

focus interview, with Alistair Flower

Alistair is the Managing Director of Flower Hotels

Settlers Inn Hotel, Fernhill Tavern, Hastings Hotel Wauchope, Lake Cathie Tavern & the Little Shack Kiosk



GREG DAVIS

M A R I N E R E S C U E

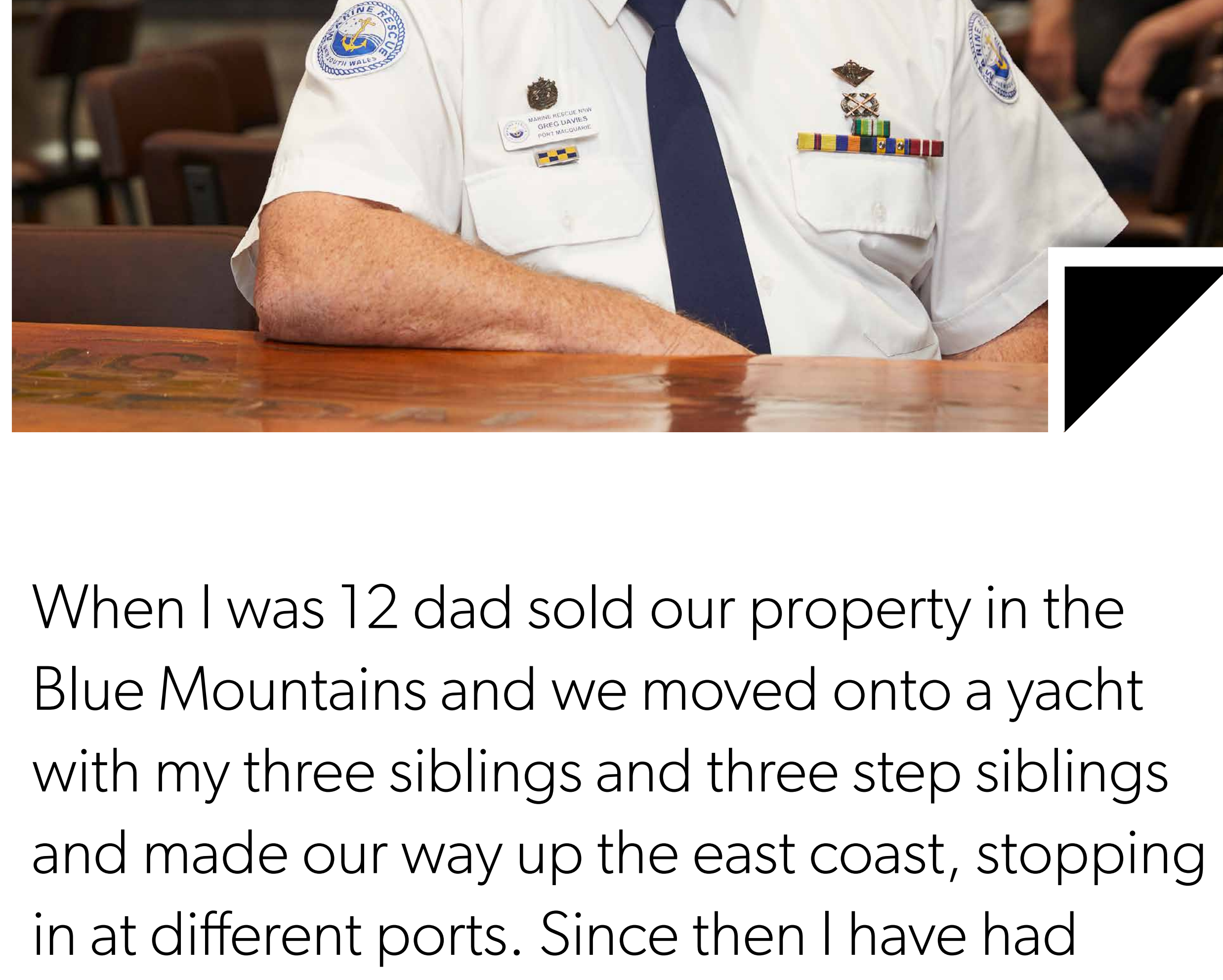
Tell us a bit about your life before heading to Port Macquarie? I was born in Sydney, dad was in the army, and was often stationed overseas. Our whole family has been part of the defence force really, the Davis family hasn't missed a war except the Korean War.

Unfortunately mum died when I was 7 which made life challenging. I've lived everywhere - from Tasmania to Darwin over my years before ending up in Port Macquarie. I even had a few years on a very remote cattle station in central Australia. I joined the Army when I could and had 26 years serving.

Is your family based in Port? My wife and I call Port home, I have a son and a daughter, my son has left the military and is in Port (looking for a girlfriend!) and my daughter lives in central Queensland with her husband and three children. My wife had our children while I was serving, I was lucky to be there for their births, but missed many, many birthdays. It's great to have Craig here locally.

What instigated your passion in Marine Rescue? I joined the Marine rescue, as I needed someone to teach me how to cross the bar fishing (haha! That's true).

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When I was 12 dad sold our property in the Blue Mountains and we moved onto a yacht with my three siblings and three step siblings and made our way up the east coast, stopping in at different ports. Since then I have had a passion for the water. I have always been community minded with the mentality to serve.

I knew I would be able to use my skills from my 26 years in the military to serve with the Marine Rescue.

Tell us about your role in the Marine Rescue? Within the first 12 months of joining, I became the training officer, I realised I wanted this Unit to succeed, today I am the Unit Commander for the Port Macquarie Base.

Is that the 'Big dog'? Ha ha, I suppose, but I don't view it like that. I just really enjoy leading a team and helping others succeed.

I joined in a volunteer capacity, although I work enough hours for it to be a full time job. I'm usually in there at about 7 and I leave at about 4, that can be 7 days a week! When I joined, we had about 30 volunteers, today we have 191. Every training or function we run, I'm making sure everyone is having a good time.

Why do you keep turning up everyday? I enjoy it, I actually love it! The people there are fantastic. We are one big family, we are very involved socially. It's not just about the people in Marine Rescue, it's about the families as well, we support that. I wouldn't be able to do it without my wife Debbie, she's very supportive of every direction I head in.

Tell us about the famous rescue that secured the Port Macquarie team the 'International Maritime Federation Award' ? That was a crazy rescue. It was 1am when we got the beacon call, the bloke had a broken jaw, so he couldn't talk properly, a broken eye socket, so he couldn't see the coordinates, and a bung arm. The coordinates they gave us were different every time, we eventually found them and one of the fellas had a bad back injury. We knew we couldn't move him without making it worse, and the boat was slowly sinking.

“ We made the decision to sink the boat, *allowing the water to hold the injured bloke and allow us to manoeuvre him to safety. There were five guys in the water when the Westpac Helicopter arrived* but our team had everything under control.

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I have never been more proud of my team. They work so hard, they deserved that award, all of their training paid off.

Now mate, aside from Marine Rescue, what keeps you busy during your retirement? I love fishing! I wasn't a fisherman before moving to Port. I have been a part of the Fernhill tavern Fishing club for four years. I became the president of the club this year with a goal of seeing the club expand. When I started, we had about eight blokes, now we have 62 including nine kids. What I really love seeing is the kids bringing in the fish; the look on their face is priceless!

What the best thing about Port Macquarie? The community. From the bottom of my heart, I have lived in many, many cities and towns, and I have never seen a town that is as community orientated as Port Macquarie. I've never been in a town as giving, we look after each other.

Lastly, what is the best piece of advice you've been given? Family first. Always family first. Work hard, be honest, and it doesn't matter what happens around you, you always come out the other end.