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GRAPEVINE MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2007 UPDATE

a little too close to home ...

IT'S WEIRD SOMETIMES THE WAY THINGS TURN OUT. I MEAN, WHEN I WAS WORKING ON THE last Grapevine – putting the finishing touches to our cover story, *'SUDDENLY SINGLE: WHEN YOUR PARTNER'S GONE & YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN'* – I was thinking of *other* families, not mine. And I never imagined that one of my nearest and dearest was about to be “suddenly singled”.

But, sadly, that's exactly what happened ...

Just a short few weeks after that edition was delivered, my gorgeous daughter lost her 31-year-old husband in a fatal road crash. Our precious three-year-old granddaughter lost her devoted dad. And Robyn and I lost our one-and-only son-in-law.

I've debated whether or not to talk about this here in UPDATE. Yes, it's been an awful, horrible, nightmare experience. But tragedies like this occur every day to other families all over the country. There's nothing especially worthy about us or our story. The shock and grief we're feeling is mostly personal and private. And it's still very early days – too early for me to want to draw any conclusions or make any points.

Part of me thinks, *“Why bother these good people? Write something cheerful and upbeat, like you usually do ...”* However, another part of me thinks, *“But you share things like this with your friends ...”* And having journeyed together in Grapevine (in some cases, for more than 30 years!) I happily regard you as friends.

These newsletters have touched on almost every other experience (good and bad) that's come down the Cooney family's footpath. So maybe it's appropriate to unload a little of this one, too. Is that okay?

I'VE READ BOOKS ABOUT GRIEF, TALKED TO PEOPLE ABOUT GRIEF, AND DONE STORIES IN Grapevine about grief. But none of it really prepared me for this. After all, no father raises his daughter with the expectation that her life, her love, her dreams, her future will, in a tragic split-second, get turned upside-down. And, I've got to tell you, it's been hard:

- hard seeing my daughter's heartbreak, aloneness and pain ...
- hard feeling so helpless, unable to “fix it” and “make it all better” like the father in me so wants to do ...
- hard watching her struggle to restart her life, second time around, all on her own ...
- hard hearing her little girl cry for a daddy who won't ever be coming home.

There are more hurdles ahead. Lots more, for sure. And they'll each have to be faced, one at a time. However, God is good, the sun still shines, our daughter is strong, her friends are fantastic, and life will go on, I know.

But several other thoughts have been chasing each other around inside my head ...

'*SUDDENLY SINGLE*' is one Grapevine story that's come a little too close-to-home for my liking. And it's not the first time this has happened. Just 18 months ago, a long-time colleague, a fellow Keeper of the Vine, lost his 26-year-old son to suicide – another awful, horrible, nightmare experience. (He and his wife spoke movingly of this tragic chapter in an interview we published earlier this year – Issue 1/2007.)

These oh-so-sudden, close-to-home experiences are a stark reminder: none of us is immune, not even the editor of Grapevine! The topics we choose for our magazine are REAL – not theoretical. They're VITAL – not incidental. And they're RELEVANT, powerfully relevant, for far more Kiwi readers than we'll probably ever know.

While we may not always tell you this, many of the insights that end up in our articles have been born out of personal experience. Someone on the Grapevine team has often "been-there-done-that" ... which is one of the things, I guess, that makes Grapevine DIFFERENT from other magazines.

Our features and interviews MATTER – that's what readers are always telling us. They HIT HOME ... they CONNECT ... and Grapevine really does "GIVE FAMILIES A LIFT."

I don't mind admitting that the words and stories and insights in that '*SUDDENLY SINGLE*' edition have proved helpful and hopeful even to ME – as I've read them again, this time through different eyes.

LIFE, AS I'VE SAID, GOES ON. AS YESTERDAY'S HURTS SLOWLY EASE, THE TO-DO LISTS of today and tomorrow claim our attention. Another brilliant edition of Grapevine is being delivered this very week. (*You may have already got yours!*) It's a beaut mag (aren't they always?) with a timely, thought-provoking cover story: '*WHAT MAKES A MAORI A MAORI?*' ... plus a heart-warming, lift-you-up interview about rebellious teens: '*BRINGING HOME THE PRODIGALS*'. And I know in my bones it'll touch the right spot in thousands of Kiwi homes.

Just around the corner is a New Year that'll be full of fresh possibilities. We'd love to see New Zealand with a better track-record in healthier marriages, better-equipped parents, fewer at-risk households – YOU feel the same, I know – and our scheming and dreaming and planning for 2008 is already well in hand.

I have long believed that NOTHING IS EVER WASTED. In God's loving hands, even our *worst* experiences – those awful, horrible, nightmare things we wish had never happened – can result in good. Yes, true: that good is often seen best from a distance – and our daughter's tragedy is still achingly recent. But she's being showered with so much kindness and care ... and we're all finding lots to be grateful for.

Thanks for being such patient listeners – I appreciate this opportunity to share from the heart. Thanks for your partnership in Grapevine – we owe you, big-time! And thanks for your generosity through the past 12 months – in spite of events back home, it's been a very good year!

Robyn and our team here at Grapequarters join me in wishing you a very Happy Christmas ...





CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2007



Nothing worth doing involves some kind of sacrifice. And if Grapevine's to reach more streets during 2008 and give more families a life-giving LIFT, we need an extra-generous response to our **2007 CHRISTMAS APPEAL**. It's vital that we start that New Year well-funded, well-equipped and well-able to do what needs to be done.

\$60,000 is the target we've set – and the good news: **we're already HALFWAY THERE!**

You're invited to make a very special pre-Christmas effort for a very special cause. \$60,000 will be an all-time Nov/Dec record. We've got our hearts set on reaching it – because we truly need every cent. But the only way we'll raise a **further \$30,000** is if each supporter makes a bigger-than-normal, bonus-sized Christmas donation!

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO, PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING \$100 TOWARDS OUR CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

If \$100 is too big a stretch, please just give whatever you can. Your 2007 CHRISTMAS DONATION, large or small, will enable us to put more great magazines into more Kiwi homes this coming year!

You could win a lovely **\$250 CHRISTMAS HAMPER!** Every donation received during November & December – **no matter how huge or tiny** – qualifies you for an entry in our lucky draw ...

We'd also like to offer you these **GREAT-VALUE CHRISTMAS STOCKING STUFFERS:**

Donate **\$100 or more**, and you can choose one of these top-rated new-release MUSIC CDs or KIDS DVDs which we'll send you FREE as a 'thank-you' from us!

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