

The Quake That Changed Our Lives

“The quake and all its ramifications has shown us the best side of human nature”

Mr Symms.

People were doing their normal things on a normal sunny day when their lives changed forever.

Everyone remembers the terrible images of Christchurch immediately after the devastating February 2011 Christchurch earthquakes. Distressed people, families torn apart, ruined houses, destroyed buildings, liquefaction seeping up through the ground, no water or electricity for days and clouds of dust floating around a collapsed city. A city in ruins. Tragically 185 people died in the violent shaking and thousands more were injured. Emergency services were rushing around saving people from buildings and rushing them to hospital. Chaos and adversity was everywhere. No one escaped being impacted in some way.

Our family was coming back from the Coromandel but our flight was cancelled as we heard the devastating news come through. All we could see were terrifying pictures on the TV of our destroyed city. I was only a toddler but Mum and Dad were worried sick about our friends and family in Christchurch. We did not know what we would be coming back to. If our house would be standing, if people we knew would be hurt or the unthinkable, lost to the violent shaking. If our family chocolate business would survive the turmoil. If our city could survive this collapse. The future was as shaky as the ground beneath us.

But this seismic shaking would not tear the people of Christchurch apart. No, they stayed strong and helped each other out; letting people who lost their houses stay in their homes until they could find another home. Doors were opened to those in need. Money was donated from far and wide to help rebuild the city. The student volunteer army was formed and came together and were a cheerful presence on the street and offering food, water and assistance to find professional help. Which reminds me of this quote “ See the light in hard times and treat it as if that’s all you see” - Dr Wayne Dyer- and that is what the people of Christchurch did; stay strong through the hard times and get through it. They showed true kindness and strength although they were facing frightening and traumatic times.

Bravery reminds me of this man and the people who came to save him.

Mr Peter Symms was watching a movie with his wife when the earthquake hit. They held each other close as the ground shook violently beneath their feet. The cinema collapsedeverything was black.... when he awoke he was lying on the hard concrete of the collapsed cinema, his leg was wedged in between the seats. Two men who were bystanders came to help pull him from the wreckage followed by a third man. They eventually managed to get his trapped leg out despite aftershocks rumbling and shaking them frequently. Mr Symms later said in hospital, with a fractured skull and the left side of his body crushed “That was incredibly brave because there were aftershocks going all the time.” Those courageous men risked their lives to save him.

Through the past 9 years since then I have grown up in a city that is broken yet hopeful and resilient. My mum and I talk about that since the earthquake, people seem more friendly and connected. That there is a much stronger sense of

community spirit and unity. My dad also has joined civil defence so he can help in situations where other disasters or emergencies happen. As the people in Christchurch proved, humans can get through adversity by working together and that showing kindness and bravery in times of darkness can create light and hope. As Mr Peter Symms wisely said “ The quake and all its ramifications has shown us the best side of human nature”.

References:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/uk-12594072>

Quote by Dr Wayne Dyer, interview, 2015.

Quote -Mr Peter Symms

<http://www.quakestories.govt.nz/563/story/>

<https://eur04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.quakestories.govt.nz%2F563%2Fstory%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C64a165d5a4eb40d2312308d85ff7d6ca%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637364865362496822&sdata=z7a0MaioMB4J%2F34lpjSKJw28nJS7ZCPSQzNPqEzPPU0%3D&reserved=>