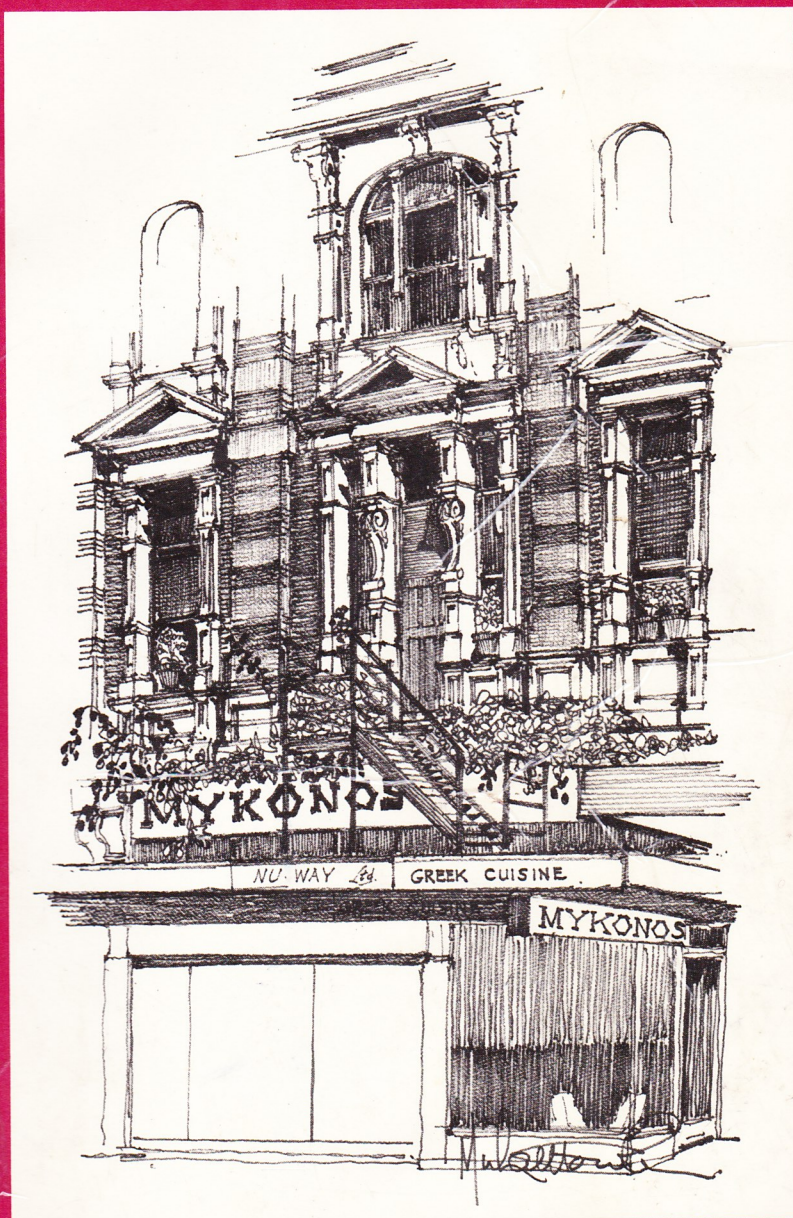


EATING HOUSES *IN* CANTERBURY



*PAULINE CLAYTON
MICHAEL FOWLER • JEFF KENNEDY
THOMAS MANNING*



The Authors

THOMAS MANNING • JEFF KENNEDY • PAULINE CLAYTON • MICHAEL FOWLER

The daughter of Barbara Harper, author of several books about people in Canterbury, **Pauline Clayton** was born in Christchurch in 1941. Her early life was spent in Geraldine with school in Oamaru and a couple more formative educational years in Christchurch. She worked at a number of well-known Christchurch institutions, among which were The Coffee Pot, Paparua Prison and the Christchurch Star. After marriage to a fellow journalist she moved to Wellington, had four children, wrote many stories for magazines and newspapers, and was "nourished and restored" by a number of restaurants. This is her second book—in association with Jeff Kennedy and Michael Fowler—on the subject of eating houses.

Born in Marton in 1929, **Michael Fowler** went to school in Feilding and later Christ's College. He graduated Master of Architecture from Auckland University, has travelled extensively and drawn buildings throughout Europe and the Middle East and is Mayor of the City of Wellington. He was knighted in 1981. The buildings and people of Christchurch have always interested him. So when these human and structural dimensions came together in 31 restaurants, a worthwhile and exciting sketching project was under way.

Thirty-three-year-old **Jeff Kennedy** started life in Los Angeles. His years of early influence were spent in Nelson. He went to school in the district but "sitting around for hours" in the Chez Eelco coffee and eating house had far more effect on his future than attention paid to studies. In 1968 he came to Wellington, married and cooked in a multitude of restaurant kitchens. He has owned three himself (all called Toad Hall) and plans next year to set up his dream of "something like Eelco's place in Nelson" upon the old Band Rotunda site in Oriental Bay. He loves the concept of restaurants, what they do for the people who go to them and what those behind the scenes are trying to do. Besides taking lively photographs, Jeff fired this book with inspiration—and magic.

Thomas Manning is the forceful character who motivated the original partnership of three (as for Eating Houses in Wellington), made it four, got them over Cook Strait and then into the streets and by-ways and outlying highways of Christchurch and Canterbury. Now aged 30, Tom spent much of his early life and education in Wellington. A love of the mountains and surrounding countryside has now made him "dedicated" to Christchurch. He runs Scandals Restaurant in Hereford Street, is keen on history, politics, texts and drawings of value to posterity, and finding out what makes people tick.

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Scandals

A flight of stairs, pot plants, some cane furniture, drinkes in the cocktail bar. More stairs, more greenery, an assortment of old railway sleepers, dins at Scandals. Episodes, levels, colour, laughter; and all embraced by the personality of the owner, Thomas Stewart Manning.

Tom ties the bumps and lumps of a high-living, bright eating spot, called Scandals, into a cruise. His largesse seldom runs thin. An opulent frame and flow of fine, fast or funny language, instil confidence and joie de vivre. Usually maitre d', but a fill-in where staff are short, and a kitchen hand if needs be, the cut of Tom's jib, however, is to be "mine host". He revels in and is good at this ultimate role of hospitality.

Belly laughs roll around the restaurant, Tom is in form tonight. The party is on at Scandals.

He has a reliably handsome face and neat even features that crease easily into smiling warmth. But this joviality can quickly disappear when the chips go awry. Cancellations, a staff member who became vindictively spiteful after Tom had fired him for rudeness to a long-term and trusted dish-washer, dust showing up on the wrought-iron bannister, a slack night.

But that was half an hour ago. People are on the stairs. He bounces and rallies. Somehow Tom straddles a questionmark in which we wonder if it's the ambience of his restaurant that gathers him up, envelops him, infuses him with fun, despite himself? Or is it Tom that makes Scandals ... creates the atmosphere, and all that? Whatever, there's an extraordinarily balanced energy flow that makes this cause and effect see-saw work well.

We've had tea with Tom well before noon (a select China brand) and he will be in the throes of planning a function for 70 the following week, supervising tile-laying in the kitchen, sorting out that evening's menu. "Quiet last night, Tom?" we'll ask. Well, he looks

unsullied and fresh. "Oh, we had The Clash in after their second performance. They partied around until all hours of this morning. There's extra cleaning up to do now—but we'll get there."

The son of an army officer, travel and the good things of life—particularly servants and exotic food—were comfortably slotted into Tom Manning's existence before he'd reached the age of 13. Then the family settled in Eastbourne, Wellington, and of necessity he became accustomed to the unfamiliar life of a New

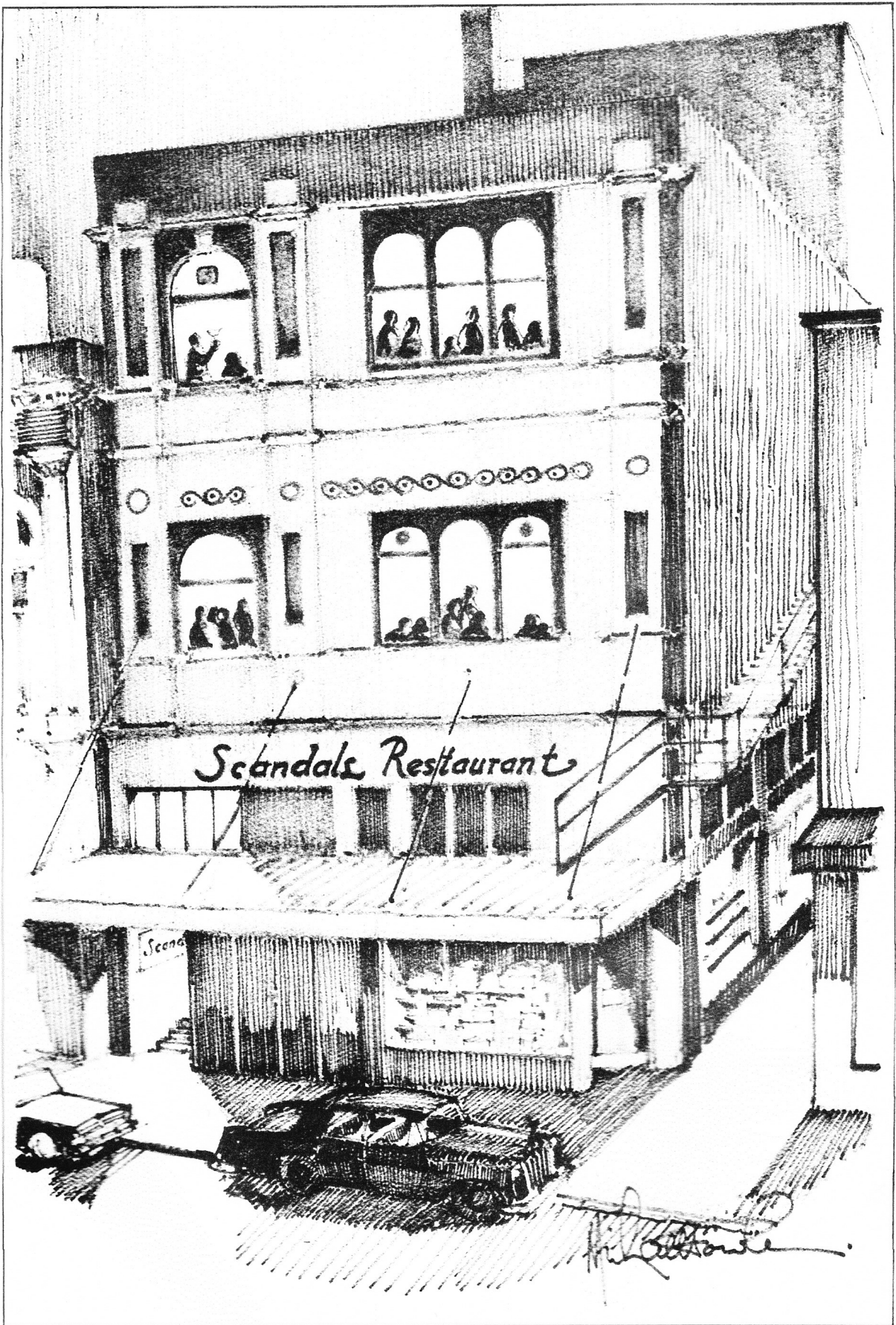
Zealand secondary school boy. Training College, a couple of years at Victoria University and relief teaching at Wellington High School, were educational and undoubtedly formative (as were several years studying Speech and Drama). But Tom wasn't making enough money to pay his debts. He made up the deficit by becoming a waiter at the White Heron Lodge. Here he worked with Pierre Meyer, founder of Pierre's in Wellington.

*"'Lud' cries my Lady Wormwood,
who loves tattle,
And puts much salt & pepper with
with her prattle,
Just ris'n at noon, all night at cards
where threshing;
Strong tea and scandal, Bless me,
how refreshing!"*

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL — SHERIDAN

A few months later he said a final farewell to chalk and textbooks. The glamour and buzz of the people industry had staked its claim and he worked as a steward with Air New Zealand for four years. However, for the boy who had been judged outstanding in teen-year speech competitions, who had the brain of an adventurer and opportunist, who had eaten and travelled all over the world, there was a compulsion to build a world that he could call his own.

This began when he took on The Four Ships establishment in High Street, an eating house famous for its roast dinners more than 20 years before. The premises had become a "sleazy disco", ripe for Tom's 1978 takeover, when Scandals hit the Christchurch scene. His restaurant was flamboyant and racey, yet sustained a light-hearted Noel Coward '20s and '30s mood: the sort of place with plenty of scope (someone once said) between crayfish and grapes and "fruits of



Scandals

SCANDALS

the earth** for philanderings behind the greenery and pillars. (The railway sleepers maintained a saucy drawing-room refinement most effectively!)

Just when his scene was in full swing—two and a half years later—a demolition order almost brought Scandals to a halt. But a stage is a mobile affair and often the play is even better the second time around. Tom bought the old Flamingo, one of the first five licensed restaurants in New Zealand, but in 1980 staggering on its remaining leg. And with an army of friends to help, he installed Scandals in Hereford Street—railway sleepers, plants and all. He inherited the liquor licence and succession of floor levels. Green paint, wrought iron and wall-to-wall carpet was added.

Tom's food is exotic with rare delicacies, such as Morton Bay Bugs (like tiny, sweet crayfish crossed with a sliver of paua), crab, lobster, smoked salmon and venison always to hand. Thin George is chef, but the owner's largesse and exuberance is demonstrated in many dishes. Besides grapes, the chunks of crayfish (Salade de Queues d'Ecrevisses), recommended to open a meal at Scandals, are tossed with eggs, tomato, green

onions and mayonnaise. (An entree costs \$6.45 and a main \$14.95. Prices swing according to the product used.) Especially appealing at our meal was John Dory Pacifica and Calves Livers Bretonne. Lobster sauce, shrimps, mushrooms and shallots were served with the fish. The livers were sautéed with sliced straw mushrooms and garlic and flambéed in Madeira wine, reduced, with chives as a garnish.

Desserts are lavish knock-outs. Scandals Super Sundae is ice-cream with a hot grapefruit and chocolate sauce and scorched almonds sprinkled throughout. Rum is the basis of a delicious nut, raisin and ginger ice-cream. The cheeseboard is varied and French with Gorgonzola, Roquefort, Camembert and Brie up front.

Now that we've finished a meal at Tom Manning's restaurant, we'll rescind the comment about philandering behind the "greenery and pillars". What with all the prolific, amazing food, laughter and entertainment, there was no time, really, for "scandals".

*A vegetarian main course consisting of crepes stuffed with nuts, bean sprouts and fresh vegetables and glazed with Gouda cheese.

