

MEET JOHN FRASER:

John Fraser is the eldest child from a family of 8, including his parents. Born in 1962 to parents who were part of the late 50's urban drift, from small town New Zealand to life in the big city. John's father worked in construction while his mum took care of the growing family. John grew up in Beach Haven, on Auckland's North Shore. As a child of the 60's John says that Beach Haven was a great place to grow up. When John was 3 1/2, he lost his right arm in a wrestling match with the family's wringer washing machine. John climbed up onto the laundry tub and used a stick to push some washing through the rollers, unfortunately he didn't let go of the stick and his arm was squashed flat like a newspaper and couldn't be saved. John's arm was amputated above the



elbow. John thinks that he was fortunate to have lost his arm as a child as it was easier to accept the loss and carry on as a "winger." John grew up in a time where all of the local kids played together outside, exploring the bush and creeks around Beach Haven, raiding the local orchard or swimming at the wharf. John went through some trials at primary school, bullying was a part of everyday school life then, and anyone with an obvious difference was an automatic target. John's Headmaster gave him permission to sort things out for himself and once the bullies realised that John was happy to stand up to them, that was the end of it. Being an amputee didn't stop John from being involved in sport at school or in later life. John played in the first XV in high school as well as participating in many other sports.

John left school and Auckland at 15 and spent a year in Thames before spending a few years hitchhiking all over NZ, living day to day, working odd jobs, before settling in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty. John became a father for the first time at 20, and eventually had 3 sons and a daughter. John's father, understanding that a working life for a winger, was going to have some challenges, gave him a little advice that he has used in every facet of his life since, "You have a good brain, whatever you want to do, work out how you're going to do it in your mind, then once you've worked it out, do it" John has no formal qualifications, but has a master's degree in the school of life. John has worked in many different roles and hasn't ever had problems getting a job when he has needed to. In 1990, John was living in Hokio Beach with his oldest son, learning Te Reo and dabbling with bone carving. He put his son on a flight to Ch Ch for the August school holidays on the Monday, Friday of the same week, John got a message that his son had become paralysed from the neck down due to a spinal cord aneurysm. John immediately made his way to Ch Ch and has never left. His son spent 3 months in hospital and regained some use of his body. The hospital was able to identify his son's

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problem but didn't have the technology to remove the aneurysm and John made the decision to stay in CHCH as the chance of further damage was quite high. John and his son settled in Spreydon and John joined the Addington league club to meet new people and start a new chapter of life. He continued his interest in carving as a hobby while working, however, he saw a job being advertised at a community arts & crafts centre called Floyds who were looking for a bone carving tutor. Floyds was a community service catering mainly to people with a physical, mental or intellectual disability but was also open to the public. John was asked to create a system that allowed everyone to be successful in completing a simple bone carving. It was during his



time at Floyds that John picked up the nickname, The Bone Dude. One day, he went to the South City Mall and spotted a lady he knew having lunch with her parents. John & Barb had attended Birkdale College together and were boyfriend/girlfriend for a time. They rekindled their relationship and spent a couple of years living in Leeston before moving back to the city. Then in 2003, John & Barb set up The Bone Dude's Bone Carving Studio and Cultured Gallery on Fitzgerald Ave, which operated until the earthquakes in 2011, offering people from all over the world the opportunity to create their own carving as well as promoting local artists. John was able to salvage most of his equipment in the weeks following the quake and eventually created a studio in the garage of their rental home however, the ongoing aftershocks put a halt on tourism in CHCH and John made a decision to get a job. In 2012, John started working for Lifelinks as an Outcome Coordinator 4 days a week and until last year, running a couple of carving sessions a week. John is still happily employed there. As John said, "I'm a people person and like the whakatauki, he aha te mea nui, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata". Helping others and sharing knowledge are John's driver. John & Barb moved out to Birdlings Flat in 2016, reestablished the carving studio and carried on life outside of the city. John & Barb work remotely which means they only have to go into Ch Ch occasionally. John describes himself as a "MAKER" driven to create for himself, a carving or a set of shelves that sits comfortably alongside Barb's passion as a potter and photographer. Listening to music, reading Scandinavian mystery and crime novels, or just walking around Birdlings, enjoying the ever-changing beauty of this part of our country are activities he enjoys. Between them they have 8 children & 17 grandchildren. When asked about their travel experiences, John replied, "We have yet to break the 5-hour barrier" having travelled to Australia & the South Pacific islands. To end this profile, John & Barb are looking to create a dedicated space in their new home to create and pursue their passions. "Barb and I live a very contented life here at Birdlings Flat"