

The Made Up Story Of Andy

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CHAPTER 1

**What are your earliest memories of growing up
in Christchurch**



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My earliest real memories are probably tearing around in the backyard with my brother, or perhaps watching my brother run around. I probably wasn't old enough to play, but with a name like mine growing up in the 1980s, you had to play cricket, and I wasn't good at it. My namesake was a was the famous cricketer who batted with Martin Crowe to set the world record, and he was the number two or number three batsman for New Zealand for a very long time.

So, growing up, I received a lot of cricket-related questions asking if I was related or named after him. The strip was basically a bit of dirt. You had to avoid where the dog had done his business. It was character-building stuff. If you believe what Bluey teaches you, I should have been an incredible batsman because that wicket was pretty wild, but in fact, it never happened.

I remember frosty mornings too. The grass would crunch and snap under your feet. It was like walking on cornflakes. Mum would be screaming at us to put shoes on before we lost a toe to frostbite. But I'd just be out there thinking, and not worrying about that. I'd be in shorts and a t-shirt trying to slap round balls or, you know, kick a football and screaming, "ooh, ah, Cantona." Not really knowing what that meant.

We lived near enough to the Avon River that bike rides were pretty legit. Mischief went hand in hand. We were always throwing a stick in the river to see how far we could chase it or floating little boats in there. We'd feed the ducks. Christchurch in the 80s felt like we had all the time in the world. We were out usually past dark. The bruises, scrapes, and scars that I accumulated from that time are all just memories that I have. But, they were good times.



Not that Andrew Jones

CHAPTER 2

What was it like growing up with your older siblings, Rob and Di? Do you have any special memories with them



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Having an older brother and sister meant I was essentially the family's crash-test dummy. Rob, being the oldest, was the ringleader. He had this knack for coming up with brilliant ideas that usually ended up with me covered in something. The best-case scenario would be mud, and I won't disclose the worst. Usually, I was up a tree retrieving the ball, explaining to Mum why the fence was broken, or hiding from a neighbour. It always seemed to be my fault, probably because it usually was.

Di, on the other hand, was a clandestine instigator and peacekeeper. If Rob and I were fighting, she probably started it, but she was also usually the one that fixed it. Rob was a lot bigger than me, so I never really stood much of a chance. But yes, Di was a classic big sister. Bossy at times, but she was always the one that helped me out. You know, the extra sweet, covering for me when I'd broken something. It was brilliant.

Once, she tried to teach me how to dance in the lounge and convinced me that I had to dress like a girl to do it. I've never really lived that down. Someone should look into her for dressing boys like girls and then convincing them to dance in the lounge.

One of my favourite memories was when the three of us decided to build a flying fox. If I remember correctly, it was winter and there was a flying fox at a place called Bishopdale Park, which was fantastic, but it was broken and we thought we could fix it. Rob tied a rope between two trees, Di supervised as if she was in NASA, and you can probably guess who the first one to go down was. It was me.

It lasted less than three seconds. I think as soon as I put weight on it, I just fell and landed on the lawn. Rob said it was a test run and that was expected. Di patched me up with plasters and Raro. Classic teamwork, I suppose.

Growing up with them was fantastic. A mix of chaos, laughter, and plenty of mischief. It was just golden.



Houston - we have a problem

CHAPTER 3

**Can you share a story about your mum, Jan,
that has stayed with you over the years**



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I suppose one theme, or perhaps it's not a story as such, but the theme that's remained with me over the years is mum's obsession with keeping us warm. Funnily enough, now that I have children of my own, I often reflect and laugh at how frequently I'm telling them to put more layers on. It's simply unnecessary. If I recall my younger self, I was running around half naked most of the time.

But yes, Christchurch winters would arrive, and mum had this uncanny sense of when you weren't wearing enough layers. I'd attempt to sneak out in just a jersey, but before I even made it to the hall, she'd have some knitted jersey that would scratch your neck. I was certain, I remember being young and thinking I was going to be decapitated by these scratchy jerseys. They were so itchy. I mean, I wear them all the time now. Not knitted jerseys by my mum, of course, but jerseys.

But yes, she was always about gloves, extra socks, and I was usually in bare feet. 'You'll catch your death out there, Andrew,' was her catchphrase. But yes, I was usually okay. The amusing part was that half the time we were outside, we were dripping with sweat and stinking up the place. But we weren't going to remove anything because if she saw us without it, we'd be marched straight back inside.

To this day, I can't see a hand-knitted jersey without hearing mum's voice in my head. And whenever I see a child wearing one, I just say a silent prayer for them because I know they're suffering.

But beyond the laughter, what really stays with me is her way of making the ordinary feel special. I remember once I was having a rough time at school and I came home feeling, you know, pretty beat up. And she sat me down with a milo and just listened. No judgement, no quick fixes. That was the quiet support that made you feel everything was going to be all right. And that's the bit of mum that has stayed with me the most.



It really wasnt that cold. No waether is ever THAT cold.

CHAPTER 4

What sort of things did you enjoy doing as a kid? Did these interests continue into adulthood



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As a kid, it was all about being outdoors. Cricket, biking down to the park, climbing, anything that looked remotely climbable, and that could be a bridge, tree, fence, the neighbour's shed, which we found out doesn't have that strong a roof. I loved the freedom of being outside. The streetlights turning on was just heartbreak.

I was also a bit of a Lego nut, or Toro, as we had, because we didn't have Lego. Toro was a slightly softer version of Lego, but I spent hours building obscure spaceships, castles. We didn't really have a lot of the newer shapes that you get in Lego these days. You had, I think, a roof tile was the most elaborate thing that we had, maybe something with an angle on it, but we figured it out.

Oddly enough, despite my brother and I being into science fiction, my sister actually used to build the best spaceships. I don't know why, but I guess that's probably, looking back, that's probably where my love of making and fixing things started. Those interests definitely followed me into being an adult.

I'm still very hands-on, whether it's messing about with cars, painting and mowing stuff, or creating geometric garden art. I've never really lost the love of being outside, walking the dog, fishing, just cruising around. Yeah, it just feels like an extension of those Christchurch days.

And I think that's a bit of advice I would always give to younger people, is hold on to being a kid as much as you can. You don't have to stop. That's a crazy thing. You don't have to stop. So yeah, the toys have got bigger and more expensive, but the spirit of it all, building, exploring, mucking about outdoors, that's never really changed.'



RocketLab here we come!

CHAPTER 5

**Tell me about your school days in Christchurch.
What subjects did you enjoy most and why**



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School for me was a bit of a mixed bag. I wasn't exactly the teacher's pet. When I was younger, it was all good, but I was definitely the kid that had to apply himself more. There were a few subjects that I loved. I loved art and anything hands-on: paintbrush, woodworking, metalwork, or even just a blank page and I was content. I liked being able to create something you could actually see and touch at the end instead of just numbers on a page.

Science was okay, but they probably shouldn't have given me a Bunsen burner. I was that guy who figured out if you turned the tap on, you could actually light the fire from the tap without the Bunsen burner, which was always very exciting. However, I was always the one that was told off for doing the thing you were not supposed to do.

Maths and I never really got along. I was never good with it. I spent more time staring at the page, thinking of something else or looking out the window than I did equations. English was a bit better. I did really struggle with getting my thoughts out and down because of dyslexia, but if I'm honest, I found that tough as well.

I did once win a class speech writing contest. It was a creative writing thing and we had like five or six different subjects that we were able to write on. I wrote mine on shaving my legs and I actually shaved my legs to test it out. I won the speech writing contest probably because my teacher, Mrs Esplin, was so shocked that I'd actually applied myself. Frustratingly, my inability to keep time during that window meant that I didn't go to the finals in the hall, which was a real disappointment. When I heard the speech that won, I knew mine would have crushed it. So, I guess that's an area where I could have applied myself better.

What stuck with me the most from school wasn't the subjects, it was just the group of guys we hung out with. We used to play footy at lunch, four square, which was like a handball would be another name for that. Swapping lunches, right in the tuck shop. Christchurch schools had that mix of old strict teachers who probably needed to retire and the ones maybe who were a bit younger who maybe understood kids like me a bit better.

I think ultimately most of my teachers looked at me as just one of those kids that you just had to get them through and get them out of there. He wasn't going to contribute to the A grades.



The quietest loud room in the world



Twice my size but hey!

CHAPTER 6

It sounds like you had a unique school experience, especially when it comes to your creative and hands-on projects. Could you share more about how those artistic and practical subjects influenced your personality and possibly your career choices later in life



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School wasn't my strong suit when it came to traditional maths or memorising dates and history. But the minute I stepped into the art room with a workshop or had to explain a scenario that happened in history, something clicked. These were the spaces where I could actually see what I was capable of. Putting paint on a canvas, shaping a bit of wood, sketching out some design. It wasn't about getting the right answer; it was about creating something from scratch. I think that played a massive role in shaping my personality.

It gave me confidence, for one, when you're a child who struggles in class or gets lost in numbers. It's somewhere to shine and art and hands-on subjects gave me that. They also taught me patience and problem-solving. If you mucked up a project, you had to figure out how to fix it. There was no shortcut.

Looking back, it's no surprise that those early influences carried through into my career choices. Landscaping was a natural fit because it combined the creative with the practical. When you're designing something, but also building it with your own hands, even now, the geometric garden art I'm working on, it's that same combination. Taking a vision in your head, turning it into something real and tangible.

These days, computers and software programmes do all of the heavy lifting for me. So the things that I wasn't great at school are compensated for by the technology that we have around us today. I think that's something they should probably tell you at school because you can feel like you're never going to make anything of yourself because so much emphasis was put on English, maths and the traditional sciences.

I reckon those school subjects shaped my outlook on life. They taught me that value isn't always measured in grades or numbers. Sometimes it's about effort, creativity and what you can physically bring into the world. Not having a go at maths or English, but maths doesn't physically bring a lot into the world. It's the study of theory oftentimes. And don't get me wrong, it's useful. It has its place, but I don't think any child should be made to feel stupid because they're not very good at it.

Yeah, this perspective has always stuck with me and it's how I ended up in careers where I can build, shape and create rather than just sit behind a desk. So in a way, those classrooms full of sawdust, paint fumes and half-finished projects set the foundation for everything that came later. They gave me tools, not just literal ones, but the tools to back myself and, yeah, I guess carve out my own path. I think that was really important.

CHAPTER 7

During your teenage years, what were some significant coming-of-age moments you experienced



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I guess one of the biggest shifts for me as a teenager was when I was alone. My brother and sister had moved out. Yes, and I suppose it was figuring out that the world wasn't always as simple as it seemed when you're a child. Christchurch had easy days, you know, like hanging out with mates, playing footy, cruising around on bikes. But when you're a teenager, school starts to clamp down. They start to tell you this and that and the other. You ride your bike to school and you're not just riding around the corner to your primary school anymore. You're actually riding on main roads. And I guess it felt like everything started to get really serious.

I enjoyed Taekwondo throughout that. Yea, the responsibility of life felt like it was hitting home. Football was great. Getting my first job was a real turning point. I was working at a local fish and chip shop and it was the first time I really had to properly show up on time and be accountable. But I enjoyed that. I remember standing there, wet feet, wet front, wet sides, in the freezing cold, producing chips, thinking, 'Oh, if this is a job, it's not too bad, it sucks.' But then I'll never forget getting that first \$40 at the end of that week. That blew my mind. Riding home with no hands, eating chocolate mousse straight out of the canister was just, you know, I felt like I'd made it. I've never felt that rich since. Being able to go to the school canteen and buy two muffins and having them break a \$20 note was just mind blowing.

Another big one was learning to drive. That was pretty tough. I learnt in mum's car. We did our licences out at Lincoln because the cop that was out there was pretty cool and he was a bit more laid back and the roads were dead quiet. So you've got time and space to do your parallel parking. It wasn't that he let you away with anything. It was just a slower pace. Whereas if you did it in the city, some geezer would be behind you, honking his horn at you, causing chaos. But finally getting that sorted was a big one. And then all of a sudden you weren't riding your bike around your neighbourhood. You were going anywhere, you know, you were going to the mall on late night and things like that, which is where young people go and hang out. If you could get there with a car and not a bus, woohoo, big player.

And of course, there were personal moments, I guess, first girlfriends and heartbreaks that come with them. First times pushing boundaries and learning who you could really trust. Those weren't always easy because, you know, everyone as a teenager is trying to figure everything out. And so maybe they're not always, it's not necessarily their character, but it's just hard, you know, like everybody's trying to feel appreciated or impress others. And yes, it's a challenging time. And it's something that I say to young people now. Like you look back, some people look back at school and they loved it or their teenage years and they loved it. Others, it was completely different. But yes, it wasn't always easy. But yes, I think I was a better older teen than I was a younger teen. I had a lot more fun when I was sort of 16, 17, 18 and 19.



That's fear, not happiness coming out...

CHAPTER 8

You've shared a wonderful range of experiences, from your first job to learning to drive and navigating relationships. Could you delve a bit more into how these experiences, especially the challenging ones, shaped you into the person you are today



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Looking back, I think the toughest experiences were the ones that shaped me the most. My first job at the fish and chip shop was nothing glamorous. It was long hours, greasy hands, coming home smelling like fat and old oil. But it taught me about showing up even when you didn't feel like it. That discipline, that idea, I guess you being that cog in the chain. It taught me that hard work pays off, even in small ways. It laid the groundwork for everything that came later.

Learning to drive was another turning point on the surface. It was just a rite of passage, but for me, it was about independence. Sitting behind the wheel for the first time, grinding the gears, stalling in front of strangers. It was all equal parts terrifying and liberating. It taught me that confidence doesn't arrive fully formed. You build it through trial and error and often with a few embarrassing mistakes along the way.

Relationships, whether it was with siblings, mates or girlfriends, were probably the most challenging. Learning to navigate other people's expectations, that string of first heartbreaks, even the disagreements with Rob and Di, they test your patience and your ability to step outside yourself, it grows there. Over time, you learn empathy and you learn about thinking about other people and looking at the world through their lens.

I guess it showed me that life isn't just about your own path, it's about who you connect with and others that are on theirs and how they intertwine and how you help each other or sometimes, how you don't help each other and that's a big deal. The people that are around you at any given time will have a massive influence on your life.

And I guess when I piece all of it together, I see that every challenge, whether it was blistered hands, peeling spuds, the humiliation of bunny hopping through an intersection in front of a girl you knew outside the local McDonald's while you were learning to drive and them all giggling and you just feeling like the worst thing that's ever happened to you, or the awkward lessons in love, being told you're dumped. They all come together and they build your resilience and it just taught me not to take myself too seriously.

When I was younger and the testosterone was flowing, I was so offended by everything, but as that dissipated and I got older, I've laughed at myself. I think I've always laughed at myself in a healthy way. But you just got to have a bit of grit and keep going and have the perspective that not everything has to be perfect to be good and worth it. And relationships are like that.

So I guess who I am today, a husband, a dad, a guy who's had a crack at business and tried to live life is the sum of all those moments. And I imagine it's that way for almost everybody. The easy ones give you joy, but the hard ones, they give you joy too. I heard once that the Russians have a lot of words for suffering and most of their poetry is about suffering and the beauty in suffering. And I think there's a lot of truth to that.



Living the dream

CHAPTER 9

Describe your first job as a chip maker at a fish and chip shop. What drew you to that job and what did you learn from it



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My first proper job, I did have a paper round, but my first proper job was at the local fish and chip shop. Well, it wasn't local actually, it wasn't our one, it was a couple of blocks away. I followed my mate into that job. He left and I followed him into it. Let me tell you, nothing humbles you more than a giant basin of freezing cold water at the peak of Christchurch's winter. There was a chip maker next to you and being told that you're doing 13 bags tonight because it's a big night.

Just hearing that you were going to do 13 bags of potatoes that you needed to turn into chips, you wanted to hear eight. That was the good number. I don't remember what the biggest one being was, but it was always a wee bit different. Why did I go and do that job? It came up, I guess that was what you had to do, right? You want the money, you got an opportunity, you went and did it. Mum wasn't exactly handing it out.

There was also something cool about working at a fish and chip shop because everyone I knew had fish and chips once a week. It was just how it went down. We didn't have McDonald's growing up. I guess by the time I was working there, there was McDonald's, but they certainly weren't prevalent. We didn't get our first one in Rickerton until late in the 80s. They certainly weren't dotted all around the city.

What I learned from it was huge. Firstly, hard work isn't glamorous. My hands were always shrivelled, cut. My clothes stank of yeasty potatoes and starchy potatoes. I'd come home looking like I'd gone ten rounds with a sack of spuds, which I had. It taught me about using sharp and heavy equipment. You only put your hand into a potato peeler when it's going once. You never put it back in there again. A potato peeler is a drum with an asphalt bottom that spins and the sides being asphalt as well. It peels the potatoes in about 30 or 40 seconds. It just gets it done. It's cool to see that stuff when you're young.

I was never really allowed near the customers or the fryer. I remember one time I was allowed to make my own burger and I was so sure that they put the cheese on the grill. The older guy that worked there, I guess he would have been 20 or something like that, asked, 'What are you doing, you dick?' I replied, 'Oh, I'm putting the cheese on the grill.' He said, 'Just go back out the back and I'll bring your burger to it.'

The boss was a really cool guy. He was awesome to work for. It was a neat job to have.



Late nights and cold days.... All worth it

CHAPTER 10

What inspired you to start your own landscaping company? Can you tell me about the journey behind that decision



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What inspired me to start my own landscaping company? I suppose it was the same itch I'd had when I was a child. Mum tended our garden. We had a rather barren backyard, filled with, well, whatever the dog left behind, a few tennis balls, footballs, and suchlike. When mum first started digging the garden, I was furious as it reduced the space for my mischief. But observing the process was truly fascinating. She carved out these semi-circles and filled the garden with different tiers and layers of plants. It was incredible. We went from having no garden to having this wonderful place to be.

Naturally, as a young lad, I did my best to ruin it by smashing balls into it, chasing the dog and whatnot. But the whole thing wasn't some grand master plan. I simply hired a trailer, borrowed mum's shovel. In essence, it was probably an extension of starting out mowing people's lawns for them. I started with the neighbours because they were elderly and it was a favour, and then it just took off. Before I knew it, I was doing a few more, then someone asked if I could do the weeding.

Then I realised that it was actually a job and that people did that. Yes, there were plenty of long days, muddy boots, frozen fingers, and numerous times where I agreed to things when I should have declined, but we figured it out. And then I realised that I had a livelihood on my hands. The experience was invaluable. It taught me that if you believe in yourself, even if you don't know what you're doing, you can figure it out. And I think that's the most important thing, you know, believe in yourself, get on with it and, yes, find out what's happening out there and just get it done and underway.'



The easy part... Showing up.

CHAPTER 11

Your journey from a young lad watching your mum in the garden to a successful landscaper is truly inspiring. I'm curious, could you share a specific moment or experience during your early days of landscaping that made you realize this was more than just a job for you, but a passion



Scan to hear audio recording

I suppose one moment that really sticks with me is when I first started taking on landscaping jobs on my own. I was working in a small backyard in Christchurch. It was nothing fancy, just a tired patch of grass, a couple of overgrown shrubs, and a family who wanted a place for their kids to play. That resonated with me a bit.

I remember making the joke that if they really wanted a place for their kids to play, they wouldn't do anything. Yes, it didn't go down that well, but I spent days levelling that bloody thing out. It was all clay. I had to lay down fresh turf, put in some simple planting, and build a little timber edging around so that the balls didn't get too carried away. This would make the mowing edge easier for the dad, not my dad.

It didn't feel like an episode of Grand Designs or anything special, but I'll never forget the look on the family's faces when they came home. A lot of the time, people will look at you and you can see them coming and going, thinking, 'Oh God, what are we doing? This bloke's just destroyed our backyard.' But when it all comes together and you watch those kids tear across the lawn like it was Lancaster Park, the mum and dad look like they'd just been given a brand new home.

And I suppose that was the first time it really clicked for me. It wasn't just about digging holes and hauling soil. It was about creating spaces where people's lives happened, places for barbecues, birthdays, all those little moments you don't forget. And I suppose my mum had given me that, so it was cool to be able to give that to other people.

Yes, transforming something ordinary into something meaningful, that really hooked me. From then on, landscaping stopped being just a way to earn a living. It became a passion. Well, I suppose it always was, but yes, that one made a mark.

And yes, I suppose from there, I went on to create many more things that would be lasting. And that's when I knew it wasn't just for the money, I was in it because I loved the outcome.



Learninring to test the soil before quoting the job.

CHAPTER 12

Can you tell me more about how your mother's influence in your early experiences with gardening has shaped the way you approach your landscaping projects now, especially when it comes to creating these meaningful spaces for people



Scan to hear audio recording



Yeah, that's pretty easy. I guess some of my earliest memories are of Mum being out in the garden and me being out there with her, you know, just dirt under the fingernails and getting amongst it. She had, I guess, this way of... I think the garden was really her escape, you know, and she sort of had this way in more than one place that we lived in, in the two houses that I lived in growing up. She took what was barren and turned it into something really beautiful.

I think, yeah, for her it was her place to sort of slow down and just focus on a task. I don't think I realised it at the time, but those moments when I was tagging along and watching her prune the roses or carefully plant seedlings, they probably left a bigger mark on me than I knew. I would say that, yeah, it had an influence that I wasn't aware of, but certainly when I got older.

What I took from her, it wasn't just the practical side, right? Although I definitely learned the basics of planting, watering, soil condition, things like that. It was the attitude that she sort of took into it. She took these things on with care and it was almost like creating a space for our family, probably for her, because the truth of it was, I had little respect for it. I was busy kicking footballs into it and rummaging through things for cricket balls and what have you. I can hear myself now when I'm yelling at the kids like, "Get the ball, but do you have to rip it out? Well, go easy. That's just a young tree."

I don't think she built it for the neighbours or anyone. Our houses, certainly our first house, was out of the way and no one ever really would walk past and see it. Our second house was a bit different, but yeah, and so that's the mindset I carried into the landscaping business.

Whenever I take on a project, I'm not just trying to think about how to look at a photo. I'm trying to think about the people that are going to sit there and be in it, you know, where will the bees be? Will they be in the way or can they get about their job and do their thing? When the kids kick a ball and it inevitably goes in, what's going to happen? Are we using the right plants and the right things for the area?

Then there's the older couples perhaps out there having their cup of tea, sitting under the pergola and your garden can just be this residential escape. There's a reason that people go to places like the botanical gardens and see these interesting and obscure plants. And if you plant well, it doesn't need to be a big chore. It'll largely look after itself.

But even now when I'm sketching out ideas or walking through a finished job, I find myself thinking, "Will Mum be proud of the space? Would she see that I'd done it right?" I've definitely stopped showing her all the photos. I'm sure she's sick of them. But yeah, that early influence shaped me into someone who sees landscaping as not a trade but more of a way of creating a space for people to be in.

And yeah, certainly as we get more and more flats and more and more units, we're starting to lose a lot of those things. So it's nice to have grown up in a time where there were those sorts of things.'



Better than a ball in the garden!

CHAPTER 13

How did your work in both the fish and chip shop and landscaping company shape your understanding of hard work and business



Scan to hear audio recording



Those two jobs couldn't have been more different. One had me up to my elbows in potato peelings, the other had me knee-deep in mud. I suppose in some regard, both involved mud. On the other hand, people do plant a lot of potatoes in their gardens in Christchurch. But I learnt some pretty important lessons from both.

The fish and chip shop taught me about long hours, hot chips, queues out the door. You can't let people down. If you don't show up for work, somebody else is going to have to do your job. That just can't happen. When you're running with a small team, it showed me if you put your head down and grafted, you just get through it. You've just got to get that next bag, cut that top off, put it in the bin, more potatoes, more potatoes.

But more than that, it taught me about people. You'd see the way that the boss interacted with customers. They'd be disgruntled or whatever. If it was me today, I'd probably tell them to shove their two pounds where the sun didn't shine. But he didn't. He just got on with it. He redid it. He just got them the next thing, moved them on, got them out the door, kept people moving, a smile and just got it done. They might only be there for 30 seconds, but getting them to come back was the art in that space. A bit of a smile, a bit of banter made all the difference.

Landscaping kind of took that and dialled it up to 10 because it wasn't about just the hard work, it was about responsibility. It wasn't just about working in a business and being a cog, it was about being all of the cogs, quoting jobs, dealing with clients, getting the quotes wrong, committing to doing a job for £350 that you thought would take a day. And you were there four days later. But you'd said you would do it and you couldn't let them down. It gave me a crash course in the reality of business. There's no one to hold your hand. You either figure it out or you don't. It's as simple as that.

Between the two, I came to understand that hard work is the baseline, it gets you in the game. But to run a business, you've also got to think much bigger about relationships, reputation, backing yourself, even if you don't have all the answers. And those early jobs taught me a lot of those things. They also taught me to say no, which is a really important lesson to learn in business. After a while, you learn the characters and you just think this job's going to be a problem. This bloke's got no idea what he wants. This woman's asking for things that don't exist. And you could sort of pick early on the people that you would want as your client. I've taken that into other areas of my life as well. I think we've got a lot of really strong instincts as humans and we should rely on them more.'

CHAPTER 14

You mentioned learning important lessons from both jobs about hard work, responsibility, and dealing with people. Can you share a specific incident from each job that challenged you and ultimately shaped these lessons



Scan to hear audio recording



I know to the chippy, the place was absolutely humming. Friday evening in Christchurch was fish and chip night, right? The parents didn't want to cook, but actually that's not true. For some people, it was fish and chip Thursday, but for most people, it was fish and chip Friday. And yeah, like the phone would just start ringing around four o'clock and that would just be it. You wouldn't be able to breathe, but this one was humming. The phone orders were everywhere. Thank goodness we didn't live in a time of the internet, or perhaps actually maybe it would have been easier because getting old lady Dot from down the road trying to decide on whether she wanted hoki or hapuka was, you know, that could be four minutes and it was four minutes that you didn't have.

But yeah, I remember one night I was behind on chips. I was thinking I was going to have to go out the back, make more, which isn't a quick fix, right? You can't make them as quickly as people order them. And yeah, the boss is normally really cool and calm, but he was getting a little bit tense and in the middle of it, a customer got pretty snappy because their order was late. I was about 15 and still a bit green and probably had a bit of testosterone flying around. My first instinct was to probably slap him with the chip basket, but I held it in, apologised and kept moving.

Ten minutes later, I saw that same guy laughing with his family, fish and chips spread out in front of them. And I guess that's when it hit me. People don't always see the effort behind the counter. It's just whether you deliver or not. And it taught me that, especially in customer service, you've just got to kind of cop it and keep your cool and get on with it because you never know what's going on in someone else's day and you never know why they're that upset. Now to know today, I know that it's often for trivial reasons and often people are just unpleasant, but allowing them to affect your mood or change your responses is crazy. So, yeah, it's definitely one from the fish and chip shop. It's one I'll always remember. I just couldn't believe someone could be so unpleasant and then be so happy 10 minutes later. But yeah, people think that they're the most important thing and you're never going to convince them otherwise, certainly not from behind the counter at the fish and chip shop.

But if you fast forward a few years, I'm running a landscaping company. I landed a decent job, a backyard overhaul, digging plants, new grass. The problem was, I really underestimated how long it would take. And like with a lot of jobs, when you start getting into it, and I always say to the customers, you open the kimono and you might not always like what you see underneath, but it's what we've got to deal with. And yeah, I realised that we were going to be way behind schedule. The customer doesn't want to hear that, they're not an expert in what you do. So they can't fathom that you couldn't have accounted for it.

I had two options, cut corners to get it done faster or put my head down and just get on with it and deal with the awkwardness of where they were at and where I was at. But I worked late. I handed out more than a dozen beers on several occasions to mates to give me a hand and just sort of break the job's back. It cost me more money than I would have liked. But yeah, I got there in the end and they were happy. And it wasn't, yeah, in the moment, people will lose their minds. But if you stay the course and they get the outcome that they wanted, the time will be forgotten.

I think that's a really important one and something I have to remind clients of for many years afterwards, I tell them right at the beginning, this might take a week, it might take two weeks longer. Don't put an event at the end of this and be shocked that we couldn't quite meet the deadline. It can happen sometimes, but your garden will be for forever. And yeah, I think that's the big one is you've got a responsibility to set people's expectation and then importantly, deliver on your word, even if it costs you. It's the nature of what we do.

Both experiences, I guess, shaped how I see people and how I work with people. Sometimes it's patience and humility and sometimes it's being really frank and, you know, what some people might see as blunt, but just delivering people the truth and setting their expectations right.'

CHAPTER 15

What significant life changes or events have shaped you into the person you are today



Scan to hear audio recording



Yeah, there are many moments that stand out as far as events go. I suppose getting a bit older and having some of my friends move away overseas gave me the bug. I wasn't brave enough to go to England, but I did move to Brisbane for a few years. That experience showed me that home isn't just a place; it's really everything to do with the people that you've got around you. It pushed me to adapt. We were starting fresh, and I had to back myself in a new environment.

When people ask, "Are you a Kiwi?" you can find out pretty quickly whether you're on the back foot or not. But it was fun.

The second standout moment was becoming a dad. That changed everything. Suddenly, it wasn't just about me anymore. There was this little human depending on me. Years later, when the second one came along, it was the same feeling all over again. Little Pete and James, they're golden. Kids have a way of flipping your priorities upside down, but in the best possible way. They make you think harder about the example you're setting.

Starting and running my own business has also been massive. It's tested me, frustrated me. Some of the proudest wins and some of my worst moments, they're a big deal.

And of course, life's thrown some tougher moments too. Losing people close to me. As I got older, I watched a lot of people my age or a little bit older die and watched family battle health issues. Those times ground you; they remind you what actually matters and how little time you really have. I've been lucky enough to take a step back and make some strong decisions based on that.

But all of it, the moves, the families, the wins, the losses, the happiness and the sadness, it's all shaped me into someone who tries not to take life too seriously and just live and enjoy in the moment. I think that's one of the most important lessons that anybody can learn. You always hear from older people as they're in the last few years, and the common great regret seems to be that they didn't spend enough time with their children or the people that love them. And I don't intend on making that mistake.'



No happier moment.

CHAPTER 16

It sounds like you've had a wealth of experiences that have shaped you. Could you share more about the strong decisions you made after witnessing health issues in your family and how those decisions have influenced your approach to life and relationships



Scan to hear audio recording

Yeah, I think seeing health struggles in close friends and family leaves a deeper impact on anyone than you might think. When you watch people that you care about face something they can't just get on with or harden up and sort, it changes the way you see life. And that's normal, whether it's your grandparents dying or whatever it is.

Actually, maybe your grandparents dying feels natural to you when you're a kid. But when you're 40 and your friend who's 40 dies from an illness that you can't do anything about, that's really hard to see. It changes everything that you're thinking about.

One of the strong decisions I made after one of those experiences or confrontations was to stop putting my health so far down the list. For years, I'd just crack on, long days, a pie, and I'd just tell myself, yeah, I'll sort it out. And I was never unfit, that was the thing. But after seeing fit people drop dead, I realised that one day wasn't enough and it wasn't guaranteed.

So I made changes, you know, a better diet, exercise, listening to my body, resting when it's asking to. I think your body will tell you a lot if you listen. It's tempting to ignore it, but it's a hard thing to talk about because a lot of people my age I've watched die unnecessarily.

So, I think if we listen to our bodies and heed the cues, but if we're just popping painkillers all the time, we don't really hear the message. And it gave me perspective in business as well. When you're going to funerals and there are kids your own kids' age running around at the funeral and their dad's gone, it's tough.

And I think that's one of the things about being a male is that it's often the dad, you know, it's very rarely the mum. A lot of the time for me, it's been watching fit enough, normal enough guys that, you know, maybe they're having a few beers or whatever, but just drop dead and somehow that's acceptable in society.

And you start talking to your doctor a bit more and they start to tell you that you're doing really well for your age. Well, you don't really want to hear that. You want to hear that you're doing really well for a 20-year-old at 40.

So, yeah, I think health challenges are hard to watch. Business and burning your body out, is it worth it? The short answer is no, especially if you've got kids to be around for. A lot of the time now I ask myself, is this going to be worth the cost?

But it's important. These things have taught me not to take time or relationships for granted. I think one message I'd like to leave to everyone is that we think that the currency of this earth is money and it's not. It's time. We can get money and if you listen to people, they'll teach you how to get money, YouTube's available now. They'll show you the way to make money, but no one can show you the way to get time back.

And so, you have to make time, make yourself available. And those are conscious decisions we all have to make. I've never spoken to anyone who was older who said, I'm so glad that I spent so much time in the office and on my career and missed my kids growing up. I've never heard anyone say that. So, maybe doing it the other way around is the right thing.

CHAPTER 17

You have a love for Sci-fi books and movies. Can you share a favourite book or movie and why it resonates with you



Scan to hear audio recording

Oh, where to start? One of my all-time favourite books is *Dune* by Frank Herbert. I first read it years ago and I probably didn't understand it, but I liked it. Then, when I read it again as an adult, it began to make sense. Initially, it was the spaceships and sandworms that intrigued me. Later, I think it was the politics, the family expectations, and the clash of cultures that really drew me in. It all felt strange, yet familiar. Even though it was set on a non-existent desert planet, there were flashes of reality enveloped in fantasy.

What really captivated me, I suppose, was the theme of power and responsibility. Paul, the main character, starts out quite ordinary, at least for an heir to a family. Then he's thrust into circumstances far beyond his control. What really resonated with me was the concept of worshipping false idols, a lesson I had to learn at a rather young age. It's fascinating how a situation can transform someone and lead them to believe virtually anything.

On the film side, I've always been a fan of Blade Runner. The visuals, the atmosphere, the exploration of what it means to be human. I didn't grasp that when I was young, but I found it incredibly cool that there were robots that looked human. As a child, anything that was cool appealed to me. We used to borrow, or perhaps steal, a few films from my friend's uncle's house, like Terminator 2. That was quite impressive.

For me, science fiction has always been more than just escapism. I believe it provides a unique perspective on our own world, our trajectory, and the choices we make along the way. If we consider films like Ex Machina or Her, or even the concept of Skynet, there are numerous lessons to be gleaned. We're clearly heading in that direction today, and I think humanity needs to take the warnings of these writers more seriously.

We need to think long and hard about the kind of future we're building. That's probably why the genre resonates with me so much.

CHAPTER 18

Tell me about your fishing experiences. Any special catch that you've had over the years



Scan to hear audio recording

Fishing has always been one of those things that's less about the catch and more about the whole ritual. It requires your focus, whether it's tying a knot, selecting the right gear, or getting to a location, be that rock fishing or on the boat.

Heading out early, there's a particular set of birds that you'll only hear at that time of morning and sun up, before they get drowned out by the world. That to me is just magical, especially in New Zealand. We have such a great range of birds and birdsong. You get these quiet stretches of water or chaotic stretches of water and it just draws you in and it feels like the rest of the world has just gone on pause.

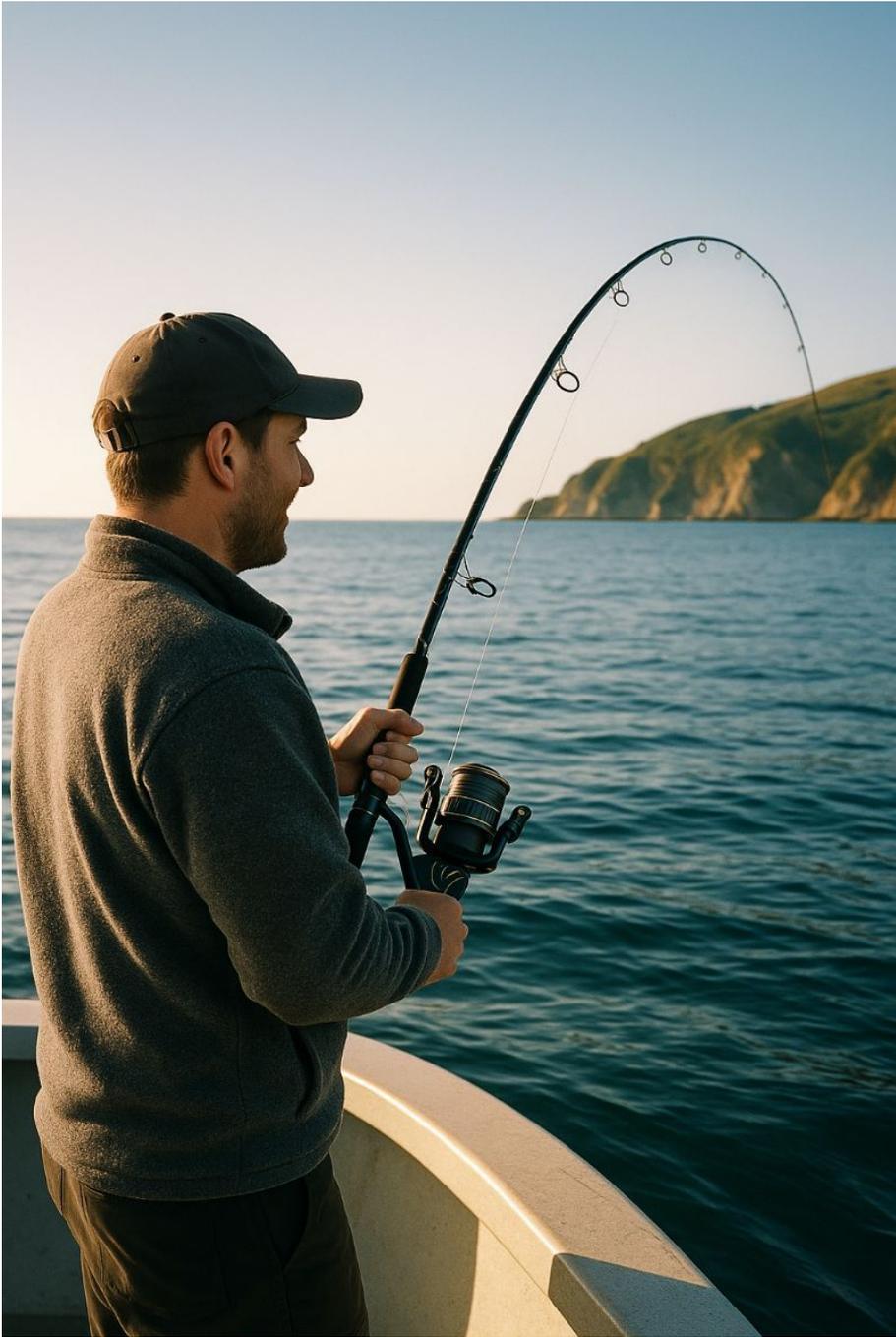
That said, there's definitely one catch that stands out. I was out on the boat one morning, just soft baiting around the edge of the coast and I hooked what I thought was going to be another run of the mill snapper. After years of catching strong medium-sized fish, I didn't really think that this thing was going to be that big. But it was. When it saw the boat, it put up a fight like it had no intention of going on my barbecue or that it at least knew that I had a barbecue. By the time I hauled it in and landed it, I was exhausted and over the moon. It kept trying to dive at the edge of the boat and it wouldn't fit in the net and it was stressful. But we got it on board and I probably wouldn't have kept it except that it had just swallowed the whole soft bait whole and it was gut hooked. So the first time I'd ever seen a big fish be able to do that.

But what made it special wasn't the size. It was when you bring home something like that, you share it with the family and neighbours, the catch. The neighbours not relying on you, but hoping that Andy shows up with a bit of fishing renown again. If you were ever to do a return on investment, I'd say fishing is probably not a very good one. That would be a financial comment. It's definitely worth the time and definitely worth the payback.

But not every fishing trip goes that way. They've had plenty of days where the only thing that was happening was nothing. But those slow days, man, it's what it's all about. It clears the head. I can tell when I haven't been fishing for a while, I start to get itchy and antsy. I guess that's the real catch.



A stunner!



Probabaly just another tiddler!

CHAPTER 19

It sounds like fishing is truly a soulful experience for you, between the early morning bird songs, the peaceful stretches of water, and the challenge of the catch.

You mentioned that bringing home a big fish to share with your family and neighbors is a special part of the experience. Can you share more about what these shared moments mean to you and any memorable reactions you've received



Scan to hear audio recording

For me, fishing's never really been about the fish. Don't get me wrong, a big kingfish, a snapper, or a tuna, it's always a thrill. But the joy is really about the experience and the by-product of that experience, which is the catch. When you're standing in the backyard with the barbecue or the smoker cranked, preparing to enjoy some of the best fish dip of your life since the last time, and you're handing over a plate of something that you've caught, cleaned, and presented in as ethical a manner as possible, it's a special feeling.

I'll never forget one time I brought home a pretty big catch. The people's eyes sort of popped out of their heads when I held them all up. My little girl thought it was the size of a shark. She ran off to the neighbours. Before long, half the street had gathered around and I realised that a lot of this would be going out the gate. So, that was cool. But it was that fish always goes to the neighbours and to family and friends. The reaction in those moments stick with me.

To begin with, I always sort of thought that I didn't want to give any away because it was a burden or, like who gives people fish? But fresh caught fish, not two-day-old, three-day-old, four-day-old fish, is fresh out of the ocean and onto the plate. It's pretty hard to beat. And sharing a catch like that, it feels like more than food. You get to share that time, the memory, and a little piece of yourself. The fish gets eaten and forgotten, but the experience, that neighbourly banter, the look on your daughter's face, especially if she catches it, that's what stays.

And that's probably why I keep going back out there. The peace and the quiet of the water, but also the moments on the land when the whole thing comes together.



Not even the big one!

CHAPTER 20

Describe your walks with your dog, Jimmy. How did you come to have Jimmy in your life



Scan to hear audio recording

So, Jimmy, one of the best parts of the day, I really think that the joy a dog experiences when they're let off the lead at a park so they can run, play, and just be free and chaotic in a different space is something all humans should envy and aim for. Not that we're let off our leads, but they really do just live in the moment and, in Jimmy's case, he really does live in that moment. I get a lot from Jimmy; he's just a constant reminder that you just deal with what's in front of you and enjoy it.

When someone comes home, it's the best thing that's ever happened to them. When he gets let off the lead at the park, it's the best thing that's ever happened to him. Go for a ride in the car, it's the best thing that's ever happened to him. We can just take a touch of that. We don't need to go bananas every time we open the door to the car and get in it, but they just love it.

How we came to have Jimmy is a sad story. Not sad for him, we went and got him, but we tried with another dog, a little Cocker Spaniel called Sky, but unfortunately, she had terrible anxiety that we just didn't seem to be able to cure and get on top of. She had a crack at a little girl and that was probably the beginning of the end for her. Then, unfortunately to compound her problems, we found out that she was actually suffering from double hip dysplasia. While it sounds awful to say, it was the end of her time, really.

It was the hardest decision I've ever had to make because she was my best little buddy. But we just couldn't guarantee with the double hip dysplasia and with the aggression that we were able to do it. We were actually able to curb her aggression with her ball and with fetch. Then, the vet had sort of said to us, she just can't run or do anything anymore. So, it was a really sad time.

But, at the end of it, we ended up with Jimmy and Jimmy is just the polar opposite. From a personality perspective, he couldn't be more relaxed around people and happier to be with people and other dogs too. So, it's a great addition to our family.



Looking for the next opportunity

CHAPTER 21

**What does an ideal day look like for you in
Auckland? How different is it from your days
back in Christchurch**



Scan to hear audio recording

An ideal day in Auckland would probably be pretty similar to a day in Christchurch. If I were still in Christchurch, it would likely involve a mountain bike. Perhaps the bike park or potentially going down to the Waimak or Bottle Lake Forest, or skiing up in Mount Hutt. All of these activities would be high on the list in Christchurch in the South Island.

However, in Auckland, it would involve the water. Boating in Christchurch is generally done in lakes. Lyttelton and Akaroa are there as well, but generally, your boating is done in lakes. In Auckland, it's done on the Hauraki Gulf. There's just nothing better than getting up early, listening to those native pigeons sing their song and the Tui cracking at first light. Getting out on the boat when it's perfectly flat, with a bit of chill in the air and heading out to a destination is ideal.

This could be with the girls, with a bit of lunch in the cooler and some coffee in the thermos, or with the boys going fishing, with a few beers in the chilli bin and the fishing rods on the back. Either of these days lines up for a brilliant adventure.

One of the things that we're not told as South Islanders about Auckland is how beautiful a city it is. Everyone knows about the traffic and the pain points, but Auckland is an incredible place to live. If you can get out and take advantage of it, get amongst it, climb the volcanoes and so forth, get out on the water, get down to the beaches, then it makes for an incredible day.



The bike park



Lures out!

CHAPTER 22

It sounds like you have a real appreciation for the outdoor activities both in Christchurch and Auckland. Can you share a particularly memorable adventure you've had in either place that captured the essence of why you love it there



Scan to hear audio recording

I suppose one adventure that resonates with me the most was a fishing trip not too long ago. It was one of those chilly mornings on the harbour, definitely a shorts and swan dry sort of day. However, the water was like glass and then slowly, the sun came around, started to burn off all the mist. I'd taken the boat out with a mate, nothing fancy, just to find some bait, find some fish, get after it.

We flew out past Rangitoto, dropped anchor and before long, we were pulling snapper one after another. It was massive, just one of those rare days where you catch 42-centimetre fish after 42-centimetre fish. The fish were just hungry. I think you could have thrown the dog down there and he would have come up with a snapper.

But between the bites, we sat back with our coffee, the Rangi in the distance as our background, the almost endless horizon, and Little Barrier and Tiritiri Matangi on the other side. It just captured exactly what's so good about Auckland. Then a container ship comes through and you've got ferries whizzing around and just how you can get on a boat, tuck in behind an island and the city almost doesn't exist anymore.

There are things there, and then you're seeing the guys in bigger boats, they're hammering it out to the other side of Great Barrier, probably chasing a bluefin or something like that. It's just brilliant, the balance of the hustle and the city and then the freedom of the sea.

And Christchurch is probably more about a bike down the hills, and roaring around. But in Christchurch, it was more about cars and getting out to places like Queenstown or Wanaka, or going over to the West Coast and things like that. It just gave you an opportunity to hang with family, friends. Both are unique and both have their amazing upsides.

But I guess that day and many other days, I've probably had a dozen days that have been really similar where maybe I've taken somebody else out and they've been fishing before but just had no luck. You just can't beat it for that.



The lighthouse on a perfect day.

CHAPTER 23

How have your relationships with Rob and Di evolved over the years



Scan to hear audio recording

Growing up, Rob and Di were larger-than-life figures to me. They were my heroes. Rob was the mischief-maker, the bloke who always had a brilliant idea that usually ended up with me flat on my face. Di was the bossy but caring big sister, part-time dance instructor, part-time secret keeper. The roles were pretty clear.

As the years rolled by, these roles blurred. Rob and I became more like mates. These days, we grab a beer, talk about cars, or just take the mickey out of each other without it feeling like a big brother, little brother dynamic. With Di, the bossiness really mellowed into advice. She's still straight to the point, but I appreciate it more now.

What's really changed is that sense of respect. When you're young, you see your siblings as the people who steal your toys or dob you in. But as adults, you see what they've been through and what they've achieved, and you feel proud to be connected.

Now, when we catch up, it doesn't really matter how long it's been. There's always laughter, there are old stories, and there's that unspoken bond that really never goes away.

CHAPTER 24

**What are the important life lessons you've learnt
from your mother, Jan**



Scan to hear audio recording

I guess it would be to work hard and be there for others. Yeah, I think when we're younger, we probably take a lot of things from our parents, even things we wouldn't necessarily choose to take from them. What springs to mind is how my mum was always loyal to companies, and in the end, they weren't always loyal to her.

So, I think it would just be about hard work and being there for people, being available for them. Mum was always around to lend a hand. She was constantly looking after other kids, just trying to do the right thing.

Another thing I'd take from her is to be brave. Don't be afraid to change careers. She changed careers a few times, always in search of the right one, and in the end, she got what she wanted. I think that's brave. In a time when people didn't really quit their jobs and retrain, it was practically unheard of, especially for single mothers. But she did that.

So, I think that's what I would take from her. And just don't put up with anybody's nonsense. Say what you're thinking. It doesn't mean you need to be rude, but it does mean that you don't need to suffer through nonsense. If you feel strongly about something, you should communicate that with people. And again, that doesn't mean you need to be rude, but you should tell them.



The extended family..

CHAPTER 25

**Can you share a memorable event or experience
that tested your values or beliefs**



Scan to hear audio recording

An experience that really tested my values was when I lost a couple of clients in business a while back. On paper, it wasn't the end of the world; businesses shift, people move on, but when you've built something from the ground up, it can feel personal. My instinct was to panic, to chase after the work, even if it meant taking on jobs I knew would drain me and compromise the standards that I'd set.

That was the crossroads. Do I lower the bar? Do I keep the money coming in? Or do I just stick to the way that I believed a business should be run? Honest, fair, and work with what I can actually stand behind.

I decided to stick with my guns, even though it was tough. It meant tightening the belt, but it also gave me clarity. I realised my values weren't just about my business; they were about the kind of dad, husband, and person that I want to be. Cutting corners might pay off in the short term, but it chips away at who you are.

It wasn't easy, but looking back, I'm glad I chose to hold the line. That experience taught me values only really mean something when they're tested.

CHAPTER 26

**Can you share some major events or milestones
from your life in the 2000s**



Scan to hear audio recording

Can I what? The 2000s were fantastic. You know, perhaps 1998, 99 were the tail end of a great era, but yes, 2000, 2001, 2004. I suppose those are probably the years where I grew up the most. They're likely the years where I thought I knew it all. The music that was being released at the time was simply epic. It was an incredible time to be alive.

There were so many cool bands emerging, such as Silver Chair. I started a business, we moved around, but back then, there was just so much cool stuff being released. The Killers, Foo Fighters, She Head were consistently producing great music. I'd be in the backyard of someone's house with The Rock playing, and later when I moved to Auckland, Hauraki.

It's as if the soundtrack of the 2000s was just so good, it made everything else pass by. Live music was a significant part of that too. I attended a lot of gigs in Christchurch, Brisbane, Auckland and I think when a crowd comes together, there's no better event. Sometimes you can get that feeling from going to different shows, but music concerts are often the best way.

I'll never forget going to Metallica and feeling that everyone in that room was on the same wavelength. Perhaps a few weren't at Metallica, but at the Foo Fighters, we were all on the same page and it was so cool. It was a fascinating time because the internet had emerged, films like *The Matrix* were being released, we were really starting to see technology come home to roost.

So, really cool music, really cool films and shows. It was probably a bit later, but *Avatar* coming out was significant. I'll never forget *The Matrix* and *The Matrix Reloaded*, they were just so mind-boggling to watch. All of us were sort of wandering around thinking that we were probably in *The Matrix*, it was that compelling.

Amazing music. There were so many significant events and milestones from the 2000s. It was a fascinating time to be alive. Fantastic. And it was a great time to be young as well. That's probably the key thing.

CHAPTER 27

It sounds like music and the emerging digital age played a crucial role in your formative years.

Could you share more about how the combination of these two elements influenced your personal growth and worldview during this period



Scan to hear audio recording

The 2000s were pretty wild. They were cool and they were definitely cool for me because I was of age now; I was 20. The world's your oyster once you're 20. You can do the things that you wanted to do and you're starting to have the money to do it.

Music was always awesome. It was something that got me through the highs and the lows. I'm sure that's the same for everyone. When the digital age hit home, though, it really erupted. We used to have to wait for CDs to arrive in New Zealand and they'd be weeks sometimes. You'd never get new emerging music. You'd just get what you were spoon-fed by the big record labels and you could only really buy the top 10.

All of a sudden there were forums and people were sharing playlists on iTunes. Napster, LimeWire, you could just see all of this really awesome stuff that the rest of the world was doing and it was super cool. Music all of a sudden could travel instantly. It didn't need to be on a plane anymore and that was epic. I found things like drum and bass, I found rap that I'd never heard before. It was really cool. Techno music, those sorts of things.

On a personal level, it was like having a constant source of inspiration and perspective. It sort of let you know that the rest of the world was probably going through a lot of what you were. Pushing through a 12-hour workday, all of a sudden you knew that there was someone else over the other side of the world listening to this music and doing that too. And I think that was really cool.

But it wasn't just about convenience. The digital age really started to show me how things could happen and change. And I don't think we'd really seen change like that, not to a fundamental service. Obviously, video streaming came not long after it and we lost our Video Village and our Blockbuster videos, they just disappeared. And it was a real shame. And yet, it was awesome at the same time.

Music gave me the rhythm of my life. And the digital age, it just changed everything. It gave us just this richness and this depth that we'd never heard before. Previously, if a radio wasn't playing it, you really didn't know about it. All of a sudden, there were just these new things dropping in all the time. It was just a game changer.

The thing that it really taught me was that nothing stays the same and that disruption is normal. That's what happens. Obviously, later we got Uber and Apple Movies and those sorts of things. But it was crazy to be able to just go onto your computer and buy a movie and watch it. That was just mind boggling. But it became the norm.

CHAPTER 28

What are some significant cultural or historical events that occurred in your lifetime? How did they impact you personally



Scan to hear audio recording

An experience that really tested my values was when I lost a couple of clients in business a while back. On paper, it wasn't the end of the world; businesses shift, people move on, but when you build something from the ground up, it can feel personal.

My instinct was to panic, to chase after the work, even if it meant taking on jobs I knew would drain me and compromise the standards that I'd set. That was the crossroads. Do I lower the bar? Do I keep the money coming in? Or do I just stick to the way that I believed a business should be run? Honest, fair, and work with what I can actually stand behind.

I decided to stick with my guns, even though it was tough. It meant tightening the belt, but it also gave me clarity. I realised my values weren't just about my business; they were about the kind of dad, husband, and person that I want to be. Cutting corners might pay off in the short term, but it chips away at who you are.

It wasn't easy, but looking back, I'm glad I chose to hold the line. That experience taught me values only really mean something when they're tested.

CHAPTER 29

**What's the story behind moving from
Christchurch to Auckland**



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The move from Christchurch to Auckland wasn't something I'd mapped out years in advance; it just kind of unfolded. Christchurch will always be where I grew up, but after a while, it felt like I'd outgrown it. I'd done the jobs, built some roots, but I was looking for a fresh start and new opportunities.

Auckland had that pull, a bigger city, more work, a different pace of life, and I wanted to put our family in a place where there was room to grow, for us, the kids, for the business side of things. So, we packed up, took a deep breath, and made the move.

It wasn't without its challenges. Auckland traffic, for one, that'll test anyone's patience. But once we settled in, it started to feel like home. There's something exciting about being in a place that's always buzzing, always moving forward, always something going on.

The story, in a way, was about change, leaving behind the comfort of what you know and backing yourself to make it work elsewhere. Auckland gave us that chance to build the next chapter.

CHAPTER 30

**How would you describe the journey of your life
so far in just a few sentences**



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Well, if I had to sum it up, I'd say that my life's been a mix of graft, growth and a fair bit of laughter along the way. From a barefoot bandit down in Christchurch, chasing around cricket balls in the backyard, to building businesses, raising a family and carving out a life in Auckland. It's been a ride that's tested me, grounded me and given me plenty to be proud of as well.

There's been bumps in the road for sure, but losses, hard lessons and moments where I've had to stop and rethink who I am or what I want. But every one of those turns shaped me into someone who values family, honesty and the freedom that comes from backing yourself.

If there's one thread that runs through it all, I've never had it all figured out, but I've always kept moving, building, trying to do it with a bit of a laugh, never taking anything too seriously. And that to me is the journey.

CHAPTER 31

**What are your favourite things about living in
Auckland now**



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One of the things I love most about living in Auckland is the mix of it all. You've got that big city energy. Everything's here, from restaurants to events to opportunity, but at the same time, you're never far from the coast. I can be sitting in traffic, then out on the boat chasing snapper the next. The balance between hustle and escape is pretty unique. There aren't many places around the world that are like that.

It's also the people. The diversity is something else. Christchurch will always be home, but Auckland has this melting pot of cultures, food and people. I'll never forget that the first Indian curry place that was really any good in Christchurch was actually owned by white people. That always made me laugh; to get a good Indian curry in Christchurch, you'd have to go and talk to a local bloke. But that's how it is.

In Auckland, you can grab a world-class coffee in the morning, some incredible sushi for lunch and some fish and chips at night. It keeps life interesting. I like that Alex gets to grow up seeing and experiencing so many different ways of living. But yes, the water is a big one for me. Being able to get out on the harbour, explore the islands or even just sit at the beach with the family, that's something I'll never take for granted.

Back in Christchurch, we had the river and the coastline, but the beaches were usable for maybe a week a year. It wasn't ideal. Most of the time, the tarmac would melt to your feet in that time. Then there's the lifestyle, which I think is just overall a walk along the waterfront, a trip out to Waiheke or just hanging in the backyard with a barbecue. It's all here.

And because work opportunities are stronger up here, it's given me the ability to provide for the family while still making time for those things that matter. Sure, the traffic drives me mad, but the trade-off is worth it. You learn to work around the traffic and not be in it. Auckland's not perfect, but it's given me the right mix of opportunity, lifestyle and freedom. To me, that's why it feels like it's probably the right place to be.

It gets its grief, especially from South Islanders, but there's a lot we were lied to about Auckland and a lot we weren't told. It's definitely worth coming and checking out. Not Queen Street, but the rest of it.



Tiritiri Matangi on a clear day.



One of the many islands to explore

CHAPTER 32

What role does reading Sci-fi books and watching movies play in your life



Scan to hear audio recording

For me, sci-fi has always been more than entertainment. It's been a bit of an escape, a way to switch off from the grind in everyday life, whilst keeping my brain ticking and engaged. Running businesses, raising a family, all that day-to-day stuff. It can be full on, picking up a book like *Dune* or watching a film like *Blade Runner*. It lets me step into another world for a while. One where there are bigger problems, bigger, stranger things happening, but in a way that's not so different to our own.

As a kid, sci-fi sparked my imagination. I'd sit there reading and start picturing whole worlds, ships, battles and stories in my head. That sense of wonder has never left. In a way, it fed my love of creating things in real life, whether it was just tinkering with cars, building landscapes, or now designing garden art. It's that same creative muscle that's exercised in a different way.

As an adult, sci-fi gives me a perspective. A good book or film often raises big questions about power, humanity, survival, and technology and its place amongst humans. Those ideas stick with you. They make you reflect on your own world, your own choices, and sometimes even the kind of future you're helping to shape for your kids. I think that's a big part of what we all should be asking ourselves today.

And then there's the simple joy of it. There's nothing quite like sitting down with a cracking book, losing track of time and realising you've been in another universe for three hours, or watching a movie that leaves you staring at the credits thinking, "Wow, what just happened?"

So yes, sci-fi isn't really just a hobby for me. It's a catalyst and a fuel for the imagination, a way to keep that childlike curiosity alive, and a reminder that no matter how ordinary life can feel, there's always going to be bigger stories wanting to be explored.

CHAPTER 33

It sounds like sci-fi has had an immense impact on your life, from sparking your imagination to influencing your perspective on larger life issues. Can you share a specific instance when a sci-fi book or film profoundly influenced a decision you made or a path you took, either personally or professionally



Scan to hear audio recording

I suppose, I'm not sure, perhaps it's a bit of amusing timing. I've mentioned before that 'Dune' always reminded me to be cautious of worshipping false gods. Just because someone begins with good intentions, it doesn't mean they'll end with good intentions, or that their plan will be beneficial to you. However, in terms of the timing of reading books, which is really what this question is about, how books influence our decisions, I'd probably say the book 'Neuromancer' by William Gibson was significant. It's a book that tells a story, but it really makes you question where technology begins and where we end.

I suppose it was a peculiar time, and it was a case of how much are we willing to surrender to technology and machines? I was likely at a crossroads with my landscaping business. Landscaping is quite tough on the body and I was probably feeling a bit of burnout. As enjoyable as it is to hand over a completed garden to a client, there's a limit to how many you can do. Hiring staff isn't easy either.

Reading 'Neuromancer' at that time, when the thought was already there, made me think differently about what I wanted. The book isn't really about technology, it's more about identity, control of it, and carving out your own space in a world that's constantly changing. I don't regret leaving landscaping, but it really made me realise that if I didn't make a change, nobody else would. In the end, I would just get caught up in a system that wasn't mine, dealing with fatigue.

Perhaps reading that book at that time made me think more about these issues, which is why I started the garden art business. The truth is, I saw the prices people were charging for what I considered garden rubbish, not garden art. I was inspired by the rusty tuis placed in trees and fences. There's some really cool stuff out there, and some really rubbish stuff. What surprised me was how profitable the tui thing was, but also how hard it was to find cool stuff. If you could, people were talking about £13,000, £20,000 for some of these pieces. I thought there must be a market where both things can be true, a good price and good looking. So, I decided to take control of that space and step into it.

I suppose it's just something that's leaning back into something more meaningful, or just different for a while. The main thing is I don't have to dig any holes. So, I suppose sci-fi, in this case, wasn't just about entertainment. It was something that flipped a few switches and was a catalyst, you could say.

CHAPTER 34

**Looking back on your life story so far, what
would you say to your younger self**



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This isn't hard at all. It's really simple. The thing I would say is understand compound interest and understand compounding. I understood that later. It really wasn't until I met a few wealthy people that they explained to me how important investing was and the significance of having assets that appreciated in value.

Late into my twenties and even in my early thirties, I spent a lot of the money that I'd earned. I'd always owned a house, but for various reasons, those were sold and we didn't always make a profit from them. So, the main lesson would be to do everything the same again, but understand compound interest.

I wished I knew about investing at a younger age or that someone had perhaps pulled me aside and said, "Look, KiwiSaver is going to be great for a lot of people, but by the time you're ready to retire, they probably won't let you access the money until you're 75."

Living in Australia with self-funded and self-controlled superannuation really brought this home to me. That was really where I started to realise Australia has better systems in place for their citizens. I guess that opened the doors for me to long-term investing and, gosh, I just wished I could have done it ten years sooner. It would be a significantly different picture.

So, compound interest and small amounts at an early age turn into big amounts at an older age. Now, at the age I am, I would just be playing with a much more significant sum. One of the flaws of New Zealand is that these sorts of things aren't talked about, but in Australia it's widely known. It's common for young men to know about these things and to be doing it.

CHAPTER 35

**Who have been the most influential people in
your life and how have they shaped your journey**



Scan to hear audio recording

The first person that comes to mind is Mum. She shaped my journey in more ways than I would have ever realised at the time. It's not until we get older and look back, but watching her in the garden, seeing the way she poured love and patience into something that grew slowly, I guess that left a deep mark on me. It taught me that care and consistency matter, not just in gardens, but in life, with consistency probably being one of the really big underlines in that sentence.

The way she always backed me, even when I was messing things up, it gave me a foundation of confidence to take risks. My brother Rob had a big influence too, but in a different way. He pushed me, sometimes literally, over and off the edge on a dodgy flying fox. He also showed me what it meant to take chances and to not be afraid of falling on your face, and that it's okay to be the butt of a joke sometimes. Not all the time, but you don't need to be upset because something didn't go your way. That gave me the courage to have a crack, even if you don't have all the answers. I've carried that through my life.

Then there's my sister. She had the knack for cutting through the noise and telling me the truth, even when I didn't want to hear it. I think I've probably done that for quite a lot of people over the years too. Her influence, I guess, grounded me and stopped me from getting ahead of myself. Actually, I don't think anyone's ever stopped me from getting ahead of myself. But she's definitely taught me to slow down and listen and get all of the information together before making a decision. She also taught me that you probably never have all of the information.

Outside of my family, there have been mentors for sure, bosses who taught me what not to do and a few that showed me the right way to do it. Back in my early landscaping days, one of them showed me the value of doing the job properly, even if it takes longer or costs more. That lesson has shaped every business decision I've ever made. Sometimes they weren't bosses, I should say, but just other people that I've worked with in the industry.

And then there's my wife and the kids. Becoming a husband and a dad changed everything. They influence me every day, reminding me why I work hard, why I need balance, and I guess why the little moments mean the most. And just to sort of pause on those things and be present and enjoy them.

But yeah, lots of people have shaped my journey along the way. Probably, you know, less by telling me how to do it and more by showing me how to do it. And that's not necessarily, hey, look at this, this is how you do it. It's just you learn by seeing and, you know, we tend to replicate what we see. But everyone's taught me something different. Put together, all up, I guess that's a big part of what's made me who I am.

CHAPTER 36

Can you share some significant challenges or obstacles you've faced in your personal or professional life



Scan to hear audio recording

Ah, there are plenty of challenges and obstacles; that's what life is. You learn that you need to get good at jumping from one pile of trouble to the next. That's what's going to happen. Life's going to throw a lot of things your way, and you've just got to get good at dealing with them.

When I first went out on my own, running a business sounded exciting. Freedom, independence, building something from scratch. But reality hit fast. Underquoted jobs, not understanding the time to not just go and see someone, but to get somewhere. Going and doing a quote could wind up being a four-hour job, and you think it'll take half an hour, but it doesn't. You can't get that three and a half hours back. You've got to account for it.

Then getting your first tax bill, which everybody told me I should be proud of, but they weren't the ones having to pay it. A lot of the time, I wondered if I'd made a mistake and that tested me. What I learned was you've got to be resilient in these things. You've got to try and avoid mistakes, but you know that you're going to make them and just deal with them quickly and get on with it. Try not to make the same ones twice.

On the personal side, one of the tougher challenges was moving cities, leaving behind the familiarity of Christchurch, my mates, a lot of family and even the comfort of knowing where everything was. To land in a city that was as big as Auckland, it was daunting. It forced me to rebuild networks. We knew a couple of people up here, but not like in Christchurch. You soon realise that you probably knew a thousand people in your hometown and even if you didn't know them, you knew the faces and they were familiar and they recognised you. There's a tremendous amount of comfort in that.

I questioned whether I'd done the right thing, but it also pushed me to grow in ways that I wouldn't have if I'd stayed where I was comfortable. There have also been personal losses along the way. I'm often reminded by people my age or a little bit younger or older that you can lose it all. Losing people and seeing family battle with health issues has shook me more than anything that my job ever could. It just reminds you that a job is one of the things that you do, but it isn't who you are. Who you are is, well, you have to be alive to be somebody.

CHAPTER 37

**When you have travelled, where have you been
and what were some memorable experiences**



Scan to hear audio recording

I've been fortunate enough to travel. My first significant trip, I believe, was to Japan. I recall stepping off the train in Tokyo and being utterly astounded. Actually, it wasn't even stepping off the train, it was getting on. I approached what appeared to be a display. There was a map in English, indicating the line we needed to take, and then, suddenly, the entire thing moved back. There was a small Japanese man there, pointing and directing me where to go. I suppose he knew where I was heading because I was white. That was quite an experience.

The sensation of stepping off the train in Tokyo was overwhelming. The crowds on the platform, on the train, it was just madness. The different smells, particularly the scent of soy, are still vivid in my memory. The neon lights in different areas were quite different from what I had anticipated.

A standout memory was wandering through Kyoto's ancient gardens and temples. It was peaceful, serene, the complete opposite of Tokyo. It made me realise how travel can present such contrasting experiences. It's easy to visit a place, see a thing, and assume that's what the entire place is like. It would be simple to visit Tokyo and assume everyone is dressed in a school uniform and everyone plays video games until midnight, which isn't the case.

Another memorable experience was when we travelled through Europe. I spent some time in Italy. One day in Rome, I got lost near the Colosseum. Instead of panicking, I thought, 'What would a local do?' and 'What's the worst that can happen?' So, I just wandered around. I ended up in a piazza where locals were sitting outside, drinking, laughing, and having fun. It wasn't any of the major tourist sites that stuck with me, but that small moment. It was about seeing what happens behind the scenes, getting a glimpse of the real life there.

Remembering that, and realising that while you're somewhere doing something, there's something else going on elsewhere in the world, is quite remarkable.



Pre-lost Rome....



Stunning Kyoto

CHAPTER 38

It sounds like you've had some rich and varied experiences in different cultures.

Can you share more about how these encounters, like the unexpected directions in Tokyo and getting lost in Rome, have shaped your perspective on travel and life



Scan to hear audio recording

The first one would be that there really is someone doing that thing that you saw all the time, and there's someone walking around that corner like you did now, today. When I take myself back there, it allows me to pause and reflect. You know, when we think of those people in that piazza, they were so present, happy, and alive. That's so important, you know.

Actually, whilst this question is about the two things that I talked about, you couldn't really have more contrasting places and times. If we look at those Romans, they were just being and enjoying a coffee or a tea, whatever it was that each one was having. They were laughing and enjoying. They didn't seem to have anywhere to be except where they were. There's so much magic in that.

Now, I'm not criticising Japan when I say this, but it's purely my observation and what I feel like I saw. Everybody seemed to be going somewhere and to, and really to be, they were somewhere else. You'd sit with people on the train, there was no interaction. They were very quiet, reserved and polite. Culturally, they're just so different. The one I align with is the Italian way of doing things, just being present, laughing, enjoying and being with people.

The Japanese were fascinating. They seemed to be such workaholics. Maybe that isn't true because, at the same time in the evenings in Tokyo, it was so busy. You would also see older people when they were retired and they were very present and just enjoying time and a place. They're two very different cultures and two very different places.

How that influenced me and what gave me perspective is that, that's always going on. In the middle of your own day, it's important to reflect that somebody else is doing something. Just take that time to let yourself be there and remember, which one of those scenarios do you want to put yourself in? Which one of those people do you align yourself with? What values?

It's not even necessarily all Japanese, you can easily take those young people playing games and having fun in the evenings. But equally, do you want to be that, maybe that nameless, faceless, same suit wearing fellow that's on the train and just going off to what often look like their doom, not a day of work? Or, do you want to be the young person yelling and yahooing in the arcade?

I felt like whenever I was on the train, it felt like a lot of those men and women were yearning for probably their youth and their fun times in the electronic district and what have you. So, it had a really massive effect on just on perspective in general. But also, when it came to travel, it's just so important to go places and see that there are completely different ways of living and being. Your way in New Zealand is one thing and there's other New Zealanders who all do it differently and they have different lives.

You learn that as a young person when you start visiting your friends' houses and what have you. But, I think it's really important to see the rest of the world.

CHAPTER 39

If you were to give one piece of advice to the younger generations, what would it be



Scan to hear audio recording

I guess that would be slow down. Don't be in such a rush to grow up. Things are different now; you don't need to have kids in your early 20s if you don't want to.

But yes, I think the main advice would be to read. Stay off social media, avoid it. There's not a lot of good that comes from it, even the people who make it say that. And just, you know, be outside. If you live in New Zealand, enjoy New Zealand for all of its pluses and qualities. Don't listen to people that will tell you what's wrong and what's bad with it. You can find the right and wrong in every situation.

But enjoy yourself. Never stop enjoying yourself. Somewhere along the line, the world's going to try and convince you to stop being a child. Just don't listen to them. And yes, be honest and look for the best in people. I think that would be the main thing.

And you know, don't believe everything that everybody says online. There are lots of elements of that, be it get rich quick schemes or whatever it is. But yes, if you're going to have a job, make sure you have a job that you enjoy going to work at. You don't have to dislike anything about your life; you can change a lot of things.

I think perception and perspective are two really important things to all people. Try and understand where someone else is coming from and try and understand how they maybe came to their position. It doesn't mean that you have to agree or anything like that, but at least try and appreciate it.

But most of all, never forget to have fun.



Never forget to have fun