

When nominations for Mercury Bay Community Board came up, Alison was voted onto the board. She served for nine years altogether – three as Chair – as well as a six year term as TCDC representative on the Hauraki Gulf Forum. She is now a member of the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) for Seachange, a marine spatial plan being developed for the Hauraki Gulf including the waters of the Coromandel.

As a member of the SWG, she's presented with "a mind boggling amount of knowledge" about what needs to be done to improve the worsening state of the Hauraki Gulf. This has introduced her to many likeminded people who care deeply about the Gulf and the challenges ahead, and Alison's response shows why she's such an asset to the project. "I'm hopeful it will be a good outcome. It has to be. There is no choice."

Alison's volunteer work has left Alan cooking his own dinner occasionally (he's particularly good at cooking the fish he catches), though Alan himself has found rewards in volunteering his time to the reserve group and local population of dotterels. "If you're prepared to look, there are plenty of opportunities to suit all tastes and you are all the better for it," he says.

"It's a marvellous entrée into a network of likeminded people," adds his wife.

City dwelling friends often ask if the life is too quiet, to which the Henry's reply: "It's not, because we make use of the natural environment. I spend a lot of time walking and involved in environmental activity, and I'm a fisherman," says Alan.

"It is a relevant question," adds Alison, "because they

“If you're prepared to look, there are plenty of opportunities to suit all tastes and you are all the better for it.”

live in Auckland where there's so much to do. But what's interesting is that if you ask them how often they go to the art gallery and the museum, the answer is too often 'very little'."

For this couple, Whitianga has a movie theatre playing the latest films, a thriving arts scene, and the city is less than three hours away. The clear waters of Cooks beach, on the other hand, are just a few minutes' walk away, and that is just how they prefer it.

Lonely Bay.



Beside the Seaside

After 14 years in corporate Australia, raising a family and battling Sydney traffic my wife Diana and I have moved to Whangamata to live in our 50-year-old family bach to run our businesses.

WORDS SHAUN FAY



Family bach 1967.

We first had this idea in 1997. When the kids were a lot younger, we in fact started the process and moved to Whanga, but a big job offer from Sydney got in the way, then kids and houses, so 17 years later we're now back.

Diana is highly trained and experienced in aged care in Australia and loves the work and wanted to build her own business back here on the family land. Aged and disabled care is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and while there are several players on the Coromandel, Diana's convinced there's room for us.

With my 30 years in radio and ad agencies around the world I've got lots of creative ideas to make the business fly. So when we returned to New Zealand earlier this year we discovered the company name "Beside the Seaside," was still available so we re-registered it and we're back in business to cater for care to the elderly and disabled.



Shaun, Diana and family.

With “Beside the Seaside,” the 5-year plan is already in place. We want to get it right in Whangamata first and then look to open other branches along the coast. We also want to expand our services adding bach care and bach rentals in a few years.

We know that marketing is important and we want this business to have impact right from the start. That’s why we’ve commissioned one of Sydney’s finest jazz muso’s Craig Calhoun to create a modern, contemporary version of the classic old British track “Beside the Seaside” with the result being a superb rendition of the song. Listen out for it on local radio stations soon.

I’m also able to continue running my Australian agency

from the ‘bunk house’ in Whanga where I can still work with clients in Canberra, Sydney, Sunshine Coast and other parts of Australia. My clients are really happy to keep working with me and it doesn’t bother them where I am based.

With communication technology improving daily, it’s a growing trend worldwide for businesses – especially creative ones – to be free to work wherever they want to work.

So after an early walk with the dog on Whangamata beach most mornings – it’s down to work. I’m also a sports fan and love tennis and golf so I can often do both before my Aussie clients have had their first cup of coffee.

I’m frequently asked to judge ad awards round the globe and my most recent experience shows just how accessible and close our world has become. In March I was sitting in my bunkhouse in Whangamata judging the New York Festivals. How cool is that?

I also teach marketing at a college in Sydney once every 3 months and often visit clients across the ditch, so I get to park at the airport on a regular basis.

I believe more and more people will be doing what I’m doing, although I have to say change is not without its challenges. I recently had to go to Waikato hospital for some routine tests which took me about 70 minutes. The thought bothered me at first but then an Auckland friend pointed out that’s how long it takes him to go anywhere in Auckland!

Both Diana and I have also worked in television production and we’re also in the process of creating a new TV show round the Coromandel’s love of car festivals. Whangamata’s



Beach Hop is the inspiration behind the show called “Pride and Joy,” which we are currently in the process of finding broadcasters and sponsorship.

As bach owners we tended to shy away from that “noisy” car festival but this year I joined in and it was simply amazing. The passion and joy these cars give their owners is inspiring and the festival is superb. I’ve never seen or experienced anything like it anywhere in the world – and it’s all so accessible.

Our friends often joke that we’re now semi-retired. But we’re far from it. We’ve got another 15 years of work in us yet and we believe Whangamata is the perfect spot to do it. Bring it on!

And if we’re not busy enough, we’ve also started building on the front of our family section. Gee, that’s a learning curve. And on top of it all occasionally I’ll throw on some old clothes and help a mate with his farm in Tairua. How’s that at 6 in the morning? Beautiful day. Cows ready for the shed. It’s a long way from Sydney!

Shaun Fay is an award-winning advertising executive who has been based in Sydney for the past 14 years.

To find out more about the development of his car show go to www.prideandjoy.net.nz

To find out more about Shaun and Diana’s new aged care project on the Coromandel go to: www.besidetheseaside.co.nz



Shaun and Diana’s Whangamata home 20 years ago (above) and now (below). The couple are in the process of adding on office space for their businesses.



Whangamata Harbour.