

MEET ROSS MILLICHAMP:



At the time of visiting Ross on a Tuesday late in November, he and wife Jinny (and Black Labrador, Briar) had only just moved the preceding Friday from their home of 12 years in Merivale to a 26-acre property at Charing Cross, some 50 kms North West of Christchurch near Hororata. The new property was made very appealing to Ross as it has its own airstrip and expansive hangar, read on.....

Ross was born in 1964 in Timaru and was the second born child in the family. He has an older and younger sister who both reside in Dunedin and a younger brother who lives in the Far North. He stated that he has a close relationship with all his siblings and his parents, (aged 82 & 79) who still live in Merivale so he is hopeful that the trip out into the country will not be a barrier for regular contact. Ross's father was a Presbyterian Minister and Ross recalls living in Timaru, Ashburton, Auckland & Whakatane before finally coming to Christchurch where he attended Quinn's Rd Primary, Shirley Intermediate before completing his secondary schooling at St Andrews College. Ross said that as a child, he was almost obsessed with salmon fishing and that passion has remained with him throughout his adult life, as you will read later. Upon leaving college, Ross attended Canterbury University where he graduated with a science degree in Zoology (animal biology) and obtained his first "real" job working on a salmon farm at Kaitangata, South Otago for 3 years.

In 1991, Ross moved back to Christchurch where he started work for Fish & Game NZ as a field officer. After 8 years in this role, he was promoted to manager of Fish & Game North Canterbury but in February, 2008, Ross experienced a life changing event. Ross and some friends were on Stewart Island on a hunting/fishing trip when he started to feel unwell. This affliction worsened over the next 4-5 days to the point where one day before being due to leaving on a boat, he had to use the mountain radio to seek medical assistance. He was admitted to Invercargill Hospital where extensive tests were carried out to reveal he was suffering from the bacterial condition, Necrotising Fasciitis (flesh eating disease) due to an infection from a cut sustained whilst fishing. His body went into what is commonly described as "septic shock" where the organs start shutting down and he was rushed into surgery to have the diseased flesh removed. From this, Ross was medically evacuated to ChCh Hospital where he admitted to ICU and further surgery. When he awoke, it was a real shock to find that both his legs had been amputated below the knee but Ross freely admitted that this had to be done and felt that the medical staff did a

great job of removing the dead tissue to keep him alive. He remained in ICU for one month, another 2 months in the ward before being transferred to Burwood Hospital for another 2 months and he was able to return home in August of that year. Up until this point, Ross had been an avid outdoors person and heavily involved in the pursuits of hunting & fishing but a medical professional told him in hospital that because of his disabilities, he should look at doing something different from this point onwards. At first, Ross admitted to some reluctance about the suggestion but he had previously met two WW2 Spitfire pilots and started tinkering with the idea of learning how to fly. So, in 2009, he commenced flying lessons with the Canterbury Aero Club and successfully obtained his pilot's licence in 2010. He admitted that there was some opposition from the medical fraternity to give him a medical clearance but his persistence and flying ability won the day. In 2011, he purchased his own plane, a Cessna 172 which has now been upgraded to a more powerful Cessna 182. Ross said he has flown all over NZ and although Jinny has only ever been on his jet boat a handful of times, she (and pooch) have accompanied him on Cessna flights from the Far North to Stewart Island.



me away from his job at Fish & Game but he decided to leave the role in 2013 as he was suffering badly from fatigue. In 2015, he took on a new role with DOC managing a field office but once again suffered rather badly from fatigue and left the position. Nowadays, Ross works part-time on a number of working groups with Environment Canterbury. He said this will allow him to come to terms with maintaining a large lifestyle property and of course, to spend more time behind the controls of the Cessna!!!

Ross admits to liking people who have the same passion for the outdoors as he does so is attracted to others who participate in fishing, hunting and an outdoors lifestyle.

FAVOURITE FOOD: Ross likes to cook, especially with the food he has hunted & fished for.

FAVOURITE PLACE: As weird as it might sound, Ross said his favourite place is the Lords River on Stewart Island.

ACTIVITIES/HOBBIES: Flying, jet boating, hunting, fishing...did I mention flying!!!



FAVOURITE MUSIC: Ross said he has a rather eclectic taste in music. He likes alternative genres and is a fan of an Australian artist, Paul Kelly.

FAVOURITE MOVIES: Too busy flying, hunting & fishing to watch movies.

FAVOURITE BOOKS/AUTHOR: Ross has actually written 2 books on salmon fishing but enjoys reading non-fiction, war and biographical books.

Ross feels that he has been very lucky in his life due to his life being saved with such timely medical intervention and skill, having such a loving, supportive wife and family but admitted that life is a challenge given his physical challenges. He does feel privileged to be able to continue his passion for flying and outdoor pursuits and deals with the good day/bad day scenarios as they present themselves. He said he is happy to pull the plane out of the hangar but even more happy when he wheels it safely back in by knowing that he has acted prudently & responsibly. Ross gains immense satisfaction from this new skill learnt and thoroughly enjoys putting this skill into real life practice. Apart from flying his own plane all around NZ, he and Jinny have travelled to the UK, Europe, USA, Japan and Tonga. *(Millichamp Airfield, Charing Cross)*

Ross, thank you most sincerely for inviting me to your wonderful property and sharing your inspiring story of courage, determination and your exciting lifestyle. You are living proof that, "ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE"