

Lou Clauson QSM

22nd November 1928 -- 28th December 2013

Thanks to the Clauson family



Louis Olin Henry Clauson was born in Auckland on 22nd November 1928. His mother Ivy said she saw the name 'Olin' in a book she was reading and thought it looked good so she added it to 'Henry', from his father's name which was Walter Henry although he was always known as Wally. No one is sure where the Louis came from but he was always known as Lou.

His only sibling was his sister Noeline who was two years younger. The family was based in Auckland for the first few years of Lou's life and his first school was *Grey Lynn Primary* in 1936-37 when their family lived in Richmond Avenue, managing a dairy there.

When the children were still quite young the family lived and worked on farms in the far north, near Kaingaroa, before moving to the Waikato where they worked on a farm in Gordonton helping share-milk on the farm of the son of Richard John Seddon, Prime Minister of New Zealand. Lou and Noeline attended *Gordonton School* which involved a 2-mile walk each way. Lou's father died in 1943 of a brain tumour and, although Lou was aged only 14, he was given permission to leave school to help on the farm.

They had been on the farm for about two years when the share milker Syd Collins and the Clausons moved to Maungateparu in the Piako District where Syd met and married Lou's grandmother. Eventually they all moved back to Syds property at Jesmond Road, Drury.

Lou took singing lessons with James Leighton in Auckland who persuaded him to enter for the 1946-1947 Cambridge and Hamilton singing competitions where Lou gained several placings. His first major stage appearance was as the Cook in the *Drury Rugby Football Club's* production of *Nautical Nonsense* in 1949. In the audience was his future wife Lorna, down from Northland. Lou bought an *Indian* motorbike and he and Lorna travelled to social events with her piano accordion tucked between them to sing duets at functions in Auckland and the Waikato from 1946 to 1950.



Lou developed a problem with undulant fever so he took a job at *Penrose Glassworks*. When transport became a problem he became a delivery driver for *Pryor's Drycleaners*. Lou and Lorna married and moved into Auckland to manage *The Avenue Dairy* in Remuera with Lorna's brother Len. After 2 years they moved back to Papakura to run the *Rose Marie Milk Bar* for Lorna's other brother, Vic. An offshoot of the Rose Marie Milk Bar was the first tiny beach store at Orere Point where a bach was purchased and the family holidayed and earned funds at the same time!

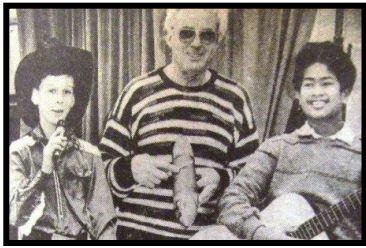
Lou formed his first group the *Sasmos* from among the *Ardmore Teacher's Training College* students. These 8 singers were popular all over South Auckland. Another vocal group was called *Four Hits and a Miss*. Eventually he formed 3 dance band groups; playing drums, keyboards and vocals. Lou established and ran the South Auckland branch of *Fullers Entertainment Bureau* with George Tollerton. He operated the *Rosemarie Restaurant* in Papakura in the fifties where he was also chef.

In 1953 he and Lorna started up the *Papakura Music Society*, the first community choir in Papakura, and they produced many concerts until the advent of TV eventually forced the choir into recess in 1966. In 1975 Lorna formed the *South Auckland Choral Society*. In 1956 he put on Auckland's first Rock & Roll dance in the *Karaka Hall*. 600 people turned up! His band *The Moorlet's* played his composition *Papakura Boogie*, perhaps the first New Zealand Rock & Roll original to be publicly performed. In 1959 Lou appeared in a colour Television clip for American television with the original *Platters*. He became known as *The Singing Compere* and organised and compered all the early talent quests in the late fifties and into the sixties at the *Maori Community Centre* and the *Henderson RSA* on Sunday nights.



He met Simon Mehana on stage at the *Maori Community Centre* in 1958 and they formed the music comedy duo *Lou and Simon*, becoming a sought-after act in cabaret, variety shows and on television, often working as the warm-up act for the *Howard Morrison Quartet*.

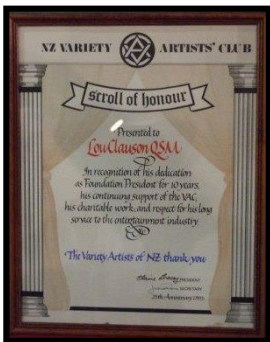
As recording artists they specialised in broad, bawdy satires such as *I want to be in a Maori Car*. They recorded 9 albums, 10 EPs and 18 singles. Their version of *Home Sweet Home* was sung in 7 languages. Besides being regulars on high-profile tours such as the *Showtime Spectaculars* and the *Miss New Zealand show*, *Lou and Simon* performed in Australia, round the Pacific and in the US. They split up in 1969 but every so often reunited for nostalgia concerts such as at the *1988 World Expo* in Brisbane.



In 1969 Lou reintroduced his *Young Talent* contests. Those who have gone on to bigger things include; Chris Powley, Brendan Dugan, Freddie Hemara, Annie Crummer, Ricky May, Ann Montgomery, Neti Galo, Georgina Te Whata, *The Temple Family*, The Silby Family, Roger Greenaway and Gail Tipene. They often performed at his *Senior Citizens Variety Concerts* at the *Auckland Town Hall* up until the mid 1990s. He ran these 4 times a year.

Lou sung in New Guinea, the USA, East and South Africa, Canada, Fiji, Bahamas, India, Sri Lanka, New Caledonia, Indonesia and Singapore and has made over thirty singing trips to Australia. He organised; baby shows, school holiday attractions, mall promotions, cabaret shows and cultural festivals. He had a life long love of cooking and performed in many shopping malls with his *Cooking with Lou Shows*. In 1975-76 he was appointed a ship board entertainer for P & O cruise ships throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

In 1971 he was presented a *Country Music Award* for 25 years in showbiz. He was National coordinator of the *1990 Commemorative Concert* and organised and performed in the 1971 and 1982 royal command concerts. He received a *1981 NEOA Merit Award* and in 1988 was granted the *Queens Service Medal*. He was also a *Justice of the Peace*, a marriage celebrant and dabbled in *Amway*. He and Lorna often cared for *Social Welfare* children in their Drury home, aptly named *Covent Gardens*.



Lorna returned to work when the kids grew up, first on the local Newspaper then at the Military Camp. She took a commercial course at *Auckland Secondary Teachers College* and taught typing at the local High School. She taught the Presbyterian Sunday School and was president of the Drury Woman's division of *Federated Farmers*. She was also chairman of the *Ratepayers Association* and

heavily involved in the Girl Guides. In 1984 Lou and Simon reunited and did a very successful national tour.

In June 1996 Lou was embroiled in a jury trial and convicted of indecently assaulting a young musician that he was promoting at the time. Simon Mehana was shocked and believed his former partner was innocent.

Lou was a long time Patron of the *VAC*, founding member and the original President from 1968—75 then continued as a committee member from 1976--78. He was awarded the *Benny* in 1972, life membership in 1980, a *Scroll of Honour* in 1992 and a *Certificate of Achievement* in 2012.

Lou's last public performance was a sell-out concert in 2006 at the *Papakura RSA*. He had continuing health problems with asthma and arthritis which put him into *Lady Elizabeth Rest Home* in early 2009 but he was still performing on his 85th birthday. Lou is survived by his former wife; Lorna, his children; Linda, Robyn and Grant; 13 Grandchildren and 8 Great Grandchildren.