

“I longed to be a firefighter”

by Tim¹



¹ Tim chose to use his real name in his story and changed other names in the story to pseudonyms. Real names are used for Brothers at Marylands where their abusive actions have been publicly reported and justice has already taken place.

I was born in Hamilton in 1965. We moved from house to house. First in Christchurch, then Hamilton, then Tauranga. We moved around. We never quite settled as it were. And when we finally went to Fiji, I was about four years old. It was the best years of our lives.

When I was a child, I was a bit of a rebel! I didn't pay much attention. Boys will be boys at that age. [In my] play centre years, we visited the old fire station in Fiji. And I longed to be a firefighter! But because I've got epilepsy, no fire service around the world would ever take on an epileptic! I mean can you imagine, I mean here's the fire chief and there's the firefighter. I've got to go in

whether [I had the time to] take my pills or not, come out or in the fire. So you can see the safety precautions there. But I was fantasising [being] a fire chief [as a young boy]. Dad had a Mazda car and that van was gonna be the fire truck. I would love to squeeze the hose, all that power water coming out of the hose Oh! [Name removed]'s house is on fire. Yahoo! I'm the fire chief, I'm having the time of my life!

It wasn't even primary school years when I started having seizures. They came on so quickly. I had no control over them whatsoever. [But I can feel it when it is coming. My mum said] "Tim, (*laugh*) if you go in that toilet do not lock the lock from the inside!" This is

the toilet, and I locked the door from the other side. And I had a fit. I don't know whether the door was actually wooden but I suppose it was. The rest of [my] family they knew what to do. Tim's having a fit! Knock down the door. [After the fit] it takes another two hours to sleep it off. Cause **all that energy** is gone. And you've gotta restore it all back again in to the body. [When my family asked what it was like, I said] "do you know how lightning and thunder occurs?" Like that.

I remember going to Christchurch [for treatment]. That was about the time the Moscow Circus came to town. And I was staying, after my operation I came out in a

wheelchair, [there they were] Camels, lions. Oh yeah! Moscow Circus. I don't think I actually went.

I hated and despised what my father had written in the old passport. And I thought **you bastard!** And I turned around like that, gave him a filthy look. I think from that perspective whether he knew anything about my disability and he must have put it down as MR [mentally retarded] or IHC is another matter. But it all accounted for the same thing.

[I went to Christchurch again for an assessment]. I remember thinking, what the hell am I doing here in this hospital? They used to have little blocks and I just hated [the assessments]! Thinking, I just want to be normal. I

wanna become a firefighter. I wanna become somebody.

My mother said you're going to that school [Marylands]. In those days, [when] you were told to go, you were told to go! And that was the end of it. You had hardly any say in the matter. But you can imagine the reverse mess that my old man said no I'm not, I'm gonna stay in Fiji. I think he probably would have said well Tim you haven't got much say in the matter lad because your mother wants you to go to the school in Christchurch. We've made arrangements and dah dah dah. I guess that's what would have happened.

Marylands was a school for boys with disabilities of

various kinds back in the day. I remember being taken down to the school [in 1978] and it had a great big sign. Of course in those days I didn't know how to spell. And it said special school for boys, Maryland's big broad letters. Well how the heck do you spell Mary? And then you got lands. So as you entered Nash road you look at the sign. Oh yeah Mary m a r y lands l a n d s. So that in itself was a sign for me to learn how to spell Marylands. when I arrived it was old and it wasn't warm. There were run down radiators, heaters if you will. While I was there, the money was probably there and they decided to knock down the old part of the building and put up new ones in 1979. Villas. One, two,

three, four and five. In the new school, or villas rather, the boys were allowed to have photos of their family. And I can't recall ever having one. Isn't that strange? Maybe I did, I dunno.

I had cousins, my uncle John and aunty Colleen in Christchurch. They were my mother's side family. I went out to visit them on the odd weekends. Very lovely people. I loved it. Sense of freedom. We had these other days as well on fete [fair] days. [There were] old tents and bits and bobs. And then mum made a cake and sent it from Fiji. All the way from Fiji to Christchurch. You can imagine the cake would get in to Christchurch stale and not edible. I think my aunt made the odd cake, I think. And

other brothers and what not made cakes. I used to take my uncle John and aunty Colleen around to the fete. They would come around and check it out.

So but the building itself, the old classrooms, we had to line up outside of the classrooms. But first we had to go outside. And the headmaster would say you have to, your reports will be sent up to your parents last week. Or who's been a good boy and who's been a bad boy! Or who's played up was playing up with the staff.

That school alone wasn't, I don't think it was designed for [school certificate/academic education]. We were given this notebook with words in it.

That was the homework. And I had to get one of the supervisors to go how do you spell this word Tim? A e I o u We had spelling tests. If we were taught words that were given the day before. You had to remember them and take them back. And if you couldn't remember them I think you learn how to spell them again.

I remember getting the strap for some reason. I can't think why. It might have been spelling, might have been something to do with lack of learning. Was I being naughty? Was I being cheeky? I don't know. I think the teacher would send me off to the headmaster and I come in here! (smacking sound). Jesus that bloody

strap was pure leather! And before the head master strapped me I could see the previous marks on it that had been widely used on the other boys for whatever reasons. And you could see the wear and tear on it. I thought ooh! Six of the best. You had to take it like a man. Or young man.

One of the boys who was at the same school as me, my senior, he rolled up, was about 1979. And this is probably why I don't like people crunching their fists and their knuckles. And he said if anyone touches my bike I will bend your fingers. Now I don't know I was probably being a bit ... I thought well I'll take the risk. I did! So I took his bike and he

found out who it was and I ran for my life! And when he caught up with me, he got my hand and he bent my fingers. So I think from that day onwards, I hate it when people bend their knuckles.

Some of the good memories are learning, we did PE, we ran, and we would run up from Nash Road outside of the school and back again. It was a hell of a long run. And you would feel the stitch in your [legs] ooh! And to ease the pain you just put your hand on your hip and run back again. And we'd do soccer and support our teams. And depending on which colour, we're yellow, green and that was just the group we were in.

We had this huge [dining room] bigger than this room! God almighty I've never seen so many boys in me life! You had tables with seats. Oh yeah. We had a bit of a mad bloody cook actually. What cook cooked up that night for the menu, your breakfast, your lunch and your dinner you ate. More please! What? More? So we would come back to the table and sit down and shut up and eat our kai. I remember roast potatoes. Ooh! I have never eaten roast potatoes the way our cook made them in their bloody jackets! Absolutely to perfection! Yesss! And it was just words fail me. Oooohhh! There's the good memories. And I think of all those roast potatoes. I'll keep remembering them til the day

I die! If I ever die tomorrow or next week or today at least I'm gonna see a nice, crisp, roast potato up in heaven. The roast potato in heaven! I'm looking forward to it.

And because I'm probably easily adaptable to most things in life. I remember Henry who was on the same table as me. I mean, I look back to the days in Fiji. To actually spread butter or margarine was easy on a piece of toast. But I don't think I actually had the experience of opening up a jam container or butter Fernleaf. And Henry he got that little corner. And helped me out with that. It was about the only decent thing he ever did for me. So I learned from that how you peel the plastic from the jam

or the Fernleaf butter. But apart from that he did other bad things for me.

I used to help out in the kitchen, the old kitchen as well as the new one. I probably won't be the only one that did that. It wasn't that much cleaning. It wasn't slave, it wasn't child labour. It was just me volunteering. [One day] the cook had this meat cleaver and somebody must have upset him. I dunno what was said. I must have been twelve going on thirteen or whatever. And he had this meat cleaver! Rararararara! Ok!

[Other thing I did was] my first aid training. And I had this great big wooden bloody trolley to push collecting the

patients' dirty laundry [from the hospital that was nearby the school]. Oh it stunk! I thought oh god, where's my peg? It was eeeh! What am I doing this for? How old am I? Fourteen going on fifteen! Just volunteered. [Helping] kind of runs in the family I guess.

I remember having to go to special celebrations like Easter and that sort of thing and sing hymns, 'I'm the Lord of the Dance said he' oh god how does it go? It was one of the things we had to sing. And the pews were just wooden. (sings the song) referring to Jesus. And then I think there was some great big confessional boxes as you come through the tower.

The boys were given work experience. It wasn't paid. It was there for a reason. And that reason was to do with should we ever leave school we might take on those jobs. And I applied for,,, don't know what I applied for. And the guy that offended me, he worked for the butchery which I am sure now is long gone. And I used to get up about six in the morning and I used to wear a white jacket. That was part of my uniform. And I used to walk down Nash Road to go to the butchery. It was just before you got to the actual city of Christchurch. It wasn't far from school then I'd walk back again. And I mean I didn't learn much about the meat and the cow, pig and so on. Boy, the ingredients

weren't even around then. You'd have these dead animals hang up on these hooks in the freezer. [Customers would come and say] "oh a pound, not even a pound, some sausages please or steak" or whatever. There'd be a cabinet and you'd go up this little flight of stairs. And in there would be I don't know, cow or pig, whatever was hanging on that hook in the fridge. And in the back was where they made these sausages. Ooh, the one thing that scared the hell out of me was this revolving machine to make mince. I'm glad I've got my fingers still after all these years. Those blades if you put your fingers in there, you could kiss them goodbye.

That was part of the work experience on Tuesdays. And the boys were all there and that was part of the scheme. Cause we had PE on Mondays and Tuesdays the boys would be sent out to various jobs. And then I went from Gleesons butchery to work in a truck. They had a furniture removal truck. That was the best job I had. Really was. Oh I loved it! I loved it so much. Was riding in a big truck! Opzzland was the name of the driver. It's a Dutch name. I loved just sitting there with him. And one of the trips we used to do. It just made me felt woooo! I'm in seventh heaven here. You can see just the whole road! And you got your driver next to you and I thought wow! This is the life! And

years later I sent a letter to Mr Opzzland. Dear Mr Opzzland I wouldn't mind coming in to Christchurch and working for you. Wrote back. No, can't do it Tim. Due to the fact that you've got epilepsy it'd be too dangerous for you. Oh ok, end of story.

One frosty morning we were all tucked up in our beds as us boys were to be expected to do so. And the alarm went off. And I guess it was the central fire station in Christchurch. They came round here. And there were the staff door. And that's the brothers bedroom. The brothers, he wouldn't be in charge of the entire villas. Other brothers would be in charge of their own villas, three, four and five. Anyway,

I couldn't get out. I mean I could, but the boys went out the fire escape door. And there's a door just about there. And it was locked from the inside and I couldn't be bothered [un]locking. I had a bad fit and I can't remember what the hell happened after that. If only half my old mates would come now and answer those questions, boy that'll tell you a story. Tim wasn't drunk but he had a few issues. But they weren't very well controlled. I used to take Zarontin and Dilantin four times a day. Back in the day when they were in glass bottles. Now they're in plastic. And the last seizure I had was in 2019. I've been doing pretty good for myself these days. Whether it's my old age or not.

Brother Ephraim was the headmaster. Before his time was brother Bernard McGrath and you may have heard about him in the papers in the past not so long ago. He abused boys. He was the headmaster at the time. Then who came after him? Think it might have been brother, yeah might have been brother Viani. And then after him came brother [name removed]. Oh yes. Sorry, I'll go back a bit. I had brother Ephraim. Then I had brother Garchow. He's dead. He was also an abuser. He was a male nurse. He would do his check up on the boys for anything to do with health. The physical side of things. He had his little consulting room downstairs on the

ground floor. And then that was his call. Well not his call, but he would make an announcement which used to go like this. "All boys with medical needs please come to my consulting room now if you think you've got a need to come and see me." But if there was any boys that needed any help that was referred to or needed hospital care, that was referred to Doctor Connor. Or if he needed Doctor Connor to come in to the school and check up on someone then that was arranged.

I didn't personally go in the consulting room. [But] the boys, they must have known before, yeah. There was some abuse going on. I'd like to meet this young man [who

abused me]. But I'm not going to go on and on about it for too long. But he would have been there before me and I'd like to meet him. The only thing I wanted to do was I wanted to get away from the one that offended me. But I wanted to know who offended [him] before I came on the scene?

There was no sex education at school. I don't remember dad ever telling me about sex and males making love to women and blah blah blah blah either. The first time I learned anything around sex was when I was in Fiji. I remember reading this book which was in our possession at the time. It must have been in the morning and I read this book and it was clearly

illustrated wasn't it? You had the boy growing to a young man and man with the penis and woman **lllllaaaahhh! Oh my god! I was somewhat taken aback. I thought, and then they had a photograph of the woman. Who wrote this book?**

I knew nothing about circumcision. I just assumed that most boys had non-circumcised penises. Until the day that he took me aside in the old gymnasium and did what he did. I was shocked. As opposed to "what the hell's going on here". He was touching my genitals or genitalia. I was pinned against a brick wall and I thought ... He was like a statue! Basically. I mean, there was an escape route

but I was frozen. I thought ...
We don't do this in Fiji! I think he might have said this is our secret. He wasn't afraid and that's when I learned that he had a circumcised penis and he did it again when we went away on that field trip. In bed he raped me. And that's when I learned that boys do have circumcised and uncircumcised penises. And I thought hmm, ok. I suppose it was the way I was brought up that you don't assume that most boys would have uncircumcised penises. But I didn't know that for my puberty years until he did what he did. He just targeted me I guess. This is the part of the problem at the moment because I would like to know why and that's why I'd love to meet up with him. They were

happy days [till] when he abused me. He was in my class. He was in the same dormitory as me. Oh he was [my friend] until he did that bad thing on me. I thought bugger you! He trapped me how do I put this? I am 56 years of age. In the last 43 years I have lived my life with trying to erase him from my mind. It's not raw but powerful. He should never have done what he did. But with me trying to erase him from my mind and it's a powerful thing to forget about because every single day, I'm not the only one who feels this way. My old comrades would probably feel the same way as I do.

Had I told my uncle when I was about twelve going on thirteen and my parents - my

family lived in Fiji. I would imagine in my mind at the time that dad would have said hang on Tim's telling porkies here. Ok John, that's my uncle, go up to the school and find out. Now I would have been telling the truth but Uncle John would have been given porkies himself.

Basically if I hadn't done all this [reflecting and writing] I wouldn't be here today because I reckon I would be in prison. I probably would have seduced half a dozen teenage boys. And for the tape, I would more than likely have done that years ago but because I'm with an organisation which used to be called DEALS it's now called Community Connections, they put me on the straight

and narrow. But that doesn't mean to say that the hurt and the pain is always gonna be there till the day I die. Because we're all angry in one way or another. And as I said I live independently and I love being independent.

I went back to Fiji after the school. I suppose in some ways I was lucky. My family. My first boss was Mr David Ashby. My father knew him and he talked to him to give me a job. He worked in a big company called Stitches and Pierce. And it worked out very well. I had own telephone, own desk, woo! There's a door there and Mr Ashby's office is there. And I was going on seventeen and I loved it! Wow!

I was working in Fiji until my father fell ill. He was bipolar. So then dad decided I'm going to Switzerland. And she [mum] stopped him. You're not going anywhere, you're coming back here! So in some ways he destroyed the family and then he went off to Samoa and he found a Samoan woman. And then he married her. And then he produced another blimin kid, another lad. And at the time I was angry with him. I mean how dare you! Then the rest of the family came back to New Zealand. I'm sure he would have been all right when he had the first lot of boys, Jason, Tim and John. I'm sure he idolised Justine being the only daughter. But he just I don't know.

And when I came back [to New Zealand] I had hell of all these blasted [sheltered] workshops! I thought there's gotta be a better life out there for me. And I was right. One day I just had enough! I mean look! Up at 6, get the 7:15 am train, catching the 3 o'clock bus, and all I got was five bucks for the end of the week. But that was because their manager couldn't get me any more than that. Because if he had done that that would have affected the benefit.

There was this dairy owned by a guy called Steve. That was where the Wellington Girls' College students would get their sweets. I wanted to work there. I spoke to Jenny who is a former epilepsy field officer. Jenny spoke to Steve

[Logan]. Cause Steve was a bit cautious. Yeah I suppose he was. What do I do if I have a thing. A fit. And it'll be all right. He took me on and he's never been the same since. He had a restaurant, and I went on to work at the other restaurant. I've been working with him for thirty two, thirty three years as kitchen hand, peel spuds, veggies prep, cleaning. I stopped working [there] when they changed the owner.

And I got this phone call. And believe it or not I was rostered. Before I got rid of my landline. Tim, we need you to come in and do some dishes. It was Steve calling from another restaurant. When I finally went in oh lord! My workload was more than I could bear. I

had forgotten. I had just forgotten how much demands, the pressure! And oh god! They had four bins that needed to be cleaned out. And he wanted me to go and do the dishes. You want this, you want that. And I've gotta change dishwashers. I don't know how to change dishwasher water. Tim we need this. Dishes are getting piled up down here. Tim down to the prep kitchen and ... Tim now to the service kitchen. Tim we need this. I was only working from what? Probably midday to 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Never get out of here. Never. So they reduced my hours from 9 am to midday. I'm glad they did!

I have a retirement plan. Even though Steve did say

to me you're not gonna retire until I retire. Oh god! I think he's sixty something and so yeah. So I made the announcement on the 28th of September to the family and I've got their backing and support. I wasn't trying to dominate my older brother's birthday. He's just turned 58 I think. That's my oldest brother Jason. And I had no intention of dominating his birthday but I did prewarn them beforehand. I've got an announcement to make and da-da-da-da through Zoom before we have the Zoom meeting. And we were waiting for mum to come on Zoom but she came in later. "Well what's your big announcement Tim?" And I told them. I already decided

the day I will retire. The 30th of the 9th 2025 which is a Friday.