

# The RELA Press (21st anniversary edition)

March 22, 2014

## The RELA Story

Over 12,000 students have attended RELA in its 21 years. They have been as young as 5, and as old as 85. The school offers a family environment for students of all ages and many nationalities. Some come for a week, some stay for two years. Some come for a short-term study and activities programme, and many are serious academic students who aim to pass international English exams such as IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, FCE and CAE

Rotorua English Language Academy opened in 1993 as the only private language school in Rotorua, The school expanded steadily, adding a new classroom block and student common room in 1997 and extra rooms in 2002. Student numbers range from 40 – 50 during quiet periods to 150 – 180 at busy times.

Rotorua English Language Academy is registered with NZQA, and is a member of ENGLISH NEW ZEALAND, an organisation of well-established quality language schools. We are also members of Quality English, a worldwide organisation of schools chosen for the excellence of their teaching and services. RELA is an approved training centre for the University of Cambridge CELTA teaching qualification.

For 21 years RELA's story has been a survival story – SARS, swine flu, bird flu, 9/11, the Asian economic crash in 1997, economic and political conditions in our markets and above all the high \$NZ have all affected enrolments.



Students and staff December 2003



Students and staff March 2014

## Community links

Over the years, many Rotorua families have hosted RELA students. There are currently 150 homestay families who offer accommodation, support and a family environment for our students. The school would not exist without this amazing support from our families.

We also send our students on activities to more than 20 providers. Rotorua's amazing selection of activities, sightseeing and visitor attractions help our students to have a memorable time.

## Sakiko's story

Saki first visited RELA in November 2002 as a sprightly young 70 year old. Her husband had recently passed away and she felt that it was time to change her life. She was a part of a group of senior students who wanted to have a homestay experience and enjoy the Garden festival. Since then Saki has come back to study at RELA every year for between two and four months.

Her Rotorua "mum" is Goldie Argent. Saki has been staying with Goldie every year since 2003 and the two have a very special bond. Goldie has visited Saki in Japan three times and Saki has been part of a number of Goldie's family celebrations.

Saki was born in Tokyo. Learning English had always been a dream of hers and in 2001 she joined an English conversation club

From Chris: *"At RELA, we have had many older students who have had busy, interesting lives. They dream about studying English abroad, and some can only do this after they retire. We love having these senior students from many different countries."*

From Saki: *"I have come to RELA 13 times. The RELA teachers, staff and my homestay, Goldie, have helped me so much so I have come to Rotorua again and again. I am lucky"*



Saki and her "boys" in 2013

## **Felipe's story**

*I'm Felipe Arthur Carvalho, 22, from São Paulo, Brazil. I studied at RELA for three months in 2013.*

*I'm a "Jovem Nerd" website's fan. I was watching the show Nerdooffice, where they have a special series about language schools in New Zealand.*

*They mentioned that there was a school in Rotorua without Brazilians. In their opinion it was the best school to learn English. This helped me to decide to go to New Zealand. Despite the fear of the smell of sulfur, a small town with little information on the Brazilian Wikipedia, I decided to bet all my chips and some time later, there I was flying from Tokyo to Auckland*

*Also I'm a hobbyist photographer and I was able to record almost my time there. Since the moments at school, on activities and tours I've done in the North Island, including the famous Hobbiton, Waitomo Caves and other amazing places in the country.*



*My stay was really good. On my last day (8/11) at the farewell ceremony, the staff told during the visit made by "Jovem Nerd", they mentioned in Brazil there were really nice and interested people to learn, the RELA's staff told I was certainly one of them. Simply a unique experience in my life, more than learning a language I could make excellent friends and meet a totally new and unique world.*

*Gradually I've been editing the photos and video I made this adventure, and I've been posting on my blog, if you want to check, go to:*  
<http://bit.ly/NZbyFelipe>

## **Angela, Robyn and Susanne's story**

Many current staff have been with RELA since 1993-4. Susanne Galler, Robyn Cowley and Angela Graham all began in those years, and they have been loyal teaching staff ever since.

They have seen the school go through many phases – extremely busy and full in 2002-2003, and quiet at other times. They have contributed amazing commitment and loyalty to RELA



Robyn, Susanne and Angela were interviewed recently by Debbie's afternoon class about their time at the school.

### **An interview with Robyn by Fanny Delor**

*How do you stay interested in teaching English after 21 years of doing it at the same place?*

I am still interested in doing it because things never stay the same, and I am always meeting new people. I meet new challenges every day and my job is to face them by helping students and by answering to their needs.

*How did RELA begin and how did you become a teacher here?*

RELA was begun by Elaine Brewster and Chris Leckie. Before that, I used to help the boys with learning difficulties at Rotorua Boys'

High School when a Chinese and two Korean boys arrived at the school. They couldn't speak English at all, and that is how I decided to take a course at Waikato University in Hamilton to get the CELTA. One day, as Elaine knew that I had got that exam, she rang me to ask if I could give English lessons at her and her husband's house. There were only two classes and that's how RELA started.

*What do you think RELA might be like on 21 years?*

I think that in another 21 years, there will be much more high technologies like computers in classrooms. Then I believe that there will be a whole new group of people, new office staff and new teachers, and I won't be teaching at RELA anymore!

*Tell us three things that students may not know about you?*

Well the first thing is that when I left school, I wanted to become a nurse so I went to America for one year, but then I changed my mind! I came back to New Zealand and became a journalist but then I stopped when I had my children.

The second thing is that I used to be scared of the dark, but it is not the case anymore!

And finally the third thing that you might not know about me is that I met my husband when we were playing basketball.

### **An interview with Susanne by Moha Alahmadi**

*What does RELA mean to you?*

RELA means to me the opportunity to be international while I'm in Rotorua. It means a lot in my life because at RELA when I come to work, I go into the world. If I had to work just with Kiwi people I'd feel bored but when I come to RELA I can go to Saudi Arabia or China or Brazil or Thailand and it's very, very important to me.

*Can you remember a particular class or student that you had a strong emotional attachment to?*

Yeah, there've been a few. I do remember an elementary class from about three years ago. They were Ayad, Khalid and Loic. It was a big class and w

## Directors

a very nice class, But I remember more people. There are still people I'm in contact with because of Facebook.

*Have the students changed over the years?*  
 Yes. The nationalities make up has changed. We used to have a lot more Koreans. Now we hardly ever have Koreans. Korean men used to be different from modern Korean men 20 years ago. The Korean guys were quite different now they are very friendly and nice and "easy-going" but in the beginning they were a little bit different from that. In the beginning we didn't have any Arabic people. We had mostly Asian people. Now we are getting more Arabic and more Swiss and more Czech Republic people. I suppose the biggest change has really been technology and that's made the students different because their concentration is shorter. Students can't concentrate. Also students are much more dependent on dictionaries because they can use them so easily so they don't try to remember. I feel, yeah that's all.

The School's directors from 1993 - 2002 were Elaine Brewster, Chris Leckie and Roger Brewster. After Elaine's death in 2002, Chris and Roger continued to run the school. In 2012, Roger sold his share of the business and Chris and Aya Kosuge took control of RELA.



Aya, Chris, Rita and Aika

## When our current teachers/staff started at RELA:

1993	Susanne	2004	Teri
1994	Robyn	2007	Jan L
1994	Angela	2007	Elsa
1998	Sandy	2008	Radha
2000	Jan C	2010	Barrie
2004	Debbie	2010	Lana



### An interview with Angela by Felipe Da Silva

*How have the facilities changed over the years?*

They have improved a lot over the years. Originally there was just the office building with a very small staff room and an old house which was knocked down and the new student building was put up. The staff room was extended. Later the computer room was added.



Staff - 2008

*What was here before RELA?*

There was only the office block and an old house.

*Have you ever visited any of your old students?*

Yes, when I went to Japan, a few years ago, I managed to visit a couple of people in Japan.



