



BUILDING BRIDGES - BRÜCKENBAU

TEIL 2 – DIE JUGENDJAHRE TRANSKRIPT MIT PLATZ FÜR LÖSUNGEN

1.

I had an idyllic childhood. Right out in the country, 9-year-old, 10-year-old, 11-year-old - wonderful. Attended a country school, Bell Block Primary School, had lots of kids to play with, out in the country, because my family lived out at - in a tiny little flat on an old - what was known as the old Bell Block airport. It was great. We used to have all sorts of games that we played out there. An ideal childhood.

2.

It all turned to custard when, as a 12-year-old, I went to New Plymouth Boys' High School, which was a brutal school. There were over 1100 boys at that school when I arrived, and I was the youngest of the 1100, and certainly one of the smallest boys in the whole school. And from day one, I was beaten up. So for a tiny little 12 year-old kid like me, I stood no chance at this place. The country school bus would drop us outside these gates, I'd come in and they'd be waiting for me - not only for me - also for other little kids - and they would systematically harass us and beat us up. I hate this place. That's where all the bullies were - in there - in those dormitories.

3.

The teachers themselves were a bit of a mixed bag. Many of them - you've got to bear in mind, this was the late 1950s, and many of them had been involved in the Second World War, and I think they were probably traumatised... And so they had military drill at this school, and a lot of those teachers set themselves up as colonel this and brigadier that, and they kind of ... they were living in this fantasy world, as though it was still wartime, and the kids that they had, we were some kind of battalion.

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4.

This place was a horror for young kids like myself who were 12, 13 and 14. "I learned nothing for three years. Every day, the same torture, when I got off the bus and these thugs would be waiting for me... At the end of three years, so I dropped out of high school, and I went and worked for a telephone exchange. And it's full of mechanical machines which were covered with grease, and so my job was to clean the grease off those telephone parts and to make cups of tea for the senior technician. So, a pretty dumb job you might say, but man, you know for getting away from that bullying – it was wonderful.

5.

But during that period, I met the first ever kids to have surfed the Taranaki coast and I became one of the first surfboard riders in Taranaki. Seeing the waves and looking at the environment – incredible. You could see the atmosphere merging down into the ocean – all the different colours. You could smell the spray and feel the spray, and it taught me about the environment.

6.

And life is a funny thing, you know, and you'll find this: serendipity or chance encounters – something happens in your life – you meet someone and for me – that was meeting a primary school teacher. A guy – he didn't give a stuff that I was a screwed-up teenager, he just listened to me and said sort of what do you feel about the surf? What do you feel about the waves?

7.

And then one day he said to me: "Look, do you ... read books? And well, I mean, in the telephone exchange we read and comics and magazines, we didn't read books. And he said, "You might want to have a look at a couple of books. You know there's a lot of stuff about surfing. So I went to the New Plymouth library, and I was amazed to find these books – on the environment, on waves: how they're generated often

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thousands of kilometres away by big storms. And I realised that I wanted to really know a lot more about the science of the environment, how it works. So guess what? I ended up going back to that same school. But I was in no mood to be messed around with. I was there to learn. And I did.

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