

## **BWL 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner**

**July 12, 2008**

Good Evening All,

I had the privilege of being the President of Busting With Life for 5 of their 10 years, coming in to the role in 2002 when Trici stepped down, and then standing down myself at the end of the 2007 season.

Following on from Trici I felt quite daunted as to how I could even attempt to fill her shoes – she was a hard act to follow, but as time goes on, you realize that you walk your own walk and wear your own shoes.

We each have different strengths and talents and hope to bring something different to the role which will ultimately benefit the team.

As we all know, the only thing constant is change.

I will cover each of the 5 years highlights and achievements which have shaped the team and contributed to Breast Cancer Dragon Boating in New Zealand, as we really were the pioneers.

### **2002 / 2003**

The planning for the Inaugural South Pacific Breast Cancer Regatta was well under way in 2002 and what an amazing band of workers we had.

All team members contributed, together with their husbands, to host our most successful venture yet, undoubtedly the highlight of our 2002/2003 season, and I still rate it as the highlight of all our off the water achievements.

Other items of note during that season were several team members traveling to Australia to compete in the Asia Pacific Masters Games. The dragon boating segment did not eventuate due to lack of entries, but the spin off was that we were taken out for a paddle by Gold Coast Dragons – Australia's National Champions who impressed us with their newly developed technique, to the extent that several weeks later, Graeme our coach, Anne our assistant coach and myself, went back for a weekend of intensive training with them

The new style was adopted and enabled us to have our most successful season to date.

The New Zealand Nationals, that year in Wellington, saw a Breast Cancer Division for the first time and was the home regatta for that city's new team – Cansurvive.

During that year Graeme and I also travelled to Tauranga for the weekend to talk to a group of very enthusiastic ladies who went on to form Boobops, the Tauranga Breast Cancer Survivors Dragon Boat Team.

A chance meeting with Shirley Horrocks of Point of View Productions, culminated in a documentary being made of the team which was screened on the TV1 programme "Inside Out"

Our end of season regatta at Karapiro was marred only by the surprise resignation of our coach Graeme. Graeme had made an enormous contribution to the team in the 5 years he was coach and we were all sad to see him go, but at the same time supportive of his decision to move on and start another chapter in his life.

During that season we sadly farewelled team member Betty MacLachlan.

## **2003 / 2004**

2003/2004 season saw huge change for the team – not only did we have to adjust to a new coach, but also to a new training venue, plus 9 new team members.

Sugar Te Paa came from a waka ama background and had the team paddling in outriggers for Sunday morning trainings before the Dragon Boat season started – this proved very popular and our paddle fitness was greatly improved by the time we got into the dragon boats.

Training at the Viaduct was a total joy – Dragon Boating at last had a home, clean surroundings – was devoid of duck poo and slime and joy of joys – had a designated changing area complete with toilets – total luxury!!!

Being in the Viaduct was great as our pink shirts stood out and our message was very much in the public eye.

This season also saw the start of the twilight series which were held on Friday nights – lots of fun and also a great buzz for us when we beat a mixed crew.

A defining moment came for the team this season when, due to adverse weather conditions, both Relay For Life and Auckland Dragon Boat Festival were postponed. Our local regatta was rescheduled for a date which clashed with our coach and sweep, so we entered the Auckland Dragon Boat Festival looking for sweeps to see us safely down the course, and needing to totally organize ourselves for the crew listings. Everyone took total responsibility and we had a great days racing and were almost relieved our coach was NOT there when we took out the Dragon Boat Idol competition, complete with \$300 cash and the opportunity to make a CD.

All during this time a lot of work had been going on in the background, preparing a set of rules for the team and formalizing our constitution. After all legal requirements were met, we finally became an incorporated society on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2004.

A great day for us all to be now standing on our own feet.

Being a legal entity made way for great funding opportunities, such as The Lion Foundation and ASB Communities Trust, both of which we have developed a good relationship with.

Our constitution has also become the precedent for several of the newer breast cancer teams who then just tweak it to suit their particular needs and objectives.

By this time Boobops in Tauranga was up and going, and I had been down to the Waikato and had talks with women who would later go on to form the Waikato Treasure Chests.

This was also a very hard season for the team as we lost two dear team members, Lega Tuipoloa and our captain of several years, Anne Cunningham.

## **2004/ 2005**

2004/2005 will always be remembered as the season of the hard yards. And we did lots of them – the focus was on getting the team to Vancouver for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Abreast In A Boat.

We got permission from the North Shore City Council to come back to the lake to do endurance training, out of the normal dragon boat season.

Sugar decided we would train in outriggers until the New Year and only transfer into the dragon boats after that – the rationale being that we had a really long season ahead and our bodies would not cope in a dragon boat for that length of time. Given the hours of daylight and the numbers to fit in the wakas, our training sessions were split.

The reasoning was sound, our training proved very effective, but we all also missed the camaraderie of the team as a unit. What a thrill to finally get into the dragon boat – we paddled straight across the lake and promptly capsized! – Not too long after that we stranded ourselves upon a rock in the lake – another memorable moment which required glasses of wine at the Poenamo afterwards.

The Nationals in Auckland that season also included Boobops and Waikato Treasure Chests in their first competitions. Just such a thrill for us all to see more breast cancer teams on the water.

Late 2004 also saw 4 members of BWL travel to China to make up an International crew to compete in the first, and as it turns out the only, officially sanctioned Breast Cancer Division in the World Dragon Boat Championships. A truly memorable experience for those who went. It was there that I met with a group of women and we all went on to form the steering committee for the International Pink Dragon Boaters Council, with the aim of establishing policies for all Breast Cancer teams internationally.

This year there were also several radio interviews, TV appearances and print media—the story boards have the print.

Our major fundraiser was the Celebrity Debate in the AK05 Arts Festival which took a lot of planning and time— an enormous effort on the part of Oliver Driver bringing in the acting community, and it was a huge success entertainment wise, but not so good financially. But, we learn as we go.

Then it was Canada – here we come.

The hard yards in all and every weather conditions paid off and we were the only breast cancer team to make a grade final at the Alcan regatta And were in “Recreational C” and came 6<sup>th</sup> out of 9 crews.

Then to early morning runs, team building exercises and waiata singing practices – every moment was filled up.

At the Regatta opening ceremony, our team member Michelle O'Neill was chosen as the bearer of the NZ flag, being the youngest NZ paddler there.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary regatta organization, dinner cruises, pink party night, opening and closing ceremonies were amazing and the direct result of a huge amount of work by a lot of dedicated people.

Busting With Life paddled hard, and paddled well in the prestigious Scotia Bank Trophy race, but after being rammed twice going down the course, could only make up enough water to come in at 4<sup>th</sup> place. A gut wrenching finish for us but each team member gave of their very best and paddled their hearts out – all that is ever asked of them.

There were 62 teams competing and an amazing acknowledgement to Abreast In A Boat for this wonderful challenge they have given to breast cancer survivors worldwide.

It was during this season that we purchased our own boat with sponsorship from the NZ Breast Cancer Foundation. A time of great excitement as no teams were able to own their own boats under the current contract so although the boats were old, we felt we were groundbreakers here!

And – to have our very own bright pink boat was such a thrill and then not long after that we were offered the long term use of a rubber ducky – so we were completely independent with our own rescue boat and could train whenever we wanted.

Yes - We were definitely breaking the mould!

On the home front, I was invited on to the Board of the NZ Dragon Boat Assn – a thrill for us all as we realized that at last, breast cancer dragon boaters were being taken seriously and were definitely here to stay.

## **2005 / 2006**

This season we started out with new coaches Dean and Sharon Beasley and yes, another paddling technique!

We had decided it would be a low key year after Canada – and just as well as we had this new paddling style to learn.

Once Dean thought we had some idea of his technique we transferred from the Viaduct back to the lake where dragon boaters now had a designated area for training, but it did not give us the distances we were used to.

So this was a season of consolidation and understanding a new style, helped considerably by Sean Ogden who had swept for Dean in previous teams.

This season we entered all the usual regattas but the one I must mention is the traditional first of season regatta in Hamilton – the Super 12, which has to go down in history as the coldest, wettest regatta we have ever attended – we spent the entire day standing upright, huddled together like penguins for warmth in the tent that Carolyn and Ocke had seen fit to bring down at the last minute. We had new ladies paddling and I'm sure they went home and rethought their decision to join our team!

The Auckland regatta this season was the first outing for the new team The Pink Dragons – the playing field just keeps getting better!  
We combined with them for an end of season fun regatta and became the “Busted Dragons” – lots of fun.

In May a forum was held between all the Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Teams in NZ and it was unanimously agreed that the NZ Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Council be formed. The guidelines set up, will help all teams to comply with National and International policies.

“Pink” magazine featured 6 of our team in an in depth interview situation together with a photo shoot, and is continuing a diary of breast cancer dragon boats teams in each bi-annual issue.

### **2006 / 2007**

And this season it's ‘Singapore here we come’, to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Pink Dragon Boaters Council World Breast Cancer Championships.

Training once again went well and way beyond our normal season – we went prepared for everything but the heat!

Never before have we gone into races with ice blocks stuffed down bras, wrapped in scarves around our necks and on our heads under our caps!

As in Canada, we won heats and came through to the finals well, earning a good lane draw each time. And once again, our lane was more attractive to the boat beside us and we were slowed in our tracks as the boat came into us – such a bitter pill to swallow and so soon after the event in Canada.

The crowd sympathies were with us but it didn't make it any easier at the time.

On the home front we had a new regatta added to the mix, which turned out to be a total disaster.

A beach regatta at Takapuna, but we were racing along the beach parallel to the waves – very few teams actually made it to the end. We capsized in our 1<sup>st</sup> race mere strokes after the start, our second race we managed about 30 metres before our next swim, after that Dean pulled the plug as it just wasn't going to get any better.

Boobops in Tauranga hosted their 1<sup>st</sup> Super 12 which was a lot of fun, with fairly challenging conditions.

They enjoy great support from the local business community and it is expected that it will become a regular feature in the dragon boating calendar.

This season ended with the loss of that indomitable spirit, Lynne Mee – loved by all the team.

Throughout these 5 years, Busting With Life team members have participated in a huge variety of walks, fun runs, fundraisers of various types, spoken at a variety of meetings and functions and given of themselves whenever called upon.

All of you who have paddled with the team, for however long, know the camaraderie and friendship that exists between the members and I hope your memories remain with you now, or are rekindled by the slide show tonight.

Marcia Fraser Address to 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Busting With Life: 12 July 08

All of us here tonight have had the pleasure of being part of this wonderful group of women, and I'm sure you all join with me to wish the current Busting With Life team members good health and success in all they do, while continuing the tradition for another 10 years.

Thank You

Marcia Fraser