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NANO GIRL
Making science fun

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Ingenio website
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If you’re as happy to read Ingenio online as in print, we’ll stop sending you the magazine and instead you’ll receive an email each time the website is refreshed with the latest Ingenio content.
You can search articles, browse by topic, view videos and leave comments on the Ingenio website.
I was recently at Melbourne University, one of the top universities in Australia. It has a slightly larger number of students than the University of Auckland, a budget nearly twice ours, and a ranking consistently in the top 50 in the world. Melbourne has, as part of its philanthropic campaign, expressed the belief that “Australia deserves a university equal to the best in the world”.

Most people would agree that New Zealand also deserves a world-leading university, but many would do so without asking themselves exactly why. The need to out-do the Aussies doesn’t seem quite enough, though it is a good start!

The real reason for being ambitious about the state of our universities is that the growth of any society requires the creation of knowledge, a process we call research; and of course most research is conducted by universities or by people who come from universities. Research universities are therefore unique institutions that need to be valued accordingly.

So, we might ask ourselves, what does it take to ensure that New Zealand has and continues to have a university that is genuinely world class?

The recipe, not surprisingly, is quite simple.

The first essential is top academics. These are the people who create the bold new ideas to change society for the better. Many are home-grown but others are attracted from overseas, contributing to New Zealand’s brain gain.

The next imperative is a large number of very able students. Research universities should be constantly challenging the status quo, and this is a particular characteristic of the vibrant and innovative thinking associated with young people.

Next come the resources that enable these people to do what they do best — to develop and exchange new ideas, to run their research programmes, and to travel so that they may engage with colleagues in similar leading institutions overseas.

The final requirement is a campus environment that encourages these highly-accomplished academics and researchers to communicate and collaborate, bringing new ideas into being and creating great opportunities for our country. Since that is just the kind of environment that will keep these people in the University, the ideas they create are more likely to remain connected to our country, creating long-term benefits for social and economic development and employment.

Among New Zealand tertiary institutions, the University of Auckland is the most highly-ranked international research university, as shown once again in the latest QS World University Rankings, released in September.

We are also in the best position to provide for New Zealand a top research university. This is because we have a number of advantages, including:

• One-third of the top academic researchers in the entire country.
• The highest student entry standards in the country and some of the highest in Australasia.
• The largest graduate school in New Zealand.
• The most successful research commercialisation company (Auckland UniServices Ltd) in Australasia.
• The highest degree of connectivity through our international students, collaborators and networks.
• The advantage of being in New Zealand’s largest, most international and most business-oriented city, one that has the kind of cultural environment that is so important for attracting top academics and to which the University itself contributes significantly.

• The strongest alumni and philanthropic base in New Zealand, and a willingness to defend our autonomy.

All these things mean that we have a strong base on which to stand, and, though it is clear to all of us that much more needs to be done, we can be very proud of what the University of Auckland has achieved in its 130 years.

I would like to thank you all for the support you are giving in so many ways to help us maintain and advance our standing as a leading research university, and to contribute to the welfare of our country.

Professor Stuart McCutcheon
University Vice-Chancellor
Government and institutions show to its citizens every day. The University of Auckland amongst other bodies deserves great credit for developing this culture.

At the same time New Zealand can blunt allegations of race biases in employment by adopting the Indian system of written exams for a large percentage of government jobs and even promotions. Your people can possibly also learn from our vast experience in the area of affirmative action for classes deemed backward. You cannot go wrong in both parts of such an endeavour with experts like Elise around.

You might be surprised if you find out how often the phrase “institutionalised racism” is used by the British association of physicians of Indian origin — in the context of HR policies of the National Health Service of a country which is very similar to yours culturally.

Faithfully, Manish Udar
(MArch(Hons) 2001)

INSPIRATIONAL CONTENT

Many thanks for your latest Ingenio. I find every issue has much that is genuinely inspirational, which, in a world of media-accentuated negatives, is a blessed relief.

In particular, in this latest autumn issue, I enjoyed, and was encouraged by, the interviews with Professor Mānuka Hēnare [and plans to increase native-forest cover in Te Tai Tokerau] and with Elise Sadler [with her wise observations on the value of rote learning in memory development].

Keep up the good work!
Yours sincerely, Dennis Gordon
(BSc Zoology, 1966; MSc Zoology 1969)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

The “Letters” section of Ingenio is well-read and appreciated by readers. I would therefore like to invite you to write in and give your perspective, and encourage input from other readers, not only about the issues covered in the magazine but also about others you see as relevant or interesting to alumni.

These could focus on intellectual, political, cultural or educational issues. All letters will be considered for publication and those most relevant and readable will be published.

I look forward to hearing from you about issues of interest.

Yours sincerely, Judy Wilford

NEWS

HONORARY DOCTORATE FOR BAN KI-MOON

On 3 September His Excellency, Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Auckland, and afterwards delivered a public lecture to nearly 3,000 people.

The conferral ceremony at the Fale Pasifika was overseen by the University’s Pro-Chancellor Peter Kiely (pictured above with Ban Ki-moon). University Public Orator, Professor Paul Rishworth, former Dean of Law, delivered an eloquent eulogy, describing His Excellency as “universally admired for selflessly delivering [a special kind of] leadership”.

Mr Ban’s lecture was held in the Fisher & Paykel Auditorium and streamed by video link to adjacent lecture theatres, with many more watching the live streaming from the University’s home page.

Mr Ban expressed gratitude for New Zealand’s engagement with the United Nations, right back to one of its earliest engagements in 1950 in his own country, Korea. “I was just six years old when I had to flee the fighting around my village. I was too young to understand the term ‘collective security’ in my mind — but in my heart I knew the world was by our side. The United Nations was a beacon of hope.”

FIRST MOOCs

The University of Auckland, in partnership with the UK’s FutureLearn, has launched its first two Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

The first, an eight-week course titled “Data to Insight: An introduction to data analysis,” teaches students how to find the stories told by statistical data.

Professor Chris Wild from the University’s Department of Statistics says this MOOC gives “a great opportunity to gain free knowledge in fundamental concepts and practical skills” and “to experience the world of statistics from a fresh perspective”. Enrolments will be taken up to 30 November.

The second of the University’s MOOCs is titled “Achieving with integrity: Values, skills, action”. Dr Jason Stephens from the Faculty of Education is the lead educator for this four-week MOOC, which aims to help learners, especially university students, understand the meaning of academic integrity and develop the skills and values they need to avoid academic dishonesty. This course began on 10 November and will run again in February, March, July and August.

For more information about the MOOCs, see www.moocs.ac.nz

Simon Nelson, FutureLearn CEO, visited the University last year and presented an overview of the MOOC site to academic and professional staff. FutureLearn is a private company wholly owned by the Open University and founded late last year. By June this year it had partnered with 36 UK and international universities as well as institutions such as the British Council, British Library, the British Museum and the National Film and Television School.

On its platform are many MOOCs, from maritime archaeology and web science to electrical engineering and Irish history. The courses are accessible on iPads, tablets, smartphones, laptops and PCs, and involve watching videos, reading articles, taking part in discussion forums and doing quizzes or submitting short essays online.
SHORT STORY COMPETITION
Winner of this year’s competition was alumna Trisha Hanifin (BA 1993), with her story “Me and Bobby McGee”. Read the story and see the full coverage on pages 18-19.

Runner-up was alumnus Dr Greg Judkins (BSc, MBChb, DipObst), whose story was “Makalofa”, described on page 19. Greg is a General Practitioner who has been working in South Auckland for over 30 years, and is also a medical educator. He is a keen cyclist, loves poetry and short fiction, and being a grandfather to six mokopuna. He is also the father of Nicki Judkins, who won last year’s short story competition.

ARTS ON THE MOVE
The Faculty of Arts office has moved to the three refurbished and restored Merchant houses at 12, 14, and 16 Symonds Street (see right). To take a video tour of the newly restored Arts houses, see http://goo.gl/Cz41NB

POEM BY AN ALUMNUS

LOVE POEM

Houses are likened to shoeboxes but shoeboxes are not likened to houses. A car is likened to a heap but a heap is not likened to a car. A child is a terror but terror is not a child. A business might be a sinking ship but a sinking ship is no business. A bedroom is a dog’s breakfast but a dog’s breakfast is not a bedroom. A bad review might be a raspberry but a raspberry is not a bad review. A haircut is likened to a disaster but a disaster is not a haircut. Books can be turkeys but turkeys are never books. A holiday might be a riot but a riot is not a holiday. A garden might become a headache but a headache is not a garden. I dream about you but you are not a dream.

Gregory O’Brien

Poem above and image (left) from Beauties of the Octagonal Pool, Auckland University Press. Reprinted with permission.

Investment in MBA pays dividends

Fergus Lee was working full-time when he started the two year executive MBA programme in 2012 and the following year accepted a promotion to Head of Capital Solutions at ASB Bank.

“It’s improved my business acumen overall. It definitely gives you more confidence in terms of your approach to work each day. I’m not scared of facing things front on, and I definitely back myself to succeed in whatever I put my mind to.”

Steve Jurkevich, ASB’s Executive General Manager for Corporate, Commercial and Rural, says granting Fergus the time to complete his MBA and supporting him through it was an easy decision for ASB.

“The best thing that can happen when people undertake an MBA is the generosity around how they share the learning. Fergus has done a really good job of coming back into the workplace and trying to help people understand what he’s been learning.

“It’s truly a win-win.”

www.gsm.auckland.ac.nz
The University has formed an unlikely alliance with one of the most influential creative icons to come out of the 60s.

“Someone who epitomises creativity, who is visionary and never lost his sense of childhood and play… a person of profound influence on culture…”

By the time the announcement was made by Kevin Roberts, Worldwide CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi and Honorary Professor of Innovation and Creativity at the University (pictured on the cover), many of the people he was addressing had guessed: Bob Dylan was to become the inaugural Creative Laureate and Founding Patron of the University of Auckland’s Creative Thinking Research Fund, launched at this New York event on 9 October.

There was a sense that, like the line from the singer’s famous protest song, times were indeed changing.

Bob Dylan’s touring schedule meant he could not be at the event in person but, by endorsing it with his name, he has given an important boost to a unique University project that is now reaching out around the globe.

“As one of the most creative voices of our time, Bob Dylan inspires the imagination,” says Vice-Chancellor Professor Stuart McCutcheon.

“He has been a restless and challenging creative force across the world for 50 years, writing anthemic songs that span generations. He is also the first rock musician voted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. And he has been a frequent visitor to New Zealand to perform concerts since 1978.”

So just what is this project that Bob Dylan has agreed to lend his name to?

The answer has its genesis in a conversation back in 2011 between University Development Manager Amy Malcolm and Rob Gardiner ONZM, the founding trustee of the Chartwell Trust, which holds a significant Australian and New Zealand contemporary art collection.

“Rob had a vision for how creativity could change the world,” recalls Amy. “We played with this idea and discussed how the University could help make this happen.”

From there the University’s Creative Thinking Project was born. It was based on four key principles: that we can all find our creative strengths; that creativity fosters achievement and cognitive development; that creativity provides a sense of enjoyment and drive throughout our lives; and that creativity is increasingly important as we move from an Information Age to a Conceptual Age.

“We wanted to start a conversation about the importance of creativity,” says Amy. “We understood that it had to be over time, with a range of different people from across disciplines. It would need a strong research component to show the value of creativity and deepen our understanding of the creative process.”

In 2013 the Auckland Brain Day, spearheaded by the University’s Centre for Brain Research, became the ideal platform for the Creative Thinking Project to engage with the public. “Wherever you have the human mind there are opportunities for creativity,” says Centre Director, Distinguished Professor Richard Faull, who is renowned globally for his work on brain cell regeneration. “Creativity is learning to think differently, learning to try things, learning to be risky. Creativity has no bounds.”

From there the Creative Thinking Project formed the theme for University alumni events. At the same time partnerships were developed with the Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Creative Waikato, Te Papa, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Puke Ariki and Saatchi & Saatchi. The Fernyhough Visual Arts and Education Trust joined the Chartwell Trust as a founding donor.

A Creative Fellows series has since been established to connect with world-leading thinkers around the globe. The first appointed was Professor Nancy Andreasen, who visited New Zealand earlier this year. Professor Andreasen, who is Director of the Neuroimaging Research Center and Mental Health Clinical Research Center at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine, was awarded the President’s National Medal of Science in 2000 for her pioneering work...
in imaging technologies and the study of cognitive processes such as memory and creativity. University Emeritus Professor of Psychology Michael Corballis was the second Creative Fellow and Professor Janis Jefferies, an artist, writer and curator from Goldsmiths, University of London, will be the third when she visits in November.

Creativity is learning to think differently, learning to try things, learning to be risky. Creativity has no bounds

Research proposals are also being developed. Some of New Zealand’s leading creative thinkers — artists, scientists, innovative corporate leaders — will be invited to become Living Creative Brain Donors with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) readings of their brains recorded in collaboration with the Department of Psychology’s Memory Lab.

Another project, by the Faculty of Education and the National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries at the University, will test an international model indicating that students with syllabuses rich in arts produce better academic results, including in the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), than comparable students with little or no arts emphasis.

Also, the Centre for Brain Research, Elam School of Fine Arts and the Faculty of Education are developing a project evaluating the impact of hands-on visual art sessions on the wellbeing and health — physical, mental, social and spiritual — of stroke survivors.

“Anything that gets you out of your current routine, that gets you out of your rut and gives you new challenges, is likely to enhance your creativity,” says Nancy Andreasen.

With this sentiment in mind, the University’s Creative Thinking Project took a bold leap forward this year and decided to launch its new international fundraising initiative in New York.

Kevin Roberts was happy to host the event at his company’s headquarters in the Big Apple. Chair of the US Friends of the University of Auckland, Dr Peter Rajsingh (see his Letter from New York on page 14) and Director of Saatchi & Saatchi Contemporary Art Projects, Jane Sutherland, led an approach to invite Bob Dylan to be Patron.

“There was a fair bit of dialogue back and forth [with Dylan’s manager],” says Peter.

“Bob Dylan was often away on tour and, for a time, it seemed things were going nowhere. Then everyone was ecstatic when he gave the go ahead. Creativity is something Dylan really cares about. He’s often quoted speaking about what creativity means to him and how important it is to keep creativity alive.”

The New York event marked the beginning of an international fundraising initiative to support University researchers and international collaborators.

“There was a moment there where we wondered, ‘Who are we to come to New York to tell people about creativity?’” says Amy Malcolm, who is now Director of the project.

Affirmation came in the form of attendance and involvement from some esteemed and influential creative thinkers. Among them was President Emerita of the Museum of Modern Art and Chair of its International Council, Agnes Gund, who is also a high profile New York arts patron, a civic leader and a staunch supporter of education. She was on the panel for a live “Creative Conversation” convened by Peter Rajsingh, with Nancy Andreasen,

Dr Craig Nevill-Manning, a New Zealander who is Engineering Director for Google; and American artist Clifford Ross. Together, they offered insights from arts, science, academia and the workplace on the complexities and possibilities of creativity. Kate Newby (pictured on the cover), a New York-based alumna and the winner of the 2012 Walters Prize for an outstanding work of contemporary New Zealand art, exhibited at the event.

“What was really striking about the event was people’s engagement and enthusiasm for the concept behind this visionary project,” Peter says. “There was amazing energy in the room, even by New York standards!”

The Creative Thinking Research Fund will bring together philanthropists with scientists, philosophers, educators and artists to form a global community of creative change agents.

“From the schoolroom to the boardroom creative thinking drives success,” says Professor Jenny Dixon, Chair of the Creative Thinking Project and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Engagement) of the University of Auckland.

“Creativity is a proven force for cognitive development, academic achievement and social and economic innovation. It opens up worlds of possibility and change.”

Or, as our Inaugural Creative Laureate once penned:

“Gather round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown...”

See www.creativethinkingproject.org

New York photos by Zander Taketomo

CENTER: Dr Craig Nevill-Manning, Engineering Director for Google, New Zealander and “Creative Conversation” panellist

LEFT: Iconic poet and musician Bob Dylan, now Creative Laureate of the University’s Creative Thinking Project and Founding Patron of the Creative Thinking Research Fund
Dr Michelle Dickinson — aka scientist superhero Nanogirl — has kite-surfed with Richard Branson, brainstormed sustainable technology with some of the world’s most influential imaginers, and lit a fire in dozens of New Zealand kids.

**ALUMNI PROFILE**

Michelle Dickinson is determined to show you just how cool science is.

She runs New Zealand’s only nanomechanical testing lab and lectures in the frontier field of nanotechnology (engineering extremely small things). “Nano” refers to nanometre, or one billionth of a metre — a strand of hair is about 80,000 nanometres wide; fingernails grow at around one nanometre a second.

If you have kids, you may have encountered Michelle’s alter-ego, Nanogirl, whose mission is to get kids excited about science. Nanogirl visits or Skypes schools, scout dens, and community centres three or four times a month. She has her own Facebook page, and has appeared on TV show *What Now*. Nanogirl fulfils Michelle’s childhood ambition to become a superhero (as a girl, she broke bones from jumping off things while wearing a cape).

She makes an impression. Kids send her brainteasers, drawings, notes — one boy sent his birthday party pack.

For a 100 Days Project this year, in which people choose to do something every day for 100 days (http://100daysproject.co.nz/project/2014/1275), Nanogirl shared a scientific experiment with a different child or adult every day for 100 days. Many of her collaborators were kids, recruited online, a few showed her something new. Some were adults she met on the day — at the airport or a gallery.

“100 days was about interacting with the public and showcasing that everyone does engineering and science everyday — it’s not big and scary and full of grumpy men, and you can do it at home,” Michelle says. “I want to show everyone I’m just a normal person and that science is fun.”

In her adult guise, Michelle regularly discusses science news on TV3’s *Firstline and The Paul Henry Show*. Somehow, she also finds time for her blog *MatterChatter*. Smart, lucid, funny and engaging, she has the knack of breaking complex science down to concepts most people can grasp. Watch for yourself in her TEDx talks (type her name into Youtube). She describes how her comic-book-fuelled childhood goals — learning how to fly, make herself invisible and read minds, along with her love of breaking things to see how they worked (toasters, computers...) and, much later, a Michael Crichton sci-fi horror about brain-infecting nanobots — led her ultimately to nanomechanics.

“Although this isn’t part of the performance-based research funding process [criteria used to allocate research money to academics], it’s really important to have a public profile and be accessible,” she says. “A lot of the money we get is taxpayer money, and society should see where their money is going, that the research isn’t irrelevant. What I’ve realised through Nanogirl is that kids are looking for a role model, science-wise — girls especially.”

Michelle made headlines herself in June when billionaire Virgin entrepreneur Richard Branson invited her to his private Caribbean hideaway, Necker Island, for a week of brainstorming sustainable technologies. She was the only New Zealander in a handful of scientists, venture capitalists and tech entrepreneurs — fellow outside-of-the-box thinkers.

“It was magic,” she says. “A paradise island with everything catered for, and then it was even better when Richard Branson and his wife came over.”

In true Branson style, networking took place over kite-surfing (Michelle is a devotee), chess, and various other contests, against a backdrop of infinity pools, giant tortoises, and a flamingo pond. In the evenings they discussed how tech could change the world. Michelle spoke about New Zealand science. She tweeted about the experience, posting a photo of Branson in a chess game with her, and a selfie photo, bombed by a turtle. (Michelle is a regular on Twitter; her tweets traverse science, social justice, environmentalism, gender equity, kite-surfing and rock-climbing.)

She says she was inspired by Branson’s gentle, nurturing style of leadership, and felt privileged to be able to contribute her expertise and ideas — a rare opportunity for working scientists, particularly women. “It was novel and fantastic to be a part of that conversation. It’s hard enough as it is to be a woman in engineering, but to be treated as an equal in that company was something else.”

As in many other fields,
gender inequality manifests in the faster career advancement of men, due to a work culture whose formal and informal customs tend to favour them. Michelle says: “I’m working on how we can accommodate women and the specific needs they have, trying to encourage women to have a voice.”

She recently blogged about the scarcity of women at Microsoft’s TechEd conference in September, where she was a keynote speaker. Of 2,500-plus delegates, only three percent were female. “Conference organisers please take note,” she wrote. “Women like to feel welcome and when we are, we interact more and feel less intimidated... Our voice is just as important and we can often give a unique perspective based on our different experiences.”

Michelle is used to being somewhat of an outsider — and to the hard slog that generally accompanies this status. As well as being a woman in a male-dominated field, she’s also an academic from a working class background whose formal and informal customs tend to accompany this status. As well as being a woman in a male-dominated field, she’s also an academic from a working class background who changed schools often while growing up. Her dad joined the military to learn a trade, which meant moving every few years. Her mother did waitressing and bar-work. The family had stints living in Asia and Europe. Michelle went to high school in a poor neighbourhood just out of Manchester, topping all her classes. She also excelled at swimming — her coach told her she could make the Olympics if she dedicated herself to it. She was sorely tempted, but chose academia for its better long-term career prospects.

At an open day at Manchester University, “I bumbled around trying to find something I liked and found the Fracture Mechanics lab.” She asked the guy inside, “What do you do?” “We break things,” he said. She’d found her place.

The study was fascinating, the workload intense. She did a combined bachelor’s and masters degree in four years, working three part-time jobs to support herself. On graduating, she found a job that she loved for a mechanical company, but was compelled to undertake a doctorate when the new German owners required that all its scientists have one. She studied nanotechnology under a British professor, following him to Rutgers University in New Jersey. Subsisting on scholarships, she completed her doctorate in four years, a record time in the United States system. Her research involved working with a toothpaste manufacturer to figure out why tooth cavities form — she discovered they form inside-out — and how red wine stains teeth. “That was my first taste of commercialisation, which is a big component of what I do now, trying to understand how research and commercialisation and innovation work together.”

Another serendipitous twist brought her to Auckland five years ago. She was at a conference on Biomechanics in Hawaii, looking for a new place to go (“I knew America wasn’t for me”), when she met a University of Auckland senior lecturer in nanomechanics who told her about a vacancy for a lecturer in the speciality. She got the job and moved to Auckland, living in a string of flats until she could buy her current home, in west Auckland, which she shares with her Dalmatian dog, Noodle.

Michelle is excited about the potential of nanotechnology to solve real-world problems, and says you’d be surprised at how much we use already — for example, nano-particles of zinc oxide in sunscreen that are too small for the naked eye, creating, in Nanogirl-speak, an invisible forcefield (no more 1980s fluro-sules!).

“I think we’re going to learn much more about nanotechnology and see it in a lot more places over the next few years.”

A DELICATE TOUCH

Research projects underway in Michelle’s Nanomechanics lab include:

Gecko feet, robot hands: Geckos have nano-hairs that help their feet adhere to surfaces. The lab, with Callaghan Innovation, is developing tiny polymer hairs to line the hands of robots, which will enable them to pick up things more delicately.

Bone disease detector: This is new medical technology that fits in a syringe and a handheld device, which will facilitate detection of bone disease, such as osteoporosis. It will remove the need for a whole-body X-ray, which can be dangerous for pregnant women and children. (With ActiveLife Scientific).

Brain cells on a chip: The lab is growing brain cells in a specific pattern on a silicon chip that’s fitted with microelectrodes on its underside, and is measuring the cells’ patterns of connection under different conditions. The aim is to better understand how brain cells talk to each other and therefore how to recreate those connections in people who’ve lost them through a stroke or Alzheimer’s disease.

Soft shells: Climate change is making oceans more acidic, and the lab is investigating how, and at what rate, this is making sea creatures’ teeth, bones and shells softer. (With Mary Sewell from the University of Auckland.)
WHY SHARKS MATTER

STORY RILEY ELLIOTT

If you follow anything to do with the ocean, you should have realised that sharks are facing major issues.

The most common is their battle against the Jaws-driven, media-induced fear factor but, more recently, their overt-exploitation because of shark finning.

Peoples’ general perception of sharks means that care or want for conservation is not commonplace — but when they are provided with science explaining why sharks matter, their perceptions often change rapidly.

Sharks have existed for over 450 million years, since well before dinosaurs. They are of the longest existing vertebrate lineage in history, one that has evolved a critical role in the marine ecosystem — the apex predator. Top-down predator pressure not only picks off the weak and sick but it has also forced animals to evolve evasion tactics. Sharks stabilise the marine environment and, in doing so, ensure that all its inhabitants exist in a balance crafted over millions of years. A large part of the oxygen we breathe comes from the ocean; its continual production relies on a healthy ecosystem — one that requires sharks.

In the last 20 years, however, sharks have been over-exploited for their fins, resulting in up to 90 percent of the world’s sharks being wiped out. One in five shark species are now threatened with extinction.

Sharks have always been a major by-catch in tuna surface long-line fishing, with more sharks commonly caught than the targeted tuna. Historically sharks were worthless and were cut free. However China’s free trade and open markets during the 1990s resulted in an exponential increase in GDP, and thus accessibility to the expensive, status symbol dish that is shark fin soup. To provide for this demand, 70,240 million sharks were finned each year globally.

In the absence of historic catch data, stock size estimates have been and continue to be near impossible for most shark species, especially the highly migratory ones that make up the majority of by-catch. The blue shark is the most commonly caught and finned species in this trade — over 80,000 a year were finned in NZ waters — yes that’s right, New Zealand waters. We were one of the top ten exporters of shark fins! Yet stock assessments and impact of current catch on population sustainability are listed as “unknown” by our Ministry for Primary Industries.

The impacts of large-scale removal of these apex predators has been well documented around the world, from entire shell fish industries collapsing to coral reef ecosystems breaking down. In New Zealand we earn NZ$1.65 billion a year from the marine ecosystem — so why, in the light of these trophic cascades, would we blindly fish these apex predators?

In my opinion it’s a trifecta — shark science is juvenile, only recently revealing even basic biology and behavior, especially for offshore species; government policy seems to start with economics and behaviour, especially for offshore species; trophic role and catchability are being defined. The communication of this science to the New Zealand public and increased knowledge of the issue around shark-finning contributed to the recent success of getting shark-finning banned in New Zealand waters as of October 2014.

A recipe that has become clear to me in addressing conservation issues is that public opinion counts and, if backed by science, it can be a very powerful tool in achieving necessary environmental protection. Just recently this approach proved successful again, in one of the major human-animal conflicts — the Western Australia shark cull — ruled as adverse to the environment largely due to mass public opinion backed by science.

I continue my PhD project, coupled with public communication, most recently through my book, published by Random House, and TV series Shark Man. (see www.sharkman.tv).

Riley is studying for his PhD in Marine Science at the University of Auckland.

See Riley on video, filmed for Ingenio at Kelly Tarlton’s. Visit www.ingenio-magazine.com
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Rebecca Bain
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Academic Integrity MOOC
“It has been a great pleasure to work with the media team and our project team truly enjoyed it.”

Dr. Li Wang
Learning Support Services Manager, Libraries and Learning Services, UoA

“The trailer is beautiful. You’ve done a great job - really high production values and story-telling.”

Kate Sandars
Content Producer, FutureLearn

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THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtakou
LETTER FROM NEW YORK

Alumnus Peter Rajsingh (BA 1987), who chairs the US Friends of the University of Auckland, reflects on his time in New Zealand. This is the first in a series in which selected alumni will be invited to contribute their thoughts from abroad.

Aotearoa: clouds, remoteness and creativity
Its syllables had a sonorous ring. I heard them first alongside other Māori words like poi and tiki. Discovering later that Aotearoa meant “land of the long white cloud,” I was smitten.

Metaphorical expressiveness of clouds, springing from Romantic poets, had long held linguistic sway (my mother taught English literature). A cloud as “nursling of the Sky,” or “wander[ing] lonely as a cloud that floats on high o’er vales and hills,” were intensely familiar notions. An entire country presented as a long white cloud, was not. This abstract cloud-like quality of New Zealand united with the empirical fact that there’s nothing noxious there — glorious pristineness, devoid of so much as a malarial mosquito, clinched my choice of studying in New Zealand. It’s a decision I’ve never regretted.

At the University of Auckland, I came to read Keith Sinclair’s classic, Distance Looks Our Way: the Effects of Remoteness on New Zealand. The work interrogates the consequences of geographical remoteness. What does it mean to be antipodean? Is insularity or provincialism the dominant ethos of living on a long white cloud at the edge of the world?

For me, New Zealand’s remoteness shaped the strength of the experience. Remoteness promoted a certain spirit in New Zealanders — independence and self-sufficiency, a sense of generosity, community and an enduring curiosity about the wider world. Distance also evoked both confidence about being shielded from greater global dangers along with an anxiety about not being left behind, which kept you on your toes.

New Zealanders seem to fit in wherever they find themselves. Seeing them flourishing in fast-paced urban capitals, or ruggedly making a difference as aid workers in remote parts of the developing world, New Zealanders consistently punch above their proverbial weight. And I’d say this has to do with creativity.

The idea of New Zealand-ness as a slightly amorphous cloud is a creative definition. Clouds, after all, are fluid and can contour and re-contour themselves. Unfettered by structural and institutional constraints weighing down other countries, New Zealand has the good fortune of being able to engage in persistent progressive reinvention. Creatively deploying limited resources helped New Zealand reach the finals of the America’s Cup, creativity makes certain industries in New Zealand the best in the world, and this same quality allows Kiwis to survive and thrive in New Zealand and abroad.

The philosopher Karl Popper has an elegant essay, “Of Clocks and Clouds”, that among other things discusses the determinacy of knowledge. Clocks are mechanistic — take them apart and you understand how they work. Comprehending clouds presents a larger challenge. Creativity, like clouds, occurs in irregular and unpredictable ways. We draw upon creativity to solve problems coming at us from left field and our most creative moments tend to happen when least expected. So how best are we to understand creativity?

The University of Auckland’s Creative Thinking project (see story page 8), which had its international campaign launch on 9 October in New York, is a fantastic way New Zealand creativity will benefit the world — thinking creatively about creativity! This is fitting since New Zealand, the land of the long white cloud, also represents an abstract creative idea in the consciousness of people. People everywhere think of New Zealand as a crucible of creativity.

Since graduating from Auckland, where he was awarded the Senior and Annual prizes in Politics, Peter V. Rajsingh has lived in New York, where he works in a boutique alternative asset management firm, teaches at New York University and sits on the boards of a number of charities and private companies. Last month Peter chaired the “Creative Conversation” at the University’s Creative Thinking launch in New York (see story page 8).

CENTRE: Peter, as a student, meets David Lange, who was then Prime Minister of New Zealand
ENCOUNTERING ‘ISLANDNESS’

We are, self-evidently, an island nation. But what does the condition of “islandness” mean? Further, how can conversations across disciplinary borders develop new understanding of islands?”

These questions surfaced for me when I invited poet and painter Gregory O’Brien to accompany me to the Chatham Islands in late 2012. What began with the goal of developing teaching resources ended up as a re-imagining of the process of creatively engaging with places.

Our time in the field involved what Icelandic geographer Karl Benediktsson calls a “conversation with landscape”: a discursive encounter running deeper than measurement and analysis. We sought to feel the tension between intimacy and isolation that shapes the contours of island life. We found the Chathams, in Greg’s words, “at once, part of nowhere and, most evidently, somewhere else … like a space station or satellite orbiting at the outer reaches of the mainland’s gravitational field”.

Upon return, we engaged in a year-long email exchange; a rich dialogue serving to craft an account of not only a singular place, but also of the place of islands themselves in our lives and national identity.

For Greg, visiting the Chathams occurred soon after visits to Rapanui (Easter Island) and Raoul (in the Kermadecs). His art in the time since reflects these interwoven influences.

For me, closer-to-home islands have taken on new degrees of intrigue. I have since examined the role of the sea in the wellbeing of people on Rotoroa in the Hauraki Gulf, the former Salvation Army alcohol detox centre, and have supervised work exploring people’s experiences of aging on Waiheke.

What’s excited us is the way each other’s ways of articulating islands has influenced the other. The geographer and the artist have found common ground. I have tentatively turned to metaphor and verse, and for Greg, new topographies have entered his paintings and poetry.

Creativity is born of encounter and conversations. Like islands themselves, creativity appears when one loosens familiar ties and heads out to sea.


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Professor Robin Kearns, School of Environment, University of Auckland, was named Distinguished New Zealand Geographer of the Year in this year’s New Zealand Geographical Society Awards.
HASTY RESPONSE

In a different context the Prime Minister described a policy: “If it looks like a dog, and smells like a dog, it is a dog”. That’s the case with charter schools. Simply: they are a dog.

You can dress them up with a Māori name and position them as if they are about partnership. However, they are the darling of right wing ideologues who see in them the promise of privatising state education and dismantling the power of teacher unions. They are predicated on a politically-motivated and manufactured crisis in education that bears little resemblance to the reality.

International evidence is remarkably clear that the introduction of charter schools in other jurisdictions has not lifted the performance of education systems. In the United States after over a decade of charter schools the educational gap has widened. If you are poor and from an ethnic minority in the US it is harder to achieve educationally now than it was before their introduction.

In New Zealand, academy and free schools have decimated public education as part of a deliberate government policy. The new schools however have been bedevilled with financial and moral scandals. Parents are increasingly returning to state education where and when they can.

The existing charter schools in New Zealand offer nothing new. In fact all of them could quite easily be catered for under the provisions of special character schools. They are all funded at levels that are quite extraordinarily out of kilter with state provision. They exist without any reference to researched or negotiated community need and some are already demonstrating they are struggling to meet the needs of their students. It is not surprising they struggle as they were set up in extreme haste to meet a rather shady political agenda. The one exception perhaps is the Mt Hobson Middle school, which seems to have only one point of difference to state schools: smaller class sizes. When the government argues elsewhere it doesn’t make a difference and then offers charter schools funding that allows for small class sizes we can only wonder about the ambivalent and confused message that has been given to South Auckland parents.

Associate Professor Peter O’Connor
Director, Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland

A POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE

In 1991, I was fortunate enough to visit one of the first charter schools in the United States, which was established in a disused parochial hall in central Milwaukee, by educational reformer Polly Williams.

She had fought the unions and the bureaucracy to use the state spend of $2,500 per child to produce what the poor community in that area had never had — choice. I will never forget the excitement and pride in the eyes of the African American mothers who were dropping off their five-year-olds, very smartly dressed in their white shirts and green trousers and skirts.

For similar reasons, five Partnership Schools Kura Hourua (PSKH) were established this year in lower socio-economic areas of Auckland and Northland, thus enabling 350 students to be given a choice hitherto available only to those in leafy suburbs. Another four have just been announced, sponsored by committed boards, including notable proponents such as Willy Jackson and Michael Janes.

PSKH is not an attack on the state school system.

It is not the be all and end all, but it is a positive alternative to the one size fits all system, which is not currently coping well with the very concerning long tail of underachievement in New Zealand, especially among Māori and Pasific communities.

I strongly support the PSKH movement because:

• it gives lower socio-economic communities choices they have never had
• it enables local communities to develop educational programmes more in harmony with their cultural traditions and educational needs
• it encourages innovative approaches eg a para-military discipline and pride in one school, a practical trades-related programme in another, and so on
• it gives those who have dropped out a second chance.
Partnership Schools, has been promoted by the Government as a panacea for disadvantaged children who fail to achieve academic success in the state system. Although there is little data to indicate whether the five pilot charter schools are working, as they were only established at the beginning of 2014, there is anecdotal evidence that strongly reveals some charter schools are performing better than others. For example, a positive outcome can be seen in the charter school that boasts an 89 percent student average in its first term, irrespective of ethnicity. By comparison, other charter schools are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their minimum rolls and providing quality educational programmes. In particular, one school has had no capacity to perform well since it started but has been allowed to continue anyway. Ongoing negative press concerning the school’s poor facilities, ineffective governance, unproven leadership and the school’s inability to recruit highly skilled teachers has resulted in major problems for the school. These negative factors have compromised the quality of education offered to the students and have also lost the goodwill of some of the parents.

It is presumed that all five charter school sponsors were assessed against specific criteria; therefore it is difficult to understand how this school gained approval. New schools often have teething problems that, given time, can improve. However, students’ futures should not be jeopardised by low-level programmes being provided while the school works through its never-ending problems.

The defining feature of any educational institution is the high quality of programmes offered to meet the needs of its students. As the current Government intends to expand on the number of charter schools in New Zealand, it is imperative that more stringent processes are used in the selection, monitoring and evaluation of sponsors/leaders of charter schools. Clearly, charter schools can provide solutions to enhance the quality of education; however, they must not become the problem in the process of making this happen.

Heather Peters
Director, Tai Tokerau Campus (1992-2012)
Faculty of Education
University of Auckland

• it is subject to strong accountability and monitoring processes
• it must demonstrate educational achievement within the National Curriculum and against National Standards and NCEA benchmarks
Partnership Schools deserve a fair go.
This is the third year that Alumni Relations have run this competition and we’d like to thank everyone who entered, judged and sponsored the competition this year.

**WINNING STORY**

“Me and Bobby McGee” is an accomplished and fluent story, skilfully constructed, with moments of keen observation and interesting character insights as we follow the arc of four lives. Historic jealousies are manifested as the narrator explores the shifts in relationships and connection amongst her long-time friends. There is a sense of loss and wasted lives amidst the narrator’s perception of being on the outer edge of desirability. The narrator is always the observer, but a sharp one, describing a lush, sensuous, at the same time alienating, world.

About the Winner

Trisha Hanifin graduated from the University of Auckland in 1993 with a Bachelor of Arts (double major in History and Political Science). In 1993 and 1994 she undertook postgraduate study part-time, completing four masters papers. She later went on to gain a Master of Creative Writing (at AUT) in 2010.

Trisha has worked in adult education and adult literacy for over 25 years, teaching a range of subjects including reading and writing at both foundational and academic levels. She has written on the nature and extent of adults’ literacy issues in Facing the Challenge: Foundation Learning for Adults in Aotearoa New Zealand (Dunmore Press, 2008). She is currently teaching on the foundation studies programme at Unitec’s Waitakere campus.

**FROM THE JUDGES’ CORNER**

Overall, this year’s selection of short stories was diverse and compelling, reflecting a wide array of experience and literary influence. We were gratified to note that many of the submissions were stylistically adventurous, and many experimented with the form of story-writing itself.

**ME AND BOBBY MCGEE**

Last night Irene rang.
She said it was time.

This morning I stood at the window and stared into the garden, watching the sparrows, and the neighbor’s cat trying to hunt them. He was old, his belly so baggy it dragged on the ground. He missed them by a mile, but still crouched in the grass and gave it his best shot.

I sipped my tea. Gathered my energy.

At the mall a busker had set himself up in the concrete square between the Bank and the Happy Sun bakery. He had an old acoustic guitar, its battered case at his feet. His grey hair was drawn back in a ponytail and he was dressed all in black like Johnny Cash. The sun was out. A few people dropped coins as they went by. He took a sip from his water bottle and waited while a bus rumbled by. Once the smell of diesel lifted he took a breath, strummed those familiar opening chords and threw his head back, his throat open and beautiful as a bird’s. Busted flat in Baton Rouge, waiting for a train . . .

Well, he wasn’t Janis, but he did okay.
He and the song and the mid-morning traffic and the kids loitering, all of us there, just hanging out. Time peeled back: the four of us were still together, speeding through the night — hey, hey, hey, Bobbie McGee.

I stood in that patch of sun and held on to a moment of grace.

If I could throw time in the air like a jigsaw puzzle and watch the pieces fall, I’d see that long ago summer ripple down against my bare arms and legs and feel again the touch of Bax’s skin against mine. And if I could hold just one piece of it in my hand I’d lift it to my face and smell the heated earth cooling down, the zest of it sweet as oranges as we drove out of town. Bax and me in front, Jerry and Irene in the back, listening to Bax’s tape on the car stereo, Jerry pretending his sandal was a microphone, Irene with her eyes closed, her black hair glistening, seaweed on the form of an incoming tide.

After lunch I sat in the car, waiting for my gut to settle and my breath to ease. I pressed my cheek against the steering wheel. Time caught me right beneath the ribs. My heart beat like an orphan’s. Waves broke on black sand. Bax was standing knee-deep in the surf playing his harmonica under a fading moon, making it sound like a steam engine gathering speed. Irene danced barefoot, wet hair dripping salt water down her back, damp patches spreading on her white shirt like the map of an exotic country. I lay on the rug, peeling oranges and rolling joints for the journey back. And Jerry? He was leaning against the boat of the car, his eyes lit up, drinking in Irene.

It was dark when I arrived. Irene made jasmine tea and chatted about which buildings had been pulled down and which ones turned into trendy cafes.

“I carried my tea into the bedroom. “You can talk to him,” she said, “he can still hear you.”

I sipped my tea too quickly and scalded the inside of my mouth.

Bax’s lungs heaved and slapped as he tried to suck in air. There wasn’t enough energy left over to open his eyes or talk. His hands twitched above the sheet. I reached over and touched the desiccated skin on his palm. His fingers clutched at mine then curled and uncurled like a newborn. I looked away, inspected the walls and floors of Irene’s house. They had that golden glow you get from polished kauri. Jerry had once lived there with her and, after him, Bax.

Irene stood by the bed in a turquoise shirt and black silk trousers looking down at Bax. Her figure was still good; her hair still lush, just two streaks of grey at her temples.

“They’ve given us enough morphine for another twelve hours,” she said.

That long ago summer night we drove to the gorge where Bax grew his dope. It was harvest time and safer to reap the heads in the dark than in daylight. Irene sat up front with Bax. Her figure was still good, her hair still lush, just two streaks of grey at her temples. “They’ve given us enough morphine for another twelve hours,” she said.

“Hey, hey, hey, Bobbie McGee.”

Well, he wasn’t Janis, but he did okay.

And Bobby McGee was out. A few people dropped coins as they went by.
Trisha writes short stories, flash fiction and is currently working on a novel, Ghost Travellers. Her stories have been shortlisted in a number of New Zealand competitions including the BNZ literary awards. This year her flash fiction has been published in Turbine and Flash Frontiers, and she was the Auckland Regional winner and second place-getter in the National Flash Fiction Competition.

Says Trisha: “Winning this competition is hugely rewarding, especially getting feedback from three such prestigious judges, all of whose work I greatly admire. It’s such a boost to get recognition for your work and to have the opportunity to have a story published, particularly in such difficult times for writers and publishers. Competitions such as this motivate writers to keep going, and help keep the writing community alive.”

**RUNNER UP**

“Makalofu” by alumnus Dr Greg Judkins (BSc, MBChB, Dip Obst) is a striking story of domestic abuse between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, with effective shifts between patient and medical perspectives. On the whole the story manages to avoid overt sentimentality with some nice subtleties. There is much story to be gleaned out of the fragments. Knowledge is power and quite a lot of knowledge is being withheld by numerous parties. This is a story about the failure to communicate due to language and cultural barriers. For more on the runner-up, see news item on page 7.

**HONOURABLE MENTIONS**

“Recognition” by Fiona Stevens, alumna (BSc(Hons) 2004, GradDipArts 2014)
“Miracle Child” by Krista Ferguson, alumna (BCom)
“Elise” by Wendy Duggan, alumna (LLB)

Congratulations to the deserving winners! Selina Tusitala Marsh, Sarah Laing and Paula Morris

Alumni Relations wishes to thank our judges, generous sponsors and Anna Hodge from Auckland University Press for their invaluable contribution to the selection process as well as to Stephanie Johnson for providing a two-hour personalised coaching session for the winner.

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I ran my fingers through my hair. “Where’s Bax?”

Jerry didn’t open his eyes, just waved his cigarette butt towards the bush.

I stumbled across the two of them in the centre of his patch. They didn’t see or hear me. Irene was naked, her hair spread out across her shoulders, a luminous white shoot among all the green. She was slightly taller and heavier than Bax and his arms and legs were wrapped around her. He said something in her ear and I watched as she laughed and bent her knees, balancing his weight on her thighs as she lowered them both to the ground. His fingers curled and uncurred in her hair.

A framed photo of the four of us was on the bedside table. I’m at one end, Jerry’s at the other, a couple of bookends. Irene’s got an arm around each of them. Her eyes are slightly closed; she’s smiling straight at the camera. It was taken the week before she lowered Bax to the ground on her thighs in his dope patch, his body wrapped so tight around hers not an inch of air could come between them. A weird kind of rumbling came out of her throat as he entered her, like a cat when it catches a mouse. She drew him in until she was all filled up and there was nothing left.

I leaned over and smoothed the sheet where Bax’s hands had been crumpling it. Lifted his head and shoulders, turned the pillow over and plumped it up. His head barely made a dent when I lowered it back down. His skin, stretched tight across his cheekbones, had that translucent morphine glow.

I reached across the bed to Irene’s side. Her pillows were encased in pale blue silk. I pressed one of them against my chest. How easy to take Bax’s last, difficult breaths from him; how satisfying to use Irene’s pillow to do it. I rubbed the silk against my cheek. It was tepid as it slid against my skin, like water or blood. My fingers trembled. I turned and caught sight of something in the mirror, something reptilian, clutching a patch of pale blue over the hole in her heart.

Eight years ago, Jerry went from a doctor’s visit about a persistent cough to the hospice in the space of a month. In the evenings when he couldn’t sleep I sat beside the bed in the big armchair and held his hand. We cruised — two parts of the old puzzle together again, moving through one more porous night. Just before dawn, when sleep finally seemed possible, I’d play some version of Me and Bobby McGee and he’d smile and mouth that first word, Busted, the ghost of himself greeting the ghosts of the past.

Late one afternoon Irene came. She was over dressed and over loud, apologising on Bax’s behalf for his absence. He had three months to go before they’d consider him for parole. In her designer jeans and linen shirt she sucked all the air out of the room. Jerry was exhausted after 15 minutes but when I suggested we get a coffee and let him rest he shook his head.

I stood by the window while she sat beside him. She smoothed her shirt, crossed her legs,licked the back of her hair a couple of times. At the end of the hour she leaned over and kissed Jerry’s cheek. His hands were shaking with pain but he still reached up and brushed the tips of his fingers against her glistening hair.

I picked up my bag and walked to the door. I turned and looked back at Bax. His body had shrunk; his bones and joints too big for his muscle and skin. All that grace and beauty, all of it wasted.

Once I was out of town I wound the window down to feel the night air on my face and arms. I turned the volume up and listened to Janis. Nothing ain’t worth nothing but it’s free … When I passed the old turn off to Bax’s patch I raised my hand in mock salute — the ghost of myself greeting the ghosts of the past.

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**WANT TO READ MORE?**

The winning story, runner-up and three honourable mentions can be read at www.ingenio-magazine.com
**2014 Alumni and Friends events**

**One:** His Excellency Wang Lutong, Ambassador, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in New Zealand; School of Music student Pearl Huang; and Vice-Chancellor Professor Stuart McCutcheon at the University’s Lantern Festival Reception at University House on 14 February.

**Two:** Guests at the Indonesia Alumni and Friends reception at the New Zealand official residence on 18 March: Bayu Rahmat Novita, Ridzky Firmansyah Amin and Ricardo Gita Perkasa.

**Three:** Medical students Eryn Isdale, Bryony Nicholls, Sunny Li, Rohit Katal, Riah Mildenhall, Ishika Jayasinghe at the MBChB 2014 Reunion in May.

**Four:** Dr Kathryn Crystall, Dr Dina Katz, Dr David Atkinson, and Dr Julyan Lawry. **Five:** Guest speaker Dr Erin Griffey at the “Celebration of Giving” event at University House on 18 June. **Six:** Wright Family Guggenheim Scholarship recipient Renisa Maki at the “Celebration of Giving”. **Seven:** Associate Professor Bernard Brown addresses his former students on 20 June at the 30th Year Law School Reunion. **Eight:** The 30th Year Auckland Law School Reunion “Big I” 80s fancy dress party at the Pullman Hotel — Dave Neutze dressed as Axl Rose and Lady Deborah Chambers as Madonna.

Photos by: Godfrey Boehnke
Nine: Mark Bentley, Director of Alumni Relations and Development, and Loretta Mamea at the Wellington Alumni and Friends Reception at the City Gallery on 30 July.

Ten: Jack Trevella and Sandy McLachlan from Wellington College. Eleven: Hon Maryan Street, Professor Jenny Dixon and Hon Steven Joyce at the post-event following the University of Auckland Society’s Tertiary Education Dialogue at the Maitment Theatre on 19 August.

Twelve: Dr William Tan, Distinguished Alumni Award winner and guest speaker for our Kuala Lumpur and Singapore Alumni and Friends Receptions, at the Singapore reception on 21 August.

Thirteen: Natalie Ip and Graeme Read at the Singapore reception. Fourteen: Business card draw winner Richie Wong and FMHS Dean Professor John Fraser. Fifteen: Han M Yong, New Zealand High Commissioner Her Excellency Bernadette Cavanagh and Khoon L Goh. Sixteen: Kube Jones-Neill and Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond at the Hood Programme celebration at University House on 25 August.

Seventeen: Professor Simon Holdaway and Professor Ngaire Kermse, both Hood Fellows, attended the tenth anniversary of the Fellowships at University House. Eighteen: Amy Malcolm, Margaret Parker and Ron Sang at the opening of the University of Auckland Society-sponsored GIFTED exhibition at the Gus Fisher Gallery on 5 September.
LEST WE FORGET

STORY TESS REDGRAVE

This is just one poignant entry in the Auckland University College First World War Roll of Honour, which has been digitised to mark the centenary of the war. It is one of many commemorative activities being undertaken around the country.

“The Roll of Honour was donated to the University’s Library in 1941 during the Second World War and is now held as an archive in Special Collections,” explains Stephen Innes, Special Collections Manager. “As far as we know, no physical memorial was mounted to those from the University who served or died in the War, so digitising the Roll makes this information easily and widely accessible for the first time.”

“The genesis of the roll was a spontaneous and informal desire on the part of students to remember their peers,” says University Senior Lecturer Dr Deborah Montgomery.

“One night in the Common Room in the spring of 1914,” recounted a student in the Student Association journal The Kiwi, “a group of us put down the names of 50 people whom we knew were in camp. The next day there were 70 on the list, and in a week 100.”

“The original AUC roll grew from there,” Deborah explains. “It received support from both the Students’ Association and the College administration, and although the College never went ahead with physical memorials to students’ war service in the form of a plaque, gate or statue, the books stand in their stead. They suggest that for those who lived through the challenges of the war, coming to terms with its meaning was as much about grappling with its consequences for known, named and loved individuals as understanding high-level geopolitics and military strategy. Even now, the scale of the losses in WWI are such that they are almost impossible to comprehend in the aggregate. In 1914, New Zealand had a population of 1.1 million. Between 1914 and 1918, 103,000 New Zealanders served overseas. Of those, 17,000 were killed and 41,000 wounded during the war; another thousand men died from injuries within five years of the war’s end. Like the people who lived through the war, one hundred years later we are still using the stories of known, named individuals and discrete communities as a way to grasp its impact.”

Deborah says there has been an emphasis in recent years on examining the impact of war on ordinary men and women. “This project is in step with those developments, it, and the original record it is based on, catalogues the service of College men and women by name and branch of service but does not prioritise officers over the rank and file, or frontline service over the service of support staff such as nurses and orderlies. It speaks to the impact of the war on Auckland and on the College community. It has a personal feel.”

The Roll forms the centrepiece of the Special Collections First World War centenary website, which also features information about the University during that period and short biographies of some of the five women and 715 men recorded in the Roll, who were past and present students and staff who had enlisted. The University of Auckland Society provided funding towards the digitisation and the Vice-Chancellor’s Strategic Development Fund supported the development of the website. The initiative was launched at a Society salon in early August.

COLLEGIANS AT WAR

When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, Auckland University College (AUC) had been open for 31 years. One of four affiliated Colleges of the University of New Zealand, it had an academic staff of eight professors and 16 lecturers, demonstrators and assistants. There were 610 students: 328 men and 282 women, although many were part-time and non-matriculated students.

The first Collegians to enlist did so within days of the declaration of war. Over the four years, most joined the New Zealand infantry, in particular the battalions of the Auckland Regiment. Others joined New Zealand’s artillery, medical, engineering and mounted units. A few served with the Allied forces, including in the Royal Navy, the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Army Medical Corps and the Australian Imperial Forces. Four women served with the New Zealand Army Nursing Service Corps and one with the Australian Army Nursing Service.
HERBERT MILNES

Herbert Milnes was principal of Auckland Training College and education lecturer at Auckland University College from 1906 until late 1915. Born in Leeds in 1874, he arrived from Isleworth, Middlesex, in February 1906 to find that he had the task of rebuilding a teachers’ college essentially from scratch. He was undaunted and immediately set about creating a vibrant institution over his decade as principal. Herbert was an advocate of the popular early 20th-century ideology of athleticism, and a focus on physical health permeated every aspect of his life and work. He encouraged all students to learn swimming, lifesaving and first aid, and all men to train in rifle shooting. He himself played front row for the University College XV. His main concern for his students was their health and happiness rather than the accumulation of facts. He personally supervised physical education, nurtured an involvement in games like fives and tennis, and was an early exponent of basketball in New Zealand. Herbert, whose wife Louisa died in 1915, enlisted on 7 March 1916, aged 41. He was soon promoted to second lieutenant and embarked for Plymouth on 21 January 1917, training at Salisbury Plain. Deployed to the Western Front with the Auckland Infantry on 29 May 1917, Herbert was killed instantly four months later at Passchendaele, Belgium, on 4 October 1917 when a shell landed almost at his feet as he led the 3rd Company of the 3rd Auckland Battalion in an assault on a pill box known as Otto Farm.

When news of Herbert’s death reached the Training College on Friday, 12 October, it was announced to students assembled in the hall and the College was closed in his honour until the following Tuesday.

LESLIE COMRIE

For the first years of the war, much of the hard work compiling the Roll of Honour was undertaken by noted science student Leslie Comrie. Born at Pukekohe in 1893, Leslie attended the University from 1912 to 1916, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 1915 and a Master of Arts in Chemistry in 1916. He was a founding member of the College Rifle Club, Secretary of the Tennis Club, the AUC Scientific Society and a member of the Executive Committee for the Men’s Common Room. Leslie was partially deaf since childhood and his initial attempts to join the military were rebuffed but he eventually “got in by a mixture of good luck and guile”. During military training at Trentham, his deafness was discovered when an instructor gave an order in his bad ear. As a result, he was given an office job, but, as with most aspects of his life, he persisted and in April 1918 he embarked for the Front. In September 1918, just days after joining the 1st Battalion of the 3rd New Zealand (Rifle) Brigade in France, he was severely wounded by a shell “a British one at that” and lost his left leg.

After the war Leslie went on to become a world leader in many aspects of computing and founded one of the world’s first private scientific computing companies, Scientific Computing Service Ltd, which during the Second World War produced ballistic, bombing and geodetic tables for the Allies. Leslie died in London in December 1950, aged 57. In December 2000, the main mathematics and statistics computer laboratory at the University of Auckland was named in his honour.

WINIFRED SCOTT

Sister Winifred Merelina Scott was attached to the Australian Army Nursing Service during the war and worked primarily in hospitals in Egypt, initially treating the wounded from Gallipoli. She was one of 12 nurses who left New Zealand on 1 April 1915 after the Australian Prime Minister asked the New Zealand government for nursing staff to bolster an Australian contingent heading to Egypt.

Winifred was born in Auckland in 1884 to Alithea (nee Symonds) and William Scott, a well-known surgeon at Auckland Hospital who also kept a general practice in Onehunga. As an undergraduate she was active on campus, including serving as secretary of the Ladies’ Common Room Club, working for the short-lived University journal Marte Nostro and performing in musical duets.

Winifred was working at Auckland Hospital when she and the other 11 nurses were given just a few days’ notice of their departure for Sydney. From there they left for Egypt on 13 April 1915 on board the Kajurra.

Early in the war, Winifred was treating casualties from Gallipoli at the 2nd Australian General Hospital near Cairo. She was later attached to the 14th Australian General Hospital at Abbassia, Cairo, where she was based until late 1918. Like many serving medical staff, Winifred was hospitalised multiple times, including for a mild “debility” in April 1917. She faced a hectic time when she returned to work after that illness, as fighting in Gaza meant the operating theatre “was in use from early morning until late at night”.

Winifred was awarded the Royal Red Cross Second Class for her war service. On her return, she worked at the King George V hospital in Rotorua and later spent more than a decade in Palmerston North, where she practiced as a medical masseuse. She died in 1937 in Onehunga after a long illness.

To view the Roll of Honour and to read these biographies in full, go to: www.specialcollections.auckland.ac.nz/ww1-centenary

This article was put together with the help of Special Collections staff Jo Birks and Katherine Pawley and History graduate Jonathan Burgess.
You wouldn’t expect academics going about their research to have to deal with this: being investigated and followed by private investigators, being intimidated by hired thugs, even being tailed in their vehicles.

“But I think I was more angry than scared, that this was happening in New Zealand,” says Dr Christina Stringer, senior lecturer in international business at the University of Auckland. “And that it was Kiwis who were doing this.”

Christina and fellow researcher, Dr Glenn Simmons, have been in the media a lot in the last few years as the authors of the groundbreaking “Not in New Zealand Waters, Surely?” research that revealed the extent of human rights and labour abuses occurring on Foreign Charter Vessels (FCVs) fishing in New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): underpayment and non-payment of wages, wages being eaten up by agency fees, fake contracts, sexual harassments, inhumane punishments, even rape.

There was anecdotal and journalistic evidence that this had been going on for some years. In fact, even in the mid 1990s, accusations were made in Parliament that “what is happening on those ships is nothing short of slavery…” Yet it wasn’t taken seriously, at least not seriously enough for successive governments to be prompted to do anything about it. “For so long it had been shrugged off, as a kind of anomaly… one or two bad operators,” says Christina.

She and Glenn provided evidence that was impossible to ignore — produced with academic rigour and by a reputable University — showing not only that modern-day slavery was alive and well and practised within New Zealand waters, but too often for it to be dismissed as the occasional aberration.

It was the first in-depth research into the foreign charter fishing sector, and has helped inform a number of legislative changes aimed at promoting better working conditions and protection for those working on FCVs. This includes the Fisheries (Foreign Charter Vessels and Other Matters) Amendment Bill, which implements a number of changes “to protect the human rights of crews and ensure that New Zealand’s reputation as a responsible and sustainable fishing nation is maintained”. From May 2016, all FCVs must carry the New Zealand flag, and operate under full New Zealand legal jurisdiction. The Bill unanimously passed its third reading in parliament this year.

Their investigation into the “dark side” of the fishing business has been perhaps best summed up by Michael Field, in the acknowledgements of his recently published book, *The Catch: How fishing companies reinvented slavery and plunder in the oceans.* “Paramount are Glenn Simmons and Dr Christina Stringer of the University of Auckland Business School. Thiers was no ivory tower; they always knew the data they collected was about people and their families. In the struggle to end slave fishing, there were no others with such a clear vision of wrong and right.”

Christina and Glenn didn’t actually set out to investigate forced labour practices on board FCVs. Rather, they first set out to look at how New Zealand could rebuild its seafood processing industry — many of the fish caught in New Zealand waters were being tailed, gutted and shipped off to China for value-added processing, then refrozen and exported to key markets such as the USA and Japan and even back to New Zealand.

This research revealed the lost economic opportunities of the fishing industry, but first alerted them to the atrocious conditions on the foreign trawlers fishing on behalf of New Zealand companies. “We were getting very conflicting messages,” says Glenn. “On the one hand we were being told we had a world-leading fishing industry, and on the other hand, there was accumulating anecdotal evidence of poor working conditions, crew going on strike, crew deserting their vessels, crew being sent home and so on.”

Evidence began to mount further when, in 2010, the Oyang 70, a South Korean fishing vessel, capsized and six men died. Apart from the immediate tragedy of the loss of lives, testimonies from surviving crew pointed to shocking working conditions. Then, the following year, two separate crews walked off their vessels (*Shin Ji* and *Oyang 75*) while berthed in New Zealand ports, citing verbal, physical and contract abuse. This galvanised public concern. It also persuaded Christina and Glenn that the issue needed further research, and urgently.
Moreover, many crew members were ready to talk. The researchers recall their first interview, with two young Indonesian men.

Glenn: “After the first interview, it became very clear that we had stumbled across something pretty insidious.”

Christina: “And we couldn’t walk away… I’m sure these men didn’t have anybody to talk to about these things. In fact we asked them if they talked about these things with each other and they said, ‘no we don’t, we try to forget.’ I think that is something that Glenn and I provided for many crew members, an opportunity for them to have a voice.”

Glenn: “That’s how we saw our role. We weren’t enforcement officers, who had either ignored or failed in their responsibilities, but we were giving the crew a voice. And having the brand of the University of Auckland behind us was our most powerful tool… even though these were migrant workers with low levels of education, they respected knowledge, and they respected universities. We didn’t realise this until we got further into the research — that we could go places that authorities wouldn’t have been able to.”

Over the following year, with the help of four translators, Christina and Glenn interviewed 144 personnel, mostly crew members working on Korean fishing vessels. They met in unusual places to protect the crew. There was little doubt about the veracity of what they were hearing: the men had kept comprehensive records of their experiences on their cell phones, not only wage details, but photographs and videos capturing the grimness of life on board.

“These were people who were earning only $100 a month, some only $50, working extremely long hours, having to eat stale bread and rotting fish bait,” recalls Glenn. “Or rostered to give the captain a full body massage until he fell asleep…”

Says Christina: “The hardest thing for me, was when the interviewees finally started talking about the rapes. One interviewee in particular was so upset as he recounted the repeated rapes of his cabin mate — his feeling of overwhelming guilt, as he couldn’t stop it.”

As highlighted in the first paragraph, Christina and Glenn’s investigations were not always phone calls were made, photographs taken, and strange men began to appear outside the restaurant.

welcome. There was the night in which they decided to take the crew members from the Shin Ji out to a restaurant — the men were living in “safe houses” at the time and, having no income, were dependent on the kindness of strangers to even eat.

“And of all the Chinese restaurants in town, we had to choose the one being dined in by the crew’s former boss,” says Christina. And shortly after the crew members were spotted by their former boss, phone calls were made, photographs taken, and strange men began to appear outside the restaurant, making their presence felt by staring at them through the window. The crew were terrified, says Christina and Glenn, so they left. As Glenn drove away with a car-load of frightened interviewees, he was followed; he took refuge in a side-street at the University, where security guards were on patrol.

And there were times that their academic colleagues advised them that they were putting themselves at risk, and they would be wiser to abandon the project altogether. “But it would have been a greater travesty if we walked away … morally, just as a person, we have these intrinsic obligations to uphold the rule of law, and part of that is not ignoring particularly insidious situations,” says Glenn.

Christina: “How could we have lived with ourselves, ethically?”

In fact, it was the kind of research that often compelled them to go beyond the call of academic duty. Glenn refers to Eula, a young widow with a baby, whose husband drowned on the Oyang 70. Eula was entitled to an ACC payment, but she lived in a remote village and didn’t know about her entitlement, and what was required to secure it.

As Glenn and Christina were in Indonesia for other research, they drove five hours to visit her, organise the necessary paperwork and deliver it to ACC along with their sworn affidavits. As a result, Eula received $15,000 in funeral and death payments. “That was equivalent to about seven years’ income,” says Glenn.

“So when she got the news, she made a four-hour trip to Skype us — simply to say thank you. She couldn’t believe that academics would do this sort of thing. I’ll always remember the look on her face and the tears of happiness. Because someone gave a damn.”

Christina and Glenn have now interviewed more than 300 people in the fishing industry. Both are cautiously optimistic that the legislative changes are likely to benefit future crews, although it came too late for most of those they have interviewed. “But the Bill is the most significant legislative change to be made to the fishing industry since 1996,” says Christina.

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When asked about the influence of Frances and his late father George, both teachers, John is a little fragile himself. This question he takes time to answer, then simply says: “They brought us up to give of our best.” This is the way he has always functioned.

John is so well known for giving of his best that legend has it that when, as vice-chancellor at the University of Auckland, he was sent an email at 3am, the sender was stunned to receive a reply within minutes.

It is not just hard work John thrives on, but also on seeing and enabling others to achieve their goals, be they students, professors or anyone else in the education spectrum.

At 62, the businessman with the keen intellect and PhD in civil engineering who was brought in to reform universities, is now heavily involved in philanthropic organisations, though his passion for learning remains undiminished. He is chairman of the Rhodes Trust and went to Oxford University twice — first as a Rhodes Scholar in the mid 1970s, then 26 years later as the first outsider to be Vice-Chancellor of the ancient institution.

As a child, John lived at Ardmore Teachers College in Auckland, where he was raised not only among educators and scholars but also amidst the fantastic sporting facilities left from the Commonwealth Games of 1950.

It was an “extraordinary academic enclave,” he recalls. The family lived “cheek by jowl” with all sorts of intelligence – the neighbours on one side were the Bogles. Professor Gordon Bogle was the founding head of the University of Auckland’s Department of Electrical Engineering and his brother Gib was a nuclear scientist who died mysteriously in Australia in the 1960s. For John, they were inspiring and both were Rhodes Scholars “so in a funny sort of way I think they opened a lens on the Oxford world for me as a very young boy, and both my parents would talk about all of that as well.”

He went on to be plucked from secondary school for a cadetship at Fletcher Construction, by mentor Jack Smith, who at the age of 89 has just published the second volume on the history of the Fletcher Construction Company.

John chokes up a little. He has been privileged, he says, to have had many extraordinary mentors throughout his life. Jack Smith was one; another was Hugh Fletcher, the former chief executive of Fletcher Challenge. During his cadetship vacations were spent with the company, including living in construction camps at the Plymouth Power Station and at the Tewai Aluminium smelter site.

After attending the University of Auckland as a student, John read for an MPhil in management at Oxford University, which in essence was economics and industrial sociology. This, and the fact of having learned the
broadth of how businesses and organisations run during his time at Fletcher Challenge, stood him in good stead when he became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Auckland; and it was while he was there, from 1999 to 2004, that he was approached to be interviewed for that role at Oxford University.

Attempting to transform the hallowed halls and pathways of that British university, which he loves, proved controversial and humbling. He had wanted to reform the 900-year-old seat of learning by including more lay members on the Council. Oxford, he says, remains an Athenian democratic model, where all the scholars get to vote on all matters. This ultimate parliament of the University (Oxford is a Charitable Corporation) was at all times respected, and changing the self-governance was never an issue.

**Attempting to transform the hallowed hallways and pathways of that British university, which he loves, proved controversial and humbling**

The proposal was to increase the number of lay trustees in order to diversify the professional expertise available to the university and to create an Academic Board below the Council, as was the case when John was at Auckland, and as is the case at most universities.

All his dreams were not achieved and the media coverage was at times harsh — yet behind the headlines were many achievements.

When pressed, John lists some of them — a more than doubling of the research income, substantial enhancement of the infrastructure and a rejuvenation of fundraising, with nearly £1 billion raised during his five-year term. There was also the creation of an endowment management structure, significant tidying up of the finances and budgeting model, and considerable improvements in governance.

“We didn’t achieve what we laid out in our final governance White Paper,” John says, “but in the throes of not achieving it we did achieve a lot in terms of improving governance processes and the institution as well.”

The university had good energy by the time he left, he says. If this period was painful, John is not saying. But you sense it was, at times, very painful.

Later, he sends through his final oration and an article that was published in British magazine *The Spectator*.

The article is written by author Justin Cartwright, a previous critic of John, and concludes the New Zealander was unmistakably the right man for the times. “I owe him an apology. Oxford owes him both an apology and a debt of gratitude.”

At the end of the five-year fixed term, John felt the job was done and it was time to move on. As the appointment was coming to a close, he began thinking about what was next. Drawn to philanthropy and knowing its importance for universities, he thought this may be his next move.

When American billionaire Julian Robertson invited him to lunch in London, he went, thinking there might be a donation for Oxford. Instead, Robertson asked him to run the Robertson Foundation. He recalls Robertson in effect saying: “I’ve been fortunate to make the money I’ve made and I really want you to help me give it away for the benefit of humanity.”

John was hooked.

“Julian Robertson said: ‘The family has decided that we want to give the money to medical science, to conservation, environment and climate change, and to public education reform and improving the lot of young people in schools, and we want you to come and work with us to do that.”

“Those were all areas which are of primary interest to me, so this was an opportunity to think deeply about those areas and about how you would work with Julian and his family to find the way for their money to make a difference over the short, medium and long term in those areas; and so to me that’s a wonderful challenge and very special.”

Robertson, he says, has, ever since, been “entirely consistent in every sense” with that position.

Nowadays, John’s schedule is to commute from Oxford to London each week, and every four or five weeks to fly across on the “commuter” trip to New York.

He is also chair of the Rhodes Trust and a director or chair of several companies, is on the board of the Mandela Rhodes Trust and on other boards, is involved with the Fletcher Trust and with Teach for All (The Global Network for Expanding Educational Opportunity), which is now in New Zealand.

His deep affection for the University of Auckland remains. “How can you not love a place like this?” he asks.

As at Oxford, there are “phenomenal people doing brilliant work,” from those in anthropology and history to mathematics and the medical school, to law and music, architecture and art.

“These people are helping us understand our society, our community, our legal systems, how to take mathematics and apply it to the real world — and are passing all this learning on to the next generation.

“At the end of the day a university reflects its society and in a sense the society reflects the intellectual leadership that the university gives it. We should all love our universities, they are open places, we want people to come in and be part of them.”

He stresses the need for philanthropy in universities, saying Oxford was founded on philanthropy and its future is dependent upon it.

This is true of Auckland and other New Zealand universities as well, he says.

“The students I would encourage to value — to put a high value — on their time at university, a high value on their pursuit of knowledge and understanding and also on life’s experience while a student.

“It’s not just the experience of the classroom, the library and the engagement of your fellow students but it is the opportunity to explore across the spectrum, from sports to culture to the arts to tramping, to all those other things that you have that unique one-off time in your life to pursue.

“Don’t devalue that time because it will never come back. It’s that one time in your life to explore intellectually and explore in every other way. Value it highly.”

His message to communities is that universities are precious institutions: “Ultimately society will have the institutions that it wants, and I hope that our society wants a wonderful university here in Auckland that can stand proud and tall in the world firmament, and if that’s to be so then we all have to get behind it.”

One of the most moving experiences of his year, he says, is attending selection committee meetings for Rhodes Scholars. Among these are students selected from the Mandela Rhodes Foundation — John met Nelson Mandela three times and says the late humanitarian had a saintly aura and an elegance.

Mandela is just one of the many extraordinary people he has met, he says, but when asked surely he can do a little big-noting about this, it’s again clear that’s just not his style. He won’t be doing that, “ever,” he says firmly.

© Brian Elsden

While in Auckland John attended a special celebration at the University. See page 35.

LEFT: Dr John Hood at the ceremony of welcome at Oxford University. With Dr Meremere Renford. On the left is Sir Hugh Kawharu and on the right is Sir Colin Lucas, who was John’s predecessor as Vice-Chancellor at Oxford.
At the University in 2003 was a conference called “Poetics of exile”. This was an extraordinary event, a gathering of people from within New Zealand and all over the world, many of whom had been forced to leave their countries of origin and create new lives elsewhere. Many were refugees who had fled persecution; most were exceptionally high achievers, academically and artistically. The focus of the conference was on their achievements, not on the hardships they had faced; but what emerged from the stories of speaker after speaker was that those achievements had arisen directly from the challenges that had shaped their lives. The experience of exile had forged their identities and driven their determination to live and contribute in meaningful ways.

The same can be said of Rez Ricardo, an Auckland student of Kurdish ancestry who was born in a refugee camp in Pakistan and came to New Zealand with her parents and older brother and sister at the age of six. “My family made a commitment to leave their home in Kurdistan,” says Rez, “and their main reason was for our education and safety. I just feel it would be such a waste if we didn’t achieve anything through it. New Zealand has been good to us as refugees. I’ve been let into this country, I’ve been allowed to stay here, I’ve been given an education and it would be wrong not to make use of it.”

Already Rez is achieving well. As a conjoint student in Law and Arts she has completed her double major in Criminology and Political Studies and was admitted this year to the honours stream in Law; she was selected in summer to be a human rights intern in Nairobi for the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) — the first New Zealander ever to be invited and the first undergraduate, and this summer she has been invited to do a summer clerkship with Chapman Tripp, which she describes as “the premier law firm in New Zealand”.

Rez has “a great bunch of friends”, a strong interest in her studies and an exciting career ahead. However it hasn’t always been easy — and some of the challenges still remain. When she started school without a word of English (which was her fourth language — and her fourth alphabet — after Kurdish, Farsi, and Urdu) she remembers “feeling like I really didn’t belong, and couldn’t communicate with anyone”. However, as time moved on, “it was OK for a while. Once I learned English I settled in better.”

Identified as a gifted child in primary school, she was placed in accelerated streams and was flying ahead in her learning. But then something happened that was outside of her control but made her adjustment suddenly much harder. This was the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001. “When 9/11 happened things got really bad. Children at that age can be really nasty and they just made an assumption — ‘you look different, you must be one of them’ I tried to explain: ‘No, the same thing’s happening to us. We’re victims of terrorists. We’re not on their side.’ But the most terrible irony was that when the war with Iraq began, the other children associated me with Saddam Hussein. That was the very hardest thing because my grandmother was killed in the attacks in which Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons on the Kurdish people of Iraq.”

For a while after that, Rez retired into a bitter, defensive silence, reluctant to acknowledge her origins. “I went through this phase where I
started to deny where I was from and just tried to be as Kiwi as I could. If people asked me where I was from, I’d ask them to guess and then I’d just say “Yes, that’s where I’m from,” because I didn’t feel like explaining. So for a while I was trying to fight my identity."

However, as Rez got older, she began researching her Kurdish heritage: reading, watching documentaries, and paying close attention to what was happening when she attended Kurdish events with her parents. Her interest was aroused when she went back to Kurdistan on a visit with her mother at the age of 14, to see her relatives in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq and Iran. “Going there opened my eyes and I really loved the culture and the people. I began to realise that my difference is what makes me who I am.”

Finally, at the age of about 17, Rez “started to find the courage to tell people where I was from”. And that was also what prompted her determination to make a career in law, “because of the injustices, the human rights breaches, all of those things that have happened in my life and that I was only just beginning to understand.

“No! I’m at University and am around intellectual people and smart, understanding people, I love talking about where I’m from because they love asking questions. It’s a very different experience to earlier years.”

Recently the University, recognising that both students and staff from refugee backgrounds (SSRB) are likely to face extra challenges and may require particular support, has been assessing these requirements and developing policies and strategies to address these issues.

Rez acknowledges many young refugees face considerable hardship and often need help in reaching the goals they aspire to: “Looking at a lot of statistics, refugees tend not to do so well.”

At the moment it is not known how many students from refugee backgrounds are enrolled at the University of Auckland. However, from 2015, students from refugee backgrounds will be able to apply for entry to the University through the Undergraduate Targeted Admissions Scheme, which also includes provisions for Māori, Pacific people and those with disabilities.

References to SSRB have been incorporated in the University’s Policy, and the University’s Equity Office has established a relationship with the Auckland Refugee Community Coalition. The Equity Office is working to develop and pilot training courses to enhance understanding among staff and is developing relationships with the main provider schools.

“One of our objectives,” says Dr Terence O’Neil, Director of Student Equity, “is to ensure that people feel secure in their identities. Identity is crucial for everyone we deal with in the Equity Office ... the feeling of being valued in that identity, being able to express it and to feel safe and secure. It’s really what all our work is about.”

Rez agrees that her Kurdish origins are a “hugely important” part of her identity. Though Kurdish people are living in the lands they have inhabited for many centuries, the area known as Kurdistan is divided by national boundaries, with Kurdish communities located in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. As Rez points out, since the Kurds don’t have a sovereign state, it is dependent on the people to maintain the culture. “If the Kurdish culture disappeared from the world, I would be from nowhere,” she says.

I went through this phase where I started to deny where I was from and just tried to be as Kiwi as I could

The older Kurdish people in New Zealand place strong value on their origins. In the words of Rez’s father: “One piece of my heart is here and the other is there.” But some of the younger ones, in embracing New Zealand life, risk losing the rich culture their parents left behind.

And this, says Rez, means a loss of identity and of a sense of cultural diversity that has added great richness to her own life and values. It is for this reason that, with another Kurdish student, she decided to mobilise a group of young people to encourage cultural activities, commencing with a big event featuring dancing, singing and feasting in the Kurdish style. This first event, filmed by Noble Pictures for an episode in a documentary series called Both Worlds (later shown on TV3) proved a great success and has been followed by others.

For Rez, this year has brought another serious challenge of a kind that is sadly not unusual among refugees from regions torn by war.

In early August the city of Erbil, capital of the Kurdish region of Iraq, was catapulted into the news with reports of its Kurdish population giving safe haven to the Kurdish Yeazidi and Christian people from Sinjal, who were under attack from the ISIS militant forces. Since then the conflict has escalated, with the end not yet in sight, and with the Kurdish people perilously close to the battle lines. For Rez and her family this is not just a story they follow on the news, but a source of enormous anxiety and personal distress.

Erbil is the birthplace of Rez’s father. She still has family living there, including grandparents, aunts, uncles and extended family. For this reason she has been working very hard in recent months to help raise international awareness of the crisis for the Kurdish people of Iraq, including helping to organise a peaceful March on 23 August.

When I spoke to Rez, she had just handed in her honours thesis in Law; the topic was “Kurdish genocide”. She says that she will always follow the dream of a free and independent Kurdistan — and that human rights is a passion she will continue to pursue, whatever path she follows in her legal career.

LEFT: Rez (centre) helping raise the profile for Kurdish people.
BELOW: Celebrating the culture.
ALUMNI AND FRIENDS EVENTS

November to December 2014

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January to May 2015

2015

- Live conversation with 2015 Distinguished Alumni
- Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner
- Tauranga Alumni and Friends Lunch
- Shanghai Alumni and Friends Reception
- Beijing Alumni and Friends Reception
- Hong Kong Alumni and Friends Reception
- Graduation Concerto Competition
- Melbourne Alumni and Friends Reception
- Sydney Alumni and Friends Reception
- Brisbane Alumni and Friends Reception

WE NEED YOUR HELP!
We need some great venues for our networking events. We love holding our events in interesting venues in the central city area. If you have any great venue suggestions for any of the events listed above please contact event manager Karen Thompson, Karen.thompson@auckland.ac.nz.

DON’T MISS OUT ON AN INVITE TO NETWORK
For more information or to ensure you receive an invitation to an event being held in your area please visit www.alumni.auckland.ac.nz/update to update your details.

O’RORKE HALL 65th REUNION

Join in our celebration of 65 years of O’Rorke Hall on Thursday 27 November 2014. We’re excited to invite you to join your fellow O’Rorkians to catch up with friends, celebrate successes and remember shared experiences as residents of O’Rorke Hall.

The evening will be focused on reconnecting and reminiscing with hall tours and photos and memorabilia on display.

Register online at www.alumni.auckland.ac.nz/O’RorkeHallReunion. For more information contact ORorke 65years@uoa.auckland.ac.nz or phone Claudia Bell on 09 923 9935.

REUNIONS 2015 reconnect / celebrate / remember

MBChB 2015 Reunion – registrations are now open

29 and 30 May 2015

On Queen’s Birthday weekend next year medical school graduates from 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005 will have the opportunity to catch up with their graduation year group, tour the purpose-built facilities and hear the latest faculty news from the dean. The weekend begins with Friday night drinks at the Grafton Campus. On the Saturday morning each year group will host its own break-out session and take tours of the new campus. The reunion ends with individual class dinners on the Saturday night. If you are interested in helping coordinate your year group, including your class dinner, visit www.alumni.auckland.ac.nz/reunion-2015 for more information about the reunion or contact Rachel Jefferies: +64 9 923 3566 or alumni-events@auckland.ac.nz.

Future MBChB reunions will be held during Queen’s Birthday weekend for the following graduating year groups:


INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORK

CONNECTING ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

If you live in or near any of the areas below and would like to be involved with local alumni, we encourage you to make contact with your Volunteer Alumni Coordinator (VAC). If you would like to consider being a VAC for your area, then please contact alumni@auckland.ac.nz for further information.

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  Tanja Srebotnjak, Tanja.Srebotnjak@ecologic.institute.us

NEW ZEALAND

AUCKLAND - UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND SOCIETY
  society@auckland.ac.nz

CHINESE ALUMNI IN AUCKLAND
  Rachel Yang, rachelyang53@gmail.com
CELEBRATING SUCCESS!

2015 UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD
WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

All awardees have confirmed their acceptance and attendance at Auckland Live! and the Distinguished Alumni Awards dinner in March 2015.

They are:
- Sir Russell Coutts KNZM, CBE, Engineering (Competitive sailor, won the America’s Cup five times)
- Bruce Plested, Education (Director Mainfreight)
- Mr Bryan Williams CNZM, Law (Pacific leader, ex All Black)
- Professor Christine Winterbourn CNZM, Science (Professor of Pathology, University of Otago)
- Mrs Joan Withers, Business (Business leader, Deputy Chair Board of TVNZ, Chairwoman of Mighty River Power)
- Fady Mishriki (Young Alumnus of the year), Business and Engineering (Entrepreneur).

To purchase your tickets to the dinner on Friday 13 March 2015 online please visit: www.alumni.auckland.ac.nz

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HIGH PERFORMER

Pianist and current honours student, Liam Woading (BMus 2013) spent this year’s semester break at Saratoga Springs in New York State learning how to improve the relationship between performer and audience.

He is the first student of the arts/creative arts to be selected for the University’s High Performance Student Support Programme and was funded by the Vice Chancellor’s Arts Support Fund to do the summer programme at the Decoda/Skidmore Chamber Music Institute.

At Decoda students learn how to engage their audiences and communities on a deeper level through scripted interactive chamber music performances, while improving their own performance and public speaking skills.

One of the sessions for Liam and his group — a quartet of piano, violin, cello and clarinet — was to perform to an audience of young children, six to nine years. Their piece, Tempest Fantasy by Paul Moravec, was inspired by Shakespeare’s The Tempest.

Says Liam, “for us the work’s defining feature was how different elements were manipulated to change the energy of the music. We showed this by setting our performance in a magical land called Darte.”

We made associations with magical creatures such as wizards and dragons

One of the challenges was to use activities to present different levels of engagement and content and achieve a balance between the activities, talking and playing, to engage the children’s attention: “We made associations with magical creatures such as wizards and dragons and we compared for example, ‘sforzando’ (a sighing emphasis on a note), to the huffing of a dragon’s breath.”

“We would play a bit and then talk about it, play a bit more and give them activities to do,” says Liam. “Towards the end we told them they had unlocked the secrets to the magical land and as a reward we would play the whole movement to them.”

MELODY FROM THE HEART

Professor Uwe Gradd from the School of Music asked some questions of alumna Dr Melody Lin (MMus 2007, Doctor of Musical Arts 2011), a former student who is now a colleague — and a successful performer.

Melody speaks of her early life: “I was born in Taiwan and started to learn piano when I was seven. We didn’t have money to buy a piano at first, so I used to practice on a piece of cardboard keyboard my mum made. Then I upgraded to a toy keyboard and finally to a Yamaha upright piano, which my parents still keep in their house now.

“I remember being drawn to music from a young age. I didn’t want to go to school because I wanted to stay home to practice piano all day. One day I went to a flute concert and was hooked with this beautiful instrument straight away. However, I didn’t get a chance to start my flute lessons until I moved to New Zealand with my family at the age of 15.

“I completed my BMus(Hons) in flute performance at the Sydney Conservatorium in 2001. I later studied flute with Professor Uwe Gradd, completing MMus in 2007, then Doctor of Musical Arts in 2011.

Melody described her current work: “In 2008 I became an Artistic Teacher in Flute at the University of Auckland. I believe teaching and learning go hand in hand. Through explaining and demonstrating to the students, I also strengthen my own playing and reinforce the fundamental skills.

“I direct the University’s flute ensemble, the Magic Flutes NZ, and have been an associate player with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra since 2006. I have completed a two-month contract with the APO as an associate principal flute, and sometimes played as a principal flue. I have also had a long relationship with the Manukau Symphony Orchestra as a principal flute and I had the exciting opportunity this year to play in the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra for the first time on a nationwide tour.

“I feel so privileged being a musician. I believe music is a universal language and is able to uplift humanity.

“During a good performance, I feel a real connection with other musicians and audiences. When I play the flute I feel I am giving a portion of my soul.”
I realise now you can be a good manager without being a brilliant leader...

Throughout his career Nathaniel has been keen to “take advantage of chance opportunities” — and he does seem to be a person who attracts them. He has been taken by helicopter to the Rena shipwreck, has gathered samples of water hotter than 300 degrees from geothermal power stations, has assisted the team of GNS scientists who rediscovered the submerged pink and white terraces, and has even met the German President.

However, one of “the greatest thrills of his life” was camping beside an extinct volcano in the middle of the Ross Sea in Antarctica — thrilling “because it’s so different and terrifying. You feel the amazing power of nature. It’s totally alien. People are not meant to live there. You’re uncomfortable throughout the time you’re there, but then when you return to New Zealand, you’d go back there in a heartbeat.”

Nathaniel believes the qualities required for good leadership are also needed for successful scientific research, especially in his own field of environmental science. “You have to have an ecologist, perhaps a chemist, maybe an anthropologist, a social geographer, even an economist. And if you’re pulling all that together, insights need to come from several places. That’s where leadership comes in.”

Participating in the leadership programme has changed Nathaniel’s mindset in a productive way.

“Leadership means being able to give up power, to accept that you don’t and can’t have all the answers. It has to be a collaborative process in which you listen, and bring together different perspectives. It’s about making sure that everyone’s on board before moving forward with an idea.

“A leader is a person who can help bring about change without antagonising people.

“I now know you can lead anywhere and in many ways, even if it’s just by ‘inspecting the foundations’. The course reminded me that even seemingly solid ideas are worth challenging, so I challenge things.”

The next Leadership Mindset Programme is March to June 2015. For more information go to www.nzli.co.nz or contact ann.moore@auckland.ac.nz

The University of Auckland Alumni Leadership Fellowship will be offered again next year. The closing date for applications is 11 February, 2015.

The most important “take home” message for Dr Nathaniel Wilson from the 2014 Leadership Mindset Programme was how to segment problems in order to solve them, taking into account the views and needs of the different people involved.

At the core of this is gaining an understanding that management and leadership are not the same thing.

Says Nathaniel: “Most people assume, as I did in the past, that to solve a problem what you need is technical expertise — provided by professionals such as scientists or engineers — combined with good management skills coming in on top of that.

“However, I now understand that this leaves ‘a void’ in the decision-making process. Leadership is needed as well. And the purpose of leadership is to solve the really difficult problems that sometimes can’t be solved simply with technical skills and good management techniques.

“I realise now you can be a good manager without being a brilliant leader and that the same applies in reverse.”

Nathaniel was the winner of a scholarship jointly awarded by Alumni Relations and the New Zealand Leadership Institute (NZLI) at the University of Auckland to create an opportunity for an alumnus to participate in the NZLI’s 2014 March to May Leadership Mindset Programme.

They were looking for a mid-career graduate who was “out there doing it”, already building professional expertise and keen to develop leadership thinking and practices.

The selection panel chose Nathaniel from 300 applicants as they thought he was at the right stage of his career to grapple with the leadership programme’s concepts and to experiment with them in his everyday work.

Fiona Kennedy, NZLI lead programme facilitator says, “The Leadership Mindset Programme, like other NZLI programmes, is not primarily focused on personal development for people in formal leadership roles. It’s about
Aphasia, “the silent disability”, affects thousands of New Zealanders every year, leaving them unable to speak. Funding from the Tavistock Trust for Aphasia in the UK is giving hope to people with aphasia and encouraging students to pursue careers in speech language therapy through the University of Auckland.

The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia was founded in 1992 as a “living legacy” to the late Robin Tavistock, the 14th Duke of Bedford. A stroke in 1988 left him unable to access language. With support from family and friends and intensive speech therapy he slowly began to recover but continued to experience difficulty in finding the words he wanted to use.

In Auckland, the Trust supports a community outreach programme called the CBR Gavel Club, which is an affiliate of Toastmasters International. Like the Trust’s founder and benefactor, members of the CBR Gavel Club all have aphasia and live each day struggling to find words.

“Members typically arrive at their first meeting with huge fears and self doubt,” says speech language therapist Celia Moore. “The most powerful and inspirational feature of the club is the group’s mutual support and respect. Members boost each other’s self-confidence and propel each other to a new speaking level.”

The Auckland club has been running for two years through a collaboration between the University’s Speech Science Department, its Centre for Brain Research (CBR), Master of Speech Language Therapy Practice students, the local AM Toastmasters club, a Toastmasters mentor, and a volunteer speech language therapist. Members’ quality of communication before and after participating in the CBR Gavel Club is measured using a scale devised by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. This data has shown positive results.

“Put simply, research shows that if we want to improve our talking skills, we need to talk,” says the Director of Speech Science, Professor Suzanne Purdy, who has a 30-year research career spanning psychology, audiology and speech science.

The Speech Science Department sits within the School of Psychology in the Faculty of Science and recently celebrated its tenth birthday. It is the fastest growing speech science programme in New Zealand, with an increasing number of postgraduate students. For the past five years an annual Tavistock Trust for Aphasia Award has been presented to one University of Auckland postgraduate student. For the past five years an annual Tavistock Trust for Aphasia Award has been presented to one University of Auckland Master of Speech Language Therapy Practice graduate who has completed an outstanding piece of work in the field of aphasia.

Last year’s winner, Marie Ualesi, says she feels very humbled and honoured to have received an award at such a level. “I had no idea that my supervisor, Dr Elaine Ballard, and co-supervisor, Dr Clare McCann, had nominated me.”

Marie’s research was titled “Stroke and aphasia awareness in the New Zealand Samoan community: caregiver and family perspectives”. She has since presented it at the Growing Pacific Solutions 2014 Conference. Marie is working as a Speech Language Therapist for Home Health Care at Counties Manukau Health, working with adults and older people who have communication or swallowing difficulties.

“After completing my research work and joining the workforce, I often reflect on my work practice, how I communicate and offer information, provide intervention and gain the best outcomes for clients, families and caregivers,” she says.

Robin’s hope was that everyone who has aphasia would be able to receive the kind of help he had received. By supporting community programmes like the CBR Gavel Club and encouraging the Speech Science health professionals of tomorrow, the Trust can enable so many more people to be understood.

ABOVE: Tavistock Trust for Aphasia Award recipient, Marie Ualesi, with Senior Lecturer in Psychology and expert on aphasia, Dr Clare McCann

TOP: CBR More Than Words Gavel Club member, Jenni Webb
Sir John and his wife Emma arrived at University House, which he officially opened in 2003, to be welcomed by recipients of Hood Fellowships, philanthropists, supporters and senior staff of the University. The group included Professor Rosemary Bailey and Professor Peter Cameron, both experts in algebra and combinatorics, who were visiting Auckland on Hood Fellowships from the University of London.

Sir John spoke of the vital role that the Hood Fellowships play in advancing the University’s international reputation. He also highlighted the importance of philanthropy in the University’s future and thanked the large community of benefactors who support the institution. He encouraged a sense of participation and shared “ownership” in the University through energetic engagement with our communities of interest. “Institutions are a reflection of their societies; societies, in turn, reflect their institutions.”

Vice-Chancellor Professor Stuart McCutcheon and the Chair of the University of Auckland Foundation, Geoff Ricketts, paid tribute to Sir John’s leadership and the ongoing impact of the Hood Fellowship Programme. The Fellowships were established to mark the former Vice- Chancellor’s outstanding contribution to the University of Auckland. Since 2004, the programme has enabled 107 international academic exchanges. Of these, 83 have been visits to our university by esteemed academics from around the world, and 24 by outstanding individuals from our own ranks who have visited colleagues in similar leading institutions overseas. Hood Fellowships were announced at the event for 11 academics.

For information about the new Hood Fellows and Fellowship visit www.uoafoundation.org.nz

LEFT: Sir John Hood arrives at University House with his wife Emma.

BELOW: Murray Beade, representing The Lion Foundation; the Chair of the University of Auckland Foundation, Geoff Ricketts; and Pravir Tesiram at the celebration.

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Suzanne saw a show by the Touch Compass Dance Company — and decided to start dancing. “It all happened quite suddenly,” she says, “I went from doing a workshop to being in a show.”

She joined the company for a season as a professional dancer, and was then offered a role with the London-based CandoCo Company, for which she danced, taught and toured for three and a half years.

Suzanne’s personal philosophy is to seize opportunities that come her way. “Each little step is a build to the next step. It sometimes looks like a leap but there are gradual steps that help prepare for the next thing.”

She gives credit to the performance element in her role with Attitude TV for giving her a “confidence around performance” that eventually saw her become a dancer and choreographer. But it is her “natural curiosity”, a mainstay of her journalism, that is now driving her energy for study.

“I’m interested in people and enjoy investigating, researching and ‘meaning-making’.

‘Having had the experience of a radical shift in my physical status, I’m interested in how the world responds to that. I don’t essentially feel any difference, but the way I’m treated shifts and I’m interested in why that is.’

A good incentive for study, she says, is “living in a society that disables people who mobilise in non-normative ways.

‘Having had the experience of a radical shift in my physical status, I’m interested in how the world responds to that. I don’t essentially feel any difference, but the way I’m treated shifts and I’m interested in why that is.’

A good incentive for study, she says, is “living in a society that disables people who mobilise in non-normative ways.

‘Even though I identify as being disabled that’s more of a political statement. I don’t identify as having a disability, that’s constructed.

‘As we age we all become impaired to some extent. That is the nature of mortality. I’m really interested in how society marginalises impaired people. I want to raise questions about the assumptions we make and the value we place on diversity.’

The former journalist and the dancer both play a part in Suzanne’s research: “Dancers think and the body thinks. There are so many possibilities of body knowledge that we explore as a dancer; it’s really rich territory.”

**LET’S DANCE!**

STORY KATE PITCHER

Suzanne Cowan, who is studying toward a PhD in Dance Studies, recalls a “golden moment” when touring with CandoCo, the British mixed ability dance company she belonged to for more than three years.

“I remember sitting towards the back of the stage watching the other dancers, waiting for my next move and just loving the magic of it.”

Suzanne can’t remember which out of 24 countries they were performing in, but finds it easy to remember “the magic: that beautiful synergy between a company of dancers when everyone is super focused and just doing their thing. Everyone looks so beautiful and there is an amazing feeling of appreciation to be performing at this level.”

As a seasoned performer, Suzanne says her enjoyment of dance (“it can be incredibly addictive”) was one of the reasons she decided to study for a higher degree.

She also regards her study as part of a greater opportunity to challenge ideas about being in a “body that’s in control.

“We have this illusion of a closed fixed body and a closed fixed identity but it’s much more fluid and it’s much more permeable and those boundaries are a lot looser than what we’re often comfortable with.”

For her PhD Suzanne is exploring universal themes of human vulnerability, with a strong focus on the relationship between vulnerability and disability.

This is something she knows more about than most. After a successful stint working as a journalist and studying in Christchurch, the then 22-year-old Suzanne travelled to Canada on a Student Abroad Programme and was in a car accident in which she lost the use of her legs.

The experience broadened her perspective and sent her off in a new direction. Now using a wheelchair, she returned to study, completing a BA in history and a diploma in film and TV before working for three years as a director, reporter and presenter on Attitude TV — a show which featured the lives of people with disabilities.

It was at this stage of her career that
Many people will have seen the 2013 award-winning movie Herb and Dorothy: 50 x 50 where an elderly American couple decided to donate 50 works from their collection to an art museum in each of 50 states.

Loving art and cherishing their friendships with artists, they managed to create one of the most important post-1960 collections of minimalist and conceptual art in private hands.

Herbert and Dorothy Vogel lived in a rent-controlled apartment in New York City and amassed 4,782 works over their lifetimes. Living frugally, they used Dorothy’s income as a librarian to cover their living expenses while spending Herb’s postman’s salary (which peaked at $23,000) to buy art, often paying in instalments. Once they received a collage from the environmental artist Christo in exchange for cat-sitting. In 1992 they decided to give the whole collection to the National Gallery of Art in Washington because it charged no admission and does not sell donated works.

The local equivalent of Herb and Dorothy were Marie (1911-2005) and Alfons Blaschke (1906-2002), who emigrated to New Zealand as refugees from Hitler’s Germany in the 1940s, bringing Marie’s father Eugen Vandewart’s folio of prints. From 1962-1975, Marie taught cello in the University’s Music Department and, convinced of the relationship between art and music, began displaying prints by contemporary NZ artists such as Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston to inspire students and staff. One of the prints she gifted to the Art Collection on her retirement, a Matisse-like congregation of blocks of deep purple made by Ralph Hotere, is now very valuable because of its rarity. It was displayed at the Gus Fisher Gallery as part of the exhibition Gifted: Works donated to the University of Auckland Art Collection.

The curator of the exhibition was a student in the ARTHIST 734 Art Writing and Curatorial Practice postgraduate class, Maria-Constanza Labra-Odde, who selected 16 works for inclusion. As a public programme to accompany the exhibition, she convened a panel discussion for the University of Auckland Society members, where two of the artists, Gregory O’Brien and Billy Apple, talked with Professor Elizabeth Rankin (Art History) about their motivations for gifting their works to the collection. They both spoke of the power of art to influence lives, and admired the way that the University’s collection is a distributed one, constantly on display, giving students from every background a first-hand experience with contemporary and historical art.

Families and artists have often given art works to the collection in memory of someone who has died. A print on linen of Māori rock drawings by A.R.D. Fairburn was given by the poet’s children after his untimely death in 1957. Gus Fisher bequeathed one of the treasures of his art collection, a painting of a blacksmith working in Dunedin by Girolamo Nerli, in recognition of the research carried out into the artist’s life by Professor Michael Dunn of the Art History Department. Similarly, the widow of John Read, son of the famous English art critic Herbert Read, recently gifted a small painting by expatriate painter Felix Kelly, who was the subject of a book and exhibition curated by art historian Dr Donald Basset. Denis O’Connor’s sculpture commemorates the early death of his archaeologist daughter Blaze, who was a graduate from the University of Auckland, but is also a tribute to English Department poet Michele Leggatt, who is losing her sight.

Koha is the name given to the principle of reciprocity which is a common feature of Māori culture. Being given a gift carries the expectation that you will cherish and return it. In the case of the University of Auckland art collection, works are being preserved for the study and enjoyment of cohorts of staff and students to come, while being researched and interpreted by each generation afresh. A catalogue, with an essay by María-Constanza Labra-Odde and sponsored by the University of Auckland Society, is available free to members of the Society, $10 for non-members. Email gusfishergallery@auckland.ac.nz for copies.
BROKEN HALLELUJAH

By day Dean Carruthers works as a photographer and is well-known around the University for his work on its publications, including Ingenio. Readers will remember his cover for the last issue, featuring four-year-old Kaea from the Growing Up in New Zealand study.

But come nights and weekends, Dean has another life as an actor and cinematographer, working with singer/songwriter Alastair Riddell (an alumnus of the University of Auckland) and writer/producer Vanessa Cohen-Riddell, who has also studied at the University.

Now you can see the fruits of their collaboration in the New Zealand film Broken Hallelujah, which had its world premiere at the Victoria Cinema in Devonport, Auckland, and opened mid-October at the Rialto in Newmarket and at 23 cinemas nationwide.

Broken Hallelujah, which was inspired by the Leonard Cohen song “Hallelujah”, tells three interwoven stories of love, marriage, friendship, mistakes and imperfections, and the precious fragility of relationships.

Though Alastair, Dean and Vanessa have previously made a short film together called Last Stop, set mainly in the steam train that travels “out west” (of Auckland), this is the first feature the three have made together, with Alastair as director, Dean as cinematographer, and Vanessa as writer/producer. Both Dean (seen above) and Vanessa acted in the film and Alastair assisted with cinematography.

“There has been something very special about learning how to make a film from start to finish,” says Dean. “You use the same skills as in still photography but you擴and on them profoundly, and I love the collaboration.”

Broken Hallelujah was mainly shot on or near Auckland’s west coast beaches, making use of the changing qualities of light in different weather and at different times of day — not only to accentuate the beauty of the landforms, says Alastair, but also, “to highlight the existential themes that underpin the stories”.

The three have made another film, Cowboy now in post-production, with two more at the planning stage. They have had no external funding and worked with limited resources, but “people are very generous”, says Alastair, and support has included exchanges of services and expertise. “What you learn when you do it yourself is that you have to create solutions.”

PURGATORY

Many of us know of shadowy secrets in the history of our families.

But for writer and alumna Rossetta Allan (BA 2009) her family history is more tragic than for most of us.

Four members of the Finnegan family, the first of her ancestors to arrive in New Zealand from Ireland, died on 27 September 1865 at the hands of a murderer who was later hanged.

When Rossetta set out to learn about these murders and about what had happened to her family members, she found that the four had been attacked in their sleep, and their bodies had been buried in the back garden of the family cottage in Otahu.

She also learned they had lain there for several months before being discovered and that the body of ten-year-old John had not been found for another four years.

Visiting the place where the house had stood, Rossetta heard from neighbours that the ghost of John had figured in local folklore all through the years. Hearing the stories, Rossetta had the feeling of a “playful presence”.

“I thought: ‘This young man should come home with me.’ And he became the hero of my story.”

Ten-year-old John Finnegan now lives on as the main character in Rossetta’s first novel, Purgatory. As the lively and appealing narrator introduced in its first pages, he tells a vivid and engrossing story with a powerful emotional punch — of his life after death, with his mothers and brothers, caught between the worlds of the living and the dead — and later, of his life alone, finding companionship where he could: “Day in, day out, the same thing happens. I play with Harvey and Harvey doesn’t know I’m there. At least at night the animals can see me. I like the nights when the weather is calm and the stars are clear.”

Purgatory, published this year by Penguin Group (NZ) is a remarkable first novel, described by fellow writer and University of Auckland alumna, Paula Morris, as “vivid and engrossing, a novel about the brutal truths of our history, the shadowy secrets of our unwritten story.”
A TREASURY OF NZ POETRY FOR CHILDREN

Released just last month is a children’s poetry anthology that might well be a classic one day. Edited by alumna Paula Green, illustrated by Jenny Cooper, and published by Random House NZ, A Treasury of NZ Poems for Children, is a lively, beautifully-presented and carefully-curated hard-backed collection of New Zealand poems for and by children. Among its authors are all the big names — from Margaret Mahy and Hone Tuwhare to Jay Cowley and Bill Manhire — as well as some exciting new poets. The Treasury includes poems by more than 20 New Zealand children. Paula ran “A First Fabulous Poetry Competition” nationwide and, with Random House, selected 21 poems from around 2000 entries.

A hotspot poetry tour of New Zealand marked the publication of the book, with events held in bookshops, libraries, local halls and beaches. For more information on the tour, visit nzpoetrybox.wordpress.com

BAREFOOT YEARS

What’s the first thing you remember? This is the first sentence of Barefoot Years, by alumna Martin Edmond, which began, he says, as a “love letter” to his parents that “became a meditation upon childhood experiences that have influenced, not just how I write, but the way I have lived my life thus far”. Martin Edmond now lives in Sydney, where he was the recipient of the 2013 Prime Minister’s Award for Literary Achievement for Non-Fiction. This small book is a memoir in which he attempts to re-inhabit the lost domain of childhood. Charting his earliest memories of life near Ohakune, the work is published as one of a series of BWB Texts. These are “short books on big subjects”, available in digital format and covering history, memoir and contemporary issues by New Zealand writers, including Maurice Gee and Jane Kelsey.

Barefoot Years is the first part of a fuller memoir to be published by Bridget Williams Books next year.

LANDSCAPES OF THE SOUL

This new recording of Lyell Cresswell’s Piano Concerto and Concerto for Orchestra and String Quartet (Naxos 8.573199), featuring the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, was conducted by Hamish McKeich. This piano concerto was written in 2011 for pianist Stephen De Pledge, an alumnus of the University and a senior lecturer in the School of Music, who has since performed it in Glasgow, Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. It has been broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and Radio New Zealand Concert. The work was written in memory of a close friend of the composer who died in 2009, and it juxtaposes meditative and personal reflections with moments of ferocious virtuosity from soloist and orchestra.

FANTAİL

Shot over 20 nights in a working Auckland petrol station, Fantail tells the story of a young woman called Tania, whose identity as a Māori is very important to her.

She is working the night shift at a petrol station to save up to take her younger brother Piwakawaka to Surfer’s Paradise in Australia to find their father. In a way that is essentially local as well as terribly sad and moving, the film explores issues of love, identity and belonging.

Editor Richard Shaw, a graduate of the University of Auckland, says it was the first feature for many of those who worked on it, including director Curtis Vavell and scriptwriter Sophie Henderson (below), who also played the leading part.

Fantail showed in cinemas earlier this year and is now available on DVD/Blu-ray.

VIDEOS FOR INGENIO

A new venture for the producers of Ingenio is to create short videos to complement some of the stories. These are now on the website for you to view, and we would be delighted to receive your thoughts, ideas and feedback.

The video made for this issue, filmed at Kelly Tarlton’s in Auckland by the filmmakers from the University’s Media Productions Department, is about Riley Elliot, the “shark man”. Riley is a PhD student at the University and a passionate spokesman for conservation of sharks. (Read his opinion piece on page 12 and see the video on the Ingenio website: www.ingenio-magazine.com)

Previous videos featured interviews with participants in the University’s “Growing Up in New Zealand” study, with Dr Rae de Lisle from the School of Music and with Dr Marama Muru-Lanning from the Department of Anthropology.
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