

Wooden
be nice
to know
breeding

THE COUNTRY
SIDE

by Rae Roadley

MYSTERIES of life. "Ahhh, so that's how it works," said two people after my explanations led one to grasp the principles surrounding wet and dry firewood, and the other to understand duck reproduction. The firewood exchange went something like this: "Wet firewood can be dry yet can still be wet, while dry firewood can be wet yet can still be dry." This was once a mystery to me then the learned farmer explained that "wet", used in association with wood, relates to the freshness of the sap therein.

Therefore, wood from a tree that's recently been chopped down is wet, even in the midst of a drought.

After awhile, the sap dries out, creating dry wood which remains dry even if it gets wet in the rain.

The Auckland urbanite who'd bought wet firewood and was agitated when a few days under cover didn't dry it out, was thrilled to learn why.

Our niece was similarly pleased to be enlightened about the business of breeding ducks and poultry.

"But she's got two children. She must know how it works," exclaimed the farmer when I said I'd been called upon to clarify the mysteries of life as they apply to birds.

This niece, I have to point out, is from his gene pool.

If you're fuzzy about such things, this is how it works based on my observations and unscientific research.

A hen — or duck — can become fixated on motherhood either for the fun of it or because she's built up a stash of eggs.

Let her hoard eggs and, after she's laid about a dozen, she'll want to sit on them till they hatch. Remove them and she'll stop laying for awhile, then will start again.

Strangely, I felt it necessary to say that eggs won't produce chickens or ducklings unless they're fertile — the female has to have been regularly having it away with the male.

And, yes, went my tutorial, fertile eggs are edible. If you've got a rooster or drake, pretty much all your eggs will be fertile.

It's even possible to put them under a clucking hen after they've been sitting on your kitchen bench for a week or two.

I've also been told eggs can remain fertile if they've been stored in the fridge. This could be a myth and I didn't mention it because it would have added unnecessary complexity to the discussion.

When I'd spelled out the process, the niece seemed satisfied and, fortunately, didn't delve deeper into the breeding process.

We have a hen that's just produced chickens due to the attentions of a rooster which is also her father. He is also her grandfather which makes him the father, grandfather and great-grandfather of the chickens.

Is this legal? Don't ask. The only thing I know for sure is that the principles of wet and dry firewood are elementary in comparison.

DIE another DAY



DEATH THROES: Bobby Campo stars as Nick and Shantel van Santen as Lori in the gruesome *The Final Destination*.

This fifth-from-last *Destination* unashamedly cashes in on its predecessors' successes, but the series' demise is long overdue

The Final Destination

Ratings: R16, 82 mins

RATING OUT OF 10: 6

DESPITE THE same-old plot and young, unknown — and therefore cheap and dispensable — cast, this postpone-the-inevitable film is as entertaining and gross as those that went before it.

The latest instalment of the *Final Destination* franchise was made to be seen in 3D but is quite gruesome enough in the less-in-your-face mode available at this cinema.

Although the mercifully short movie has suspense aplenty, the storyline offers no surprises for the audience.

Nick (Bobby Campo) foresees a terrible speedway accident and persuades girlfriend Lori (Shantel van Santen) and their two friends to leave

before it occurs — only to have the lucky escapees looking over their shoulders as death stalks those who got away.

As with the previous films, the deaths are innovative, graphic and bloody and the build-up of tension is at times unbearable.

The youthful and attractive cast members are mostly forgettable in roles without depth but Campo does an adequate job with his rather intense character.

Although a competent enough addition to the line-up, please let this episode be the death throes of the series and give everyone concerned a decent burial. *Final Destination*, your time is up.

— Chloe Clennell

LAST WORD:

■ Nick Zano (Hunt) had plans to become a Navy SEAL.

■ Director David Ellis started his movie career as a successful stuntman.

■ As well as the second *Final Destination* film, Ellis also directed the adventure film *Snakes on a Plane*.

■ Writer Eric Bress also wrote the screenplay for the second film in the franchise.

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From Kamo to Kandahar, it's all in a Day's work

by Kara Segedin

THE barren landscape of war-torn Afghanistan, the frozen Antarctic or tsunami-torn Indonesia couldn't seem further away from the quiet suburbia where Gemma Day lives.

If it wasn't for the camouflage gear, it would be hard to believe the petite, beaming young woman greeting me at the door had travelled to some of the world's most isolated and dangerous spots.

Gemma has just returned to her Ranui home after a day at the Whenuapai Air Base. Her face is framed by hair pulled back in sensible military style. But neatly manicured fingers and pink toenails peek out from her baggy uniform as she settles on to the sofa.

The former Kamo High School student is a flight lieutenant with the New Zealand Air Force, and says her 12 years in the force have flown by.

She manages 35 people within the suppliers unit.

"We call it air movements — working with the aircraft when they go overseas, doing all the loading and unloading.

"That's how I've managed to have so many different experiences.

"All these different opportunities come up, and I've never thought of leaving."

Some of the perks have included dinner with Prince William, who she describes as really tall and a lot more bald than photos show, and the Governor General, Sir Anand Satyanand.

"He's so knowledgeable, but he's really hard to talk to. He couldn't open up."

In 2003, Gemma was based in the Middle East for six weeks. Her



GEMMA DAY: RNZAF Flight Lieutenant at her graduation.

role was to monitor the supplies and people coming in and out of Afghanistan.

"Al Qaeda were tapping the phones. We had to be really, really careful. For this particular time there was some stuff that needed to be moved and it was quite sensitive."

In order to speak freely and organise the move, Gemma had to fly into the war-zone. Coming into Kandahar airfield, the plane flying high to avoid enemy fire, the view was of a barren, hilly and dry land.

"At the top of the Hercules there's a little window where you can look over the whole aircraft. My job was to look out for explosions."

Gemma remembers the short,

steep landing, "almost like a rollercoaster drop — my heart was racing."

Kirsty Howie, Gemma's younger sister, describes their childhood in Whangarei as "pretty cruisey".

Kirsty admits to being surprised when Gemma joined the Air Force on leaving school.

The family are used to Gemma's long trips overseas, but nothing could prepare them for when she was deployed to the Middle East.

"We were seeing all the news coverage of soldiers getting injured," says Kirsty.

Not being able to communicate freely was hard, she said.

Gemma had been on call over Christmas 2004, working at the

Ohakea base.

"I remember being at home and my boss gave me a call and I knew that something was wrong."

She was told to turn on the news and get ready to move in 72 hours. That was how Gemma first learned of the Boxing Day tsunami.

A second phone call told her she had 24 hours to move. A third told her to head to Auckland — immediately.

In Indonesia, where the Kiwis led a merged Australian and New Zealand team, Gemma ran a unit of 12 from Madiun airport, receiving supplies — mainly baby products and milk — and sending them out to Banda Aceh.

"Where I was, there was no

devastation. It was just a staging point for all the stores going out."

Working in a country like Indonesia posed several problems, for example, the danger of sub-standard equipment.

"We got forklifts off the Indonesians and they had no brakes, but then you're in this quandary where we really needed to use them."

For five months, from October 2005, Gemma called Antarctica home.

"My official title, which I thought sounded kind of cool, was Officer Commanding McMurdo Terminal Team."

She was in charge of the ground handlers in the cargo team responsible for loading and unloading the flights coming in and out of Antarctica.

At the height of summer the base held around 900 people, and over winter about 300.

"We worked shifts, six days on and one day off, for five months. I was quite lucky they were 10-hour days. Sometimes I had to work longer than that. It was 24-hour daylight."

In her free time Gemma explored the untouched wilderness.

"We got to go hiking to some really amazing walks and to the different old huts, Scott's Hut, Shackleton's Hut. It was something else to step into a building that was used so long ago."

With everything so clean, cool and dry, Gemma could smell nothing in Antarctica. Coming back through Christchurch airport the first thing to hit her nose was the smell from the carpet.

"It smelt like rotten, wet dog. That was my first memory coming back. I wish it was cut grass or something."

When it's time for me to leave, I notice two delicate pairs of shoes... flanked by a polished pair of equally tiny army boots neatly lined up by the front door.

"I'm still a girl," Gemma says. "I'm not going to play Rambo."



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