

#1 read weekly mag!  
**BEST VALUE**

**NICOLE: 'WHY I CRY FOR SUNDAY'**

**SHOCK SECRET**

**THE UNTOLD STORY**



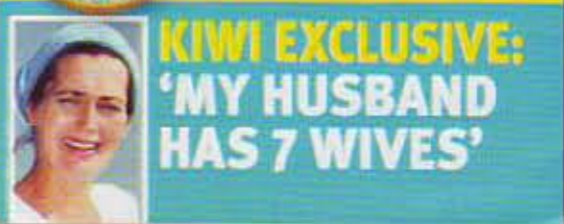
**BARACK'S SOULMATE MICHELLE**



**ENGAGED! BRENDON'S WHIRLWIND LOVE AFFAIR**



**TWINS? JEN'S FERTILITY TREATMENTS REVEALED**



**KIWI EXCLUSIVE: 'MY HUSBAND HAS 7 WIVES'**



**LOOKING BACK: CHARLES TURNS 60**

**SHORTLY ST STAR FLEUR'S ISLAND MISSION**

**ISLAND APPEAL**



Fleur gets a warm Cook Island welcome at Rutaki School

**FLEUR: 'I LEFT MY HEART IN RAROTONGA'**

The Shortland Street actress tells of her starring role in 'Island Nite with Libby'

I had no idea what to expect in Rarotonga. It was easy to imagine sandy beaches and picture-postcard vistas, yet I knew I would be working in a village known to the locals as the "wild, wild west" – so I was curious as to what I'd find there! My mission was to fundraise for a new toilet block at Rutaki School in Arorangi village. What I didn't know was that the children had never had toilets at school. Around 20 kids had to "hold on" through hours of lessons until they made it home

to the family loo. It astounded me that something we take for granted here in New Zealand could be so unattainable. I also didn't know that it had taken nearly four years for this school's dream to come to fruition. It costs the seemingly minor sum of \$15,000 for a basic sanitation block but, for the people of Rutaki School, it might as well have been \$15 million. I didn't know about the beauty of the Rarotongan landscape and its people, and I certainly couldn't have known that

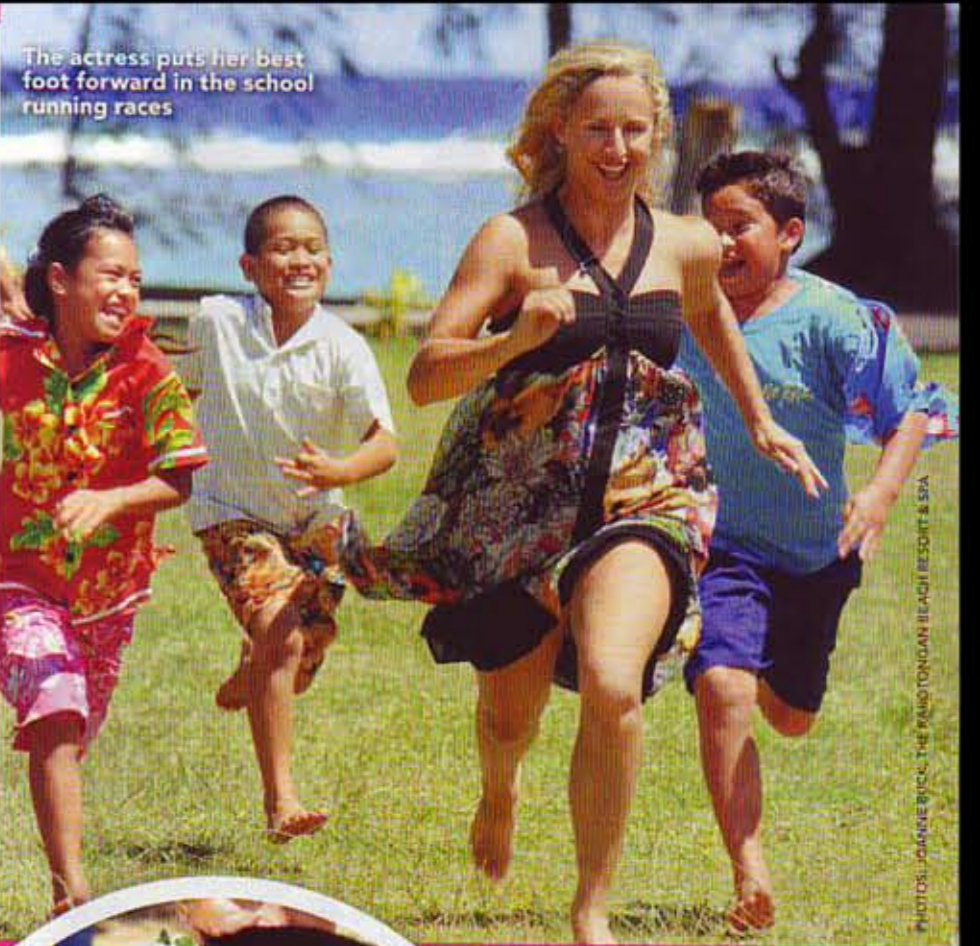
the presence of an actress from a Kiwi soap opera would help. This opportunity was pure serendipity. I was flying to Sydney with my father (my birthday present to him) and seated next to us was the fabulous Cleo Marsters, a Cook Islander and all-round godsend who works for Air New Zealand and spends his spare time raising money for Rarotongan charities. He's also a big Shorty Street fan and we hit it off, swapped email addresses and promised to stay in touch. Five months later, my mother Dianne and I stepped off a flight to Rarotonga at 4am to 40 locals greeting us with floral leis, fresh fruit, hugs and kisses. I was there for



Fleur with her mum Dianne

a fundraising event to be called "Island Nite with Libby" after my Shortland Street character Libby Jeffries. Later on, we were woken by the sound of Cook Island drumming and someone shouting over a loudspeaker, "Liibbbbee! Come to the markets and meet our people!" So we left the Manuia Beach Boutique Hotel and spent the rest of the morning promoting the fundraiser and meeting some of the friendliest people I've ever encountered. That night, we were granted the privilege of parking our sponsored BMW convertible on the palace grounds (usually reserved for ministers and royalty only), and met Mama Louisa and Papa Teri'i, chieftains of Arorangi. We were then escorted into a huge auditorium full of people, where we feasted on delicacies, watched performances by cute children – the kids that would directly benefit from the money raised – then auctioned off signed T-shirts and autographs. My biggest challenge was dealing with the hundreds of women asking for TK!

Luckily, the many families and sponsors present were hugely generous and we almost reached our target, raising \$14,630 on the night. I emptied my pockets to get us to the \$15,000 goal, and then suddenly Rutaki School was a whole lot closer to its new toilet block. The next day was the best, though, as we got to visit the children at Rutaki School. As we were welcomed on to this sacred land, gifted to the school by the chiefs of the district, the children sang songs and



The actress puts her best foot forward in the school running races



Fleur enjoys some R&R at Aitutaki Lagoon Resort & Spa

we were greeted by PTA members, parents and chiefs, all extremely excited that "Libby" was here and very grateful for the donations to their project. When it came time to return the greeting, however, I was totally overwhelmed – I could hardly finish my speech. I became even more emotional when I was taken past the school's library and saw it was being used for storage. It's sad that there aren't the resources to operate something so fundamental, when I'm sure Kiwi homes contain hundreds of pre-loved books. After the school visit (which included

running races in which I was totally smoked by a pre-teen athlete) we played soccer, and my mother won fame as both the goalie and the "real-life Yvonne." Then Mum and I nipped off for some R&R at the gorgeous Aitutaki Lagoon Resort & Spa. It's just a 45-minute flight from Rarotonga to the crystal-clear water and heavenly scenery of Aitutaki. I was humbled by what I learned in the Cook Islands, and am so grateful to work on a show that gives me opportunities to do some real good. To everyone in Apii Rutaki – you truly have my heart.