

Glenn still cheers the sea waves crashing

In 1987, Glenn Campbell was king of the waves in Aotearoa. Over a decade, the Raglan-based surfer won almost every title in the country and competed successfully internationally. Wintec journalism student *Katrina Lintonbon* caught up with him at his favourite beach.

ON A calm Sunday just before sunset the waves at Raglan's Ngarunui Beach sparkle like a cluster of diamonds on a light blue blanket.

It's been a while since they rolled in so perfectly from the Tasman Sea. At their peak they are maybe a metre high. Not big, but perfectly formed. The sort of waves that make Glenn Campbell's heart pound just a little bit faster.

"GC", as he is affectionately known in Raglan, knows this place well.

The beaches in and around the seaside town have been his playground for the past 20 years.

This is where, as a nine-year-old, he and his older brother first paddled their surfboards beyond the breakers to wait for the sets to roll in.

It's also where Campbell honed the skills that made him New Zealand's surfer of the year in 1987, and kept him at the top for almost a decade.

Twenty years later, Campbell still maintains surfing is the ultimate buzz.

"It makes you feel like you are at one with the water."

In 1987, the year Campbell won his title, surfing had reached a peak in New Zealand.

Raglan was regarded as having some of New Zealand's leading surf breaks and was renowned for having the longest left-hander in the southern hemisphere. The number of people taking up surfing was also steadily increasing.

Campbell was 25 years old and a typical surfer, blond and tanned, with a surfboard never far from his side.

He had just returned from Australia where he had worked on his board skills.

By April 1987, he had won every competition on the New Zealand surfing circuit, including the Billabong Saltwater Pro Am at Whangamata where he was awarded the Surfer of the Year title.

He says his memories of the celebrations are blurred, probably due to excess alcohol.

"But I was stoked. This was the beginning of my surfing peak."

A month later, he was given full sponsorship from surfing brand Billabong, and he got his first shot at the world titles in Puerto Rico. He wasn't placed but still



READY TO RIDE: *There's nothing like a set of perfect waves to get Raglan surfer and former New Zealand champ Glenn Campbell's heart pounding.*

The 100th issue of Kiwi Surf magazine pays tribute to Campbell as one of the best surfers New Zealand has ever produced and says he can claim fame as one of the first surfers who had a backhand perfected on Manu Bay's predictable walls.

"From his performance the likes of [New Zealand surfers] Emmerson Tucker, Marc Moore and Daniel Kereopa were able to study, learn from and improve their backhand techniques.

"These days the dynasty lives on with guys like Morehu Roberts, Luke Hughes and Billy Stairmand with super strong backhands."

Ironically, Campbell says surfing was not highly regarded as a sport at the time, with the perception that surfers were "dope-smoking hippies".

These days, he says, surfing is more respectable and the sport has become highly commercialised.

"It is about who has the coolest shoes and clothes. Commercialisation is destroying the real reason why people choose to take up surfing."

New Zealand's current open men's surfing champion, Kereopa, says Campbell paved the way for surfers like him and he put Raglan on the map as a place that produces some of the country's best surfers.

In 1995, Campbell contested his last surfing competition, placing third.

He says of that time he had done all he had set out to do and achieved all his goals.

"I didn't want to do it any more."

These days, he still lives in Raglan but music has

enjoyed the experience.

Two years later, on January 1, 1989, he won the national surfing title at Mt Maunganui and was ranked top in New Zealand.

During the next few years, Campbell also defeated some of the best surfers in the Pacific region, including Australian Gary Green who was ranked fifth in the world at the time. In 1990, he also competed in world events in France and Scotland.

replaced surfing as his passion.

He plays the drums for two local bands, Numotion and Good Riders. He also works as a painter and decorator.

But he still has a range of short and long boards in his garage.

And on a good day, when the Raglan waves are perfect, he and wife Ann, whom he met when he was a surf instructor at Raglan Surf School, head out the back of the breakers to wait for the perfect ride.

"I'll never stop surfing. I'll be doing it till the day I die."
