

Students revisit 1987 'Jurassic' period

Nineteen eighty-seven was a big year: big hair and big shoulders, for women, mobile phones the size of bricks and mortgage rates that peaked at 20.5 per cent. It was the year the All Blacks won the World Cup; ditto the netballers, and our America's Cup yachties had their first encounter with big, bad Dennis Conner. But it was also a year of hardship and heartache for thousands of Kiwis who lost their savings on a black Tuesday in October. In a weekly series starting today, Wintec journalism students revisit the stories that made headlines 20 years ago.

IN 1987, Jasjot Kaur was three years old and living in Norway. She held a funeral service for a honey bee and thought clouds were made from chimney smoke.

David Tilson worked as butler for the Sheraton Towers Hotel in Brisbane; Anni Schwanen bought her first car - a purple Mini Minor.

Penny Miles wore a green and-white checked tunic at Marsden School in Wellington and Michael Campbell, five years her junior, struggled with an outsized satchel on his first day at school. David Tauranga wrote his first story - about a Christmas tree.

"I remember feeling proud because I had written it and I could read it," he says.

Ask a group of journalism students for their memories from two decades before and it's surprising what they can recall.

Students in their early 20s remember the contents of their lunch boxes, summer holidays at the beach, and teachers.

"Mine was Miss Bird," says Greer McDonald. "I imagined she flew home to her nest each night. Back then, teachers were allowed to hug."

For older students, like Anthony Kelly, an engineer retraining as a journalist, 1987 was a year of partying, fishing and trying to keep his HQ Holden on the road. "I was a bit of a long-haired lout. But boy, the beer, music and girls were great."

In genealogical terms, 20 years is almost a generation ago.

So, for "Generation Y" students - those aged under 30 - 1987 is positively Jurassic.

The clothes appal them ("How could you wear those shoulder pads?") and the technology amuses them - "Mobile phones were really that big?"

But they embraced the idea of writing about a year that began with long lunches and unlimited expense accounts and ended in heartache for many businesses and "mum and dad" investors.

Over the next few weeks, more than 30 students will revisit the people and issues that made the headlines in the Waikato.

For student Jimmy Baker, a sports nut, it was a dream assignment. 1987 was a triumphant year on the world stage for Kiwi sportsmen and women. The All Blacks won the World Cup, the netballers beat Trinidad and Tobago in the World Championships and a yacht nicknamed Plastic Fantastic was racing off the coast of Fremantle.

For her story, Emma Pottinger focused on Lotto, which was launched in 1987. She found that several Waikato people struck gold that year, including a Hamilton grandmother who shared the first division prize of \$645,316 with two other people, and a Putaruru timber worker who took home nearly \$400,000. But two Hamilton brothers almost missed out on \$72,000. Their winning prize went unclaimed for three months.

Andy Fyers discovered black water rafting also had its genesis in 1987 and tracked down the young men who came up with an idea that has now become an iconic Kiwi experience.

Other students caught up with people who made headlines through tragedies and triumphs.

Amy Smart revisited the touching story of toddler Regan Chibnall who, in 1987, desperately needed a liver transplant.

While Regan did not survive, many other Waikato children have continued to benefit from the hundreds of thousands of dollars raised for his operation.

For another medical story, Holly McKay talked to a nurse who was part of the team that successfully separated the Waikato's first conjoined twins in 1987. The nurse was also a member of the team that separated another set of twins three years ago.

The students also traced Waikato people affected by the wave of business closures and redundancies that preceded and followed the October 1987 sharemarket crash.

Other stories will cover the Waikato's concerns in 1987 about crime, local body politics, health and education. Many are not too dissimilar from today.

Wintec editor-in-residence Venetia Sherson said the 1987 project was very satisfying.

"News is often fleeting.

"It was fascinating to write another chapter in the big stories that held our attention two decades ago."



PICTURE: Nick Eggleston, Wintec student

LOOKING BACK: 1. Angela Hughes, 2. Susana Talagi, 3. Anni Schwanen, 4. David Tilson, 5. Ben Telfer, 6. Deanna Harris, 7. Flo Kerr, 8. Sean Scott, 9. Greer McDonald, 10. Allister Walker, 11. Pip Cole, 12. Andy Fyers, 13. Nicolina Newcombe, 14. Katrina Lintonbon, 15. Brad Mills, 16. Anita Moran, 17. Penny Miles, 18. Jonathan Creighton-Pester, 19. Cleo Fraser, 20. Amy Smart, 21. Vicky Hanna, 22. Michael Campbell, 23. Kylie Mills, 24. Anthony Kelly, 25. Jimmy Baker, 26. Emma Pottinger, 27. David Tauranga, 28. Holly McKay, 29. Jasjot Kaur, Absent: Josh Drummond, Kathy Graham, Michael Shone.

The way it was

IN 1987:

- David Lange was prime minister, Jim Bolger was the leader of the Opposition and Ross Jansen was Hamilton's mayor.
- Ansett New Zealand took on Air New Zealand and TV3 was given the go-ahead to compete with TVNZ.
- The sharemarket crash on Tuesday, October 20, wiped \$6 billion off New Zealand share values.
- Waikato's jobless hit a record high of 9153 and, in November, Hamilton had the biggest rise in unemployment (up to 8.3 per cent). The national average was 6.8 per cent.
- New Zealand was worried about the escalation of Aids. In June, an Auckland coroner found a 43-year-old woman died from an Aids-related infection accidentally acquired from a blood transfusion and six people were infected by transfusions in Wellington Hospital.



DAVID LANGE:
NZ's leader.

- The first heart transplant operation was performed at Green Lane Hospital.
 - Computers were so big they needed their own office, Walkmans were the iPods of the young, and vinyl records had been replaced by new, shiny compact discs.
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