

# John Kenny



John was born during the helter-skelter of the 1942 bombing of Coventry, England, a blazing start to an intrepid life.

His parents bought and sold a string of *chippies*, in various Midland cities, as luckily, fish and chips were one staple not rationed during the war. At 17, he and his 21-year-old sister set sail for New Zealand's golden fleece, with green hope and a wicked intelligence. John joined the Wellington Police Force for 2 years, before purchasing a 7-day milk bar in

Christchurch, complete with a broken-down ice-cream churn. Undaunted, John made his own.

This ingenious design attracted the attention of *General Foods*, who, serendipitously, were setting up *Mr Whippy* at the time. They ordered 100 machines, which enabled John to establish his own engineering & manufacturing company. Continued success led to diversification into pneumatics, hydraulics, soft drinks, sheet metal works, a non-ferrous foundry and licenced dealings in cars, trucks and buses. These were all bought out, but his old Christchurch beverage company still operates and now makes an excellent malt whiskey!

Racing hydroplanes and cars in NZ saloon car championships lapped up his spare time. However, the Sydney sales branch of his beverage equipment business was struggling, so in 1980, he crossed the ditch, initially for 6 months, to lend a hand. He never went back.

John then turned his knack to a confection of enterprises, cleverly spinning straw into gold again. This included a packaged computerised

system, linking beverage equipment to stock control, that was sold Australia wide and exported to Southeast Asia. In 1983, he sold up once more and moved the family to Surfers Paradise.

Property development was now the game. John built more than 500 quality homes, one development honoured with a prestigious HIA Award for low-cost homes. Nonetheless, it was here in *The Moonlight State* where everything went belly up. After reporting a business partner's embezzlement to police, the detectives appointed wanted John to be *grateful and generous* if the money was returned, no questions asked. John complained to the Criminal Justice Commission, who was very interested in the detectives concerned, due to their link to the incumbent, bent Police Commissioner Sir Terry Lewis and his bagman, Detective Jack Herbert, both as slippery as soap. John's family was threatened, to persuade him not to appear as a court witness. He was clobbered with a steel bar outside a restaurant, the family was forced into witness protection, their home was stripped bare. Court appearances required bullet proof vests and high-speed cars. Eventually the noose tightened and the guilty were jailed, including Terry Lewis, who was also stripped of his knighthood.

Onto a blue-ribbon Tweed Heads development, where it was the turn of the council, a protected Osprey, the banks and the tax office to sink the boot in. John was rendered stone cold broke and his marriage collapsed.

Still, he picked himself up, as those with Ulyssean grit and nous do. Fortuitously, John met his current partner Christine in Melbourne in 1998, whom he had first met in Christchurch 34 years before! A spell volunteering at *Meals on Wheels* brought him thumping back to earth. With combined funds, John and Christine were able to develop 10 terrace houses in Werribee, before moving to Mooloolaba, where they purchased the management rights to a Parkyn Parade resort. They operated this for 7 years, but after 17 years serving with Rotary and over 50 roller-coaster years in business, John finally put his feet up, now able to play bridge.

A quiet life at last!