

“My name is Richard, I am an SOB. I admit that I have no power to help myself. As a “Spouse of Birder” I squander time and resources foolishly to see birds; big birds, small birds, nice birds, mean birds, smart birds and stupid birds, those that fly and those that don’t – and take photos of them that no one wants to see.” EVERY trip we take, every route I plan has got to be worked around various opportunities to see these little feathered guys. Of course, I enjoy the challenge of catching them in photos (even if I do not know which is which (“BIRD at 7:00 high!!”– “Oh, that is just a common Whatever.”) I can tell a bird from a cow 3 out of 4 times and am proud of that. Soooo, on the move again, between South Island and the North (6 days of travel) we have 4 birding expeditions.

Having hiked off of the Hast Pass our first weekend, it was easy to sail across from Wanaka to the West Coast. The most amazing thing about the crossing, this time, was the mass emergence of the NZ Cicada. These guys (and no doubt girls) spend most of their life (about 3 – 4 years) under up to 3 feet of ground. They eat by attaching themselves to a root and sucking nourishment from it through very clever two-chambered face tubes – one pumps a sort of anticoagulant into the root, and the other sucks up the resultant nutrient fluid. When a particular root runs dry, they move a bit to another. When the conditions are right they (millions of them at once) work their way to the surface, climb to a high branch of a tree and wait (not long) for the metamorphosis by which they shed their old skin and emerge a wet-winged flying insect. They



have one night to dry out and only a few days more to live. The males have only one thing on their little mind. Imagine millions and millions of them shouting at the top of their lungs: “please, PLEASE, Somebody, ANYBODY, engage with me in sexual congress before I die!!” You could hear their desperate collective pleas emanating from the forests while driving with the windows closed and the air-conditioning on. OK, not quite top of their lungs. The males have a little tympanic membrane on the side of their bodies with a muscle attached to the back of it. They contract and release this drum at great frequency creating a great buzz. If they do succeed in attracting a mate, they soon fall dead (they have not eaten anything and have had quite a work out). The female lays her now fertilized eggs in a “V” shaped notch on

the tree limb and soon herself, dies. Of course the emerging larvae drop to the forest floor, burrow into the soil and start this process again. All the time they are out of the soil, they are of targets for Wenche’s little feathered friends -- something about the Cycle of Life or maybe Survival of the Fittest (or least tasty).



On the coast we did a bit of hiking here and there including a hike to an iconic lake which promised perfect reflections of Mt Cook and associated peaks – only to find the lake surface rippled by wind and the mountains overcast in any case. Did catch a nice shot of my favourite bird the mostly flightless pukeko . We got a look at the Franz Joseph glacier, again. Seen ice before. Actually seen prettier, cleaner, more blue ice before (BC-Calgary, Norway, Antarctica, Alaska). We

drove on to a non existent town, Wairoa, where the ONLY licensed guide service into the White Heron Sanctuary (by flat bottomed jet boat) also coincidentally owns the only accommodations in town. Nice enough guy. Nice enough room, actually. His business is down 50% this year over last. Kiwis are travelling their own country less and foreign travellers are likewise down as money seems tight in most (allegedly) affluent countries.

My photo is not of a Heron but of a Royal Spoonbill, that share the same area (and also shags – cormorants we call them).



Further on, going North along the West Coast, we again enjoyed Pancake Rocks and our favourite hike (just 30 min or so each way) in all of New Zealand, the Truman Track - Lush tropical jungle opening onto rocky beach cliffs with access to beach if so inclined. We were not. Actually began to rain a bit. Also nice- the short little MiniHaHa track taking off just South of the Hotel in Franz Joseph.

Stayed in Westport at a nice B and B (where I left my watch – sent to me) and ate as we did 5 years ago at the (formerly – see below) BEST restaurant in NZ – The Bay House. As her business of 6 years on this incredible site out of town is also down, she is moving into town (The Town House) where rent is cheaper and maybe the locals will more likely patronize. There has been someone's restaurant in this spot for about 30 years. Likely no longer. On the water, great view, incredible sunset. Marvellous food.

Long run to Picton – two nights there. Tanglewood – lovely B and B surround by verdant gardens, tree ferns, native trees and brush. Nobody seems to understand that BREAKFAST means HOT food – potatoes, eggs (for others, bacon). Most NZ B& B seem quite pleased to put out some good homemade jams and jellies, cold cereals and toast. This one no different. And if they do cook an egg dish, it is under-done and under-seasoned. One B & B did make AMERICAN style pancakes. Exception: Helen on N. Island Kapiti coast – made a good Omelette, but so late in the process that we could not enjoy it as we did not know it was coming and were rushing out the door to meet a ferry. In Picton took a boat ride into the Charlotte Sound to a bird island (all stoats – weasel like – rats, possums, etc. Have been trapped or poisoned off to permit native birds to re-populate. We saw some birds.

We had rented a car (Ford Focus 4D Auto Hatch) in Queenstown – Wenche actually took a bus from Wanaka to pick up the day before departure-for this trip from S to N Island from an agency (Apex) that permitted (most don't) and even paid for the ferry crossing between NZs' to major islands. About a 3-4 hour crossing. Nice ship. Several lounges, Movie theatre, etc.

Kapiti Island just off the coast on the North Island is a similar bird island but restricted in its entry numbers to about 45 per day. You get there by a short boat ride, then walk very limited (but long and high enough) trail system on your own, seeking to spot the elusive and endangered Saddle Back, the plentiful fan-tail, the Tom Tit, the White head, etc. Wenche was trilled to have seen about 18 of the 22 birds said to be on the island.

One bird we could not miss was the Kaka – the Parrot of the North Island – a cousin the Kea tunnel bandit on the South Island. Also endangered, but certainly not shy. This guy met us at the shelter – in case we left something behind that was unsecured. He actually landed on a few back packs WHILE IN USE. They can open the zipper and take what is on top. One was sort of following us. I told Wenche he was. We finally got to a picnic table (the only one on the trail) and sat down with our sandwiches. The Parrot was nowhere to be seen. I was down to the last bite. The treasured, center piece. No more crust. The thickest peanut butter and most banana. Just ONE bite lifted within an inch of my mouth. Without



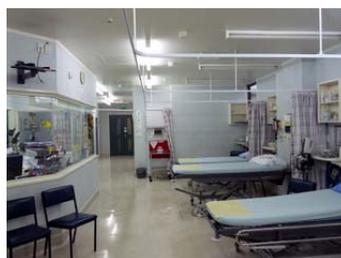
warning, and soundlessly this THIEF (his cousin is an extortionist – this guy just steals), landed ever so lightly and briefly on my R shoulder and flew off with my sandwich bite and sat not more than 10 feet from me taunting me as he enjoyed each morsel. I was actually a tad bit shaken thinking that either massive sharp beak or razor like talons had deftly picked a soft piece of sandwich from between my fingers so close to mouth and eyes. I know he was laughing.

The most fabulous destination – our second time – was the tractor pulled hay wagons that took us along the surf at the base of towering, almost vertical, geologically fascinating cliffs of Cape Kidnappers to the Australian Gannets. These are truly beautiful birds with golden heads, magnificent wing spans and cute adolescent babies still on their nets. They are on top of coastal rock towers that we could walk up to – while the birds looked down at us not more than 10 feet away. They seemed totally happy with our presence. In fact I could swear that an occasional bird was saying “did you get the sun glistening off my golden head? This is my better side. How about that chick of mine?” I shot and shot and shot. You will only see one or two. At the end of the 9K ride we walked up to the top of the cliff where a large (1000? 2000?) nesting colony sits no more than 3 feet away behind a single rope barrier we are not supposed to cross. The cliffs have distinct layers – river stone aggregates, alternating with clay, an ash layer from an ancient volcano eruption, a peat layer from an ancient forest - all at an angle consistent with having been up-thrusted after forming. The cliff face was broken at several places by fault lines of an earthquake. The time necessary for the river(s) to deposit stone, change course, become a lake, deposit clay, shrink, deposit sand at its edge, become a river again, deposit more stone, repeat the cycle, dry up, become a forest, get buried and form peat, etc, etc. Can only be guessed at, but is a long, long time. There were an occasional ancient sea-shell jutting out from the base (older) layers as well as two distinct, separate layers dense with small sea shells further up. Remarkable place. One we recommend to everyone.



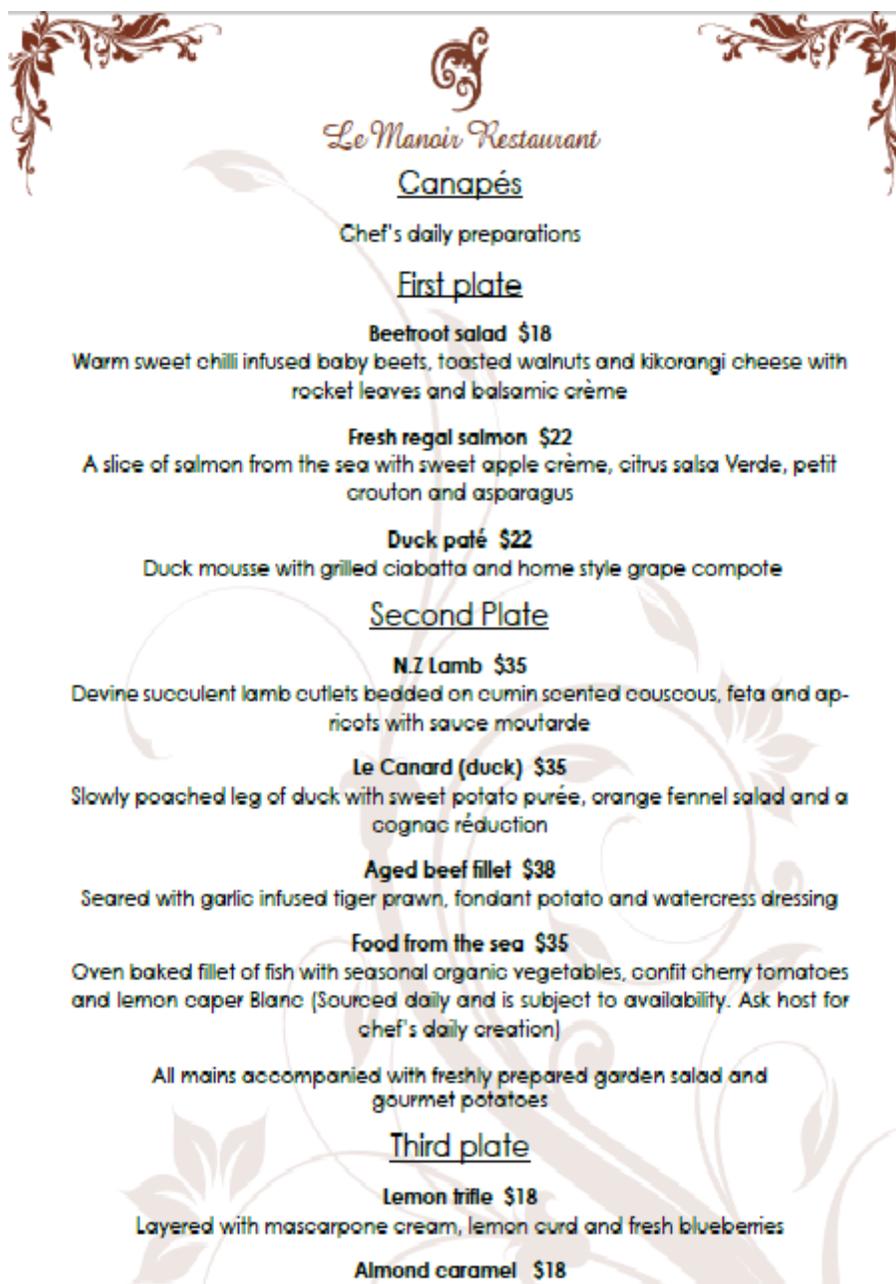
Returning to Rotorua was a bit like coming home. We were here for 6 mos last time. Our wonderful friends Vid and Graham Will are now both in their 80s and a bit less spry of foot, but still a joy to spend time with. Graham is a retired soils scientist, PhD with about 100 published papers to his credit. Discussing geology and its implications for Earth’s natural history is fascinating. He just had an article published in Spectrum – the unofficial journal among Seventh-day Adventists for scholarly, theological, or ecclesiastically challenging material. His mind is still sharp. We have spent each Saturday afternoon with them while in Rotorua and typically have taken a hike somewhere nearby.

I am again working at Lakes Prime Care. Here, too, it was a homecoming. Many of the same staff are here, several of whom had done nice things for us the first time (boat ride, home to dinner, a “Hangi Feast” – meat and vegetables cooked over fire heated rocks buried in a pit Maori style). This time LPC provided the house and as the owners were gone we had the run of the place. Wenche has cooked up a storm, having many of these wonderful people, now, as our guests in “our” home. She is returning home with several recipes from Kiwi cookbooks found in the home.



One Saturday morning we “worshipped” with a visiting Buddhist teacher of some renown, from Tibet, currently in India. He

explained how all living things or sacred and should not be harmed or exploited by taking that which we did not make or earn. That to do such was to store up bad "karma" that would surely be re-balanced in our own next reincarnation (as would acts of kindness and love working the other direction). I could not help myself. I asked, "from what you tell us, I presume all Buddhist are, thus, vegetarian, but do they also refrain from taking the milk and eggs of cows or chickens and thus "taking" that which was theirs." He paused a moment and admitted first that not all Buddhist were vegetarian. That the people of Tibet "liked their meat." He sought, weakly, to differentiate personal participation in killing of an animal and utilizing its meat, once already killed. There had been a fly irritating most of our front row. I asked if under the circumstances I could "clap" the fly. He said "no, shew it away." I cut in, "to my neighbour?" He admitted it was a problem. Then he grinned and added. "So is alcohol." "We monks sometimes gather all the alcohol we can find in a village and light it afire."



Had our BEST meal, not only in NZ (which is NOT known for excellence in cuisine – but which has improved in 6 years) , but perhaps EVER at the Hamurana boutique lodge and dinner room (only 14 guests per night) on the opposite side of lake Rotorua. Effusive service (the mangers come out and meet you in their small parking lot, escort you to the balcony with a view of the lake, offer you a beverage, suggest you peruse the menu at your leisure on overstuffed sofas beside a real fire

place – not on in summer - and ultimately do attend to your every need at the table). Perfect food. Fair to generous portions. It takes an artist to do a steak truly well done without turning it to shoe leather. This 23 (!!!) yo Chief was a master. The lemon trifle desert (his answer to a tiramisu) was incredible. We brought Graham and Vid as our guests and had special ordered vegetarian meals for them (home made Gnocchi with grilled garden (their own) vegetables and a pesto sauce). Wenche's herbed lamp cutlets were melt in mouth tender. Every morsel disappeared from all plates. It was also the most expensive meal I recall purchasing (even when one converts from NZ \$ to US \$ - x 0.80).

We drove up to Taruanga and Mount Mangunui – one of our favourite places. We expected to climb the old volcano cone to incredible views. Instead we found that so much rain had fallen the week before that there had been multiple landslides on the mountain, many still unstable that had closed all trails. We watched instead the volunteer lifeguards of the region (including Australia) compete in contests related to their avocation. Wenche, I think, likes buff young men. There were a few females as well, but like most truly athletic females they lacked the ah.... considerable attributes of fake lifeguards



as found on the girls of Baywatch. There were other rewards. Taruanga has the best fish and chips in the whole world. The Fresh Fish Company is on the wharf and the menu is determined by the catch that day. Incredibly good, wrapped in newspaper as they should be and shared (against the signage) with expectant seagulls.

Watched a true DVD while here made by Australians: "Balibo." Moving. Haunting. Recommended. The consequence of "realpolitik" of Henry Kissinger and his counterparts in Australia and Europe who WANTED East Timor invaded by neighbouring Indonesia nine days after the country announced its independence from the Portuguese who had ruled it for about 400 years and were tired of doing so. The big powers feared the independence movement might in those cold war days have an excess of Communist sympathy. Five Australian journalists and a 6th who went to investigate were murdered by Indonesian Army operatives in the days leading to the invasion – and accorded little attention by their governments (Aus, NZ, Britain). Almost 24 years of continued resistance fighting later, East Timor was given independence by action of the UN and reluctant (and destructive) Indonesian acceptance.

Now, I am bored stiff. It is 1:30 pm and I have seen "only" 17 patients. Yesterday in my 9.5 hours with NO designated breaks (and none taken) I saw 40. As Ms WORD lets me add stuff later, I can add that in our 17 working days we have averaged 33.5 patients per day. As a walk in Urgent Care, I see what comes in. Much of it minor trauma, a few fractures and lacerations that the nurses cast or close after my blessing (and often *before*). Now, having read both office and home emails. Looked at Google News, I sit here with no patients. An idle mind is the Devil's Playground. So I will do a bit more Spam.

George Clooney made me do it. About 2 years ago, our very good friends, the Engeberg's visited, I took the wife out in our canoe off our Puget Sound property (also she was the only person EVER to get poison oak/ivy from our land). A photo was taken (obviously at a bit of a distance). Her girlfriend wondered what she was doing in a craft with George Clooney. Ever



after Wenche has been determined that I should look more like him. He is wearing his hair short. Sooooo..... nobody knows me here, my hair is short, I mean really short. But, then with short hair, the eyebrows look a bit bushy. To avoid Wenche assaulting me with small tweezers, yanking, little hairs out by their roots (some time 2 and 3 at a time as she is not that precise), I elect to trim them with my electric beard trimmer. I usually set it at maximum (9) for beard and a bit less at (7) for

eyebrows. I go over either site 3 – 4 times to ensure a reasonably complete and even job. In this house one does so blindly as the mirror is on the right hand wall, the sink in the corner, thus, if leaning over the latter, one can not see the former. Of course, without my reading glasses, can not see all that well up close, anyway. You ever notice how some “1s” have a small flag at the top, going to the left? Kind of looks like a “7” doesn’t it? Zip, Zip, Zip, Zip – looking into the sink I am impressed with how many and how long the “trimmed” eyebrows raining down are. THEN, I look in the mirror. Gone. A bit of residual fuss. Look ridiculous. Like some Alien. It is George’s fault. No, no picture. Have got some artificial colour and applied sparingly to what was left to minimize the effect. Wenche laughed. A lot. Said something about “too old to be using motorized sharp instruments.”

Wenche has found “our” home so comfortable that she is “nesting.” She (!!!!) has actually lost her enthusiasm for travelling great distance to see new things. Thus, our free time has been spent fairly close to Rotorua. The Redwood forest (yes, California Coastal Redwoods, planted about 1910 along with several other blocks of trees seeking the ideal tree for commercial use, are a VERY impressive forest now – made all the better by the presence of tree ferns and other more Jurassic type foliage). You expect to see a dinosaur at every corner. These trees grow so fast here (like everything else) that the grain proved to loose for commercial harvest. The logging industry settled on the *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine). This tree now dominates commercial areas planted in remarkably neat rows up mountainsides.

About 10 days ago, as I write, Graham and Vid took us out to Waihoua river about 40 minutes from here. These waters originate in several springs in the valley, fed by water seeping off a high plateau, estimated to require 80 – 100 years. Thus they emerge profoundly well filtered, cool, and crystal clear.

This last Saturday, we were rewarded in church with the music of about 30 young people living in NZ with a heritage from Tonga. Lots of Islanders emigrate to NZ. Young men and women from all over the region were gathering for competitive co-ed “touch” Rugby (if you are touched you are considered tackled). 2 ancient women from the Cook Islands were also visiting.



This is sad. Troubling still even as I write. I hope they were not life-long SDA. I hope they converted to our faith from some other. The small group study was on “self-esteem” as informed by the Scriptures and the Christian faith (simple right? We have worth because God has declared us His children, equally valuable and equally in need of a Saviour). Out of the blue, one of these women blurts out “Then why did God curse those of us with dark skin, the children of Ham? Why are the white people always on top? As children we were taught we must always step back and let the white folk go in front.” [In a story from Genesis, rarely mentioned in children’s Sunday or Sabbath Schools, Noah, after surviving a flood with his 8 family members and some animals in the Ark grows a vineyard, gets himself drunk and is found exposed by his son Ham. Rather than protect his father’s dignity, he mockingly informs his 2 brothers – who do, walking backwards – toss a covering on the old man. On rousing the enraged Noah curses the *children* of Ham to forever serve those of his brothers]. There was stunned silence in our group of mixed races, nationalities, and ages. I was the first to recover – and explained forcefully that she had been the victim of a vicious, racist, myth that is NOT Biblical. The Bible merely records the cruse of a drunken embarrassed *man* – NOT God, and does not relate the curse to colour in any case (and if it did, and if had any effect – which it would not - maybe the curse is in *loosing* our protective pigmentation and forcing us white people to migrate to colder, sunless climates). That story was used to try to justify slavery in the American South before the civil war and by Europeans as they earlier had colonized and exploited the African Continent. How sad for a woman of probably near 80 to have believed all her life that she was truly second-class to both man and God.

The rest of the day was better. We went out to the Maungatautari nature reserve – the South entrance is the best. This 3400 hector mountian top (ancient volcano) has been fully fenced with a high tech (solar powered, video monitored, rolled over top, fine mesh deep under ground, electrified at the midpoint and on top, and double interlocking entrance doors)

fence to keep out mice, possums, rats, stoats, deer, and all other introduced species to what otherwise is still native forest. No opening is larger than 6 mm (0.15 inch). All interlopers have been removed by poisoning, trapping, or hunting, and homesteaders of native birds, fish, beetles, gecko, etc. have been brought in – without the competition for which nature never prepared them. It is a long range project, of course. It will be years, before the native birds and others are again as dense as they once were, but they are making gains. It is only 10 yrs old. Perhaps we need some Kiwi ingenuity to protect our U.S. Southern Border. The second photo is simply looking down the hillside away from the fence.



One final Bird adventure was to Mokoia Island in the middle of lake Rotorua. This island is famous for the heroic love affair between Tutanekai and Hinemoa. It seems she was “high born” and lived on the mainland of the lake. He was of a lower cast living on the island in the middle. He lived for a while among the other tribe and a forbidden love developed. In due

time it became clear to the elders they must be separated. He was returned to his people. That evening, expecting the young woman might do something foolish (as young women are wont to do in such circumstances) the elders retrieved and hid all canoes from the lake shore. Hinemoa tied dried hollow guards to herself as flotation aides and guided by the music of the flute played by her lover swam the great distance. There she bathed in the sacred hot pools (still there to be seen) and awaited her Tutanekai. Many of the local Maori claim to be 10th generation descendants of their subsequently fruitful union. The two major cross streets of Rotorua are named in their honour. Lots of birds. Including the “More Pork” owl (named for the request he seems to make repeatedly at night) and the rare and endangered saddle back. I especially like the overworked shag (cormorant) mother of four that you could just about hear saying “THIS was a mistake.”



We leave (IF I get this finished and mailed out from McDonalds PAY Wi-Fi service on 28 Feb as planned --- they advertise FREE in their McCafe, but THAT service is so weak and slow, nobody can use it for *anything*) – tomorrow from Auckland. We will land in Seattle via San Francisco on the “same” day, 1 March and I am to work the 3rd.

Of course, we are grateful to be able to choose the manner and time of our departure as planned. Tragically people from 22 nations are currently confirmed among the 144 dead and other yet missing in the SECOND earthquake in Christchurch. They were just getting back to semi-normal from the first one. Geologically, we are told, of course, that this is the “same” event – just a bigger than average “aftershock” that they have continued to have right along. They now estimate that 1/3 of the Central Business Core of the city will have fallen or will be demolished as unsafe by the time this is over. About 1/3 still have no power, and many still no water. The story dominates the news in this nation of only 4 million. It is major loss to absorb. The economic destruction is on a world wide basis the largest since Hurricane Ike struck the US South East Coast. The cost of insurance will skyrocket in NZ – and also ripple across the globe through re-insurance programs. The human cost while tragic is mercifully far less than that of Hati and other 2nd and 3rd world locations where buildings of little

economic value (judged by world wide standards) fell readily, killing more people. There are rescue teams working in Christchurch from, I think 20 nations, as I write. Little hope is held, however, for more live rescues.

As Christchurch is a DIFFERENT ISLAND from us, I apologize for not having sent out immediate reassurance of our safety. Yes, we could have been travelling there as tourists. Many have inquired, and your thoughts, concerns, and prayers are appreciated.

If I have time. I will do one more spam. It will be entirely on the Quirks, Risk-taking, and Inventiveness of the Kiwis. But, that one I may end up doing from home.

Got to mention a few patients I have seen.

First off, in 6 years the “Wimp Titre” of the average Kiwi has risen. They are not as tough a lot as they once were. The “ACC” (Accident Compensation Corporation, I think) system that I so lavishly praised 6 years ago as having eliminated virtually all injury litigation from New Zealand is at fault. If you are injured in NZ your bills are simply socialized. They are paid by the government – all medical, time loss, rehab, and life-long pension if necessary. There is no charge for ACC care to the patient – though for the convenience of not waiting from their own GP and using our walk in clinic, they do pay a surcharge of about \$30.00 (US equiv). They would pay more if an “illness.” Thus “everything” becomes ACC if they can.

One guy was simply riding his bike more than usual. He was stiff and generally ached. I gave him a prescription anti-inflammatory and P.T. if he wanted it. No accident, no fall, no “event.” Thus, I did not throw to ACC. The upset patient was assured by the staff in Wanaka that that was OK, the Physical Therapist could put it in the system.

I have had in Rotorua, numerous ACC visits for bug bites (covered – they are unplanned “accidents”) – this in a nation with NO native poisonous insects of any kind (a rare import from Australia may do some serious damage). “Yes, mosquitoes bites do get red and itchy” (.....*didn't your mother teach you ANYTHING?*) One woman of about 20 for 3 bites on her shoulder (not infected) wanted to be certified for 2 – 3 days off of office work. And Kiwis do not have screens on their windows, and only a few have AC (more than in past, however). What do they expect will be the result? But ACC is there for them.

I think I mentioned in Wanaka the 79 year old with an artificial hip (skiing accident age 77) from Wanaka who came in for shallow lacerations to his bald scalp after tumbling off a razor-back edge of mountain hiking (no marked trail) several miles from any trail head. He was still regularly climbing that cursed Mount Iron on the edge of Wanaka regularly in 55 min up and down (my time: 2 hours – but then I *was* taking pictures). He was 5 minutes slower than the 75 year old woman who also rode her bike to and from the Mount. OK, so not all Kiwis have raised their wimp titre. Just the younger ones.

Met an interesting Polish tourist (lots of tourists seen in Rotorua). I did take time to chat with patients when we could. He was quite proud of his Grandfather who was the leader of Polish Paratroopers depicted by Gene Hackman in the movie “A Bridge Too Far.” He says the actor got it perfect, right down to the inflection and mannerisms of the Grandfather he knew. Our patient was born in 1945, so he knew Granddad not that long after the events.

One of my patients was not unique to NZ. We will find them everywhere there is a system to abuse. Big dude about 280 pounds, 6 foot 2 inches, stringy hair. Imposing shoulders. Well tattooed. Maori heritage. Gets in under “ACC” for “I fell off a trail, my shoulder hurts” – assuring the receptionist – who at age past 70 is still working at LPC and has seen it all – that he had his \$40.00 (he could wait at the hospital for free). There was nothing wrong with his shoulder. It did not take long for him to make clear what he really wanted was a re-up on his every 3 mos re-certification of his “disability” as he as not at home and running out of money. He was backpacking from place to place visiting friends and family (mooching off them, I would gather). He showed me a list of previous certifications by about 15 different doctors (patients are not the only wimps). I told him he looked remarkably fit to me, “what is the disability?” I was told “drug and alcohol syndrome.” He has been sober for 10 years (well “except for occasional marihuana – but that don't count”). Asked how that was a

continuing disability as he had been successfully sober for so long – he explained “but, I could slip back at any time.” Asked how long he had been on disability: “since 1995, when I got out of prison.” At this point I was glad I was the one closest to the exit, and started thinking of which staff were at risk. Could not help myself, I had to ask: “Armed Robbery.” But, he was a lot better now, he learned why he was the way he was by studying psychology while in prison. He had been raised by his extended family, abandoned by his mother, so thus, of course, he could not act in responsible ways. He did not get his certification. Fortunately, we simply have an institutional policy that forbids doing those things – that is for his own GP. He did get an RX for Naproxen for his shoulder “injury” which he had forgotten all about. He discovered on leaving, that surprise, surprise, he actually did not have any money, but he would be back with it the next day. Right. Such people probably do not really cost the system (in any country) that much in relative terms. But, neither are they likely to be pointed out in the audience during a State of the Union Address as an example of how the “system works.”

As I close this, it is a glorious, sun filled day with white billowing clouds in a blue sky. This is viewed out “our” back windows past a palm tree and about 20 – 30 other species of trees and ponga (tree ferns). We look forward to our return home where I am told 6 inches of snow was laying last week, sufficient to close Heritage Family Medicine for a day. But, we do return to within three hours of our 1st Grandson. Well, almost. He has not yet found his way out and being male will not ask for directions. Search and Rescue intends to recover him about 22 April. Anne-marie is beginning to look sooooo pregnant. She will make a good mother if planning and preparation are the key – she has already purchased about 10 brands of diaper so she can quickly determine her preferred and stick to that. She informed doting grandparents that “every baby in New Zealand has a ‘Bussy Bee’ – so did Prince William” – so our suitcase accommodates this toy.

Room for more photos: The sunset with the palm, is off our balcony, the moon from down the street, and the other sunset has the old bathhouse in silhouette. Bathing in this region of natural thermal activity was once very grand, indeed.



PS: final night in Rotorua. Wenche had cleaned the kitchen, she hoped for the last time as owners arrive tomorrow eve. While she checked her email on a LPC computer, I researched restaurants and settled on an Italian Zinallie's or something like that (about 2 blocks over and 4 blocks up from LPC – we walked). Incredible lamb fillet and veal steak, starter bread thick sliced garlic rich olive oil and black olive spread and one with garlic and parsley. All perfect, but the truly remarkable was the home-made gelato. Wenche had liquorice (“the BEST ice-cream I have EVER had”), and we both had “Hokey Pokey” (rich vanilla ice cream with –in the normal version bits of burn sugar, Norwegian call it Krokan - his was large chunks of home made salt toffee.