

## **WEIR: RODERICK BIGNELL**

**Born: 14 July 1927, Palmerston Nth, New Zealand (or Wanganui)**

**Married: 1952, New Zealand**

**To: Loys Agnes Wilson (1929 – 1984)**

**Married: 22 March 1986, New Zealand**

**To: Anna Jane Macfarlane (nee Peacock) (1939 - )**

**Died: 15 November 2021, Waikanae, New Zealand**

**Buried: Karori cemetery (cremated), Wellington, New Zealand**



### ***Roderick's parents were:***

Cecil Alexander (1899 – 1941) & Clarice Mildred Foye (nee Bignell) (1901 – 1965)

### ***Roderick had 1 brother & 1 sister:***

Dame Gilliam Constance (1941 – )

married Clive Rowland Webster  
married Lawrence Irving Phelps

Graham Ashley (1929 – 2016)

married

### ***Roderick & Loys have 1 child:***

Leslie Alex (1953 – )

married Donaldson

### ***Roderick has 2 stepsons:***

Jeremy Moore

Rupert Moore

### ***Roderick has 1 grandson:***

Jason Donaldson

**Education:**

Wanganui Boy's College

**Honours:**

Knights Bachelor 1984 For services to farming, commerce & the community

Hon Doctor of Science 1993 by Massey University

Inducted into the NZ Business Hall of Fame 2008

Distinguished Fellow 2002 NZ Institute of Directors

Fellow: NZ Institute of Management

**Associations:**

Member: Salvation Army Advisory Bd

Councillor: Wellington Medical Research Foundation Inc

Trustee: Massey University Business & Property Trust

Patron & Board Member: Massey University Agricultural Research Foundation

Trustee: NZ Institute of Economic Research Inc

Chairman: Medic Alert Trust

Trustee: Wanganui Boy's College (Old Boys Assn)

Trustee: Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

Director: NZ Symphony Orchestra Ltd

Justice of the Peace from 1972

Honorary Consul General for Austria (1976 – 1984)

Member: Waikanae Bridge Club ( – 2021)

Member: NZ National Party Business House Committee

Member: NZ National Party Finance & Property Committee

Councillor: Wellington School of Medicine

Member: ASEAN/NZ Business Council

Chairman: Electorate Holdings Ltd

Member: Levin Chamber of Commerce

President: NZ International Festival of the Arts

Trustee; Otaki Urban Farm Rating Court

Councillor: NZ Stock & Agents Assn

Member: Heretaunga Golf Club

Member: Wellington Club

Member: Levin Club

**Other Business Associations:**

Chairman: Amuri Corporation; Rangatira Ltd; McKechnie Pacific Ltd

Director: Sun Alliance Insurance Ltd; Sun Alliance Life Ltd; NZ Casing Co Ltd; Bain Clarkson Ltd; Crown Meats Ltd; Danaflex Packaging Corporation; Mallard Bros Ltd; Development Finance Corporation Ltd; James Smith Ltd; Allied Farmers Ltd; Crown Corporation Ltd; Newton King Ltd; Canterbury Farmers Co-op Assn Ltd



*Sir Ron Trotter and Sir Rod Weir*

**Sporting Interests:**

Shooting, Boxing, Golf and Fishing

**Rod's life and work**

Rod was born at Palmerston Nth, the son of Cecil and Clarice (nee Bignell) Weir.

His younger sister is the organist Dame Gillian Weir and younger brother was the bookseller and businessman Graham Weir.

He received his schooling at Wanganui Boy's College (now known as Wanganui City College).

Rod started his career as an office junior, at age 15, with the NZ Loan & Mercantile Co, a prominent stock and station agency in Wanganui. He joked that his first job's main duty was 'trying to balance the stamp book'. Despite his lack of skills, initially, he was promoted many times over a few years.

He was a livestock manager in Otaki, a stock and station agent in Levin, and a manager of the Wellington branch of the NZ Loan & Mercantile Agency (which merged with Dalgety & Co). He was the youngest manager in Dalgety history.

He had to teach himself how to be an auctioneer when he lived in Otaki, and would drive out to Waitarere Beach, where he was on his own, and practise. He became an accomplished auctioneer and was often called on for charity events.

He developed deep roots with the Horowhenua farming community when he lived in Levin and Otaki, which remained with him until his death.

He was a self-made man who in May 1963, made a decision that changed his life. He resigned from his secure job at Dalgety & Co in Wellington and started Rod Weir & Co. He was 34, had a 10 year old daughter and a mortgage. He wanted to pursue his dream of owning his own business and doing things his way.

It was a risk – no independent new stock and station agency had been established for decades. With few resources, but possessing a charismatic personality and a shrewd assessment of the world, he made a go of it and became a well-known part of the NZ business community.

His wife, Loys, unequivocally supported him and together they began a new phase of their lives. Loys was an enormous asset to Rod. She was a warm and gracious hostess, and supported his endeavours in every possible way. She was the woman behind the successful man and contributed immensely to his success.

He started the company with £15,000 from the sale of their house in Paramata. The day after the company inception, he sold 17 black and white heifers for 34 pounds.

He had people who believed in him (especially directors Frank Bushell and Cuthbert Hogg) and were valuable mentors. Rod Weir & Co storefronts became a familiar sight throughout the North Island as the company grew.

A decade later, the company had a turnover of \$9 million, 100 staff and eight branches, which finally numbered more than 4,400 staff and 140 branches from Whangarei to Invercargill.

In 1973 Rod Weir & Co became part of Newton King, its subsidiary, Gisborne Sheep Farmers, and the Hawkes Bay partnership de Peilichet McLeod & Co. The Newton group became Crown Consolidated.

In 1983 Rod bought Dalgety's New Zealand. He had gone from being Dalgety's Wellington manager to owning the company.

In 1986 he negotiated his largest merger, with Sir Ron Trotter. Dalgety and Wrightson merged, with each company having assets of more than \$300 million.

Despite his rise to prominence in Wellington boardrooms, however, he was always at home in a paddock, chewing on a blade of grass and talking with the 'cow-cookies' about their heifers.

In 1984 he received a knighthood for his services to farming, commerce and the community. Because Loys was dealing with cancer at that time, Governor General Sir David Beattie invited



the family to a private ceremony at Government House.

He was appointed the government representative for the NZ Apple and Pear Marketing Board in the 1980's. He chaired the Massey University Business and Property Trust and served as a Trustee of the NZ Institute of Economic Research.

His private directorships included Sun Alliance Insurance, Amuri Corporation, Sherwood mercantile, McKechnie Pacific, and was vice-chairman of Rangitira.

He was made an Honorary Doctor of Science by Massey University, and was a Laureate of the Business Hall of Fame.

Rod lived a long life, and a new chapter began after Loys died in 1984. It was a devastating blow. In 1986 he married Anna Peacock. Both had spouses who had died and together they started a new life. They built a house in Waikanae, on 30 acres, where they entertained and could both pursue their interests, Anna with horses and Rod with a hobby farm of sheep and cattle. *Anna's husband was John Macfarlane, CEO and Chairman of NZ Breweries (now Lion).*



*Rod and Loys at his investiture*

He was a lot of fun and had a mischievous streak. He believed in working hard and playing hard. He often got into trouble. He had a lifelong love of cars, but treated them with nonchalance. One was lost while driving too close to the water on one of the many beaches he like to drive on.

He was a believer in the importance of contributing to society, and this he did generously and with flair.

His style was very much in the flavour of 1960's New Zealand, chatting with neighbour Ron Trotter over the fence, with a blade of grass in his mouth.

*In 1981 (during the 75<sup>th</sup> jubilee of Levin), Rod stated: "Although we primarily service the rural sector, Levin, as the 'capital' of the Horowhenua, has been important to us and we are proud to have been able to play our part in the development of the town. ... we have tremendous faith and confidence in the future of Levin, the Horowhenua district and our great nation."*

***Excerpts from an obituary written by his daughter, Lesley***