

## Meet Bruce Mote.



Bruce was born at Burwood Hospital in 1953 and was part of a large family comprising of eight brothers & sisters. He recalls his younger life as being very tough with a father who was an alcoholic and from an early age he quickly learnt to be self-sufficient. By the age of 11, Bruce was mowing lawns and delivering groceries to earn extra money and he said he loved these jobs. He felt that he was making a better life for himself and this attitude guided where and what he did in his future life.

He has lived the majority of his life in and around Belfast where he is widely known in the community. Prior to moving to Belfast, Bruce attended Bishopdale Primary then Papanui High School before leaving school at 15 to go to sea. A huge challenge for a young "boy". He started off as a deck boy on the Aramoana doing stints on the Aranui & Maori then after 2-3 years, progressing to international work for about 10 years with BP Oil. He completed all his tickets and became an engineer specialising in steam and had jobs with Shaw Saville and P&O along the way. At this point, he came ashore and worked for BP Oil at Lyttelton for approx. 18 months and it was at this point that he and his wife, Dorothy, purchased their Belfast home. A variety of jobs ensued, working for Zealandia in the soap/candle factory, CFM Meat Co as a maintenance man then onto Scott's Engineering doing the same. Scott's offered Bruce an opportunity to become involved in the installation of boilers & LPG tanks. This eventually provided Bruce the opportunity to become self-employed for the next 4 years cleaning/repairing fuel/chemical tanks all over the south island.

It was in Timaru in 1985 when Bruce was instructing the Fire Service how "not" to get burnt while cleaning tanks that his accident happened. Whilst kneeling in acid in the bottom of a tank, a pair of faulty overalls allowed acid to come into contact with his legs and his problems began. He spent 18 months in Burwood Hospital and after numerous skin grafts to save his leg, a decision was made to amputate his right leg. After being fitted with a prosthesis, Bruce successfully carried out maintenance work for local schools for around 2 years before an accident damaged his left leg and he had to have it amputated after another 3 months of trying to save it.

Bruce said that his family has been and still is, very important to him. "Dorothy has been a fantastic support to me. I wouldn't be here today without her love, care & support. My children were only young when my

problems started but they have been fantastic to both of us” He thinks the hardest times have been dealing with all the medical issues, being in hospital for years and getting his rightful entitlements from ACC.

Visiting places like Vietnam & Russia during his time at sea as a young man were some of the greatest risks he has taken in his life. Notwithstanding this, Bruce has travelled all over the world in his time in the merchant navy and feels lucky to have experienced this.

In 2004, Bruce & Dorothy travelled overseas together for the first time to attend their daughter’s wedding in Ireland. Since then, they have travelled back to Europe, UK, USA, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia and he says he is an experienced “disabled” traveller. Bruce said he has seen a lot of amputees “begging” on the streets but they always look a bit “sheepish” when they spot him without any legs pushing himself along in his wheelchair!

FAVOURITE FOOD: Seafood.

FAVOURITE PLACE: Being around home with family & achieving things.

FAVOURITE ACTIVITIES: Fishing, travelling in their motorhome, putting up Xmas lights every year, walking the dogs and spending time with the grandchildren.

FAVOURITE MUSIC: The Bee Gees, listening to brass & jazz.

FAVOURITE BOOKS: “Reach for the Sky” about Douglas Bader & history books.

Bruce said that he likes people who “get up and go” by rising to life’s challenges. He also said that he is most happy when doing chores around home, getting out & about walking the dogs to meet people and ALWAYS talks to any fellow amputees that he meets on his travels.

*Bruce & Dorothy have created a most wonderful display of Xmas lighting and decorations that many people come to see at this time of year. Bruce personifies the adage that his disabilities do not hinder him achieving great things. Well done Bruce and many thanks to both you & Dorothy for hosting me in your home.*

Note: Bruce and friends have been instrumental in working with ECAN to have an accessible fishing platform built on the Waimakariri river. Anyone wishing to gain access to this wonderful facility can make contact with Bruce on 03 323-7328.