



Riches

The answer to the timeless childhood question ‘what do you want to be when you grow up?’ need not just be one option.

SARAH LANG meets those with more than one string to their bow

H EARD THE joke about the vet-taxidermist who merged his two businesses with the catchphrase “either way you’ll get your dog back”? Okay, so maybe that’s not such a winning idea, but around the world all sorts of people are doubling up on careers. Like the engineer-DJ in India, the accountant-pilot in Denmark and the oncologist-actor in Canada. The United States is home to a vet-banker, a psychiatric nurse-farmer and even a lawyer-magician. And we’re certainly not immune to the two-career bug in New Zealand.

We’re not talking about the actress who waitresses in between jobs or the factory worker who does some night-watchman shifts on the side — after all, moonlighting in another job to earn extra cash is an age-old phenomenon. Nor are we talking about ditching a career that’s not quite you and turning your passion into your living, like the lawyer who decides to hole up with her water-colours and easel. These are people with passions for two fields who are choosing to combine two careers rather than choosing between them.

While two related careers can bounce off and bolster each other, more often people who get a lot — but not all they need — out of their primary careers are forging a poles-apart secondary career that adds not only income but a different kind of satisfaction to their lives. Maybe that’s creative satisfaction or a dash of the practical; perhaps it’s more people contact or a chance for uninterrupted solitude.

But yes, although fewer jobs demand strict 9-5 attendance nowadays, juggling two careers is still tricky time-wise. Here are four Kiwis who are making their double majors work.

JULIE CLEARWATER **NAVAL RESERVIST AND PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCHER**

Julie Clearwater was just 10 when she first tried to join the navy after a group tour of a Wellington naval ship. “I took some recruitment applications away and filled them out but my parents took them away from me!”

After high school in Invercargill, Clearwater found herself pulled in two directions. While still drawn to the sea and the navy, she also wanted the fun of studying and partying ashore in Dunedin. “Then I found out about the naval reserves which looked like a lot of fun.” Joining in 1997, she juggled science study at Otago Polytechnic with navy training, exercises, and sea voyages on the HMNZS Toroa as part of the Dunedin Volunteer Naval Reserves, one of five reserves dotted throughout the country.

s of a double life



DARK HORSE: When not on the beat, Christchurch policeman Stefen Harris is behind the camera and learning the craft from the likes of director Martin Campbell. Julie Clearwater, left, relishes her double life, saying her navy work “feels like I’m stepping into a completely different world from my normal life”.

PICTURE / SIMON BAKER

The seagoing equivalent of the army territorials, “reservists” are typically people with regular jobs who get paid for their naval-reserves time. As well as crewing the patrol vessels that protect New Zealand’s waters, they work with the regular force either at sea, ashore, or overseas on peacekeeping missions. And it’s not all hoist the sails and ahoy there: activities include border protection, pollution control, anti-piracy, customs assistance and search-and-rescue.

As a leading hand (the senior rank in the navy’s junior grade) 30-year-old Clearwater mentors junior reservists and has tackled everything from steering the ship to berthing it, from seabed mapping to search-and-rescue, through to standing by to fight fire while helicopters touched down on the Royal Australian Navy’s first amphibious ship (Clearwater went on a three-month exchange with RAN in 2003). And she plans to rise up the ranks: a fire-and-flood damage-control course with the regular navy this month is a step towards promotion to a Petty Officer.

Then there’s what she calls her “civilian job”. As a lab technician for eight years — latterly in the University of Otago’s school of pharmacy — she liaises with lecturers, sets up equipment, demonstrates experiments, helps teach students, and is about to begin her own pharmaceutical research.

Though the technician job’s fulltime, Clearwater finds plenty of time for the navy: as well as attending Wednesday naval parades

she attends regular training courses, and puts up her hand for voyages between semesters, in the summer holidays and whenever her leave and her boss allows.

The navy doesn’t feel like labour. “What I like most about the navy is it feels like I’m stepping into a completely different world from my normal life.”

And although one of her careers involves crouching over chemical concoctions and another involves a lot more physical heave-ho, Clearwater reckons they’re quite similar: “They’re both practical and involve teamwork, leadership and guidance”. Meanwhile, she says the navy’s helped her become a more logical, more confident technician and person.

Yes, there are definitely times when she’s stuck in a lab and just wants to get out to sea. But while she may go fulltime in the navy one day, she’s in no hurry to give up her double major. “The best thing about it is I never get bored.”

STEFEN HARRIS COMMUNITY CONSTABLE AND FILMMAKER

In 1977, 14-year-old Stefen Harris was hanging out at his Devonport, Auckland, home when he heard an almighty ruckus next door: yells, screams and what sounded like gunshots. He hit

the deck, then to his surprise heard the same melange of sounds repeating itself. “I poked my head over the fence and realised it was Sam Neill and Ian Mune working on *Sleeping Dogs*.” Turns out they were rehearsing scenes for the seminal New Zealand film at actor/screenwriter Mune’s house.

Over the next year, Mune helped his young next-door neighbour, who was already making “very basic” Super-8 movies, gain an understanding of storycraft. By his mid-teens, Harris had entered TV One’s *Spot On* film competition, one year losing out to a movie-mad kid called Peter Jackson.

Fast-forward three decades and both boys have morphed into award-winning filmmakers — though no, Harris isn’t in Jackson’s league quite yet. By day the quietly-spoken 45-year-old is a Christchurch community constable; by night he’s a filmmaker.

And this year’s been by far the best of his filmmaking life. Chosen from 150 entrants as one of three finalists for the 2007 Air New Zealand Inspiring New Zealanders Scholarship In Film, Harris was flown to Los Angeles last December for a 45-minute interview with one of New Zealand’s most commercially-successful directors, Martin Campbell (*The Mask of Zorro* and *Casino Royale*). Says Harris: “It was quite overwhelming: one day you’re backyard filmmaking and the next you’re in Hollywood meeting someone like Martin.”

To Harris’ surprise and delight, Campbell chose him for the 12-month mentoring prize, waxing lyrical about application film *The Waimate Conspiracy*, a mockumentary about a Waimate land claim (shot with a meagre \$15,000 budget) which made the international festival circuit and won awards at home, in Australia and Canada.

In September, Harris flew to the US for five weeks of mentoring from Campbell on the set of his new film. “When I found out it’d be *Edge of Darkness* I was so excited. It’s my dream project” says Harris, a fervent fan of Campbell’s first *Edge of Darkness* incarnation, the 1985 BBC thriller series which won six Baftas.

During filming in Boston, the two were “basically attached at the hip”, with Campbell frequently pausing to talk to Harris about what he was doing and why.

“I couldn’t have been any closer to the action.” All in all, it’s been a huge injection of confidence for Harris that he, too, can make it in the tough filmmaking arena.

Using the last of his annual leave for the trip, Harris returned to the police station and an overflowing in-tray in October. A cop for close to 19 years, 12 of those in Christchurch, Harris spends his day doing everything from dealing with taggers to hauling drunk drivers off the road; from liaising with victim support to visiting schools. “Every day’s different. I get the opportunity to help people out and make things better sometimes.”

With on-the-beat hours swallowing his days, how much time does he put into filmmaking? “Virtually all the rest!” When he’s in the middle of a film project, he turns into a night owl: after film work til midnight and a few hours’ sleep he’s up at 6am to head to the station, then come 5pm knock-off it’s straight back into the film project.

“Timewise it can be quite fraught,” admits Harris, who squeezes in time with 12-year-old daughter Phoebe and partner Pegen O’Rourke (Canterbury Police’s family violence safety co-ordinator).

But though it gets tiring, Harris likes his life. He still gets a lot out of policing, and knows that — at this stage of his career

at least — it's virtually impossible to make a full-time living from filmmaking. "Filmmaking really is a vocation: if you're passionate about it, it's something you just have to do."

Meanwhile making that mental transition when he swaps his policeman's cap for a filmmaker's isn't at all tricky. In fact, he reckons combining a largely practical job with a more creative career makes for a nice balance. "They're both part of my character."

As is writing. An avid writer since his teens, Harris — who writes his own scripts — penned five unpublished novels in 12 years before one was published: 1999's *The Waikikamukau Conspiracy* (the genesis of film *The Waimate Conspiracy*) and 2003's *The HydroSnipe*.

Currently he's turning that second novel into eponymous environmental-crime thriller *The Temuka Project* — set for a January shoot — while also working on the fourth draft of NZ Film Commission-funded screenplay *La Bora*, the story of another job-juggling bloke, a chef with a bankrupt restaurant who moonlights as a security guard to keep the receivers at bay.

His next scholarship phase is a two-month stint in LA in February getting advice from Campbell on *La Bora*, workshoping the script with a leading film-studies professor, and observing post-production on *Edge of Darkness*.

Then it's back to juggling the force with Dark Horse Films, a company name which his once in-the-dark fellow coppers think is pretty apt.

GLENN COLQUHOUN

DOCTOR AND POET

At parties, Glenn Colquhoun often gets a few surprised looks when he introduces himself and tells how he earns a crust. "Usually I say I'm a GP then over the course of the conversation mention I write books, too. People sometimes seem surprised, because poet and doctor are something people don't put together — after all, both come with a pile of connotations and a strong mental image."

But Colquhoun manages to embody both that solid solicitous bloke with a stethoscope, and the dreamer who's "drifting away in some esoteric ethereal realm of the imagination".

Colquhoun writes almost as lyrically as he speaks. Full of intimate observations and disarming clarity, his poetry has won the country's highest literary accolade — the 2004 Prize in Modern Letters, and the 2003 Montana Book Awards prizes (best poetry book and the first poet to win the coveted readers' choice award) for his third poetry collection, *Playing God*. In 2006 it was the first-ever New Zealand poetry book to "go platinum" by selling more than 50,000 copies.

About to publish his fifth poetry collection, mythology-meshing *North South* (handwritten and painted by narrative artist Nigel Brown), and fourth children's book *Amazing Tales of Aotearoa*, Colquhoun's currently "scribbling" another book of poetry and another children's book from his home in sleepy Waikawa Beach, just north of Otaki. Cross the road and sand squelches between your toes.

But that's not a luxury he gets every day. On Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays the 44-year-old works as a GP in nearby Paraparaumu, while Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays are "Olive days" (he shares custody of his 5-year-old daughter with ex-partner Libby).

"I write in and around that, and when I say write, often I'm just thinking around the topic. I might be mowing the lawn or walking on the beach or crashing the car but at the same time I'm figuring out a character, running a rhyme around in my head. Writing pervades everything."

Although he'd need to move somewhere cheaper to eke a full-time living out of writing, his wordsmith pocket money means there's no need to work five-days-a-week as a GP.

"I'm lucky, my week is nicely balanced. In a perfect world I'd probably work two days medicine, one day just purely for me to do whatever the hell I wanted to and the rest of the week writing, but financially three days medicine is easier. I wouldn't want to work any more than that in medicine, [because] you're constantly putting fires out and those days wipe me out. But I also wouldn't want the complete solitude and the intensity of the imagination of writing for the whole week, week in, week out, without some root in the world of argy-bargy and people."

His third career is fatherhood. "It gets as much time as the others. I call them The Holy Trinity: the father, son and the Holy Ghost," laughs Colquhoun, who once trained to be a minister.



DOUBLE VISION: Glenn Colquhoun says he would miss both of his careers if he had to choose just one.

PICTURE / MARK MITCHELL

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Glenn Colquhoun

"They're a nice balance to each other. I can be teaching Olive how to make meatballs one minute, the next minute I'm solving a rhyme, then I'm looking in someone's ear, so really they get me out of each other, and the ability to swap headspaces from one into the other is hugely energising."

Although you could see medicine and writing as opposites — practical vs creative; solitary vs sociable — Colquhoun's conscious of their similarities. "With medicine you're around the world of the human being, and as a writer you're reflecting the human condition. And both revolve around people's stories."

Meanwhile medicine helps inspire his poetry, most evidently in his collection *Playing God* where you'll find a poem titled *Today I want to be a doctor* alongside its companion *Today, I do not want to be a doctor* ("The asthmatics are smoking; The alcoholics are drinking/The diabetics are eating chocolate/The mad are beginning to make sense").

"There are definitely times when you think 'Oh noooo, get me out of here,'" Colquhoun laughs. "I don't think you'll talk to a doctor living or dead who wouldn't feel that. But if I work through that space in medicine I think 'Wow, I'm very lucky and privileged to be here'."

"For me, medicine is the girl you get pregnant behind the bike sheds and have to do the right thing by. All of a sudden there's this big thing that takes a huge amount of energy and it's hard to walk away from, and I've had significant doubt about it and my capacity to do it. And I don't mean to degrade medicine by saying that, because you hang in there, sort of survive each other and eventually a different type of relationship and aroha, love, grows rich and slow."

While he'd miss medicine if he wasn't doing it, he loves writing

in a much more passionate way. "Writing's my childhood sweetheart, and eventually we saw each other on the bus again and said 'hey, how about we get together' and that's been a wonderful journey."

Although he's dallied with the idea of giving up medicine "very briefly, on a bad day" — and may pull back from it one day — Colquhoun plans to keep juggling words with GP work for the foreseeable future.

"If Owen Glenn decided to give up Winston Peters and give poets \$100,000 then I'd take a day a week off medicine and dedicate every book I write to him. But otherwise this is nice."

NEIL BILLINGTON

COURT COMMUNICATIONS ADVISER AND MUSICIAN

If you remember those piercing blue eyes and that strong jaw from somewhere in the distant past, odds are you watched Neil Billington on telly in the 80s — perhaps when he was reporter/presenter on current-affairs shows *Frontline*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *World Watch* and *Eyewitness News*, or when he was reading *One News* with Judy Bailey in 1987. After a year of autocues and artificial banter, he quit because he needed more of a challenge "and I felt somewhat absurd being famous for so little. I didn't know then that the salaries would shoot up like they did — if I'd stayed in the job I could have asked for \$800,000 and retired two years later!"

Two decades on, Billington's about as far as you can get from retired. The 55-year-old, whose black beret matches an offbeat sense of humour, juggles two careers in Wellington, neither of which is journalism. "I have two existences: one's nocturnal, one's diurnal."

His "day gig" is senior communications adviser to New Zealand's judiciary, while by night he sings and plays blues and jazz gigs with The Neil Billington Band. Playing the harmonica (often dubbed the blues harp), Billington — who's been described by Midge Marsden as New Zealand's best blues harp player — jokingly refers to his chosen instrument as "the poor man's violin" and "a lazy man's instrument". Yet with its 19 notes, and changes in pitch achieved partly by relaxing and coordinating muscles in the throat, mouth and lips, the harmonica's not as easy to play as it looks.

With gigs often keeping him up into the small hours, Billington has to get creative about clocking up enough sleep. Happily his communications duties aren't strictly 9-5, which means after rolling into bed at 3am post-gig he doesn't need to "leap to attention at the crack of dawn" and he often naps after work before heading out at night. Judges can call him at any hour so he makes up the work time with "periods of concentrated effort" on weekdays, weekends and evenings.



IN TUNE: Neil Billington says he was “a small boy from Hawera who wanted to be a black man from Mississippi.”

PICTURE / MARK MITCHELL

His communications job of 11 years isn't PR; instead, he's “a translator and interpreter between the judges and the public.” In a stand-alone consultative position (rather than an information-processing role), he assists judges from all courts with communications matters: on any given day he could be advising a judge on how he or she might best express a sensitive issue, assisting with speeches or media statements, or keeping judges up-to-date on articles.

While he relishes this stimulus of his judgment, big-picture-thinking and people skills, he finds the contrast of music freeing. “Music lets me let go of careful thinking and practised inhibitions; it's like stepping out into space and trusting you don't fall.”

And yes, people are often surprised when they find out about his dual careers. “People always want to locate you through what you do, then when they find out [about being a musician] my cover's blown” he laughs. During the 2006 triennial judges' conference in Queenstown on a ferry crossing Lake Wakatipu, Billington pulled out his harmonica and “ended up jamming” to the surprise of the judges, most of whom hadn't known he was a musician.

He's only just “come out of the closet” as a singer. Growing up in the “male-dominated small-town New Zealand heartland” of Hawera in Taranaki, “it wasn't really acceptable for blokes to sing, to express emotion. To have cultural inclinations like music was dubious. And I thought playing music was a form of magic, beyond my own capacity.”

He remembers watching blues bands on TV at age 10 and “being utterly absorbed by the way they moved and swayed when they played. That's when blues first spoke to me. I was a small boy from Hawera who wanted to be a black man from Mississippi.”

Joining the Hawera Municipal Brass Band, he began playing the tenor horn then switched to cornet. But when someone whipped out a harmonica on a school bus trip, he found his true

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Neil Billington

musical love. “I was blown away by the way it evoked the human voice and I knew I had to play it, so I bought it for \$2 and drove everyone else mad. It was like acquiring another voice.”

While living at Wellington student hostel Weir House as a law student, he would practise harmonica late at night in the cavernous B-floor toilets. But never believing he could become a musician like his blues idols (“I felt like a person with a physical impairment looking up at great athletes”), he gradually stopped.

After a brief stint as a lawyer, more than 20 years in TV and radio (including as presenter/reporter/documentary-maker on National Radio and as current-affairs producer/presenter for BBC World Service in London) and six months as country-hopping press secretary to then-Foreign Minister Don McKinnon, Billington suddenly found himself in a deep rut in 1995. “My marriage broke up, I had no job, no wife, no nothing and that's when I realised not playing music for almost 20 years

had been like cutting off an arm.”

So he dusted off his harmonica and started playing with a crowd of Wellington musicians. “This salty old guy told me I had a God-given gift for this instrument, so I stopped and thought ‘what could I do with music if I really applied myself?’ That's when my focus shifted to the creative.”

After playing the harmonica for more than 10 years in various local bands — from rock 'n' roll and Irish to jazz and blues bands — last year he decided to start his own blues band. As well as continuing its regular local gigs, The Neil Billington Band is planning to play at more blues and jazz festivals, tour the country and release some CDs.

While one day Billington might give up his communications-adviser job to move to Europe and concentrate on his music, right now he says the balance makes him happy. “My eyes are often more red than blue in the mornings, but I feel like I've got things right, at my core. I do what I am.” □



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