

ANDREW'S NEW DAWN

By MERE MULU

AUTHOR Andrew Fiu is writing the wrongs of the infamous "dawn raids" crackdowns on Pacific Island overstayers in the 1970s. Andrew, who came here with his family from Samoa as a five-year-old, remembers firsthand the infamous chapter of New Zealand history in his autobiography *Purple Heart*.

"Our house was raided. I can remember it because at that very moment I was watching (kids TV show) *Spot On* and they were telling us that if you ever need help, don't be afraid to ask a policeman," he recalls with a wry smile.

"The police had just knocked down our door and a burly police officer was chasing a relative out the back door.

"Mum was getting all our papers to confirm we were in the country legally."

The family home raided by the police was in the now plush Auckland suburb of Ponsonby.

Andrew's dad, Fiu Luamanuvae, and mum, Taufao, bought the house for \$15,000 when Ponsonby was considered by many as a slum.

"The house is worth a million dollars now," said Andrew, 41.

Despite the unwanted police attention, Andrew - born Ta'afulu in the tiny Samoan village of Lefaga - dreamed of representing his new homeland in rugby.

But his ambition to become an All Black collapsed when he contracted rheumatic fever at 14 - leading to severe heart damage.

"I spent three and half years in hospital, most of it lying flat on my back," Andrew said.

"I was the only brown kid in a ward where the average age was 50. It was interesting because I was learning from their stories.

Dad-of-four Andrew - who has three hereditary matai (chief) titles - says he has learned to turn negative experiences into positives.

He says writing *Purple Heart* was an opportunity to instill that philosophy in others.

"Life is what you make it. Like a wise man told me, 'It can always be worse than it is', and I believe that."

Purple Heart (Random House) is available at bookstores nationwide from Friday.



MEMORIES: Fiu outside the family home the police raided.

GRAHAME COX