



# The Mount House Association

## Member's letter



### **New Zealand Earthquake 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2010**

John Philips an old boy of Mount House has a son out in Christchurch NZ, Harvey, (another old boy) he wrote an email to his father John describing the experience he and his family went through in the recent earthquake, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2010. They have kindly agreed to share this with the Mount House Association

"We are fine and trying to get back to normal. L has to go to school for a meeting tomorrow - evidently the ceiling in "her" library has collapsed so she will be busy!

I went to work today - I had checked out the office on Sunday as I had to ring around to see if staff were okay etc and report on the state of our building - anyway we were lucky with the only damage being some smashed bottles of wine! All staff okay - except whenever there was another shake - had 8 today - biggest being 5.1 - all called "after-shocks" but as you will know a 5 category shake can be quite frightening.

We are all still quite shaken by the event! The experience very difficult to describe but here goes:

Imagine being fast asleep - 4.35am - being woken by a horrendous roaring sound - akin to a large truck approaching - followed by an incredible shaking that just went on and on. The walls seemed to move in all directions and I was quite convinced that the whole house would collapse on top of us.....I believe I yelled some obscenities to L ....then blackness as all the power went off and a strange quiet descended - broken by the sound of things breaking as pictures/ornaments fell down. Then water noises - we could both hear the sound of running water - as we struggled to throw clothes on and locate torches etc.....then more panic as another shake rocked the house....then a feeling of blind panic when the bedroom door would not open.....I forced it open - bending the

handle in the process and ran down the hall to find debris strewn all over the place - speakers on the floor, broken glass on the kitchen floor etc etc

And all the time this sound of running water I was anxious to see where it was coming from.....opened a window - the sound suddenly much louder and by torchlight saw the most unbelievable sight of water spouts popping up in about 6 different spots on the lawn where liquefied sand was being pushed up through the ground.....I instantly knew what they were as I had recently read all about what happens in an earthquake when the ground becomes liquefied.....then checking that each room was intact...and then being faced with another jammed door into the laundry room leading to the garage...could not open it at all and then suddenly there was another sharp jolt and the door came free and managed to get into the garage to check for damage in there - all looked okay in there so it was back to locate L.....Frodo was under our bed where he stayed for hours.....then a txt message to Sara's phone as L was frantically trying to locate her..then a new noise.....cars going by on the road outside - what seemed like a convoy - car after car after car and we knew they would be fleeing the area in case of a tsunami.....dithering about whether to join the exodus and L telling me that if there was to be a tsunami the siren would have sounded so then deciding to get the radio on...locate batteries for the radio and finally hear the calm announcement that Chc had indeed been hit by a substantial 'quake and music to our ears was that it had come from inland so there was no risk of a tsunami.....and then we stopped rushing around and tried to calm down.....

Anyway - what is amazing is that there has been no loss of life - the community has pulled together and we will come out the other side

I know. Huge infrastructure problems to surmount - roads, bridges etc and then of course there will be just hundreds of houses to fix or rebuild. It will be years before it is all over! We will have to be rebuilt. The ground has shifted underneath the house - no longer do we have level floors - it's like living in the old house again! We can't close some internal doors - can't even use the front door as it is all twisted - shut luckily. The ramp up to the garage is 4 inches away from the house; the patios and driveway are all over the place and split in many different directions. Inside the house there are big cracks on the floors, and in the ceilings and walls.....goes on and on and on !! We can at least live here like this - many poor people have been forced from their homes as they are just not safe.

Really we are fine and quite honestly when one thinks of all the awful other disasters that befall communities we don't have much to complain about. But I guess we will !!!"