



## Fine Art & Diplomacy

Dr Kennedy Graham, 59, is a diplomat, lecturer and writer. He's held various posts in the New Zealand Foreign Service and with the United Nations, mainly in America, Asia and Canada. Currently he teaches modern diplomacy at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, is a researcher at the University of Canterbury, and is a UN consultant. Brother of longtime MP Sir Doug Graham, he has lived just seven of the last 33 years in New Zealand. In August he and second wife Marilyn moved to Christchurch to live permanently.

Chris Graham, 34, is a filmmaker and screenwriter. His short films, including *Water* and *BusStop*, have showed at numerous international film festivals. A television commercial-maker he's also one of our most successful music video makers, with the likes of Scribe's *Stand Up*. His first feature film, *Sione's Wedding*, a romantic comedy, is released March 30. On February 18 he marries girlfriend Rehana Dayananda.

### Kennedy Graham

Chris was eight months old when we moved to Boston, America. Our eldest, David, was four. I'd got a Fulbright scholarship but I wasn't going anywhere without my family. My wife Corrienne reminded him of breast milk, so I was wet nurse. Chris would wake screaming six times a night — he was a shocker — so I'd drag myself out of bed and give him a bottle.

I sort of grew up with Chris. I was 22 and 25 when my kids were born. I had plenty of vigour but I lacked wisdom. Of course the boys didn't recognise that.

Right from the start Chris was very bubbly and enthusiastic. I don't know many people who so determinedly get enjoyment out of life

as my younger son. That was good for fathering, because it brought out the fun in me. We played a lot of sport together: swimming, baseball, yachting, squash and rugby.

I remember fondly when we came back to Wellington I bought a motorbike and got Chris a baby crash helmet. He was only five, six. We'd go from Karori over the hills to Makara. I'd swerve all over with these little arms hanging on tight, and suddenly I'd feel the arms not as tight, turn my head and he'd be fast asleep. The boy was without fear. Still is.

Chris is far more intuitive and creative than me. He carted a camera everywhere, driving us absolutely bonkers. Every moment you'd look up and here's a camera blinking at you.

As a teenager Chris was very gregarious. He used to bring the school crowd over to the Wairarapa cottage for weekends. Soon he became one of the capital's more active graffiti writers — he saw it as an art form. I wrestled with it because I was teaching political theory — individual liberties vs social responsibility — and didn't know how to come down on him! I remember going in my suit and tie down to the Khandallah train station and recognising some graffiti disturbingly well. That evening I bided my time, we sat down to dinner, and I said: "Chris, do the words 'David stinks' mean anything to you?" The soup spilled all over his lap but he had the wit and courage to acknowledge it was his.

When I was sent to Geneva [in 1986] I decided to go on my own. The boys were busy at high school, they'd done their overseas thing. Chris came to visit three times a year, though I knew he missed his girlfriend and his friends. And we were constantly in touch. I always tried to let him make his own decisions. I would never have tried to persuade him to become a doctor or a lawyer because it was clear that wasn't him.

I helped put him through film school in New York [School of Visual Arts]. I was living there at the time and we had a few years to catch up

SCOTT VENNING

on. For the first year we bached as buddies across the road from the Twin Towers. I only had a one-bedroom apartment so Chris slept in the living room. We had a great time — we always do, maybe because we find the same kind of things funny. Chris reminds me of his uncle, my brother Doug, with that superb sense of humour. He's one of those people — there's a few of them, not a lot — that you just feel better after being with.

While we lived together I was production manager for his first student film. In the extraordinary, sweltering midsummer heat inside one weekend, my job was to move these plasticine stick figures a millimetre so he could take another shot. I've learned a lot about patience from Chris.

When he got to New York I was a bachelor, withdrawn, committed to work [Corrienne and Kennedy separated in 1989]. I went down with some dreadful lurgy and my 19-year-old son came into my room and spent half an hour stroking my head. I had no-one to speak of in my life at that stage and here's my son acting as nurse to me. I remember it so clearly.

My son is into human empathy more than most males. In New York he made friends with Dominic, a homeless Italian guy on Wall St, and took a whole lot of food down there one Christmas Eve and they had dinner on the pavement.

It's gratifying to see Chris achieve success. Like every artist he's gone through tough times. He did extremely well at film school in New York, the phones rang for 24 hours and then they fell silent. So he bumped along doing apprentice-type things in the US for five years. He's always kept his good cheer and in recent years he's started to get traction. That's his grit and determination paying off.

**Chris Graham**

When I was little I thought Dad was so cool. Especially after he got a motorbike. I remember like slow motion roaring up to my Karori primary school, pulling off the helmet and all the kids staring at me. And Dad would burn off: Superdad. In that moment I was the coolest.

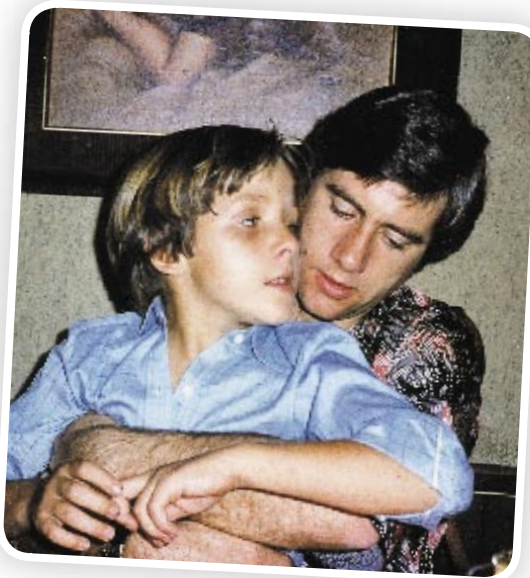
One of my earliest memories involves two softball gloves, Dad and a ball. I was really aware he was a young dad. We played rugby right through into my teenage years. I had energy to burn but he was in his 30s and could match me. I remember thinking: I want to have children young so I can do that. We'd be physically active but really just talking and hanging out together.

When I was seven my parents sat my brother and me down in our lounge in Karori and told us we were moving to Bangkok. I was very

confused about what Asia was, let alone Bangkok, but I got used to the idea because we'd lived in America and Canada when I was really little. It was an unusual childhood moving between New Zealand and overseas. I was very lucky. I realised very young how big the world is, and how differently people do things.

Socially Dad puts everyone at ease and makes them feel comfortable. Once my parents had a dinner party and a rather unusual guest asked if someone would sing a song. David and I sat there watching all these adults just looking at each other nervously, and then Dad stands up and launched into "By The Rivers Of Babylon". He sort of danced along, and of course then everyone burst into song and thought it was fantastic.

As a teenager he encouraged me to make my own mistakes and be independent. When mainstream video cameras came out in the



1979, Kennedy and Chris Graham: "He became one of the capital's more active graffiti writers — he saw it as an art form."

mid '80s I asked my parents for one for Christmas. They were almost \$2000 and Dad said if this is something you really want you should work for it yourself. Years later eventually I did!

Dad left for Geneva when I was 15. We had a blast when I went to stay. We have a very similar sense of humour. We'll crack a joke in a group of people and we'll be cracking up and they'll all be looking at us funny.

When I was finishing high school I wanted to go to film school and there was a great one in New York — nothing remotely like it in New Zealand then. But it was hellishly expensive. Dad said: "I've got the money to get you through three years of film school but you'll have to get

a loan for the fourth year." After film school I was on my own money-wise.

Dad had lived away from us for three years in Geneva so it was fantastic going to live with him in New York. I started halfway through the American school year and the first-year students had already formed little cliques. I'd missed Dad for years so we did everything together. We'd go to Yankee baseball games, go for walks, I'd drag Dad to the movies. It was like filling up the reserve tank that had emptied while he was away. We used to go to this diner two blocks away from the UN, they had the most amazing hot apple pie and vanilla ice cream. He'd go back to the diner years later and email me: "I just had that pie". I blame Dad for my dessert fetish.

One of my closest friends died when I was in my third year of film school. I was 20. Straight away it flashed through my mind that Dad's friend David had died at the same age. I remember Dad stroking my head.

Dad was always supportive of choices I made, unless it involved any danger. Like when he'd "highly recommend" I didn't go into that part of Harlem.

But he's more of a risk-taker than he thinks. Risks that aren't just recreation — calculated career risks I think take a huge amount of courage. I've been deeply impressed for a long time at the work he does, from writing his PhD on Pacific nuclear-free zones, to articles for international journals, to the work he's doing now on global governance. Dad thinks about the big picture in the widest sense — not just the world we live in today but our grandchildren's world.

Though he's very modest about what he does. I'd often find out after the case, like when he was working for a global non-profit organisation [Parliamentarians For Global Action], that it was crumbling and he'd taken it on knowing he had to salvage it and raise millions of dollars. And he did.

My last short film *Water* is about a family in denial that their house is flooding. It was a greater metaphor for global warming, a huge part of the work Dad's doing. It went to Sundance, and he flew over.

I think the infrequency of seeing each other has actually added to our closeness. When I do see him there's an intensity about it, to the point that he usually laughs at me because when I hug him at the airport I don't let go for a while.

It's wonderful he's back. There were times I sent him emails encouraging him to consider it. But Dad's career is still on an upward gradient and I didn't want to push him. He never pushed me.

Sarah Lang ■