

Profile of a Member - Michael & Louise Tyler

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Michael comes from a very internationally-minded family. His mother was born and spent her early years in India. After her family returned to England she trained as a teacher and later obtained a position at a private school for girls in Ceylon. It was there that she met Michael's father, a military padre, during the war.

Louise's father was an engineer whose early experience was in the oil industry. Her mother was a social worker, who became the head of her department in the NSW public service. However, at the time when Louise was born (their second child - she has an older brother), they were operating a citrus plantation at Lisarow near Gosford.

Shortly after Louise's birth, her father was offered a position with an oil company and the family ceased farming and moved to Noumea for 2 years. Upon their return to Australia, her father got a job on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, working on construction of the Tumut Ponds dam. Thus it was that one of Louise's earliest memories is of needing help to remove her boots after tramping through the snow to attend Tumut Ponds Public School at the surprisingly young age of 3.

Michael attended boarding schools in England (and sees no reason to "transport" his sons in the same way). At Bradfield College near Reading (famous for its triennial classical Greek plays in its own Greek amphitheatre) he majored in French and German. Key interests at this time were flying (he has a gliding licence), sailing and photography.

Unable to pursue a career as a pilot, owing to less than perfect eyesight, it was suggested that Michael study for a law degree (from London University) as it could be a useful foundation for a variety of careers.

Louise's family returned to Sydney in 1958, when her father became a production engineer at Arnotts Biscuits. For a while they shared her tyrannical grandmother's house in Neutral Bay. However, eventually they built their own house in West Pymble and for a short time Louise attended Gordon West Public School.

Louise was in the first intake at the newly opened Ku-ring-gai High School. She was not the most diligent student, since she did not need to work hard to pass exams. Indeed, she preferred to read whatever took her fancy and so began a lifelong habit.

Michael became an articled clerk in a firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn Fields that claimed to be London's longest continuously practising law partnership, dating back to the 17th century. There he learned the arcane arts of litigation, conveyancing, wills and trusts. Memories include conveyancing of everything from a minor stately home to a single pigsty and the defence of an earl's son who was caught in the act of piping laughing gas into Reading Crown Court!

Whilst living on an articled clerk's pittance, Michael discovered the sport of rowing and so followed 3 years largely devoted to office work and competitive rowing, culminating in an appearance at Henley Royal Regatta.

Louise had artistic talent and expressed this in different media from time to time (most recently in stained glass manufacture). At school she developed an interest in drama and won a place at NIDA to study directing. However, her mother disapproved and persuaded her to embark on a career in nursing instead. She trained in general nursing and midwifery at RNSH.

For some years after qualifying, Louise alternated between working and overseas travel. She gained experience as a surgical theatre nurse at Hornsby Hospital and took breaks to visit the West Coast of the USA, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Indonesia.

Michael had always wanted to undertake the modern "grand tour" and see more of Asia. So, after qualifying as a solicitor, he set off overland by bus spending a month in each of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 6 months in India, 3 in Sri Lanka. The culmination of a wonderful, fascinating journey was a month-long trek through Nepal to Everest Base Camp.

In the mid 1970s Louise moved to Melbourne and trained as a coronary care specialist at Prince Henry Hospital. But then the travel bug got her again and she set off for 16 months exploring Europe and the USA, including a stint on a kibbutz in Israel and a memorable trip to Russia in a decrepit bus, from which she was sacked as cook after mistakenly serving Polish "porridge", which turned out to be powdered potato instead.

Arriving in Thailand after a short side trip to Burma, Michael decided it was time to resume his career. However, by accident he became a volunteer assisting in the construction (in 6 months) of Thailand's second largest city - Khao-I-Dang Refugee Camp (pop. 100,000). This was followed by a contract with the UNHCR as a Protection Officer in the heavily Khmer Rouge infiltrated Sa Kaeo Refugee Camp.

Back in Australia from her European adventure, Louise became the sister in charge of the coronary care unit at the Mater Hospital. There was more travelling, of course, and holidays took her back to Greece and Indonesia. But this did not satisfy her taste for adventure and so, relying on her (non-existent and untested) French skills, she was hired by Save the Children Fund and sent to Sa Kaeo as a paediatric nurse. Once there she was appointed Camp Nutritionist. (Such is life in the refugee business.)

Refugee work was enormously satisfying and Michael seriously considered making a career of it, but eventually decided it was a precarious existence. And so, 2 years after leaving England, he arrived in Hong Kong. He joined a medium-sized British/Chinese firm of solicitors and soon discovered his niche - commercial law. There followed 5 years practising in one of the most exciting commercial environments, with clients and projects all over the world. After 3 years he became a partner in the firm.

When her contract in Thailand was completed, Louise joined Michael in Hong Kong. They were married a few months later in Sydney and then set up home as the only "gweilos" (foreign devils) in a small Chinese village in the New Territories. Louise became a nurse practitioner in one of the Vietnamese refugee camps and worked with a series of Rotarian volunteer doctors, including [former](#) Australian RI Director, Ken Collins.

Michael and Louise joined the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club and Michael became involved in competitive rowing again (with a bit of dragon boat racing as well). Apart from visits to Australia and England, holidays were an opportunity to explore the Philippines and Japan.

Following the birth of their first 2 sons, Richard and Jonathan, and mindful of the agreement for the hand back of Hong Kong to China in 1997, Michael and Louise had to decide whether to invest their future in the legal practice there or to move on and re-establish themselves elsewhere whilst Michael was still relatively young. It was not hard to decide that Australia would be a more congenial environment in which to bring up a family and that outweighed the commercial considerations. They arrived at the start of 1986.

Michael joined the Commercial Department of Sly & Russell. However, after a year he got a better offer and transferred to Clayton Utz as a Senior Associate, which gave him a different perspective on commercial legal practice in Australia. By 1990 Michael had identified an opportunity to set up his own practice, serving the needs of unlisted businesses for whom the major law firms were prohibitively expensive.

With her mother to look after the boys, Louise became the nurse in and manager of a private endoscopy clinic in Chatswood. She continued that for several years until the doctors closed the clinic. Then she got a job at the Peninsula Private Hospital Sleep Laboratory. This involved a significant amount of study: Louise and a colleague became two of the first in Australia to pass the only internationally recognised sleep polysomnography qualifying exam. She subsequently conducted research and has presented papers on many subjects at several interstate and overseas conferences.

Michael resumed rowing with Mosman Rowing Club. He and Louise both became heavily involved in Forestville Montessori School, Michael as a director and company secretary and Louise as one of the major fundraisers. All 3 of their boys (the 3rd of whom, Charlie, was born at the San) attended that school before moving on to [Barker College](#).

[Richard \(21\) is in the third year of a BA \(Media & Communications\) at UNSW, majoring in film. In his spare time he is a keen road racing cyclist. He works part time at the Turramurra Cyclery and is closely involved in management of its associated cycling club.](#)

[Jonathan \(19\) has just returned from a gap year, during which he spent 4 months in Nepal \(3 months teaching English in a secondary school and 1 month trekking to Everest Base Camp\), attended the Athens Olympics and spent 2 months pulling pints in a London pub. This year he has commenced a BBusiness at Newcastle University. In his spare time he works for Foti International Fireworks, the company that produces the Sydney Harbour New Year's Eve show.](#)

[Charlie \(15\) is still at Barker and his interests centre on rugby, basketball and computer games.](#)

On its first day Michael's practice had one client. Now there are over 400. After 3½ years' working from a home office he bought an office in North Sydney and employed another solicitor. Subsequently, Michael was one of the first [in New South Wales](#) to become an Accredited Specialist in Business Law. The practice now focusses on business and property law.