

Tony Bouzaid 1940 – 2011- a tribute

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It was a real shock to hear of the sudden passing of Tony Bouzaid last week. Yesterday a very large funeral was held for Tony at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Parnell. I attended with Cr Ann Hartley and GBI Board member Izzy Fordham. The Bouzaid family asked me to speak at the funeral along with members of the Bouzaid family and close friends. It was a great honour. Here is my eulogy for Tony.

‘Walter Benjamin once wrote: “How much more deeply is the leave take loved. Separation penetrates the disappearing person like a pigment and steepens him in a gentle radiance.”

To Mal and the family I extend the condolences and deepest sympathy of the Mayor, Councillors and staff of Auckland Council, the Great Barrier Local Board, and the Waiheke Local Board of Auckland Council and the Board and staff of Auckland Transport. Can I thank Mal and Tanya for asking me to speak here today.

When you get to my age one seems to hear news of people passing away on a regular basis – I suppose is to be expected as one grows older – and to a degree we become resigned to it.

But when I heard of the death of Tony last Monday morning – it gave me quite a shock – I felt it physically in the pit of my stomach. And it turns out I wasn’t the only one to have this reaction.

I am not exactly sure why this was – while Tony certainly wasn’t a young man – he never struck me as being particularly old either. In fact he appeared much younger than his years, tall, robust, handsome with the bearing and indeed mental outlook of a much younger man.

Tony was always planning a project, setting goals and then working very hard to achieve those goals. What has notable about him was his confident optimism and his focus on the future. Then suddenly his future was gone. I guess that is why the news of his passing was such a shock.

I worked with Tony in local government and on conservation projects for nearly 20 years – and of course like most New Zealanders because of his and his brother Chris’s great sporting achievements I knew *of* him much longer than that.

Chris and John and Sean have recounted the details of Tony’s great achievements as a world champion yachtsman and as a successful businessman. The Bouzaid family contribution to this city is acknowledged with the street name ‘Bouzaid Way’ – quite fittingly at the Viaduct basin.

I am meant to speak today about Tony’s work in local government and conservation but I just want to something else about him.

Tony was an acknowledged international expert on sail making and sailing techniques – and I still have a xeroxed copy of an article written by Tony for *Sea Spray* magazine in December 1981. The article discusses at length and with much experienced-base expertise, and generously illustrated with diagrams; the topic of rigging, tuning and trimming trailer-sailors. It was typical of Tony that he obviously wasn't content just to make superior sails – he wanted ordinary New Zealanders, family weekend sailors to gain the maximum benefit from those sails and the maximum satisfaction from their sailing – a pastime he was so passionate about.

But I am here to today to pay tribute to Tony for his work in Local Government, and his achievements in conservation on Great Barrier Island and in the Hauraki Gulf.

When Tony and Mal 'retired' or semi-retired to Port Fitzroy in 1992, Tony, as a natural leader soon became active in the local community – notably in the North Barrier Residents and Ratepayers Assn and the Port Fitzroy Boating Club. In 1995 he stood for and won a seat on the Great Barrier Community Board, of the Auckland City Council. Tony served three consecutive terms as a Board Member and in 2004 he was elected chairman of the Great Barrier Island Community Board.

A modest thoughtful person with an outstanding record of personal achievement behind him, Tony served in the role of community leader with much distinction and integrity – and though local government can often be a thankless task, often personally bruising, Tony presented to his community, to the Auckland City Council and to the world in general a dignified, sophisticated image for Great Barrier Island.

In late 2007 to the disappointment of many he stood down from local government to dedicate his time to conservation. (I recall attending Tony's last Board Meeting.)

Tony firmly believed that that future of Great Barrier lay in conservation tourism and quite typically he set out to put into practice what he preached. When Tony and Mal bought Fitzroy House in 1992 and began restoring both the buildings and its extensive estate – they set out on a journey which would carry them to the forefront of private sector conservation achievement.

I refer to Glenfern Sanctuary. Canon Caroline and Jo have talked about this but I also want to talk about Tony's achievements here.

Achievements such as the raising and planting of some 20,000 native trees, the creation of an extensive bait station network to suppress rats, the reintroduction of North Island robins to Great Barrier, and then finally the erection of a two kilometre long pest-proof excluder fence across the Kotuku peninsula running from the headwaters of the Port Fitzroy estuary, Rarohara Bay – across to the Orama property on Karaka Bay.

Given the difficult topography of the land – this was a significant engineering achievement. After organising aerial drops to eradicate all rodents behind this wall Tony worked tirelessly to create a 260 ha pest free wildlife sanctuary – the Glenfern Sanctuary. He and his family and

the workers and volunteers who came to Glenfern from all over the world – achieved much success – as demonstrated by the dramatic increase in birdlife – native kaka parrots, native pigeons, black petrels and rare endemic chevron skinks. The significant increase in birdlife because of Tony's efforts is apparent not just within the Glenfern Sanctuary but right throughout the Fitzroy area, However Tony was a perfectionist – and a fighter – having walled out predators he worked tirelessly to eliminate any incursions from rats swimming to Glenfern from across the estuaries – installing a grid of 1000 monitoring stations.

This is a fight I guess which will have to be carried on until rats are progressively eradicated from the wider area and all of Great Barrier.

Tony was also a fighter when it came to protecting the waters of the Hauraki Gulf from the relentless spread of marine farms. I recall a resource consent hearing at the ARC for a marine farm in his beloved Port Fitzroy in 2002. As the case unfolded I was interested to observe that it was Tony who was clearly the acknowledged general of the opposition side. Tony who worked tirelessly through the case, marshalling the evidence of the lawyers and the technical experts. When he won the case – he went on to the Environment Court and fought and won the battle all over again.

In recent weeks Tony issued a warning by email to recreational boaters that the government had passed under urgency, legislation which would encourage the proliferation of marine farms throughout the Hauraki Gulf. In this coming battle the leadership and commitment of Tony Bouzaid will be badly missed.

I last saw Tony at a meeting on Great Barrier on 17 September at Motairehe Marae called by the Great Barrier Charitable Trust and Ngati Rehua to discuss the return of the kokako to the island. As always he gave quiet, sensible advice based on his own practical experience.

When I was chairman of the ARC, the highlight of my year was to travel across to Great Barrier and stay at Tony's bungalow for two or three days to update myself on conservation projects the ARC was supporting at Glenfern, on Motu Kaikoura Island, the Broken Islands – and to meet with DoC to discuss things like the future removal of rats from Rakitu Island. I prefer to remember Tony from those times, after a hard day's work at Glenfern, sitting on the verandah of Fitzroy House in the evening sun, with a glass of red wine, overlooking his beloved Port Fitzroy.

A great kauri has fallen in the forest of Aotea.

We have lost a champion – we have lost a legend.