

## **In Therapy Leaving Kapiti**

*The government bought our two-acre property for the expressway. They provided three counselling sessions to help with the loss. This is an imagined conversation with my psychotherapist.*

**Psychotherapist:** So you're going to try for a new life away from the captivating Kapiti Coast?

**Me:** Crazy to leave this paradise, many people say.

**P:** You're crazy or it's paradise?

**Me:** I'm sure they mean both. For me though it *was* paradise. Not easy now to regard it that way with a motorway slicing through its heart. So the time has come, lived here 15 years, and visited off and on for many years before that ...

**P:** I've been here all my life, love it, can't imagine wanting to leave; just the motorway driving you to leave, is it?

**Me:** That's a dubious verb under our circumstances, driven from our paradise within paradise by a motorway.

**P:** Slip of the tongue, sorry. So you're happy to be going and you feel that your condition will be all right with a big move?

**Me:** My "condition"! That's a strange expression for mild and temporary down-feeling.

**P:** All right, I can sense you're feeling better.

**Me:** I don't think I've ever been unwell actually. Things took a turn for the worse with the motorway carving through our two-acre Shangri-la. The destruction of nature we've enjoyed and loved is the sad thing, really gnaws at my innards. Someone said not to worry about the birds and creatures, they just go somewhere else? And a very public person said there will always be winners and losers where progress is concerned. Living must be so much simpler for some other people.

**P:** Do you think or rather feel you feel too much?

**Me:** No, no, just got some basic feelings about destroying the environment, entwined with some animosity over the loss of our cottage, fish pond, fruit trees, rhododendrons, hydrangeas, flaxes, native trees and "naked ladies".

**P:** Ah, ah ... amaryllis by any other name ... I agree with you about the road to some extent – it has obviously taken a toll on a lot of people and the destruction will be terrible – but won't they make good? Build ponds and other features, plant trees, put up noise barriers ...

**Me:** I sincerely hope it won't be a toll road, it's cost enough already! *(Both laugh)*. Sorry, couldn't resist. Yes, mitigations they call them, but it'll be changed with a four-lane asphalt strip running through our beautiful coast, splitting communities, making it more difficult for visitors ... and all in the name of spending money on infrastructure. Sorry to say no matter what they put in place, a terrible beauty will not be born. Did you know that the traffic has been reducing over the past 10 years?

**P:** Ah, but the choke points, the peak-hour traffic, the holiday gridlocks. Many people are snarled up in traffic every morning and evening five times a week ... but I can understand losing your paradise is tough.

**Me:** Oh, there are always yea-sayers for progress at any cost. I hope we get a new government which will accelerate provision of alternative transport. Can I ask you what's so special about the Coast for you?

**P:** The island, a wonderful sanctuary for wildlife, it's the gem of the Kapiti Coast with its forested facets and ever-changing colours in the varied weathers ... and the history of the coastal area – Te Rauparah used to paddle his canoe up the swamp from South Raumati to Waikanae.

**Me:** Well, that'll be a good thing to recall when you're driving on the new road.

**P:** You would receive compensation of some kind for seizing your property.

**Me:** Yes, we received more than fair market value but it went nowhere towards making up for the pain of loss, for the eviction trauma, for the hassle in all the valuations and negotiations involved, for the way it was done. One good thing was they paid for all the move, a substantial amount of stuff. We moved only about four kilometres away, but they would have helped us to move up to 80 kms, I think.

**P:** You said, "The way it was done"?

**Me:** Abominable! Two transport officials walked up our 200-metre driveway and spread a map out on our picnic table so that we could see a big red line going through the middle of our paradise. I asked them why they didn't phone us in advance as a basic courtesy. They explained that they didn't do things that way – I suppose taking people by surprise is better than giving them time to prepare! Later in dealings with the property acquisition manager we asked to have three more springtimes on our property. To our relief we got that. We were the last of 28 homes to vacate.

**P:** I know there was a group, Save Kapiti ...

**Me:** Amazing! Many public-spirited Kapiti-loving people who worked hard to tell the public about the change and destruction, making a huge number of submissions at the Board of Inquiry held over a couple of months from November, 2012. It was all wallpaper and poor miles to the gallon. I recall one expert “witness” for the authorities saying, “Everyone gets used to losing their homes eventually.” Sad when officials start saying things like that – no feeling, no empathy, just needless cold-hearted party line.

**P:** Great that you could protest though, the chance to do so very important. Where will you go to now? Any ideas?

**Me:** The far North, the remote subtropics, more sun and rain, but far away from any possibility of a new road being built, although I believe a new motorway is going to be built to Whangarei, so we’ll have to steer clear of that.

**P:** No more expressways for you then.

**Me:** Right, but over 40 years of connection with the Kapiti Coast means we’ll be taking fond and abiding memories of a long life enjoying the beauty of nature here.

*All gone!*



