I was angry and in denial. A lot of my actions were guided by the things I didn't want to happen. I didn't want to live in a spinal unit permanently, so I moved into a house. I did everything I could to prevent being institutionalised.



WITH ROBBIE, MY FRIEND AND CAREGIVER AT MY CHURCH.

*"Healing is an ongoing process of adapting to new, dramatically-changed circumstances, physically and emotionally. It takes a while to get the recipe right."*

However, I came to accept my limitations. It was a real milestone when I began to consciously set goals for the future. I started incorporating disability into my life, with hope for the future and a real sense of self-worth.

Adapting to life as a quadriplegic is a complex thing. It's a combination of medical concerns, managing pain, your age, your philosophy and beliefs and your family structure.

No two people heal in the same way. There is no set formula or pattern for adjusting to a spinal injury. The healing process is as diverse as people are different.

Being paralysed means you are completely dependent on others. Everyone you meet plays a significant role in your recovery, especially your carers. The better the standard of care, the higher your quality of life.

My family were always there for me too, especially when I was ready to give up. Their strength, support and love has proved an inspiration.

After my accident I also became interested in religion. I knew I needed something to believe in. Christianity didn't change my behaviour all at once, but it did change me. It forced me to examine my values and my lifestyle. It gave me hope, comfort and security. I felt less alone knowing there was someone who would protect and watch over me. These beliefs gave me the strength to act and to find the blessings in my situation.



WITH THE PASTORS AT MY CHURCH.

So to sum up, there is no doubt that being paralysed induces a great sense of loss. However, that doesn't mean you can't have a fulfilling life.

Healing is an ongoing process of adapting to new, dramatically-changed circumstances, physically and emotionally. It takes a while to get the recipe right.

Even with the limitations I faced, I'm proud of the goals I set and the improvements I've made to my life since my injury.

I've become much more knowledgeable and complete as a person. I've learnt about biology, psychology, physiology, anatomy and religion. I've learnt to write and that's helped me to heal too.

Most of all, I've learnt a lot about myself. I realise that the pride, ego and stubbornness that contributed to my accident, also helped enormously in my recovery.

Disability can be a curse or an opportunity depending on how you respond. Sure, there have been times when I felt like giving up. But overall, I've remained optimistic.

I honestly believe my future is more hopeful now than it would've been if I had not had the accident. I've focused on the things I can do. I've adapted. I've set myself goals and overcome obstacles.

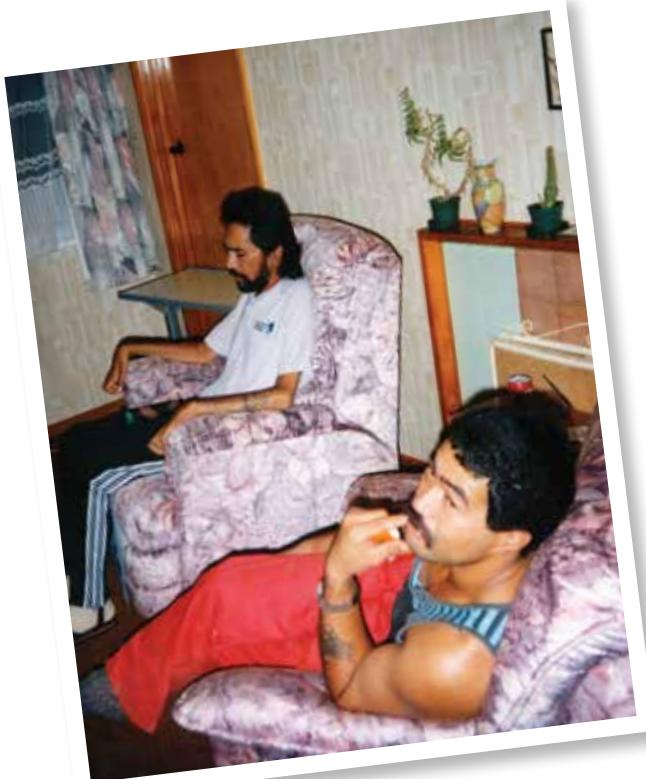
My whole sense of identity – the me, myself, I – has become more than just a physical thing. I'm experiencing sides to life I never imagined before. Yes, my journey has been a challenging one, but it's helped me become the person I am today – Ngaputu Adam Watling, writer, living life to the full.

21 FEBRUARY 1997

# EPILOGUE

*I am the way, the truth, and the life. no man cometh unto the father, but by me.* JOHN 14:6

**Ngaputu Adam Watling  
went on to live a life of  
great inspiration and  
achievement.**



ADAM WITH BROTHER RANGI WATLING ("BABES")

He continued writing and studying and gained qualifications in Human Psychology.

His lifelong passion was improving the standard of care for the disabled and raising the status and conditions of caregivers. He became an expert in the area and developed training modules for caregivers, so they could gain professional qualifications and have their skills properly recognised.

He set up S.P.A.N.A (Special Persons Attendant Network Agency) to further this work. It was named after a giant crescent that mysteriously appeared one day in his south Auckland house!

His ground-breaking Te Poi Poi a Tinana (Nurture The Body) programme, was adopted by the Te Roopu Waiora Trust in Papatoetoe in 2005. It continues to make a huge contribution to the lives of whānau with disabilities.

Adam was a powerful and effective advocate for the rights of the disabled. He successfully fought many battles on their behalf to secure better treatment, funding and information. He was a champion of 24-hour care for the disabled.

Adam was also immensely resourceful. He used the proceeds from harvested firewood to sponsor school rugby teams and fund his research and writing. He loved to foster new talent and potential, whether they were rugby players, writers or caregivers.

*"Adam had a brilliant, beautiful mind. Whilst being cared for himself, he was also very caring."*



NGAWHA MARAE, NORTHLAND

His faith continued to blossom and he helped establish His Image Bible Church in Pakuranga. It soon had a flourishing congregation.

On the 21st anniversary of his accident, Ngaputu Adam Watling returned to Eastbourne wharf, the scene of his accident. It was an emotional time. A lot of his family went with him. Looking down at the green water, Adam shed a few tears over the phone with his brother Rangi, and then turned away, determined to get on with his life. He'd faced his demons and laid them to rest at last.

Adam defied the odds until the end. He passed away in 2011, aged 53 – his doctors had originally predicted he wouldn't make it to 35. He is buried at St Michael's Church in Ngawha Springs, Northland.

His legacy lives on today, as his brother Rangi explains in his own words below:

"Adam was a pioneer in disability, a visionary in business and faith, a mighty man of God, a faith builder, an encourager, an optimist, a singer, a

friend to everyone, a coach, a life teacher, a team sponsor, a penpal, a rugby fan, a brilliant chess player, a beautiful home maker, a dog trainer, an overseas mission sponsor, a businessman, a merchant trader, a councillor, a pastoral minister, a great uncle to the many, many nieces and nephews and their children, an employer, a confidante to many, a church builder, a writer, a brother to eight sisters and five brothers."

"Adam was so much more. What he lost in the accident (the use of his arms and legs) he gained by the use of his mind, his heart and his spirit. The mind said, there is an obstacle. The heart said, there is a way around this. The spirit said, are you willing? He said, I am."

"Adam had a brilliant, beautiful mind. Whilst being cared for himself, he was also very caring. The special people who came into his life, enriched it greatly. I am so grateful to have shared the friendship of this man, whom I'm also proud to call my brother. Me, myself, I. Adam I am."



TAUHARA COLLEGE 1ST XV RUGBY TEAM ON TOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA. ADAM HAS SPONSORED THE TEAM EVERY YEAR FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS.



*Nga mihi mahana ō koutou tautoko ki  
Te Roopu Waiora, Tamaki Ngati Kāpō,  
me Mana Tangata Turi hoki*



THE TE ROOPU WAIORA TRUST. ADAM WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE TRUST TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.





Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa