

EARTHQUAKE!

SURVIVORS' STORIES



Hone Hohepa

Hone Hohepa recalls a conversation he overheard as an eleven year old boy on the day of the earthquake which many of the old people came to believe was an omen of what was to come.



Hana Lyola Cotter QSM

Hana, a respected Heretaunga kuia now in her nineties was 16 years old when the earthquake struck. Very soon after the quake, Hana joined a team of rescue volunteers from Bridge Pa, and headed to Napier. Hana takes the viewer right into the disaster zone describing the devastation and the sadness at having to recover, from smouldering rubble, the bodies of those who did not survive.



Jim Clayton

Jim Clayton is a farmer who has maintained a lifelong love of working on the land and an endless fascination with geology as a result of his experience of the 1931 Hawke's Bay Earthquake.

Jim was about to start secondary school on February 3rd, 1931.

He tells of strange animal behaviour and natural disturbances that were unheeded warnings in the days leading up to the earthquake.



Sally Sutherland

Born a few years after the 1931 Earthquake, Sally recalls how time and dates in her family were defined as either 'before the quake' or 'after the quake'. As a four year old she discovered a burnt purse in a cupboard that unearthed a tragic legacy that she and generations within her family have quietly lived with ever since.



Bishop Thomas Fouhy

In February 1931, Thomas Fouhy was a twenty two year old student at the Greenmeadows Marist Brothers Seminary known now as The Mission.

He tells how the earthquake hurled huge blocks of masonry around the chapel where he and other seminarians were praying. He escaped but seven fellow students and two priests were killed instantly.



Lauris Edmond

Lauris Edmond's name is well known as a poet and novelist. She was six at the time of the earthquake and explains how she watched awestruck as her school turned into a pile of red bricks and dust. Lauris's story of New Zealand's most deadly earthquake is told beautifully through the eyes of a child.



Ivan Hodgkinson

Ivan was sixteen at the time of the earthquake. Straight after the quake hit, he left his Napier home to wander around the town and assist relief workers where he could. He recalls standing helpless with others outside the remains of the Napier Nurses' Home where twelve night shift nurses were entombed. Ivan witnessed the aftermath and the terrifying panic as the fire approached.



Audrey McKelvie

Audrey is the daughter of Napier photographer A B Hurst. On the morning of the earthquake, AB Hurst grabbed his tripod and large format camera and began capturing the now iconic images of Napier's central business district as the town gradually became a firestorm.

Audrey herself was a sheltered fifteen year old at the time who had her eyes opened to life's realities as she helped out at the temporary hospital the next day.



May Blair

On the morning of the quake, fourteen year old May Blair set off on her first day at technical college with dreams of where it would take her. She tells of her escape as the large, brick building crumbled around her. The next morning May's brother, a sailor, arrived on a naval relief ship from Auckland. His efforts to help his family in Napier had unfortunate consequences.

The survivors Gaylene Preston has interviewed tell their stories with stoicism, humour and warmth characteristic of their generation.

Yet the impact of the earthquake on the lives of these people cannot be underestimated.

As they remember we, the audience, are drawn back into a time and a place that many of us will be glad we never experienced and all of us hope, we never will.

EARTHQUAKE!

DIRECTOR GAYLENE PRESTON

No one is more ideally suited to directing a documentary on the 1931 Hawkes Bay earthquake than film maker Gaylene Preston.

She is not only one of New Zealand's finest and most celebrated film makers, but for her the '31 earthquake was very much part of the backdrop of life in Napier where she received her secondary education.

"I was twelve," she says "when I heard a tragic story about a trapped woman in the Cathedral who was given a lethal injection as the fire roared toward her. I never was quite sure if that story was true or not, until I had a chance to supervise the collection of some oral archives on the subject in 1997.

Gaylene located the woman's granddaughter who tells what really happened in *EARTHQUAKE!*

"At 18 I was a nurse aid at St Mary's Home for the elderly, where I heard more earthquake stories. I began collecting them on sound tape in 1977 and much later, when invited, I jumped at the chance to make a film for use as a permanent exhibit in the Hawkes Bay Museum. This project was assembled in 1998 and remains the centrepiece of the museum's comprehensive earthquake exhibition.

Gaylene was able to draw on the video interviews recorded at that time when asked by TV3's Inside New Zealand to make the documentary **EARTHQUAKE!** for the 75th anniversary of the Hawkes Bay Earthquake.

While her feature films **MR WRONG** and **RUBY AND RATA** and the mini series **BREAD AND ROSES** remain New Zealand classics, she has constantly returned to documentary – **WAR STORIES Our Mothers Never Told Us** was in official selection at Sundance, Toronto and Venice Film festivals and won the audience vote at Sydney Film Festival, and *Best Film at the NZ Screen Awards 1996*. **EARTHQUAKE!** is her first new film since **PERFECT STRANGERS** (*Winner best actress for Rachael Blake, Fantasporto, Portugal and Vladivostok Film Festivals 2004, and best film Toronto Female Eye 2005.*)

In **EARTHQUAKE!** Gaylene has interwoven personal eye-witness accounts of the disaster with stunning archival footage from the time.

Once again, she has masterfully documented an important chapter in New Zealand's past with a film that engages emotionally and lays bare a National tragedy while celebrating the human spirit and that essential heart which is truly us.

CINEMATOGRAPHER DAVID PAUL

Highly regarded Wellington cinematographer David Paul is behind the lens. David came to the Earthquake! project after several years as head of photography on *Insiders Guide to Happiness and Insiders Guide to Love*.

A large requirement of David's work on **EARTHQUAKE!** was to film piles of black and white archival photographs. On the face of it that may not seem a stimulating task for an experienced cameraman. It was entirely the reverse says David.

"I hadn't really thought about the range of techniques you can employ as a cameraman to give life to an old still image. Gaylene and I worked closely on every photograph and I was blown away

by her amazing eye for composition, often creating the impression the image is a moving one.”

David says the challenge of making the archival stills compelling to the viewer was an artistically fulfilling aspect of the shoot. He describes the opportunity to film the interviews of the elderly earthquake survivors as a true privilege.

EDITOR RAEWYN HUMPHRIES

Raewyn trained at the Avalon Film and Television school and after editing programmes like *Country Calendar* and *Crimewatch*, set herself up in London as a freelance video editor. Since her return she has edited a range of local television series but she says her real interest lies in long form documentary.

And what appealed to her about ***EARTHQUAKE!*** was that it wasn't a facts and figures take on a natural disaster but through personal accounts, focused on the human impact.

“Personal stories as opposed to the graphics and narration style need to be approached very differently in the edit suite. I had to be mindful not to be too intrusive by cutting it around too much. I just had to let them tell their stories.”

Raewyn says there were some thrilling moments in the cutting room when she and Gaylene discovered that some of the archival footage perfectly matched the interviewee's descriptions of scenes and events after the earthquake.

“It's a real gift to an editor and pretty rare to be able to match two independent sources to illustrate a specific moment in time seventy five years ago”.