



Read our CEO **Jonny Wilkinson's** regular column in The Northern Advocate

"A different Light"

A Different Light 31 March 2108 – Bouquets and Accolades

It's easier to write in the negative. It's funnier to poke fun. It's a straighter road to take the proverbial than to give credit. When writing even self-depreciation is easier than talking oneself up (of course I would say that being the humble creature that I am!). However, last fortnight in my column, I learnt, I got burnt, I got push back. I even apologised.

So, this time around I'm pulling in my head and pulling out the bouquets (where from, you may ask?).

Always give credit where credit's due, my late father used to say. Ironical from a man of whom the only person he spoke kindly outside the immediate family was Lord Mountbatten.

So here we go regarding the past fortnight. Firstly, I want to give credit and thanks to a flock of good Samaritans who picked me and a rented behemoth mobility scooter up off a down-hill section on The Terrace, a street in Wellington, last Tuesday. I was down in our nation's Capital for meetings and the launch of the new Employment Support Practice Guidelines at the Beehive. I hired a mobility scooter, which turned out to be huge compared to my own nifty steed here in Whangarei. I was late; what ensued were down-hill, speed wobbles, brick wall, grazed noggin, grazed knuckles (not from dragging them on the ground). A group of people picked me and the scooter up without a fuss. "*They breed them tough in Wellington*" one jokingly said. "*I'm from Whangarei*", I whimpered in reply.

Shane Reti, Whangarei's MP, approached me for feedback on a refreshingly proactive draft Election Access Bill which he is supporting. If goes through would offer resources to disabled people to stand for elections to remove any barriers in the way due to their impairment. It would also offer resources for organisations to hold educational events to encourage disabled people to vote on disabled issues in bipartisan fashion.

M2 Men's Magazine's Gerard Seth interviewed the Paralympic medallist Cameron Leslie with enthusiasm and dignified inspiration, applying the finesse of a

mainstream upmarket Gentlemen's Magazine. He asked Cameron "*When did you realise you had serious talent?*"

Cameron replied "Probably not until I won gold at the Beijing 2008 Paralympics. I had only set a goal of finishing top six, but then I came home with gold and a world record. I had no idea I was capable of doing that, nor was that my goal. After that, I sort of realised I must be good if I can win and get a world record."

Our own local columnist Vaughan Gunson wrote a fantastic piece about a recent photo exhibition by Belinda Mason called "Intimate Encounters" citing "*Domestic Bliss [name of one of the photos] is emblematic of this impact. It is one of the most effective images of intimate and loving sex that I've ever seen.*"

The ashes of Stephen Hawking will be interred next to the grave of Sir Isaac Newton at Westminster Abbey. The Dean of Westminster, the Very Reverend Dr John Hall, said: "It is entirely fitting that the remains of Professor Stephen Hawking are to be buried in the Abbey, near those of distinguished fellow scientists".

See, I can do positive, I can give credit, but it does hurt a little bit, so I would like to end on a profound backhander from Stephen Hawking.

"I believe alien life is quite common in the universe, although intelligent life is less so. Some say it has yet to appear on planet Earth."

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability - A Matter of Perception. A Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.