

## PEOPLE ARE SIMPLY FASCINATING (I'm glad I'm a people – aren't you?)

One of the things I love most about travel is the people I meet. We humans, in my opinion, are fascinating. And no matter where I am – here at home, across the ditch in Oz, up north in Fiji or Asia, or on the far side of the world in Europe or Africa, the UK or Canada, the Middle East or Russia – I find myself endlessly captivated by our surprising similarities and our striking differences: skin-colours and facial features, clothing and hair-styles, customs and cultures, languages and accents, histories and traditions, relationships and convictions, values and faith.



### MY ALL-TIME FAVOURITE HABIT WHEN

I'm in some distant corner of the planet is to just sit and observe ... make eye-contact and smile ... watch the locals as they go about their daily lives ... break the ice and say hello ... and even (if time permits and we can understand each other) have a friendly chat.

It doesn't just happen when I'm away. It happens when I'm home, too. I love multi-cultural New Zealand. I love the mix-and-match variety that we find in Godzone these days. I love it that we're a great big melting pot – a South Pacific United Nations in the making. And I love the people, in all their rainbow differences, who've chosen our small islands as their home.

The wonder of it struck me just this week at our local shopping mall. In the course of no more than an hour I had the good fortune to greet, talk with, get smiled at, be served by and do business with a whole bunch of new New Zealanders:

- ☺ the little Vietnamese lady who owns a clothing-alteration shop and knows how to make my shirts, pants and jackets fit my short, stocky frame
- ☺ the energetic Turkish guy who brews a very nice cuppa in a little café and nearly



splits his face with a grin whenever we see each other

- ☺ the bright young Indian girl who works in the big shoe shop across the way and never fails to give me a cheerful, sunny wave
- ☺ the Chinese masseurs in the centre-isle booth who treat me like a favourite old friend, working their magic on my stiff neck and shoulders, and letting me practice my halting Mandarin
- ☺ the Israeli students on their big OE who serve at the next booth along, who once sold me some powerful products made from Dead Sea mud, who won't stop trying to sell me some more.

And everywhere I looked I saw bright-eyed Kiwis of all shapes and sizes, ages and descriptions – Pakehas, Maoris, Polynesians, and more – doing who-knows-what, going who-knows-where, filled with potential and getting on with their busy-busy lives.



**M**OST OF THESE PEOPLE, IN MY EXPERIENCE, are good people, decent people, hard-working people. And most of them are helping make New Zealand a better place. They've got names worth knowing, stories worth hearing, families and kids and longings and dreams.

Most of them, I've discovered, are just as interested in me as I am in them. And I owe them, I reckon – I thank God for them – because they're enlarging my world and enriching my heart.

In fact, I sometimes feel that I've wasted an opportunity if I buy something, eat somewhere, drink coffee or cross the street and fail to connect (even a nod or a hello) with the people I meet. And, invariably, when one of those conversations starts up and we manage to get below the surface, we find we have far more things in common than we do things that separate us.

It's a gentle reminder, I reckon, that variety is the spice of life. And it's also our Creator's trademark. That's why, instead of a box for a home, he's given us a limitless universe to live in. Instead of one gorgeous flower, he's given us a zillion. And instead of black-and-white, he's filled our world with kaleidoscopes of colour.

Whatever else we might think of God, we can't accuse him of being dull and drab. He prefers originals to photocopies every time. And those unpredictable combinations that he's built into every human being are amongst his very best ideas.



**T**HERE'S SOMETHING ELSE I'VE DISCOVERED IN MY travels, and it's this: Grapevine is unique in the world. I give copies away when I'm overseas (just like I hand copies out when I'm here at home). And I've had it confirmed over and over again: there's nothing quite like Grapevine, anywhere!

That's been the case for the past 28 years. As far as we can tell, no other country on the planet has a family-friendly magazine that gets delivered free to hundreds of thousands of letterboxes ... promoting stable, loving relationships ... tackling human hurts and headaches in a positive, helpful way ... injecting fun and hope and wholeness into homes ... giving families a lift.

Grapevine's recipe is unique. Its message is universal (just as relevant to my Vietnamese, Turkish, Indian, Chinese and Israeli friends as it is to you and me). And its funding-strategy is unbeatable: friends like you who donate generously and sponsor regularly – putting copies into their local streets, schools, workplaces and community organisations.

Will you help us do it again with our next soon-to-be-published edition? It's still under wraps, but I can tell you that it'll include a 'toolbox' full of ideas for couples who are overdue for some 'MARRIAGE REPAIR' ... plus a heart-breaking, heart-warming story from a dad whose son was 'ADDICTED TO P'.



**I** NEVER GROW TIRED OF SAYING THAT YOU ARE Grapevine's best-kept secret – and, the truth is, we can't do much without you. So please respond urgently, and give whatever you can – \$30, \$50, \$100 ... or \$500, \$1000, \$5000 if you are able. Every dollar counts. And every extra copy of Grapevine can make a difference for yet another family down your street or mine.

This comes, as always, with a big "thank-you" from the team here at Grapequarters!

Cheers ...

(JOHN COONEY – FOUNDER/EDITOR)



## GOOD NEWS FOR GRAPEVINE SUPPORTERS

**F**rom April this year donors can now claim back from the Tax Department 33% of whatever they gave to charities in the year to March 31. And there's no longer an upper limit: donors can give their entire annual income if they wish. The Department promises to pay the refund within eight weeks by direct credit to donors' bank accounts.

This is good news for Grapevine sponsors and supporters: for every \$150 you give, you can now claim back \$50!

It has been reported that many people don't know about the refund, or that the only way to claim it is to request a special form from the Inland Revenue Department website – an IR526. However, once you send in the form, you'll find that next year you'll automatically get a new one.

In these difficult times there seems to be an increased awareness of the needs of others. And you may choose to spend your refund on increasing your Grapevine sponsorship, or a similar act of kindness ...