

'YOU'LL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING', TEACHER SAID

The Boro lad who went on to live a *charmed life*

Gerald Hogg, left, with best friend (and subsequently his best man)



SINCE leaving Middlesbrough in 1970, Gerald Hogg has lived in and visited many countries, worked on cruise ships, been a chef to the rich and famous and has now retired to the beautiful Thai island of Koh Samui, where he's written several successful books about how to retire in that part of the world.

All this for a Boro lad once told by a teacher at school: "You will never amount to anything." Here, Gerald looks back on those formative years on Teesside - and tells how he reacted to that teacher's fateful words...

In 1957, my father took my mum, brother and me to Jamaica after the building company he had been working for in London was offered a contract to build a government building in Kingston Town. On our return to the UK in 1959, he decided to take our family back to his home town of Middlesbrough to work on the docks, where his father and most of his brothers were employed.

In 1960, we were offered a dilapidated council house on Granville Street in the Cannon Street area of the town. Then, about a year after we moved in, the whole area was engulfed in the infamous Cannon Street race riots. When the dust had settled, the council decided that Cannon Street as a residential area had no further part to play in the future of Middlesbrough and new estates were to be built to re-house residents. The houses would then be demolished.

We were rehoused in Pinewood Avenue, Grove Hill. I enrolled in Brackenhoe Technical School in 1961 and left in 1966 with very little education to show for it.

The day I left school was the day the school broke up for the Easter Holidays. The headmaster decided that the six of us who weren't staying on to do their CSE or GCSE exams and were leaving school for good on that day should go before lunch-time.

As we were being escorted from the school grounds by one of the teachers, I heard a voice from behind shouting: "You lot will never amount to anything - you'll all end up as drunks, unemployed or in prison." I recognised the voice straight away - it was Mr Bagley, my science teacher, who had tormented me at every opportunity over the past four years.

One day, about six years later, I was sitting in a beach bar in Bermuda, sipping a cocktail with my beautiful fiancée Colleen

beside me, when I remembered his words, "you lot will never amount to anything", and I had to laugh when I thought about what my life had become.

Here I was, working in a five-star resort as a chef in Bermuda, one of the most beautiful islands in the world. I was being paid a big, tax-free salary with a free apartment overlooking the crystal clear waters of Church Bay and a paid return flight back to the UK every year.

I had cooked meals for people such as Sean Connery, Steve McQueen and Raquel Welch while my old science teacher was back in the cold and wet in Middlesbrough... karma, you've got to love it!

The year 1966 was a great one to be leaving school. There was low unemployment and plenty of jobs going in the town. ICI and British Steel would come to our school on career days and try to entice us to go and work for them when we eventually left school.

And Ayresome Park was hosting the group four stage of the World Cup, with North Korea, the USSR, Chile and Italy playing for a place in the knock-out stages.

The people of Middlesbrough took the minnows of the tournament, North Korea, to heart and they paid back Middlesbrough's faith in them when they provided the biggest upset of the tournament, a 1-0 win over the bookies favourites Italy.

I managed to get a ticket for the game and it's something that I will always remember as North Korea progressed into the next round.

The music scene in Middlesbrough was flourishing with Sloopys, Barracuda, and The Scene - and The Bongo over the border if you were brave enough! The Red Lion, the Top Deck and the Coatham were just down the road in Redcar, as was the Kirk (the Kirklevington Country Club near Yarm).

Soul was the music of choice in most clubs and pubs, with Otis Reading, Sam and Dave, The Temptations, Junior Walker and the All Stars and The Isley Brothers being played into the early hours.

The live music scene was also jumping and I would regularly go and see The Road Runners, with the line-up of Paul Rodgers, Colin Bradley, Mick Moody and Dave Usher. Three members of the band later went to London where they reinvented themselves as The Wildflowers and eventually, Paul would form the world-renowned bands Free and Bad Company.

The Real McCoy, whose line-up included John McCoy and Boro record store owner Alan Fearnley, were also big back in those

