

LAST OF SUMMER WHINE

A different Light – 12 January 2019

2019- Game on! Here we are, back to work, heigh ho, heigh ho, oh no!

I find holidays pose a real dichotomy in more ways than one. There is such a build up towards the Christmas Holidays. The numerous countdowns; to the last day of work, to Christmas Eve/Day, to New Year's Eve. As soon as I get on holiday I have a terrible habit of counting down to the end of them with a morose dread. Wandering around the house, I announce various milestones. "I'm half way through my holiday!" "Two thirds of the holidays are over!" "This is my last Monday off!" "This is my last working day off!" Right down to the last Sunday, which is inevitably detox day to add to my self-inflicted misery. My wife finds these announcements somewhat irritating although she does offer snippets of wise council such as "Enjoy the moment" or "Yes but we're going to Brisbane two weeks after you're back at work". She can afford to be nonchalant being a school principal having six weeks off over summer. (Okay, okay she's actually back too –but with a certain sense of self managing freedom...)

Then there's the dichotomy of Christmas stress. Looking forward to an event that can be stressful. Traditionally we have invited extended whanau over for Christmas Day, putting on extravagant spreads, which I really enjoy; turkey, whole beef fillets on the barbie, legs of lamb done in increasingly exotic ways. However this annual production has perturbed and burnt out the rest of my immediate family. Sally made a pronouncement that we wouldn't be putting on Christmas this year. Her sister picked up the mantle-yay. With our Mokopuna and her parents being in Brisbane we made it more of an adult Christmas; fried ham and chilli and eggs with Champagne for brekkie and the off to Sally's sisters for the wider get-together.

We live very close to the beach in Ruakaka, which these holidays I found to be a dichotomy. Even though we are close to the beach, the thought of painstakingly shuffling up and down the sand dunes with a neck brace on in the full heat of the day was somewhat off putting. So close but so far away. As friends and family visited us togs in hand for a dip I waved them down to the beach, staying indoors playing online Scrabble in a vaguely melancholy fashion. I did get down to the beach in my not so trusty beach truck. The Suzuki, which is on its last legs can still gain access through the Ruakaka Surf Lifesaving Club entrance to which I have a key. The dichotomy there is that there is no vehicle access between 9am and 5pm over the summer holiday period. We did make some early morning pilgrimages to the water which was always refreshing. The return trip always had a slight angst to it as we had to thread the truck through families of early morning beach goers congregated around the surf life club entrance, bracing ourselves for the potential of a rebuke from an uninformed vigilante.

New Year's Eve was celebrated at ours with friends staying over for much enjoyed revelry with a complementary "street party" in the Walk Way; a park like Pohutukawa laden common that substitutes our front street. The event was organised by Neighbour Aunty Marg. Both long term residents and holiday makers enthusiastically participated, breaching the dichotomy that can exist between two such groups.

I've come to the conclusion that all things that are enjoyable will have some kind of dichotomy involved. It's the nature of life, the ups and the downs, the snakes and ladders, the bitter sweet, the ying and the yang. It's a balancing act, sometimes a juggle. One cannot indulge all of the time and all holidays must come to an end.

Now, back to work!

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