

2 MINUTES WITH Peter Saxton

Peter has played a major part in carving out the tracks in the bush around Tawa over the years. In fact on a wet and windy day this week he was up in the nearby hills planning future tracks. It was he who led the recent community walk up into the newly-acquired Forest of Tane.



Back in the 1970s he served a term on the Tawa Borough Council (as it was then). His contribution in various aspects of Tawa life over the years has been invaluable.



Peter can be seen at the left of this pic at the Forest of Tane celebratory walk.

Where were you born? New Plymouth

Where did you grow up?

New Plymouth till the age of 13, then to boarding school at Mt Albert Grammar in Auckland. "That's where I got my athleticism from, running against the likes of Murray Halberg [who is now 83 – Ed.]"

Where were you educated?

After Mt Albert Grammar I became a survey cadet, training as a surveyor.

Work experience over the years

Three years after finishing school, having done most of my surveying training, I went to England and travelled all over the world for the best part of three years. I came back to New Zealand and to Wellington to work for survey firm TCB (no longer in existence). After two years there I thought I should take things further and went to town planning school in Auckland for one year. Town planners were new then. I joined Wellington City Council as a town planner in 1966 and finished there 29 years later. In the remaining years before retiring I did some town planning consultancy work around New Zealand, including Hawkes Bay and Blenheim.

How long have you lived in Tawa?

Since 1968, so coming up to 50 years.

What about family?

Valerie is my wife. She was born in England and came to New Zealand when she was 14. We married in 1963 and bought a house in Newlands. We have three adult children, two in Wellington and one in Auckland; six grandchildren, the oldest at Canterbury University.

What are your interests and hobbies?

Main sports are surfing and skiing. We have a house at Oakura [southwest of New Plymouth – Ed.], the top surf beach in New Zealand. I still swim in the surf, still ski, mostly at Ruapehu at least one week a year, if not more.

Since retiring I've been tied up with U3A Tawa, one of the best in the country. I used to be doing lots of work with [the late] Allan Todd [See http://www.tawalink.com/allan_todd.html – Ed.] setting up programmes with him. Also genealogy.

Another interest has always been running to keep fit. I take out Tawa Hikers every Thursday. I've always had an interest in tramping and hiking. I was involved with Friends of Maara Roa (Cannons Creek) in establishing tracks, and was then 'co-opted' on to Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves. I took the lead in constructing the Achilles-Peterhouse track in Redwood Bush.

Favourite sports team and/or sports person?

Is it the Hurricanes or is it Taranaki? And probably Beauden Barrett whose family come from the other end of Oakura.

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Favourite musical group and/or individual singer?

I can't sing in tune. I always got kicked out of singing classes! But Louis Armstrong ("gravel mouth") is my favourite. I saw him play in Berlin in an underground jazz sort of place, before the [Berlin] wall went up.

What is your favourite holiday destination in New Zealand?

Oakura [southwest of New Plymouth, as previously stated – Ed.]

What accomplishments/achievements in your life give you the most satisfaction/pride?

Over a period of 10 or 20 years with Wellington City Council I helped influence people's thinking about living in Wellington. Whereas previously many people living here didn't really want to be here, our efforts saw a change in people's attitudes towards Wellington. As town planners we did things which people appreciated. I played a part in seeing the people of Wellington take responsibility for the harbour. It was 20 years before that happened, before ownership was transferred from the harbour board to the city.

I introduced art into the city, and was involved with the converting of part of Cuba Street into a shopping street.

What are three things you would like to do before you die?

I've done most of the travelling I want to do. I've been to around 100 countries over the years and have seen most of Europe.

There are still more tracks to be built in Tawa – opening up the bush to the general public so they can appreciate nature.

Most importantly seeing my grandchildren grow up in a good environment and are capable of handling things that come at them, and helping however I can to achieve that.

(Compiled May 2017)