

# Paul Bennett

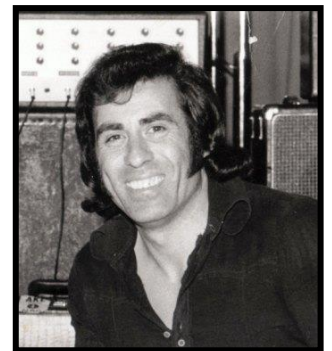
The surname Bennett is from the English 'Benedict' meaning 'blessed'. When Governor Sir George Grey invited **Dr John Bennett** of County Cork, Ireland, to become the first Registrar-General of New Zealand in 1849, Bennett, a Doctor of both Medicine and Divinity, brought along his wife Horatia and their six adolescent siblings. His youngest son **Thomas Bennett** married Raiha (b. Rangikawhiti) a high-born Te Arawa woman and they established a store at Ohinemutu Pa on the southern coast of Lake Rotorua. Thomas and Raiha had three sons, William, Frederick and Henry and from this dynasty came two Maori Bishops, two Knights, a Commanding Officer of the Maori Battalion, a New Zealand High Commissioner, the first Maori Officer in the *Royal Navy* and a medical superintendent at *Tokanui Psychiatric Hospital*.

**William Bennett** ran tourist motor launches on the Rotorua lakes and to the Pink and White Terraces on Lake Tarawea where he witnessed the Tarawera eruption in 1886. His second son **Joseph Bennett** was born in 1897 and joined the *NZ Rifle Brigade* in 1916, seeing action in France; the Somme, Messines and Passchendaele before being wounded and returned home in 1918. He was a plumber before the war but later became an electrician. Joseph married 3 times. He and Isobel (born Dickson) had separated 10 years earlier in 1932 but decided to have another go at their marriage and reconciled at Hamilton where Isobel was working at the *Ruakura Research Centre*.



When **Jackson Paul Bennett** was born in Hamilton on 16 August 1942 he already had two sisters, Leslie and Ngaire, aged 10 and 12. The family returned to Rotorua but seven years later Joseph took Paul to Tauranga then, two years later, to Brisbane, Australia. When Paul's aboriginal best-friend Garth Terare turned up at Paul's house with a new *Maton* acoustic guitar, Paul fell instantly in love and after learning the prerequisite three chords formed a duo with Garth. A love of aeroplanes led Paul to join the *Australian Air force* after leaving school and he became a morse-code signaller but his love of music won over and he left 2 years later after being posted to Darwin. He moved to Melbourne and worked at the *De Brazil Club* with another young part-Maori calling himself Jay-Ar, now John Rowles. John's brother Wally later sang in Paul's Trio in New Zealand, *The Pilgrims*.

Paul and Garth joined Prince Tui Teke's *Maori Troubadours* in 1962 and toured New Zealand, then Paul returned to Rotorua and laboured during the day and gined at night. He moved to Auckland and joined *Trio Samos*, a Samoan vocal group working cabaret and night clubs. He also worked as backing guitarist to singers such as Tommy Adderley and Diana Lee then became the resident vocalist at Dave Dunningham's *Surfside* on the North Shore. He married Josephine and they had two children, Andrew and Samantha. Agent Eddie Hegan sought Paul out in 1969 to work with Lou Clauson after the break up of *Lou and Simon*, which led to 5 or 6 gigs every Saturday night. When Clauson discovered Brendon Dugan, Paul went solo, working parties and cabaret. He appeared regularly at the *Jolly Farmer* in 1970 and the next year he took over Freddie Keil's residency at *Tommo's Place*.



His marriage faltered in 1971 so Paul took the opportunity to work the cruise ship *Marco Polo* with Dave Cowell, joining other Kiwi artists such as *The Yandell Sisters*, Jon Zealando, Brigette Allen and Paul Fisher. He performed at the *Kahala Hilton Hotel* in Honolulu in 1972 with John Rowles. In 1974 Paul joined the *Bahai Faith*, 'the best decision I ever made in my life!', which led to many trips around the Pacific, especially Rarotonga and the Solomon Islands, performing in concerts and fund raising.

For 10 years Paul and a group of Bahaii presented a series of welcoming concerts at the *Mangere Refuge Centre*. He married Ingrid in 1977 and they had a daughter Amanda although once again this did not work out. His last marriage in 1991 to Sue lasted a year. 'I married for companionship but really neither of us wanted to be attached.' Being away from home 5 to 6 hours a night certainly didn't help either.



In 1976 Paul worked on an album called *Spotty Dog* with his friend Bryce Peterson and they toured around schools doing free shows. He went on a pilgrimage to the Bahai shrines in Israel in 1985 achieving a 10 year dream, luckily paid for by a 78 year old aunt. 1999 marked the beginning of 16 years of poor health for Paul. He developed pancreatitis which, although later treated, led to diabetes. He has had a series of heart attacks and arthritis, especially in his hands, which led to him giving up playing for a while. And he has just had a hip operation. Paul gained a residency at the *Santa Lucia* Restaurant in Mission Bay in 2005 dueting with his friend Kip Tipuna. Recently Paul has been performing at retirement homes and hospitals around Auckland.

He is a founder member of the *Variety Artists Club*, being at the inaugural meeting at the *Manhattan Lounge* in 1966. He received a Scroll of Honour in 1989, the 1992 Shure Golden Microphone and the Benny in 1997. He was vice-president in 1994 and sat on the committee the next year in 1995.



Paul has three grandchildren, Olivia (10), Tiana (13) and Jordan (21).