

OUR EARTHQUAKE EXPERIENCE

12.51pm Tuesday 22 February 2011 I was out at my husbands work at Wigram, Blair was at his day base in Shirley. The earthquake struck, and what a shake it was 6.3 magnitude. At 1.10pm I chose to leave Wigram and head off to Shirley to collect Blair early and take him home where we would be safe.

The traffic was gridlocked and many times I turned the motor off and sat waiting for there to be any movement that would allow me to get closer to Blair. I eventually made it to Fitzgerald Avenue and after going around in circles without getting any closer I made the decision to park up in a business car park and continue my journey to get Blair on foot. The devastation was enormous and frightening, buildings broken, roads and bridges mangled and no idea what I was going to face when I reached Gresford Street (Blair's day base.) I finally reached the base at 5.15pm, only 4 hours for a journey which would have taken 30 mins on any other day. I had phone calls from Mum's alarm people who were concerned about her alarm going off. I explained to them that I had no way of getting to mum and they needed to send out a taxi or something to check on her as that was what they were paid to do. Mum was okay, her alarm was beeping due to the power going off. Once I collected Blair we waked back to the van, Blair was really cold and was unable to drive his chair himself, so I walked alongside him driving his chair. When we got to the bridge we came to a stop, there was no way we could get across the bridge as it was mangled and wide cracks prevented us going any further. Three men came to ask if they could lift Blair and his chair and I said it wouldn't be safe to lift him and his chair due to the weight of it. They then found some broken asphalt and built ramps over the cracks in the road, we put Blair's chair in manual and we very cautiously crossed to the other side, eventually arriving back at the van.

On arrival at home Ken met me just as I started going up the ramp and walked me to the back door, saying now don't get upset but there is a mess inside the house. There was broken glass, fine china, memorabilia etc all scattered and broken all over the floor. No room was spared from being trashed. Very quickly we took some photos and cleaned up the mess so that we could get Blair into the house and out of the cold.

The next couple of weeks brought daily changes, Jason, Rebekah and their three children came to live with us in the camp-a-matic on the back lawn, there were days where we had water, power etc and days that we had none. Water was provided at water stops around the area and the Red Cross were available if support was required. Then my eighty three year old mum had to shift out of her house and move in with us as well. Tight quarters for all in an average size house, but when it comes to family you just provide the support they need.

The first blow for Blair was when the Crusaders games were moved from Christchurch due to the state of AMI Stadium and then secondly when the RWC games were also moved from AMI. For Blair's 21st last August he was gifted \$1800.00 for tickets to six of the games including two quarter finals, all being played in Christchurch. We chose to buy only for Christchurch games due to the huge effort it is to travel with him now. We will now need to sit down and rethink our game plan.

Sue, Ken and Blair Robinson