

## **CHAPTER 9**

### ***'SHUT UP' FOR 24 MONTHS***

What a great relief it was not to have to go to meetings!! To be released from the agony of sitting for hours listening to all that regurgitated, semi-processed, pseudo-political bullshit!!

I enrolled at the local Polytechnic and commenced a Certificate in Horticulture – daily lessons commenced early in February 1988

I moved out of the main bedroom – Rachel, while 'shut up' because of me, was forbidden any physical contact with me whatsoever

Well, there is an old saying: 'Even if you chase nature out with a pitch fork – she will find a way back in.'

It was not too long before my wife and I were sleeping together again – what bliss! Not only no radio and no TV – but no meetings as well. Even the rabbits on the front lawn laid back their ears in respect for the competition. My philosophy was a bit like that of the US air force – aim at the target often enough and sooner or later you just gotta get a hit!

And indeed we did – a couple of months later Rachel complained one morning of feeling nauseous – a trip to the local doctor confirmed that she was pregnant

In the meantime I continued with my studies at the Polytech. One morning all the students came up to view our garden which, with all my spare time at weekends, was indeed a picture. Rachel and I had been going for long rides along Dargaville Ocean Beach in the car – picking up attractive logs of drift wood and placing them around the garden

At our weekly 'priestly' that weekend I got strongly rebuked for allowing 'worldly people' to come on to our section

On the 13<sup>th</sup> may 1988 I graduated from Polytech with my Certificate in Horticulture (I still have it framed and proudly hanging on the spare bedroom wall) It was to be the first of many academic qualifications and I am very proud of it and all of them – they have been achieved through tremendous difficulty and at tremendous cost

About two weeks later I secured a full time employment position as Orchard Manager at a mixed orchard some fifteen minutes drive away at Tatarariki Orchard. I would head off in the morning, work long hours in the sun and fresh air – after three months I was tanned and fit

Our weekly 'priestly visits' continued. It was made clear to me that I was making no progress whatever – I was outspoken, rude and deliberately offensive. I remember telling Simpkin & Simpkin; 'If only all the officials had one neck so that their heads could be cut off with one foul blow'.

However, Rachel and I had become very close – it was indeed a marriage afflicted by tremendous external interference. Left alone we had become inseparable

At 11pm one night in the middle of September the ‘priests’ banged noisily on the door. They had come to tell Rachel that she was ‘shut up in her own right for having sex with her husband while he was in ‘the confined position’( I imagine they had drooled over the mechanics of all the ‘other positions’!!). This was in her eighth month of pregnancy – she was incredibly distressed – I kicked them out of the house

On the Sunday evening of the 16 October 1988 our son Nathan was born – a delightful infant with blond hair and blue eyes – he was totally adorable

I continued with my work at the orchard. I remember so clearly Nathan crawling to the door as I said goodbye – when I returned in the evening he would be crawling to then door to welcome me. Alas, I was never to see my son take his first steps

Rachel and I started to have serious discussions about ‘my position’ – my lack of ‘moral growth’ and so on and so on. I asked her if she would like a legal separation – she replied that she would not ask me for it but would accept it if I offered it to her

After continued discussion we agreed that this would be the best course of action. As ‘separation’ under Exclusive Brethren edict is ‘legal, moral and physical’ we would need to go to the family solicitor to draw up the agreement and I would have to move out of the family home – Simpkin & Simpkin eagerly awaited the proffering of this document

Our family solicitor was a Mr Howard Hammond. He enquired carefully into the circumstances – I had known him for a number of years since my employment in the local Magistrate’s Court in the early seventies and considered him a friend and a man of some ethics

He asked if he could ask us a question – the question was: ‘Do you two love each other’. We hurried to reply ‘yes’ in unison to this. He then said: ‘In that case – I am not prepared to have anything further to do with this matter – I will not separate two people who love each other’.

Howard Hammond was vilified by the Exclusive Brethren. He is to be admired for taking a stand directly in the face of the evil practised by the Exclusive Brethren cult. I was saddened to hear some years later that his life had been cut short by cancer. He was a brave man who made a real stand in a small community – my understanding is that all Exclusive Brethren took their legal work away from the firm (I bet all the lawyers breathed a sigh of relief at that – the EB were considered a total pain in the arse at the best of times!!)

The ‘priests’ arrived that evening and demanded to see the legal separation. We told them what had happened. They were livid with anger and instructed us to go down the next morning and ‘get the job done with the other legal firm across the road’

By this time I had severe misgivings as to what Rachel and I had agreed upon. The enormity of being separated from the wife I loved and the son I loved was bearing in

on me. I threw myself at their feet and begged for mercy – I warned them not to come to me in ten years time and say this had all been a mistake

But, there is no mercy in the Exclusive Brethren system – it is a system without natural feeling, without compassion and without justice. When they came to me, (not ten but thirteen years later), to apologise for what they did there was absolutely no mention of what they did over the separation. In fact, when I went out of my way to meet Desmond Simpkin (not one of the Simpkin & Simpkin duo) at Auckland airport (I was up at The Refugee Status Board appearing for a client at a refugee hearing) he remarked: 'I know no details of your case'. What was he meeting with me for if he had no knowledge? What sort of apology was this?

So, next day Rachel and I wearily trudged to the solicitors 'across the road'. No compunction here – the papers were drawn up

When we got home I told Rachel what we were doing was very wrong – I put the separation papers in the lounge fire and watched them burn

Well, when Simpkin & Simpkin turned up that night their wrath knew no bounds

The papers were replaced and I said goodbye to my family. The idea was that this was going to be a three month separation. As I headed off to the motor camp in the car towing the caravan behind, little did I know that this 'Goodbye' was going to last less than one week