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Editorial

This month's editorial has been written by Paul Amstalden.

Peter Bourne. A few weeks ago, had you asked this name off fellow New Zealanders on the street, with the question who this man was, I venture 80% would have stared blankly at you with "Peter who?" Had you asked the same question with the name "Possum Bourne", the result would almost certainly have been reversed, and 70% would have quickly answered "Oh, he's that racing-car driver isn't he?" And people say, "Oh what's in a name?" Well, names are very important! Even nicknames. They identify all humans as individuals, billions of us! But my thoughts have not been about names these past three weeks, but about life, and the tragic loss for all humanity of all races by the early death of a promising individual of any nationality. For who can foresee what the person may have achieved given a longer life? Another famous name that springs to mind immediately is another Peter.

Sir Peter Blake, that 'Possum Bourne' of yacht racing, whose life was also tragically and needlessly cut short long before his time. We will never know what exciting and intriguing new discoveries about nature and our environment Sir Peter and his new team may have discovered over the next couple of

decades in his new career with the Cousteau Foundation. No doubt his team will carry on the work he started, but it will be without Sir Peter's inquisitive drive.

So I come back to my primary thought, life, and its wondrous possibilities. Especially for our young to middle-age people, I implore you all to be careful out there! If driving on road or off, operating machinery, or just having leisure fun with family or friends, it takes only a half-second distraction to cause a tragedy sometimes. Most times, driving on a rural road or secondary highway calls for more cautious alertness than driving on a motorway or primary highway by virtue of the condition of the former, narrower, sharp bends, misleading little humps, narrow bridges and so on. So I will again say, especially to our young people, always be careful, especially when driving motor vehicles, day or night. Remember, if you die in a tragic accident, you leave behind grieving parents, siblings, maybe even a spouse and children as well as other relatives and friends. Life is far too precious not to do one's best to preserve it to a ripe old age, I should know at my age! Oh, yes, yes, I hear many of you young people loud and clear saying that "life stinks." And yes,

sometimes 'life' does throw a few 'hardballs' at us, but the trick is to catch them, hold them firmly in your grasp and study and learn from them so you are wiser and stronger for the next delivery, when it comes. But I can remember my smelling power back over 70 years of my life and I never ever smelt life stink!

So look after your life! Who knows, if not you, perhaps one of your present or future children will become a famous scientist, doctor, engineer, or even astronaut! The possibilities are limitless and perhaps very rewarding and satisfying in your future, when you get to my age.

"Not likely," I hear some of you mumble. Oh yeah? Let me give you one or two examples! The Wright brothers of America, and Richard Pearse of New Zealand. One hundred years ago both parties, living nearly half-a-world apart from each other and with no knowledge of each other's existence, started to build about the same time, some weird contraptions for their ideas of powered flight - and the rest is history. And about 140 years ago, Mum and Dad Wright in America and Mum and Dad Pearse in New Zealand had no hint that their dearly loved little boys would go into world history forever.

But not only men, many women too, have done tremendous deeds for humanity. Two names spring into my mind immediately, Florence Nightingale and Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Although they lived primarily 100 years apart from each other, what a difference they each made to millions of people, even during their lifetimes. Both their life stories will certainly go down in history forever also.

Then there is our own still-living legend who, 50 years ago, accompanied by an equally brave, tough and tenacious man from the local people with the funny name Tensing Norgay, accomplished what several hundred of the world's best mountaineers had failed to do. They made it to the top of Everest.

Using what, by today's standards can only be described as 'primitive' high-altitude mountaineering equipment, they had succeeded where so many before them had failed. They had conquered our world's highest mountain and returned safely to tell the tale! But what followed in these men's lives is even more remarkable. While living among them that first

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