

## **Meet Brian Coker:**



Brian was born in Oamaru in 1958 and attended primary school then moved on to attend Waitaki Boys' High School before leaving NZ in 1977 to travel

overseas to the UK. Brian's father was employed as an Electrical Engineer for the Power Board and still resides in Oamaru, aged 91 years. He has fond memories of his childhood living in Oamaru and the numerous family camping holidays around the hydro lakes area. When Brian was 13 years old, his mother sadly passed away and he said that this was a very hard time for his father in caring for him, his two older and one younger siblings.

He moved to Christchurch in 1979 where he obtained a clerical job with the Justice Department and worked there for around 5 years. It was at this time that Brian met and eventually married Helen and they have two children, Olivia (30) & Jonathon (27). Grandchildren are yet to appear☺.

Brian and Helen then owned a food business for around 3 years before Brian worked as a legal executive for a law firm until 2001 when he became a financial advisor with Perpetual Trust.

February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 is a day that Brian and his family will never forget. Early that morning, he dropped Helen, at the airport for a flight to Palmerston North to visit with her sister. As he was leaving his workplace, the PGC building to go for lunch, the devastating earthquake that has changed our city and his life forever, occurred. At the time, Brian was in the stairwell and was pinned by the collapsing debris which caused horrendous injuries. He recounts that he thought the whole city must have collapsed and he despaired at the prospect of ever being rescued. His thoughts were that, "This was it" but he somehow managed to get a text to his son, Jonathon to advise that he was trapped beneath debris in the stairwell. 7 ½ hours later, he was located by rescuers and luckily among these people were medical professionals who after sedating Brian, performed the amputation of his legs above knee so that he could be extricated from the debris that had him trapped. Brian had to be resuscitated in the ambulance and was moved to Hamilton the following day as the resources at ChCh Hospital were severely stretched in trying to

cope with all the trauma related injuries from the earthquake. In total, Brian and Helen spent 3 months in Hamilton before returning to ChCh and by August, was taking his first steps on the prostheses made by our Limb Centre.

Brian was back at work and in touch with clients while in Hamilton and returned daily to the office in Christchurch in June 2011, just over 3 months after the quake. His part of the company has been taken over but Brian remains as a financial adviser with (now) Saturn Portfolio working from new offices in Kilmore Street.

Due to ongoing problems with his new legs, Brian & Helen began to investigate other surgical procedures (Osseointegration) that may improve his comfort, functionality and mobility. In July & September, 2012, Brian underwent surgery (ILP) and he said that had it not been for this, he feels he would be in a wheelchair today. Brian is very happy with the results and the care given by his medical & rehabilitation teams. He said that his most pressing physical challenges revolve around his general mobility and currently uses two walking sticks to aid him.

Subsequent to 2011, Brian & Helen sold their city property and have built a beautiful home on a  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre section at West Melton where they enjoy working on their award winning garden. Cooking is also something that Brian really enjoys and said that he and Helen work well together in preparing meals for family and friends as they love to entertain in their home.

With a chuckle, Brian said the biggest risk he has ever taken was going to work on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011! Although the last 5 years have been a struggle and tested their resolve to the upper most limits, Brian said that he attempts to have a positive outlook on life in general. His family remain the most important factor in his life as they have lived the highs & lows of this traumatic time alongside him and he is indebted for their ongoing support.

**FAVOURITE FOOD:** EVERYTHING!

**FAVOURITE PLACE:** Paris and he plans to return there in the future.

**ACTIVITIES:** Gardening, travelling & singing in the St Albans Community Choir.

**FAVOURITE MOVIE:** Forest Gump.

**FAVOURITE MUSIC:** Any variety but especially fond of Frank Sinatra.

**FAVOURITE SONG:** 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life' from the Monthy Python Move 'The Life of Brian'!

BOOKS/AUTHOR: Historical novels. Robert Goddard/Ken Follett and crime fiction. Stieg Larsson/Jo Nesbo

TRAVEL: UK, France, Italy, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Fiji, New Caledonia & Australia.

*Brian & Helen. Many thanks for hosting me in your beautiful home and your garden is a wonderful testament to all your hard work. Mark.*