

Tears On Paper.

I write a lot of hand-written letters. Whenever I have a moment to spare, I reach for my pen and paper and dash off a letter to someone. Every person I know on the annual Australia Day and Queen's Birthday honours list receives a letter. About a hundred people each month are listed by their date of birth to remind me to send them a letter just before their birthday. Everyone having a baby, or graduating, or getting a new job, or facing surgery, or grieving - as far as possible - receives a letter.

Being in Parliament helps. Of course I receive hundreds of messages each month requiring advice or action, but there is a great deal of time one has to sit in Parliament for procedural motions or debates that are of little personal consequence. So I asked the President if the Parliament would build me a small writing table, so I could write my letters during those times when I had to sit there, but when I was not making a speech. Thus a lovely polished letter-writing table was built for me.

On my study table at home is a nineteenth century, folding writing box, beautifully polished with leather top, complete with pens, paper, ink and envelopes so that at any moment I can write to some friend.

You might think I could use some competent secretaries. I do. At my work at Wesley Mission, I have four competent people to help me with my mail - opening up to a thousand letters each week, sorting them, then typing, helping me answer them, and finally posting them. In my Parliamentary Office I have other staff doing the same thing.

But there is something special about the hand-written reply. For one thing, people tell me that in the stack of mail they may receive in one day, they will always open the hand-written envelope first. And they will inevitably keep the hand-written note, when the computer-generated mail is thrown out.

But many letters are paper spotted with tears.

This week a woman unknown to me wrote following my sermon she heard on radio: *"I would like to thank you for last week's sermon. It touched my soul. My belief has been strong all my short life of 35 years. But I am drowning for the past three years. I wish I could leave my life behind, but I do not want to sin or hurt people. I really struggle. Even now my marriage feels too much pressure. People are using me. Why do I have to help people? When will I have my own life?"*

Am I being selfish or self-centred not having the desire or motivation all the time to want to help or serve people as God wants me to, or to serve my husband as he would like? I may not have a fulfilled life on earth now but when I go to God it may be better. I would like it to be better here though....”

I wrote back immediately mentioning how from God's Word, that in spite of all her difficulties it can be better here. She did not need to go to God now to find inner peace. Power was available to enable her to cope and find fulfilment in this life. Perhaps a suicide was prevented.

Another letter mentioned in passing the coffee shop where the woman worked. Her situation was desperate. I called in unexpectedly. The waitress put a cup of coffee beside me and I noticed how weary she looked. At the end table of the small shop were her five children. They were aged from twelve years down to one. The older girls were looking after the baby. They cared for each other. Mother and children were poorly dressed.

I mentioned who I was and thanked her for her letter. I asked her *"Where does your husband work?"* The reply came from the oldest child, *"I'd need x-ray vision to see where he was!"* I gathered it was a long time since they had heard from him. My heart went out to a woman who was struggling with keeping her family together and trying to get enough money to feed, clothe and house them. We would need to help them.

Every week I receive letters from farmers unable to cope with the drought. I have sent cheques of \$1000 each to more than one hundred and fifty such farmers, each with the hand-written letter. I have had a team of generous donors who have entrusted me with that money they have given. One letter to me this week reads: *"Due to the ongoing drought conditions I apply for any assistance that may be available. I wouldn't normally ask but I am hand feeding my cows hay. To get the cows to eat this dry feed, you have to give them a supplement (mixture of molasses, urea and water) to stimulate their appetite. This supplement costs \$450 (highly inflated price in these drought times) I had obtained a recipe off another lady that saved me \$350 but as soon as the cows started eating the home made supplement they started dying. We tried to save as many as we could by sticking a hose down their throats but to no avail. We lost a total of 31 cows, which is about 1/3 of our core breeding stock. These were some of our fattest and healthiest cows as these would push in first to get fed. We were devastated at our loss.*

It is hard to fully understand how we worked just to keep them alive. They are on agistment. Michael drives one hour each way every second day to feed and water them. We pay \$770 per month for the

agistment as all the stock routes have been closed. Our overdraft is now \$60,000, our credit card is \$16,000 overdrawn and climbing, plus there is another loan of \$15,000 that was used to purchase 2 row-weeders in 2001. Any assistance that you can offer will be gratefully received."

The letters show the tears from toil. They show hearts bleeding in people who cannot cope.

The next letter came from a wife; whose husband and she have been long term unemployed. Her letter said: *"Gordon, I am so ashamed to have to ask for help again. I feel desperate and depressed, in fact we both are suffering from depression and been on medication for years and tried to overcome it but it is making it almost impossible to get and keep a job in the present climate. I am so scared that we are facing eviction. I don't know what to do. Have borrowed money from our relatives and can't ask again. We just need help and advice. Please telephone me."*

Through people who trust me with their gifts I was able to send a hand-written letter, telling them I had sent \$1000 to pay off all that was owing to the Estate Agent and so stave off eviction. That has solved their immediate problem, but their car is unregistered, their telephone is about to be cut off, their credit rating is zero, their accommodation is sub-standard, and their children are living with others. We will have to help them.

I recently published some figures from last month's breakdown of contacts: 524 contacts from depressed people; 500 contacts from anxious people; 420 contacts from people with nowhere else to turn; 203 contacts about broken marriage; 142 contacts concerning sexual abuse; 124 contacts where gambling is out of control; 120 contacts from parents with teenagers off the track; 107 contacts from people who did not want to go on living; 103 contacts from people who were alcoholic; 71 contacts from people with drug related problems; 52 people who wanted to kill themselves. And so on. Every one of these people need resources other than their own. The testimony of many people is that they could not cope if it had not been for the fact that whenever they reach a crisis in their life, they turn to God's helpers.

Naturally Wesley Mission has developed systems where people ring and talk immediately with those so deeply troubled. We have people who ring every week those who are lonely and at risk. We have understanding secretaries who know how to sift the letters, start answering some immediately, and give me ones that need the personal touch.

I am amazed at how hand-written letters are saved. I was asked to conduct the funeral of a man with whom I had corresponded. Before the funeral I visited the family. I asked if I could read a passage

of Scripture before I left and would they like me to read from their father's Bible. Someone fetched it, and as I opened it, here was a letter I had written him more than ten years earlier. He had read and re-read that letter.

A homeless man was kicked to death in an inner city street one night. The police asked if I could identify him. How did they know to contact me? The police found in the homeless man's pocket a hand-written letter I had given him once. It had been folded and unfolded a thousand times, and was now almost a scrap, but he, who possessed nothing, cherished it.

When the floods recently devastated many farmers, I searched through thousands of addresses to find those who had written to me over the past twenty years who lived in the flooded areas. I found 288 families and wrote personally to each one, telling them we loved them, were praying for them and wanted to help. We could send manpower to help with the cleaning up, clothing, financial counsellors, and money to help. I did not realise was how much we encouraged each of them.

One farmer wrote to me recently. Here is the message:

"Dear Gordon, your letter to me last year meant so much as you reassured me of God's love. I had thought we had been forgotten. Our local community forgot, and not one person in the area came to see how I was managing. The local church forgot, because while they prayed for the flood victims no one came out to give me a hand. I kept your letter on my bedside table and read it night after night, often in tears. It helped keep me going. I did not ask you to help me, but just your loving concern was enough. For eight months after the floods I have had to move my cows every day round the stock routes to get enough pasture to keep them going. Then I have to milk them twice a day, and what with bringing up the children and keeping the farm going, life has been very hard, especially when you are a woman on your own. No one else seemed to care, but the love of God and your church people expressed in your letter have kept me going. Please find a cheque for \$50 to help someone else in need." That letter broke me up!

Pen is mightier than the sword! The nib can go where nothing else makes a difference. I do not mind sitting at my computer typing this for you, provided you pick up your pen and write to someone now.

One of the greatest agonies and one of the greatest delights in commencing as Superintendent of Wesley Mission in 1979 was the fact that I also had oversight of the Dalmar Children's Homes where 134 children resided. There was an awesome responsibility of having the legal oversight and responsibility of 134 children, but the work of the children's homes was bedevilled by debt, housed

in old and inadequate buildings and was plagued by staff problems. The work needed immediate attention,

The main centre was at our Dalmar Children's Homes at Carlingford. It had been built as a large orphanage capable of caring for more than 100 children in the 1920's. There were a number of cottages scattered around the grounds and a pre-school which had opened first in 1918 which was run in a very fine manner by Mrs. Yvonne Petereit for many years. The buildings were spacious and the grounds were extensive.

There was another big building in Pymble, which was like a mini orphanage where 30 children lived and that had been for sometime, until recently, under the leadership of a fine Matron, Enid Kerr. This home came as a result of the generosity of a Sydney solicitor Mr. Ken Bernard-Smith who gave money for the acquisition of the property in Pymble in 1960. The old mansion was big enough for 30 children plus staff, and the grounds were attractive and gave the children plenty of space.

A smaller building had been bought in Burwood and was known as Wesley James after a generous man who had left a legacy to the Mission. This had been purchased in 1972 under the leadership of Rev. Alan Walker but was now giving us great concern particularly from inadequate staffing. One of my first jobs was to appoint Doug and Marina Greenslade a delightful married couple who became 'Cottage Parents' and provided great stability for a number of years. The children they cared for were the same age as my children, and a close bond developed between them so they visited our home and we visited their home.

The fourth Centre was Gateway at Lewisham, which had also been opened in 1964 by Rev. Alan Walker. Children arrived at this centre in a terrible condition, often in the middle of the night being brought by police, following family disputes, arguments and even murders. Staffing this centre was an absolute headache. Not long after Gateway opened, we opened LifeLine and LifeLine counsellors now had a resource to which they could send families in crisis.

There was one bright light on the horizon and that was the leaders of the work, Terry and Diane Freeman, a very fine dedicated Christian couple who did their best to support the staff to consolidate the work and to inspire people to help. They presided like a mother and father over this huge family of about 134 children and staff.

The great Dalmar Fete and Country Fair, which were held annually in November, raised \$20,000 a year, which was much needed in those days. The Country Fair brought the children's homes and the children into the centre of concern for people who lived in the community.

I realised within weeks of becoming Superintendent that something urgent had to be done with the whole concept of childcare. The first thing was to stop the compulsory attendance of the children and staff at the 7pm Lyceum Theatre Church Service. The adults loved seeing a hundred or more children present. But the kids hated this compulsory attendance. Instead I encouraged the children to become involved in a dozen local churches in small groups where they could become integrated into the community.

The Dalmar Children's Homes had started with the Central Methodist Mission building a "home for neglected children" in Woolloomooloo in 1884. The Mission paid for the care of some 20 neglected children who came to us from the area around Woolloomooloo and the Rocks. Strangely, the Methodist Conference refused to financially support the care of children, a position the denomination has continued to this day.

In 1900 the Central Methodist Mission obtained a fine country property at Croydon and was able to expand the work to house 32 children. This Centre was built by Parramatta Road, but the complaint was that Croydon was too far from the city for people and parents to visit the children.

In 1922 the Central Methodist Mission moved again this time right out into the country, to Carlingford, and built there children's homes able to take 130 neglected and abused children. If Croydon was too far from the city, Carlingford was an impossible place. No one but farmers lived there. There was no electricity, no water and no made roads.

The Methodist Church must have looked at envy up Pennant Hills Road where Colonel Burns had provided property and endowed Burnside for the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian denomination rallied behind Colonel Burns (famous for Burns Philip Company) and strong endowments and shares meant that that work was comparatively affluent compared to the Methodist effort which struggled every year to pay its way. Only the untiring efforts of the ladies auxiliary enabled it to continue. The Methodist Conference gave no financial support whatever.

The Methodist Conference had a curious relationship with the Dalmar Children's Homes. The Conference decided not to financially support the work in any way! However, individual Methodist Churches (depending upon the whim of the present Minister) Sunday School children and Women's

Auxiliaries rallied behind the Central Methodist Mission in providing care for the children. For the last 110 years the Methodist Church and Uniting Church have consistently failed to support the amazing work of caring for children in their name. I had inherited an important work, which every week went further into debt, and an antagonist Synod Board that was totally opposed to us raising funds in Uniting Churches, because the Uniting Church Board of Social responsibility was keen to force out of Office the Burnside Children's Home Board, take control of all its assets, and use the Uniting Church investments to fund their operations under Rev. Harry Herbert. The Board members who were forced out were ropable; the Uniting Church lost scores of good volunteers. Rev. Herbert could not over throw Dalmar and Wesley Mission, so decided to limit our access for funds, until he found another means to access Dalmar's funds and assets.

Many individual Methodist families however provided support from the time we shifted to Carlingford. The Cowlshaw, Newman, Norman, Cull, Vickery, Waterhouse and Stewart gave significant donations to build cottages for children. About 12 children would live in each cottage, usually with one or two single young women as the 'Cottage Parents'. During the day they had the support of a domestic to do the washing and ironing, and volunteer ladies who did darning, knitting and sewing. These women in charge saved us from most of the serious allegations raised later of child and sexual abuse.

Carlingford was so far out in the country in those days that there was no electricity to the children's homes until 1929. All the children helped in growing vegetables in the large vegetable gardens or in chopping the wood or in bringing the cows in for milking in the milking shed. This was no different to life on any family farm. The staff throughout the 30's, 40's and 50's were led by Matron Dorothy Barnett who gave 35 years of amazingly competent and dedicated Christian care. She surrounded herself with a very dedicated staff of practical country girls who loved and cared for the kids. For them, it was an escape from their own farms, and many met and married young men from the Central Methodist Mission.

After the war Mr. Donald Stewart was appointed the first Superintendent. The Mission at that time needed a male Superintendent by government legislation so that orphaned British children from the war could be brought to Australia. He set a high standard of care but died unexpectedly in 1961.

The Dalmar Children's Homes were led by three extremely competent Superintendents' in my time - Terry Freeman, Terry Mudie, our first fully trained psychologist to take the position, and Kerry Brownsey. Over most of the 80 years prior to this we have been served by a very large number of these fine, dedicated Christian women from country churches and who worked with 12 to 16

children as well as undertaking very heavy domestic duties. Many of these staff that served for long periods of time were greatly loved by the children and even now in retirement keep an active contact with the Old Boys and Old Girls Association of the Dalmar Children's Home.

So when I came to Wesley Mission we had these four properties some huge debts, no support whatever the bureaucracy of the church, a changing social attitude as to how children should be raised, and a continuous problem of having to fund the operational costs with little support coming from the government or from the church as a whole.

So in 1979 I took the decision to completely examine all of our work that we were doing, our staff structures, our properties and the like and do a complete review of our assets and liabilities including the land we owned and our staff training procedures and the like. We called in an expert Psychologist Geoffrey Fox and commissioned a top to bottom report. Our friend Sheila Walkerden, a trained social worker, had recently shifted to the United Kingdom and we commissioned from her a report into trends in childcare in Great Britain. My General Manager at the time, Stan Manning took a keen personal interest in the review and our desire for change.

For the previous 80 years while the Dalmar Children's Homes never received any money from the Methodist Conference, it was enthusiastically supported where Ministers of local Methodist churches approved Sunday School scholars and Women's Auxiliaries supporting us. Unfortunately, by 1977 when the Uniting Church came into being much of the denominational pride of the former Methodist churches in supporting their own Methodist Children's Homes disappeared. At the same time Australia was rapidly moving into an era when there was decline in Sunday School attendance and an increase in the number of women in the Australian workforce which meant a dramatic decline in the number of women able to attend auxiliaries to help raise money for such matters as child care. These three declines I realised would end up with the children's homes going out of business within 10 years.

With the review on our philosophy of child care and our resources underway, I realised I had to develop better means of fundraising to keep the work going in the meantime and to expand it in the new desired directions. For one thing this would mean greater support from the government. The government's support for childcare was deplorable. The Victorian Government supported care for children at a rate of 80 cents out of every dollar spent on their care. The Queensland Government provided 100 cents in every dollar spent in caring for children and as well as provided capital grants for new buildings. The New South Wales Government was only providing 18 cents in each dollar spent and no finances for capital development. I realised that a campaign was needed to help the

Government change its thoughts and policies. I immediately launched stinging attacks on the Government through newspapers, radio and television and through direct confrontation with some of the politicians concerned. I remember particularly a bruising meeting with Rex Jackson the Minister responsible for the Department of Community Services. Rex was a tough labour politician who had come up under very difficult circumstances, being cared for in a children's home himself. He was a hard man and had to exercise government policy. My meetings with Neville Wran were also difficult and on one occasion ended with the Premier calling me a "damned nuisance" and it was made very clear to me that government policy was appropriate and unlikely to be changed. We kept the pressure up and it was not long afterwards that there was an amazing change with Neville Wran announcing that children would now be subsidised to the extent of 66 cents in the dollar. It was still far below Victoria and Queensland but nevertheless it was great improvement from the old situation. However, even this increase from government support was not going to save our situation.

The answer came from an unexpected quarter. Mr. Harold W. Cottee, who with his wife Lois had been tremendous supporters of Methodist Overseas Mission Department and the Central Methodist Mission, had died. Mr. Cottee had given his names to drinks and jams that had successfully been sold across the nation and part of most Australians daily food intake. He left in his Will an orchard at Paringa in South Australia consisting of 500 acres and 80,000 trees. The orchard was plagued with problems including water, poor management, root rot and leaf curl. But his highly competent and experienced son Harold S. Cottee indicated that if Wesley Mission were prepared to own the orchard and operate it with the funds going to the Dalmar Children's Home he would give continuing oversight and care to the running of the orchard. Harold S. Cottee's willingness to do this in memory of his father was the most God sent blessing in the history of the Dalmar Children's Homes. It meant that the orchard, now helped by an infusion of funds from Wesley Mission to pay \$120,000 of debt, would be run competently, and sell citrus fruit with all the profits going to aid needy Sydney children. That work continues to this day. Millions of dollars came to us as God continued not to change muddy river water into wine, but into sparkling orange juice.

But that was not the end of the Cottee family generosity. Although we were caring for 134 children at that stage, I was greatly disturbed by the fact that we were not doing enough to help young teenagers, either when they came out of our care or when they left their own homes and came into the streets of Sydney. There was almost weekly increase in the number of street kids in the heart of Sydney.

This demanded two approaches - the development of a street ministry which did not get underway for the next few years but which eventually became StreetSmart, the most effective street ministry both in Sydney and now replicated in major cities all over Australia, and a place where such street kids could stay. Someone brought to my attention the sale of a small convent in Ashfield. It had been established by a group of German nuns to provide residential care for girls on the streets of Sydney. The sisters had worked valiantly for years in providing such accommodation for young street girls. Unfortunately the same financial woes that were besetting the Dalmar Children's Home also beset them. Without the support of congregations and donors near by, they were unable to continue. I went and visited the sisters and I was greeted as if I was the answer to their prayers. For months they had been praying for a Christian organisation that would provide help for young people living on the streets and if such a Christian organisation were found they would sell their convent at a very reasonable price. I indicated that had intentions of providing of care for both young males as well as females and the sisters readily accepted that. After a time of praise and singing we agreed on a price of \$132,000 - a very reasonable price for a building in good repair that had 18 bedrooms in it! The sisters did not want to make a profit. They wanted to cover their losses and return to Germany knowing that all they had worked for would continue in good hands. I agreed to buy the property even though at that stage I had no money whatever.

The Mission did not have that kind of money and I didn't know where I could borrow it. It was then that a kindly word from Harold S. Cottee indicated that his mother Lois might be able to help. With some fear and trepidation I went to Mrs. Lois Cottee with the request - would she give us \$100,000 towards the purchase of an 18-bedroom house to care for street kids? Mrs. Cottee was overjoyed to be asked. She had no hesitation whatever in helping us with this new development, which would be named Cottee Lodge in honour of her husband.

As I left with my heart beating and walking six feet above the ground carrying boxes of goods that Lois had gathered for our next Spring Fair, she called out to me as I went down the stairs "\$100,000? Is that all? How much is it going to cost you? I answered her from the bottom of the stairs: "Well it is going to cost \$132,000, but I felt I could only ask you for \$100,000." "What a silly thing to do", she said. "If you need \$132,000 then ask me for \$132,000, come back up here." I walked up stairs, put down the cardboard boxes of goods for the Spring Fair and Lois wrote out a second cheque this time for \$32,000. The two cheques together totalled \$132,000 and paid the entire cost of Cottee Lodge. For more than 20 years now Cottee Lodge has continued to meet the needs of homeless young people in the Ashfield area.

That wasn't the end of my problems however, because it was going to cost another \$40,000 per annum to run it. The government was not inclined to help because they believed that street accommodation for young people was required in Kings Cross not in Ashfield. My argument with the government department was that every accommodation service that had been supplied in the Kings Cross area only provided an overnight stopping point for kids, who the next morning went out on to the street to commit crimes, to abuse drugs and to engage in prostitution. Accommodation services in the heart of Kings Cross only aided in their illegal activities. We needed to get people out of Kings Cross if ever we were going to rehabilitate them. The beautiful Cottee Lodge has proved that over and over again.

By the time the Fox Report and the Report from Sheila Walkerden from the United Kingdom had arrived, we knew that we had to move right away from the large institutions at Carlingford and Pymble and move to smaller houses. Here children in groups of 3 or 4 could be cared for. We would also develop large scale fostering programs where foster parents would concentrate on caring for one or two children at the most. This concentrated care would bring better results than what we had been achieving try to care for too many in one place.

In 1983 I opened our first house at Mount Druitt and then another one at Whalan and very quickly houses at Blaxland, Penrith, Quakers Hill, Castle Hill, Riverstone, Grantham Heights, Blacktown, Lindfield, Killara, Dulwich Hill, Tuggerah, Rouse Hill, Lakemba and many other places. As our fundraising improved we got more family group homes.

Besides this we recruited hundreds of families, many of whom had already grown children and who now still wanted to provide a second chance for children where their own families could not care for them.

This foster work is now the backbone of all that we do.

In 1993 we engaged Professor Don Wright to write a history of Dalmar's Centenary of Care. He contacted hundreds of old boys and girls and former staff and other residents and wrote an excellent history. He also discovered that over a hundred years of caring, there were very few examples of any forms of abuse. I put this down to the fact that most of our staff were committed Christian girls who came from good country homes.

In the first 90 years of the Dalmar Children's Home, including 10 years of my oversight, we had cared for 10,000 children. In the next 10 years, following the opening of all of these family group homes we also cared for 10,000 children.

Today every three years we care for 10,000 children.

The need for good quality family care and childcare is dramatically increasing. We have developed dozens of preventative programs in helping men be better fathers, parents be supported by volunteers who come in as extra hands, programs that teach parents how to drug proof their kids and a whole range of specialised programs to improve family life. These preventative programs are having good impact but the need for care for those who do not undertake the programs is still a continuing one.

Thanks to individuals, donors and generous benefactors who have left property, or parts of their estate in their Will, Wesley Mission has expanded greatly the care for children. Over the last 20 years more than 80 other childcare organisations have closed down or gone out of business and the individual demand on us is a continuing one.

From the day I arrived and discovered I was responsible for 134 children, the care of children has continued to be a priority in my role as a pastor.

A role of a pastor is not only focused on the people of the worshipping congregations of your church. In a real sense, any minister relating to the community becomes the pastor to the community. The Pastor is called upon constantly to conduct weddings and funerals. Sometimes these are important state occasions for leading citizens and sometimes for unknown homeless people. I treat all alike and from the days of burying people from the Mental Asylum who had no known relatives at all! I always gave them a full funeral.

The pastor becomes a leader in community groups, school parent councils, service organisations, sporting teams and the like, often as chairman or President. I found these community expectations very demanding and difficult to combine with my core business in the Church.

One such organisation in which I have enjoyed office and leadership for over thirty years has been Rotary International.

One of the first things I did when I came to Sydney was find where the Rotary Club of Sydney met. In those days it used to meet in the old Tattersalls club in Elisabeth Street. It had about 350 members and was regarded as one of the finest clubs in the nation. I duly went along as a visiting Rotarian and attended a luncheon and then a second and a third. A couple of members asked if I would like to become a member of the Rotary Club of Sydney and of course I indicated that that was my desire. My wife was in full agreement. She felt my membership in the Rotary club of Cheltenham over the years had been one of the most significant experiences of my life and believed that meeting with a large group of men from various business professional, political and religious affiliations would be good for me as Superintendent of Wesley Mission.

I indicated to the friendly Rotarians International Vice President Doug Stewart and Fellow Howell Swanton that I would be pleased to be welcomed into membership. Rotarians cannot transfer from one club to another. The process of membership has to be undertaken the same as if the Rotarian who was presenting for membership was just another person in the street. Even though I had been a club president and was a Paul Harris fellow that didn't mean a thing. I soon discovered how true that was. Six months went by and in spite of regularly attending the Rotary club of Sydney weekly meetings; no one approached me to say that the process of becoming a member was in hand. I paid my fees at Cheltenham where I continued to be a member even though I now lived in Sydney, and attended each week doing a "make-up" as a member of the Rotary club of Cheltenham. Eventually after nine months had passed the process of being welcomed into the Rotary club of Sydney was completed.

Rotary has always believed in doing things by the book. My first lesson about not trying to take any short cuts with Rotary occurred when the best part of ten years earlier I had decided to start myself the Rotary club of Cheltenham.

At the Cheltenham High School, a school of some 900 teenagers, the Principal was Mr. Bill Fowler. Bill Fowler was a dedicated educationalist. He was also a fine Christian, a member of the local Presbyterian Church. But the thing that came home to me as I worked closely with him over the years was his enthusiasm as a member of the Rotary Club of Moorabbin.

Bill always spoke warmly of his Rotary Club and had invited me to be guest speaker on one occasion. As I looked at the eighty or more members of that Rotary Club I realised what a great asset to the community of Cheltenham it would be if we had a Rotary Club.

I had always wanted to be a Rotarian ever since I started addressing community service clubs at Ararat in 1963 and 1964. The Rotary Club of Ararat was certainly the hub of the whole community. Here

were all the key men - the businessmen, commercial and professional men. Here was the money and the political clout of the community. When I spoke at the Rotary Club of Moorabbin I realised it was the same there. What Cheltenham needed was a Rotary Club.

I had gained by now the idea that unlike other clubs which enlisted good hearted and willing people to serve the community, the Rotary Club was distinctive. The distinction which made Rotary different was called "The Classification Principle". It meant there was one person only from each classification. For example, there was one doctor, one dentist, one lawyer, one builder, one undertaker, one school principal, one grocer and so on. I found out, however, that if there were two papers in the community there could be an editor from each paper and as for clergymen there could be one from each major denomination.

The point about the classification principle was that it was not just one person from each classification. It was the one person who was generally regarded as the outstanding practitioner in his particular field. For example the one lawyer would be the person who was best regarded by his peers in the community. The one doctor was the one generally regarded as the outstanding physician in the community. The one surgeon would be regarded as the outstanding surgeon and so on.

As a result Rotary brought together an incredible cross section of men who were dedicated to community service. And they were the most influential people in the community. Not knowing anything at all about how a Rotary Club commenced, I decided the best thing to do was to learn by trying. I thought I would start the Rotary Club of Cheltenham.

I didn't know then that there were very strict laws about how a Rotary Club could grow in an area. For example, the nearest Club to the area would have to cede the territory over to the new club and define the limits of it, because members of that new Rotary Club would either have to live or work within that area or territory. Then the District Governor who was responsible for the activities of fifty or more clubs round about the area would have to decide if the time was right to develop a new Club. He would then approach one of the neighbouring Clubs and ask them to undertake the program of extension that would lead to a new Club being formed. There would be two or three District Governor's special representatives appointed who would have a task over a period of twelve months of getting to know the community well and getting to know the potential new Rotarians would be and then approach them.

Rotary does not accept as members people who just offer themselves. They have to belong to a classification for which there is no other present member in the Club. Then all members are entitled to

nominate the person who would then suit that classification. Then a check is made on the person to see if he is of the ethical standard required of a Rotarian before the person was approached and asked.

I did not know any of this at all. But over a period of several weeks whenever the moment grabbed me I thought of significant people in the community who would make good Rotarians and wrote their names under their classification. Gradually the list that I kept in the bottom draw of my desk grew longer as I considered the outstanding men in the community of Cheltenham.

One day Bill Fowler rang me and asked if he could come and see me about a Rotary matter and introduce me to a couple of the fellow Rotarians from Moorabbin. It sounded as though I was about to be sounded out for membership in the Rotary Club of Moorabbin. That would have been a great honour but I felt it was more important that we have a Rotary Club for Cheltenham itself.

When Bill rang at the door of my study and as I welcomed him into the study he introduced to me John Dack and Compton Hocking of the Rotary Club of Moorabbin. After some pleasantries and chitchat we came to the point of their visit. John Dack started: "We're planning to commence from the Rotary Club of Moorabbin a new Rotary Club here in Cheltenham. We have come to you because you have visited the Rotary Club of Moorabbin and been our guest speaker and we had in mind that you would understand what a Rotary Club is all about. We had in mind we should invite you to become a Charter Member and wondered if you could recommend any suitable men in the community for us to visit about the idea of commencing a Rotary Club."

Compton Hocking then joined the conversation and indicated to me that the task of starting a Rotary Club was a very serious one and involved a long procedure but the way to start was with a list of suitable potential members none of whom could be spoken to or approached until the Club was officially launched by the District Governor and then as his special representatives they would interview each man and ascertain whether they would be suitable for the new Club. Compton Hocking continued "So we've come to you to ask if you know one or two men whom you would consider would make good Rotarians in the proposed Rotary Club of Cheltenham".

I paused for a moment and wondered whether I should reveal what I had been doing. I decided I should put all the cards on the table. Reaching down to the bottom drawer of my desk I pulled out a typewritten sheet. "I've put down on this typewritten sheet the twenty five outstanding men in the community of Cheltenham together with their current occupations and their telephone numbers and addresses. You will see that I have marked Geoff Chambers, a solicitor from Charman Road, as the best candidate for President. I've further marked Don Campbell, the Manager of the Commercial

Banking Company of Sydney on the corner of the highway, as the best of the bank managers in the community and one who would make an ideal Treasurer. Brother Theophane Quinnell, belongs to the Order of St. John of God and I believe he would make an excellent Rotarian. As a matter of fact each of those men there are really outstanding in our community. There is Harry Ramler of Ramler Furniture. He is a Jewish man and a fine character. And Daryl Davis - he is the Pharmacist up in the shopping centre and one I believe would be excellent in committing himself to acts of community service. You will notice that Arthur Rose the undertaker is mentioned there. I included him because his brother Lawrence is a member of your Club at Moorabbin."

The three men looked at each other and nearly fell off their seats.

Bill Fowler merely turned to the other two and said, "What did I tell you?" John Dack took the lead: "And you? Young man, what do you propose to do in the Club?" I replied, "I will organise them. Probably Club Secretary would be best."

The rest of the meeting dissolved into laughter as the men told me I had just broken every rule written about the establishment of a Rotary Club but they accepted my judgement and they would go about the business of visiting the people on the list.

That's how the Rotary Club of Cheltenham began back in 1972. It was put together in record time and the District Governor was duly notified that suitable Charter Members were available. The District Governor's special representative said it was the easiest Chartering of a new Club that they had ever been involved in.

Of the twenty-five people on my list, twenty-one became Charter Members. The District Governor for that year, Jock Andrews, was very proud of the new Club and in fact still keeps in contact with me. Today Jock lives in Sydney.

A few years ago I returned to Cheltenham as guest speaker for their twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chartering. It was great to see a strong and virile Club still continuing with many of the same people I had originally recommended. Recently at a Melbourne District Conference where fourteen hundred Rotarians were attending I met some of the members of the same Club. I have enjoyed every moment of my thirty years as a Rotarian.

But if you are a Rotarian you have to expect that you will be busy. Over those years I have been a Club Director several times, Secretary, Vice President, President twice, Past President, Director of

Club Service, Director of International Service, Director of Vocational Service, Director of Community Service (twice), bulletin editor and printer, Chairperson of Classifications, Chairperson of fundraising, District Director, District Community Service Director, District Governor's Advisory Board, Member of the Nominating Committee, Fellowship Committee, Public Relations Committee, Club and District Conference Organiser, Developer of the Rotary District Retirement Village, Awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship, been the recipient of the prestigious Rotary Club of Sydney Vocational Service Award, recipient of the Rotary International's Distinguished Service Award, and speaker at several hundred meetings of Rotary Clubs, as well as Conferences, Assemblies and Conventions, at District, Regional and International levels. Being keynote speaker and addressing 25,000 Rotarians at an International Convention would be a lifetime highlight.

Looking back upon this list of activities I suddenly realise that my fellows have never invited me to be Treasurer! I wonder what stopped them? Every one of these activities has brought me satisfaction. Working together with teams of Rotarians either as a team member or a team leader has provided the means of acquaintance and an opportunity for service. I have been wonderfully blessed by the friendship of other fellows and spouses whom I would not have known but for working alongside each other. That involvement was a long-term preparation for being President of a significant Club such as the Rotary Club of Sydney where I had been a member for fifteen years. Twenty years after I was the President of the Rotary Club of Cheltenham, I was elected President of the Rotary Club of Sydney.

To be elected as the president of the Rotary Club of Sydney was one of the proudest but most humbling experiences of my life. It was exactly twenty years to the day that I became a president for the second time. The year between the 1st July 1993 and the 30th June 1994 was one of the busiest of my whole life. It brought Beverley and I a great deal of personal satisfaction. I brought together a wonderful team of Rotarians in Sydney who would work with me in making it an outstanding year. I told my colleagues on my first day as president that I had four aims.

Firstly I wanted to confirm the Rotary Club of Sydney as Australia's principle forum for public leadership. In order to achieve that I had already chosen 45 outstanding speakers from across the nation to address the club including the Prime Minister and the previous Prime Minister, another outstanding people. Every one of the 45 speakers were well known people in public life and leaders in their field. Furthermore I decided that we would aggressively develop our number of women members. Rotary had just agreed to have women members and many of our older members at the Rotary Club of Sydney were very opposed to that move. Three ballots about whether we would approve women as members had been lost. I received a letter signed by a number of men who indicated that if we were to push ahead with female members then they would leave. In my opening address I indicated that we would

be very pro-active in seeking women members and if any member decided that they would leave because of that, then we would greatly miss them. As far as I was concerned there was no argument. We would rapidly increase the number of women members. None of the objecting men left after I started inducting women members.

The second goal was to confirm that Rotary is on the cutting edge of social issues. That meant we had become a much more multi cultural and heterogeneous community reflecting our nations diversity. In order to do this I would develop a whole range of programmes to help our membership understand what was happening in society. And that we would initiate a whole programme of hands on activities to involve our members with the homeless with building houses for people who's homes had been destroyed by a hurricane in Fiji and in helping street kids in the heart of Sydney. The issue that I proposed that created the most publicity and indeed controversy was to bring work parties every Saturday into Everleigh Street Redfern and work with the Aboriginals in the community in rebuilding their homes and cleaning up Australia's Street of Shame. The garbage men of South Sydney had refused to collect the garbage from Everleigh Street for some time because of the tax on their garbage trucks. But it was my plan to lead a team of Chief Executives professionals like lawyers, doctors, dentists, and CEO's of large companies into Everleigh Street to shovel garbage, to clean up the community to clean bricks and to rebuild a house gutted by fire during one of the riots in that area. That was going to be one of the most gut wrenching and exhilarating experiences of my life. Many members in the Rotary Club of Sydney look back on those Saturday mornings as life changing experiences for them. Incidentally our club and my key man in this project, Past President John Randall received a world commendation for this as our outstanding Rotary project.

The third goal I had was to confirm that the Rotary Club of Sydney was the outstanding Rotary Club in the Southern Hemisphere. To do that would involve training Rotarians in leadership, involving members in our total programme and becoming involved in a number of high initiative programmes. One of those received front page attention on the papers when it was announced on my behalf by the Premier John Fahey. He announced during the contest to win the right to stage Olympics 2000 in seven years time that the Rotary club of Sydney had put forward a proposal to provide home hosting with free bed and lodging for the parents of every athlete who desired to come to the games. John Fahey said that that proposal was the one that tipped the balance in favour of Sydney being the host city in the year 2000. The Rotary Home Hosting Programme was one of the most significant voluntary projects during the Sydney 2000 games. My experience as the first Australian Olympic Chaplain convinced me that the 97% of athletes won nothing and their very young average age, meant they needed their parents – and most parents couldn't afford to stay in hotels.

Our fourth goal was to confirm the fact that our Rotary club of Sydney had a sense of freshness about it. We would have new members, younger members, more female members and more members from a multi cultural background. To help me in this I had two outstanding Vice Presidents, Steve Koroknay and David Greatorex. Both served with distinction. My friendship with Dr Greatorex grew and a short time later he became a member of the Board of Wesley Mission. When Professor Alf Pollard died in December 2000, Dr David Greatorex became the honorary Secretary of Wesley Mission and we work in an even closer partnership.

There was one thing that I did not promote. I had indicated that in spite of the fact that the Rotary Club of Sydney had raised usually about two hundred thousand dollars a year to help others in need that fundraising would not be my primary role and that we would have no special presidential projects and that the pressure to raise money that we had endured for several years would not be made during my year of office.

Not that I was shy on raising money because I had raised several hundred million dollars from Church members, the public and the community at large for some of Australia's major charity projects but I felt that this was not the time for a major thrust in fundraising.

However one year later the club was to prove me wrong. For within that one year without making fundraising a major emphasis in the life of The Rotary Club of Sydney, those members had raised more than seven hundred thousand dollars for the needy of our community. We had raised more than five hundred thousand dollars toward training unemployed youth through a programme with the YWCA. We gave money to Rotary health research, thousands to library development, to the Fred Hollows foundation, Youth research, heart research and bush fire relief. As well we were notified we would receive more than half a million dollars through people deciding to write to the Rotary Club of Sydney into their wills. This was by far the most money ever raised by the Rotary Club of Sydney before or since.

There was one other final point. I was asked to go to Sri Lanka on behalf of Rotary in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan government to develop in that country the guidelines for a programme of helping street kids and young addicts as we had done in Sydney. That programme also received several hundred thousand US dollars to help it get on its way, mainly through my visits and special pleading to the consulates in Columbo.

It had been the most successful year financially in the history of any Rotary Club in Australia.

That is it for me. I am a non-destiny person in Rotary, believing the greatest privilege is being an ordinary member involved in serving the community, and the highest Rotary honour in Australia, is to be the President of the Rotary Club of Sydney. Outside of the Church the greatest pleasure I have found has been within a fine team of community leaders who have been members of the Rotary Club of Cheltenham and of the Rotary Club of Sydney.

During 2005 a new history was published which to my surprise carried an assessment of my leadership in the Rotary Club. "The Rotary Club of Sydney 1921-2005 Achieving for Others" was written as a scholarly work by Professor Brian H Fletcher, one of Australia's outstanding academic historians. He wrote:

'In 1986 the Reverend Dr. Gordon Moyes, Director of the Wesley Central Mission, had started Habitat for Humanity in Australia an international organisation of which he was National President. Its aim was to provide houses for needy people with accommodation problems. In 1988-89 the Sydney Club made available volunteers and material to help construct a house at Plumpton for a single mother and four children who had lived in a caravan for six years. That children were involved strengthened the Club's desire to help and pointed to another area of concern.

In 1987 a document had been produced raising the question of what might be done for the growing number of young people living in Sydney under conditions that placed them at risk. Investigations were carried out and in February 1989 the incoming Board decided in the forthcoming year to look for ways of providing housing and rehabilitation for 'at risk' children in the inner city. This was welcomed by Gordon Moyes who was involved with a similar project that had government support.

He looked to the Club for cooperation and suggested that if a building was found it should be named Rotary Lodge. Subsequently, the Board decided that it could not proceed with the idea of a Rotary Lodge but it did respond favourably when the Wesley Mission opened a centre known as StreetSmart at 169 Liverpool Street. This provided a haven where young people could seek counselling and help in achieving reconciliation with families. They could also be referred to agencies that could help with accommodation, drug rehabilitation and employment. President Bill Locke threw his weight and skills behind what became known as the Kids in Crisis project. Together with others he had been deeply moved by the Burdekin Report and an ABC television documentary series entitled 'Nobody's Children'. The Club succeeded in raising \$100,000 which was placed in a Trust Fund designed to underwrite the cost of a youth worker at the Wesley Centre for three years."

One of the other positive consequences of the admission of women was the fact that it reduced the average age of members. This was something to which Gordon Moyes drew attention in his inaugural

address as President in July 1993. He observed that, when he had joined the Club in 1979, 16% of the membership had been less than 50 years old. Now the figure had risen to 25%, an increase he considered, 'mainly due to women members'. Significantly, it became his goal and that of subsequent Presidents and Boards to infuse young blood into the Club. In March 1994 the Membership Development Committee took steps to bring together members under the age of 40, partly to make them feel more at-home and encouraging others to join, partly because it was felt that with proper encouragement they would do much for the Club.

On 28 June 1993 the energetic Reverend Dr Gordon Moyes AM, became only the second clergyman to be made President. He brought to the Club the unbounded enthusiasm that influenced every aspect of a life inspired by a desire to help the needy. This had become evident while he was serving as a Minister in Melbourne, where he became President of the Rotary Club of Cheltenham and was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship.

Appointment as Superintendent of the Wesley Central Mission in Sydney in 1979 gave him further opportunity for service and this he seized with relish. His achievements were recognised by the Sydney Club, which gave him the prestigious Vocational Service Award in 1991.

In a stirring luncheon address delivered on 29 June 1993, he outlined his plans for the next 12 months. These comprised a comprehensive range of initiatives, amongst them a decision to establish the Rotary Club of Sydney Policy Committee, which was to formulate a 'Rolling Strategic Plan' and provide oversight of 'many of our projects'. Chaired by the new President it also contained Past-Presidents Ray Hodgkinson and John Wallace, together with President elect Denis Cortese. Much was accomplished and the Annual Report prepared at the close of Gordon Moyes' period in office was one of the most extensive and far-reaching ever issued. Covering 56 pages and copiously illustrated with photographs, it depicted the Club as 'the outstanding Rotary Club in the Southern Hemisphere, possessed of a "sense of freshness" that placed it at the cutting edge of public issues.'

One of the areas I looked forward to working in when I came to Wesley Mission was working with some disabled people. I had started in a small way during my suburban minister days in Cheltenham setting up a special class within the Sunday School for children who suffered severe physical and mental deficiencies. One of our boys, David, was in a wheelchair. He could neither speak nor see properly and he had no limbs that would function.

However I arranged with my Rotary Club the purchase of a then revolutionary Golf Ball typewriter for him. In his Sunday School class we attached a long wooden peg to a band that fitted on his head and by using his head he would hit the point of the pointer onto the letter and spell out on the

typewriter his answers to questions. That very preliminary work with David, which led us to putting in ramps to the church and places for his wheelchair with plenty of room for his Grandmother to sit beside him, started me on an intense programme of caring for the disabled.

When we came to Wesley Mission we operated a centre called 'Pinaroo'. It was a large hostel for about 45 severely disabled people. The trouble with this hostel was its very strength. Its strength lay in caring staff who made beds, cleaned floors, cooked meals and took disabled people out and helped them have an enjoyable life to the full. But I soon saw that in caring for people in a lodge like this and by doing so much for them, we were further disabling them. What we really needed to do was help enable them to do whatever they could do for themselves.

I remember in 1980 and 1981 having meetings with their parents explaining that we wanted to deinstitutionalise these severely disabled young people and have them live in house groups of four to a house with one carer. Instead of us doing their banking and money for them we would teach them to handle their own money. Instead of taking them for rides in our disabled persons bus, we would go with them until they learnt to travel by bus and train and to be independent. Instead of spending all the time in the presence of carers we would encourage them to go to sheltered workshops and earn some money of their own.

Noble though these ideas were we were met with total resistance from parents. Parents had gone through the big break of having their child leave home now to live in someone else's care and they didn't want us to make them independent. Many of the parents were quite elderly and their children now adults and they wanted to spend the rest of their lives knowing that their disabled adult children were in total care for the rest of their lives. They would never have to worry about them ever being out in the community, travelling by train, or going into a supermarket to buy food. The parents without realising it wanted their disabled adult child to be so cocooned with safety that they would never develop what capacities they had. They were disabling even their capacities.

Our view was just the opposite. I wanted to make those people as independent as possible and to help them develop whatever skills they had to their maximum use. I wanted them to undertake courses in cooking, to go to a TAFE course to learn how to handle money on their own and how to cook and buy food for their own kitchen. It was inevitable that we would have conflict with some of those parents and I was always glad of the support of my colleague Rev. Colin Wood who helped me negotiate very prickly meetings with very tense parents.

We succeeded eventually with opening about 25 houses into which we placed a staff person plus three or four disabled people. The story of that enterprise throughout the 1980's and 90's was one of great success. Almost every one developed within their capabilities. Some became so independent that they took courses at TAFE, learned to cook, learned to travel on public transport and got jobs away from Sheltered employment. A number of them eventually became the leaseholder on their own house property. Many of them learned to travel independently and to save their money, to travel overseas and go to Disneyland or wherever their chosen destination was. Several got married and we have today still a close contact with a number of those people who have been married and set up their own homes.

We are extraordinarily proud of how those disabled people developed their skills and abilities. That first step was followed by many others to help the disabled. Wesley Mission is today the largest provider of services to disabled people within NSW. We have many different types of services and we look after hundreds of disabled babies, children, young adults and aged disabled people.

Many of those disabled have become firm friends. I was very moved a few years ago on Mother's Day when Robert Bates a 55 year old profoundly disabled man who helped us every Sunday night by handing out Hymn sheets to everybody who comes to worship, purchased a Mother's Day card and a gift to give my wife. He regarded Beverley as his mother.

I have often had people who come to church of a night wonder what kind of church this is when they see a profoundly disabled man sitting at the front doors of Wesley Theatre wearing a solid helmet on his head to save his very tender bones when he falls accidentally handing out the hymn sheets. Many people find it difficult to confront a disabled person but allowing Robert to share in the taking up of the offering and in the handing out of the hymn sheets that all of God's children are welcome and everyone of them has a place where they can exercise their gifts of service.

Sometimes our friendship with disabled people has brought us great sorrow and great rejoicing. I can never think about the sorrow that has been brought upon us by some serious disabled person without thinking of Trevor Young or Steven Seymor. Trevor Young was only in his early twenties. He used to sleep rough in the back alleys around the streets of the Central Business District. I found him huddled in a doorway one night in an alley that ran between a café and picture theatre in Pitt Street. I asked him where he was sleeping and in halting speech was told that he just slept up the alley. I told him that we had beds where he could sleep and showers and breakfast in the morning, a hot breakfast which would help set him up for the day and that what he needed to do was to go to our Edward Eager Lodge. It was a damp night and rain was beginning to fall. In those days without

a mobile telephone I went back to my office telephoned Edward Eager Lodge and told them I'd sent the young man up to the Lodge to get a bed for the night. The night manager told me they were already full but he would do what he could to find him a comfortable and a dry place.

The next morning I heard a dreadful story about Trevor as soon as I arrived at work. The Lodge was overcrowded with people and we have a strict rule that we will not allow mattresses on the floor in fire escapes in case of an emergency evacuation. The night was raining and there were many people - more than 500 who were sleeping out in the parks and in the alleyways and backdoor ways of the city. Trevor told the night manager not to worry, that he would come back in the morning and then book in for a bed the next night. I don't know what happened then but apparently Trevor went round the back of Edward Eager Lodge. The rain started to come down very heavily and looking for a dry spot this young, mentally disabled man lifted the lid on one of our large dump bins. He recognised it was out of the rain and he would be warm there. He crawled in among the garbage and made himself comfortable. Apparently he fell into a deep sleep. He awoke the next morning to violent movement. In the early hours of the morning the garbage truck came and picked up the big metal garbage container and lifted it over the cabin where the driver sat and emptied the contents, including Trevor, into the back of the garbage truck. Without realising what he was doing the garbage man replaced the big steel bin and pressed the level which compacted the garbage in the back of his truck and Trevor was compressed to death. No disabled young person should be homeless on their own sleeping in the trash bins.

I am sad every time I think of Trevor and I think of him every time I see a trash dump bin being emptied into a garbage truck.

Or when I think of Steven Seymour. Tears well up in my eyes as I think of Steven. Every morning from 1987 for the next 7 years, Steven met with me for a cup of coffee or tea. In 1987 when our head office was in temporary accommodation in George street while we were building our large new Wesley Centre in Pitt street, Steven Seymour would appear at the door of Wesley Centre waiting for me to arrive. In those days he used to come in and have an early cup of tea with the LifeLine counsellors who had been on duty all night. Then he learnt that he could come in to Wesley Centre and meet with the early arriving members of our restaurant staff. Every day they would give him a free breakfast and a cup of coffee.

By the time I had arrived he was full of good food and tea and coffee. He would wait just where I park my car and then accompany me to my office. Steven would spend the entire day with us and would find out where I might be going during the day. Steven was of medium height with dark hair

and a scraggily beard. He always carried over one shoulder, a bag containing all of his possessions. He had several teeth missing and the rest were a mixture of green and black and white. He had lived for 16 years in the Gladesville Psychiatric Hospital and then in a lodge at Leichardt.

Steven was addicted to the streets. No one could get him away from the streets and whenever we found him a better place of accommodation he would only stay a night or two before he would come back to sleep somewhere around the streets.

Steven was a gentle man. He was very clean in his personal habits but very timid and fearful that people would bash him at night.

He had the conflict of being afraid of being on the streets at night, and desiring to sleep out under what he called the 'Starlight Hotel' rather than indoors. Several times while he has been sleeping on the street or in a back alley or in a doorway he was robbed of his few possessions. Many times he was bashed up by young hoodlums who found him a very easy target because he could not strike back.

In the seven years that I knew him Steven never drank alcohol, he never smoked and he never took any illegal drugs. He was just a gentle child of a man.

When he was born, he was born with an intellectual disability and he was born into a dysfunctional family. I found out that his sister had left home at 15. A brother had left home in his early teenage years and the life between his mother and father was one of alcohol abuse and physical violence. Steven somewhere slipped through the cracks and as a boy ended up in the Gladesville Psychiatric Hospital. Upon de-institutionalisation which occurred in the mid 1980's, Steven was one of those people sent out into the community into a house where he would be looked after. The fact was the boarding house proprietor took the money but did not look after Steven. After a while Steven was on the street and I suspect the boarding house proprietor was still receiving money to care for him. When we moved into our new building in Pitt Street Steven moved with us. Every morning, early while it was still dark Steven would be waiting for the first person to arrive, which was usually one of our cooks or chefs from Wesley Restaurant to open the doors. Our staff would let him in because he was no trouble and because they liked to give him a cup of tea and some breakfast. On Tuesdays, Steven knew I would go to Rotary and he would be there waiting for me to come down in the lift from my office and there he would be waiting with his bag with all his possessions hooked over one shoulder and he would walk with me down to the Rotary Club of Sydney meeting in the Hotel

Windsor. He would lope along beside me skipping from foot to foot and saying over and over again “You’re my friend aren’t you Gordon? You’re my friend” I kept reassuring Steven I was his friend.

When I got to the Hotel Menzies I would say that I had to go to my meeting and Steven would quite naturally peel off and lope over to Wynyard Park where he would sit in the sun until an hour and a quarter later he would be waiting at the front doors of the Hotel Menzies for me to exit. Then he would lope along beside me and we would talk all the way with Stephen saying over and over again “You’re my friend Gordon aren’t you? You’re my friend” I always assured Steven that I was his friend. We always made sure he had a few dollars in his pocket and that he was able to get some lunch. One time in 1994 Steven’s Birthday came around and the staff at Wesley Centre gave him a birthday party complete with cake and candles and gave him the gift of a wristwatch. It was not a fine delicate gold watch, that wasn’t Steven; it was a large ostentatious brightly coloured plastic watch with a battery and hands. He was so proud of his big watch and wore it constantly; the watch had cost us less than \$20.

No one ever accepted responsibility for Steven but in 1992 through the miracle of the radio station when I told something of Steven’s life, his sister who had long lost contact with him recognised I was talking about her brother and she made contact with me, I reunited brother and sister after twenty years. That’s when Steven found out that both his mother and father had died some years earlier. However I would love to tell you that his sister took extra responsibility for Steven, but the fact was that having made contact with him she no longer wished to be in contact.

In 1994 I was rung early one Saturday morning. The constable from the Surry Hills police station told me that Steven had been attacked in the early hours of the morning and had been robbed of his watch. He had run away from his assailant who was seen to chase him and eventually catch him and then savagely kick him to death. They told me it was hard to recognise his face. The only way the police were able to find someone to identify him was that when they went through his bag of possessions they found several photographs of me cut from our Wesley Mission magazine. The police rang and asked if I could come and identify him. Beverley and I quickly dressed and went to where the body of Steven was. It was hard to recognise him owing to the swollen and beaten nature of his face. There was no doubt about it, it was Steven and he had been robbed and kicked to death for the sake of a watch worth less than \$20.

Over the road several stories up two cleaners were completing their tasks when they saw the assault. They came down and gave a very good description to the police of the assailant. I met with the police on a continuous basis over a period of several months but no one has ever been arrested and charged with his murder.

I told Steven's story the following Sunday night on the radio and indicated I wanted to hold a service in Wesley Church in his memory and I wanted people to say to the community that we cared for a disabled homeless man like Steven. I was overwhelmed. Flowers arrived from all over the state and more than 300 people attended an incredible service of tribute and praise to one of God's very special frail children.

But there are other very disabled people whose stories mean a great deal to us who bring us joy. At the same time as I first got to know Robert Bates I also got to know Angie. Angie was a well know female who moved from bar to bar in the Kings Cross area. She had been a prostitute for many years in earlier life but when I came to know her she was just an older woman who was dirty, diseased and very alcoholic. She couldn't exist without cheap wine. Her clothing was dirty, her body was smelly and her blood shot eyes and raucous voice put fear into any one. She used to go from hotel to hotel and would frequently slump on the floor at the bar and beg men to buy her drinks.

Years of smoking had scarified her throat and her loud raucous harsh voice made her the most unladylike women you could ever find. I didn't know much about her in those days but some time in 1980 she arrived at a service at Wesley Mission's Edward Eager Lodge. In those days there were very few homeless women on the streets but Angie was one of them. After taking a Sunday morning church service I had a cup of tea with her and while we were drinking the tea asked her why she had come to Edward Eager Lodge.

She told me she had resisted the thought of going to any of the homeless person centres run by the Welfare agencies. She laughed with a harsh crackling voice "You'd never catch me in one of those places" I said to her "Well why have you ended up here?" and she replied quite simply "One night two men rolled me in a lane behind a pub. They pushed me on the ground and went through my clothes looking for money. They wouldn't touch me 'cause they thought they'd get the scab. They took what money I had, but I didn't have much maybe 15 cents. One of the men stood over me, undid his fly and pissed all over me." She let the enormity of that sink on me. Then she continued, "While I was laying in the lane and he was pissing on my face I thought "I'm gonna go up the Lodge and see Noreen"

So that was how Angie came to Edward Eager Lodge and to Rev. Noreen Towers who has worked among Sydney's homeless in such a wonderful way for so many years.

As we finished our cup of tea I said to her “Do you like it here Angie?” She replied, “It’s beautiful and I never want to leave” I replied to her “Well I hope you do leave but not to go back to the streets. I want you to leave here and come into a new place we’re just starting. It’s out at Horsley Park and it’s called Serenity Farm. It’s a lovely place set in farm lands with cows and chooks and a couple of dogs and a cat and a few other people we’re helping get their lives straight. Would you like to go out to the farm Angie?”

Angie said “Not on your life. I’ve never been out of the city and I’m not going to any farm.”

I got to know Angie well as she lived in Edward Eager Lodge over the next couple of years. We saw some improvement in her lifestyle. She was cleaner, she became more docile, and she began to get her drinking under some sort of control but still she wasn’t willing to make any effort to really overcome her alcoholism.

One day Rev. Noreen Towers said to me “ When you go out to the farm, you’re going to get a surprise. I’ve got someone out there who will be the last person you expect to see.”

Just as Noreen had predicted, when I arrived at Serenity Farm at Horsley Park those three houses we had on about 14 acres of rolling green hills, there in the centre house was one woman, the first woman to come into our alcohol recovery programme, it was Angie Brut. When I walked into the kitchen there she was, with her hands in washing up water looking out over the café style curtains at the animals grazing on the paddock behind the house. I gave her a big hug and welcomed her. Sitting in the lounge were four men who were her housemates during their recovery from alcoholism. I decided I should have a talk with them. And said “Fella’s, this is a bit of a risk for us. This is the first time we’ve ever had a woman living in one of our houses with men. I want you men to treat her like a lady because if you treat Angie like a lady then she will grow to become one. I want you to open the door and let her go first. I want you to help her with the jobs around the place and when she comes into the room get out of the chair and allow her to sit down. And I want you to listen to this very clearly - I don’t want one of you men ever trying to get into her bedroom at night!”

From behind the kitchen door came a raucous voice “They’d better not try to get into my bedroom or they’ll loose what they’ve always been proud of!”

Nothing more needed to be said. Angie stayed with us in the alcoholic recovery programme. She was now dry, sober and her general health improved immensely. After about two years I was told

there was a lady waiting to see me outside my office. I asked my secretary to bring her in. Standing before me was a lady who bore some resemblance to someone I had once met but that was all until she burst out laughing and the harsh crackly voice came through.” “Angie what have you done? I didn’t recognise you!” Angie laughed again “You blokes get fooled because a girl changes her hair colour. And I’ve got a new set of choppers; it makes all the difference to your face if you’ve got a mouth full of choppers. I haven’t had teeth for years.” Angie got down to the business of telling me why she had come. She was well dressed, well presented with a blue rinse and new teeth. Now she said to me “Mr Moyes I’ve cleaned my life up and I wanna get a job. I’m wondering if I can work in your restaurant.”

In our restaurant? I was trying to present people with an image of a reasonably priced high quality service restaurant. It didn’t seem as if Angie would fit there at all. But I knew if I said no it would probably dispirit her greatly. I told her I’d take her on for a trial for a month. Angie that day donned an apron and started to clear away dirty dishes from a table of people who came into Wesley Restaurant. At the end of the month she’d been earning her wages, was reliable and apart from a few occasions when we had to teach her how to keep her thumb out of the soup and not to laugh so loudly she was a perfect waitress. Angie Brut fell in love with one of our recovered alcoholics Charlie and my colleague Rev. Peter Davis married them. A short while afterwards they shifted from their rented premises to a home they purchased interstate. They became associated with a local church and became regular attenders in a home Bible Study group. They corresponded with me regularly until Angie died a few years ago after nearly twenty years of sober, happily married life. When you’re working with the disabled and the homeless there are treasures, treasures you will never forget like Robert Bates and Trevor and Steven and Angie and Charlie.

As a pastor I was vitally interested in the work of young people. Beverley and I ran dozens of youth camps; attended hundreds of boys and girls club meetings, teenage club evenings and young adult club activities and camps. For some years Beverley was the leader of the girls Good Companions Club, and I was leader of the boy’s Explorer Club. Both had large attendances of girls and boys.

Then I was asked to bring my experience to bear on the State Boys Brigade movement as State President. The International Boys' Brigade was begun in 1883 by William Alexander Smith, secretary of the Sunday School of the Free College Church in Glasgow. The Boys' Brigade predates Lord Baden Powell's Boy Scout movement by twenty- five years.

Beginning with thirty boys the movement quickly spread worldwide and in a few years had grown to 250,000. The Boys' Brigade trains boys aged 11 to 18 in spiritual, physical and social activities.

The ultimate aim being to develop well-balanced young men who are ready to take their place in society.

Though not as well known as the Boy Scout Movement, their system of earning badges for various activities camps and other programmes, are almost identical. I spent a lot of time, providing State Leadership, attending camps and taking the salute on our large marches through City streets on "Founder's Day" and in speaking at special church services and parades. This also involved raising money for the Boys' Brigade and ultimately led to me to being elected as the New South Wales president from 1988 to 1994.

I also supplied the Brigade with numbers of sermons, articles and speeches on themes relevant to the boys. The Governor of New South Wales was patron of the Boys' Brigade and every year I was invited to Government House on the occasion of the presentation of the Queen's Badge, the movement's highest award to successful young men. I was then elected national President of the Boys Brigade, and followed similar activities throughout each of the states. I against visited the Governor General and was a speaker at the International Boys Brigade Conference in Singapore. Two heart attacks followed by heart surgery forced me reluctantly to step down from these positions but I have continued to value the ministry to boys and to the work of the Boys Brigade in particular.

These activities did bring us into constant contact with the Governors and the Governors General, but these formal occasions brought us into an even closer personal relationship with these dignitaries. I was appointed by Executive Ministries as Chaplain to Government House Canberra and to the Office of the Prime Minister. This resulted in our names appearing on many invitation lists to VIP functions, including Royal tours. At these important dinners I was invited to say grace before the meal began. Similarly, at the Australia Club I was invited to preside over various functions, make speeches and say grace. One such important occasion was the visit of Prince Philip from the United Kingdom. In this position I also formed a particular friendship with Bill Hayden and his wife Dallas while he was Governor General and discussed Christianity with them. This led me to present the Haydens with his video series on Discovering Jesus at the request of the Governor General.

Holy Communion

One of the highest privileges a pastor can have is to lead in the celebration of Holy Communion. For fifty years, every week I have celebrated Holy Communion. I have used a variety of liturgies, written hundreds of modern liturgies and conducted hundreds of home communions for aged, frail

and shut in Christians. I regularly carried a small Communion set, and while visiting the aged and shut in or in aged care institutions, set up a small table, and celebrated the sacrament.

It is easy to become over familiar when handling “holy things” but I have always regarded this as a great privilege. Weekly communion over fifty years, is a source of spiritual strength upholding my spiritual life.

A Country Parson.

After my seven years in the inner slums of Melbourne, I spent time in Ararat doing the work of a country parson.

In all the fast track learning on how to become a country parson, I guess I have not told you about the ordinary things we did day by day that made a country minister's life a busy one. Everybody recognises that the leadership of worship is important and I was pleased to see within the first year the worship attendances had doubled for each morning and the evening services had an increase of 150%.

But there were many more things a country parson does week by week. In my first three weeks, in order to re-establish a Sunday School and attract children from the area to come into Sunday School, I ran a week long programme of "Happy Hours" where vigorous and happy activities for children were conducted every afternoon. Soon more than 250 children from the community were coming in to the Happy Hour programme and, four weeks after we arrived, we opened a new Sunday School with 94 children. In the first year we averaged 109 children plus 19 trained teachers. All of those had to be obtained, trained and established within the first weeks of ministry.

We had a shortage of ministers willing to teach Religious Instruction in the High School, so I undertook to teach 700 children in large classes every week. We started a Boys Club with a strong programme of gymnastics and team games and soon 32 boys plus 13 young leaders were working with me in physical jerks and team competitions. We started a Christian Youth Fellowship with more than 30 teenagers regularly meeting each week. Fourteen young adults came to the first weekly meeting of the Young Adult Fellowship, a Mens Monthly Breakfast attracted 42 men, 22 girls started attending a mid-week Girls Club, three table tennis teams were started and a girls netball competition established, and a young men's table tennis competition started. All the organisation and leadership came to rest in my lap.

During the week we started with a Bible Study which soon grew into a series of house church study groups, each studying the same Bible passage which I would prepare early in the week for lay leaders to use and then to develop with the adult study groups. We also discovered that people enjoyed praying so we set up house prayer groups, with morning, afternoon and night meetings on several days a week where groups of people would come together to pray for all of our work and undergird it with their personal commitment. We discovered that people of every denomination would join together in order to pray for our community.

On Tuesday nights I trained a group of men to visit the homes of non- church members and explain the significance of faith in Christ and membership in the church. The men came visiting with me and over the next month 35 adults made commitments to Christ and were baptised. On Thursday mornings I would appear in court as the only Probation Officer in the area to take responsibility for young men who had been violating the law. Pastoral visitation occupied three afternoons a week. I was not only visiting the aged, the sick, the infirm, but also every man connected with the church at his place of work. There was an afternoon a week spent in chaplaincy up in the J Ward where Victoria's worst criminally insane were housed. I went from cell to cell being carefully locked in for a fixed period of time with each prisoner, and then time at Aradale in the mental hospital where I ran an Alcoholics Anonymous programme. There were working bees on Saturday mornings and any spare night was usually spent talking to a community club. I addressed more than 100 different community organisations in two years. We trained people as counsellors to guide young people in the problems they were facing and 84 adults attended a six week course. More than 40 people attended a four weeks course in training for church membership. The work of a pastor in a rural area was rich and varied.

But I guess the most lasting thing that I ever did in those early days as a country parson was to start broadcasting on 3BA Ballarat and 3CS Colac in brief presentations of Christian messages, which, 25 years down the track would lead to speaking to the largest radio audience for a Christian programme anywhere in the nation. It was while I was in the country that I appeared in my first regular television programmes, speaking after midnight in five minute epilogues broadcast from BTV-6 Ballarat and BCV-8 Maryborough. Since that time I have been involved in more than three thousand telecasts and many films and countless videos. Newspaper articles and features became a regular part of life and I learnt the art of writing for publication.

I visited the people on the farms and found they appreciated me spending a few hours with them. A pastoral visit to a farm was different to a pastoral visit in the slums. In the slums I would call at a

person's house, have a cup of tea in the kitchen, discuss their family and personal problems, read some Scripture and have a prayer for each person in the household.

But on the farms I worked alongside the farmer for perhaps the rest of the day until he finished and went up to the house for tea at sunset. Working alongside some of the farmers built incredibly good relationships. Country people judge a minister by his willingness to do some hard work. So I helped in digging a well, sinking a bore, rounding up sheep, crutching sheep, dipping, drenching, lambing and shearing sheep, spreading hay, stacking hay bales, harvesting wheat, loading bags of oats onto a truck, tipping grain at the silo, plucking chooks, milking cows, eradicating rabbits, shooting foxes, erecting fences, felling trees, shifting water tanks, driving a tractor, making a dam, repairing farm gates - and doing a hundred and one other odd jobs around the property. A good visit, some hard work, a cup of billy tea out in the paddock, and then a couple of hours later going up to the farmhouse for another cup of tea, a round of Scripture and prayer with the family and finally heading off home with a bottle of clotted cream or a cabbage from the garden. Country people loved it when the parson stripped off and worked alongside the men. I carried a change of clothes in the boot of the car and some hand cream to help my soft hands recover from the blisters. The country is a wonderful place for people to develop their skills and their interests.

We had launched within the church what we called "A Plan For Progress" which ended with the new hall being built, the running of a community-based youth evangelistic mission, and various forms of ministry within the community.

We were strong on our care for the poor. For some reason which have now forgotten, we collected nylons, the laddered stockings of ladies in the community - for use by poor refugees in Korea following the Korean War. One thousand, five hundred pairs of nylons were shipped off to Korea.

We gathered together food parcels for poor families, organised youth working bees to do the gardens, mow the lawns, clean the houses of the aged and frail in the community. The young people met together for working bees where we mass produced wooden toys which were assembled, sanded and painted for distribution to the Royal Childrens Hospital.

Probably the most difficult task we ever undertook was to convince about thirty women in the Christian Womens Fellowship, mainly elderly and conservative country women, to attend regularly a ballroom dancing session in a locked ward of fifty men in the Aradale Mental Hospital. Most of these unshaven, rambling and disorientated men had told me that what they missed more than anything else was the opportunity to dance with a woman. I tell you I led some trembling and very frightened women into afternoon ballroom dancing in the Mental Hospital, to the accompaniment of

78 records on a wind up gramophone. But the church was committed to the community and proclaiming the Word of Jesus Christ and doing deeds of helpfulness to people.

We loved the work. We worked hard every day. Living next door to the church, the church became an extension of our family life. There was no such thing as working hours. The day started when Selly the chook man would arrive in our house at six in the morning, walking in the back door calling out that it was time we got him a cup of tea and that he had been up for hours before delivering his day old chickens to the railway over the road from the manse - and it continued non-stop until the last teenager had been dropped off at home following a youth club at night, or we had gotten home from speaking at the Rotary Club or Lions or women's Penguin Group. There were no weekends off and in fact, no day off at all. We worked seven days a week for sixteen or more hours a day. There were no union regulations or rules and we put in a hundred hours a week every week.

Looking back, it all seems rather exhausting especially as I read an article in the press entitled 'The Human Dynamo' which outlined my activities. It was exhausting but with great highlights and much enjoyment. For almost fifty years I worked one hundred hours a week and my wife made it possible by joining in what I was doing on top of caring for our home and children.

As a young country parson I had met a host of characters around the gateway to the Wimmera. They were interesting characters who were going to stay as part of my life. I would never forget the stories concerning these people and I wrote them in my diaries. There was Ballarat Bertie, the drunken steam train driver, and Keith the fireman who played a dreadful prank upon him the night he went to sleep when he was bringing the steam train into Ararat. There was Tom Varney, the criminally insane prisoner in J Ward, who today is a businessman of some standing on the Gold Coast, and Lyall and Ross Knudson, the bachelor brothers who had fought for forty years and who each ran one half of the Ararat General Providore. There was Hans Joseph Schmidt who used to collect all the waste from behind the hotels and restaurants and boil it up to make Smitty's Soup for Geoff Judd's pigs. Rabbito Bill who used to eradicate the rabbits on the farms for a living but always made sure he left the young ones in the warren to ensure he had a good crop next year. There was Chook Head Clarrie who chopped the huge tree down that had grown too close to his house only to see it fall the wrong way and totally demolish his house. There was Big Mumma Bertha who came into town with some good time girls for the truck drivers, but who was run out of town by Eugene Horton and the Ararat Players who were rehearsing "Annie Get Your Gun".

I have retained a lifelong friendship over those years with the Methodist Minister Rev. Geoffrey Stanton Crouch who once went to revive faith in a lapsed Methodist family only to get bogged on their farm and to have his car ruined and then discover that the family had been visited by me the

week earlier and had been baptised and come into membership of the Church of Christ and yet who loved me with openness and magnanimity. There was Captain David A.J. Wilson. the Salvation Army officer with whom I preached in the open air and who received a surprise Christmas gift which was eventually discovered as the stolen Christmas lunch from the Anglican vicar, and Chris Fisher the journalist who helped me immensely by writing hundreds of articles about our ministry and outreach.

I'll never forget Old Dr. Gwen who wore a man's army overcoat and boots as she made her rounds among the farms and cared for the poor people in the community, and the Wheatons who ran the Miram Country Store, or Frank Gason who rode into Ararat on a pushbike and who became Australia's largest tractor cabin manufacturer and who was to become Australia's sixth largest car manufacturer.

A host of people in that country town played a part in our lives. Young people like Marilyn Duffy who ran off to Adelaide with the travelling salesman and poor Plain Jane who had a difficult task living with a fashion plate mother, and Harry Riley the insurance man who taught me more lessons about successful pastoral care than anybody.

But above all, there were friendships that made a difference to our lives. There was Ron Johnson, the train controller who became a dear friend, Loy Fleming the cow cocky who taught me to divine water and a hundred other lessons that every young minister should know, and dear Geoff Judd whose farm became our second home and whose death upon his tractor robbed me of the closest male friend I ever had in adult life.

One of the greatest joys of being a country parson was to spend time with Ken Sellwood as he discussed with me the call to ministry and then, a year later, to send him off to Theological College duly candidated for training for the ministry. Our joy was to turn to sadness one year later when, as a young student minister returning from a Sunday congregation, Ken's motor bike skidded in the rain and he was killed. The church was packed once more, this time in sadness as we laid his young body to rest in the Ararat Cemetery.

Another joyful memory was sitting down with John and Margaret Boatman, young farmers with a young family of Methodist background to discuss with them the implications of training for the ministry and turning their back upon the country family property. I encouraged them to enter Queens College and train for the Methodist ministry and John Boatman became a highly regarded Uniting Church minister.

A Suburban Minister.

I was 25 years of age when the time came for me to leave that ministry in the country. We had set our sights on America but the arrival of first born son, Peter, and the gradual involvement in the community of pastoral care dimmed the vision of further graduate study and at a time when the vision was most vulnerable, the Conference of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania decided that rather than risk a promising young minister by allowing him to go overseas, they would organise a significant call to ministry that was bound to keep him in this country.

And so I received an enquiry to see if I would become senior minister at the Cheltenham Church of Christ, one of the largest congregations of the denomination in Australia. The church was already 110 years old and had fine property and large congregations. The heavy word was placed upon me that I should not reject this call.

However, the desire for further graduate study was still strong and so I rejected the call, planning instead to leave the following January for America. A second time a letter of request came and this time with a greater note of urgency indicating that the strategic significance of placing a young man into such a large and significant pulpit.

Beverley and I decided we should at least listen to what they had to say. We agreed to meet half way between Ararat and Cheltenham, Victoria, and meet with the Parish Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman. They had done their homework well. We met at a motel and they had a book of clippings from newspapers with headings like "Dynamic Young Minister To Leave Ararat" and "Youth Loses A Great Friend". Another full page article was headed "A Man Who Made News Everywhere" and other newspaper and magazine cuttings were headed "Moyes Regrets His Ministry Here Was Only Temporary" and "Church Of Christ Led To Grow As Never Before".

They had more statistics and background information on me than I ever imagined. My new friends shared in convivial conversation as we ate together in a fine restaurant and then sat down around a table to listen to what they had to say about the call to a new ministry. Everything they had to say about the church and the challenge that was there before us excited us. It seemed that God was opening up for us a new direction - not in Indianapolis but in Cheltenham, Victoria.

As we left the congregation's three representatives holding their formal invitation in our hands we started on the road back to Ararat to think over this new change in our direction and challenge to continued ministry in this country. But, had we known what would happen next we may have had different thoughts. For during the two weeks I indicated I would like to think and pray with my wife about this new call, I visited Melbourne and took the opportunity to call in on the present minister

who was in his sixteenth year of service. He was a man I had admired greatly from a distance. A former missionary and a man of great statesmanship, he had been President of the denomination and was regarded as one of the finest preachers in the country. He was now in his early sixties and at the height of his powers.

I called upon him, paid my respects and asked if him if I could find out some details about the church and especially, when he expected to be vacating the parsonage. "Leave the manse?" He looked at me through his rimless spectacles, "I didn't know I was leaving either the manse or this church!" I suddenly realised that while we had been talking to the Chairman, the Secretary and the Treasurer of the Church Board they had not spoken to their existing minister. An awful wave of regret and dismay swept over me. I immediately left the situation with our questions unasked and wrote a letter declining the offer and breaking off all negotiations. As it happened, some weeks later the incumbent minister decided to resign and left the church without ministry and now, for the third time, came an invitation from this church.

To go or not to go, that was the question. It was the question that Beverley and I and our two young children pondered as we drove back towards Ararat. It would be a turning point in our ministry and a move from being a country parson to a suburban minister.

Funerals.

A minister has stories to tell about conducting funerals. I have conducted funerals for more than a thousand diseased persons, visiting the homes of the grieving families.

Consider the problem that ministers and undertakers have when, in the middle of the flood area, they have a burial in a cemetery. The Ararat cemetery was built down by the Ararat creek.

When the Ararat creek flooded most of the cemetery went under water. One morning I was burying a former patient from the Aradale Mental Hospital. These were government funerals known as "pauper" funerals. The deceased had no known relatives and consequently the funeral was put on early in the morning so as not to interfere with more important funerals that would be conducted later in the day. Only the undertaker, his driver, the grave digger and the minister would be present. On such occasions the minister and the grave digger would lend a hand in carrying the simple pine box in which the poor deceased's body lay.

Even though there was no one present I always gave that funeral the same service as I would for anyone else, except when it came to the eulogy there was usually no information known about the

person other than what I could find upon the card of admittance. As many of the people I buried had been in the Aradale Mental Hospital for 30 or 40 years and as the details of their admissions during the 1930's were very sketchy there was virtually nothing I could say. However, I always gave the deceased a full Christian burial, talking about the Christian hope of resurrection for those who had faith, and of emphasising the inherent dignity and worth of each human being in the eyes of God, even though this person had been mentally defective and probably did not even know their own name. The undertaker got very impatient with my full service. He wanted a quick job.

One such morning, early, Mr. Dunne and his driver were carrying the pine casket towards the place of the burial. When we stopped Mr. Dunne said irreverently, "Oh God, look at that grave. It is full of ruddy water." Since the grave digger had finished his job last night, the water had seeped through the sodden earth and filled the grave to the top. Mr. Dunne, with the coffin perched on one shoulder, looked at me. "If you don't mind, Rev.," he said, "I want to get this box in as soon as possible. Otherwise we are going to have problems." I did not mind so we had the committal first and then I conducted the service.

As soon as he and the driver put the coffin into the water filled grave I understood his problem: it floated! As it is very hard to bury a floating coffin, Mr. Dunne and the grave digger standing by, Old Busby, a grizzly alcoholic looking fellow with a big bushy beard and the most incredible amount of dirt always on his person and clothes, started shovelling shovelfuls of wet clay on top of the coffin. When enough clay was piled on top of the coffin, it very slowly slid down into the water. Satisfied Mr. Dunne and Old Busby stood back and I went on with the service.

I said some prayers and quoted the great verses about Christ being the resurrection and the life. I read the 23rd Psalm and then some passages from the 19th Psalm which seemed appropriate to this poor person. I had just reached the point of our Lord talking in John 14, when I read the words "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. For I go to prepare a place for you." Immediately I said the words "Prepare a place for you" from the water beneath my feet, deep from the bottom of the grave, came the unmistakable sound of "blurple" and a large bubble came to the surface. It was then followed with another "blurple" and "blurple". Then a whole stream of bubbles came up to the top of the water.

Suddenly I had a picture of poor old John in the coffin below affirming his faith in the words I had just said. Old Busby started to laugh but I was determined to keep my dignity and give the poor deceased a proper burial. Mr. Dunne the undertaker was standing in his best black clothes trying to keep a straight face but every time I finished a sentence another three or four large bubbles would

reach the top of the surface and break. I could see I wasn't going to win. I've got an idea that Old Busby and Mr. Dunne the undertaker had deliberately planned to get that coffin in first so that my sermon and service would be cut short on that cold winters morning by the bubbles which came to the surface. It certainly worked. I could not cope with the noise of the bubbles and finished up the service and left old Busby the job of filling in the flooded grave. Water in the country is essential to everything that happens. Some of the time there is just not enough of it and some of the time there is far too much of it. There certainly was that first day when I took a winter's funeral in the Ararat cemetery.

Sex Offenders. Probably the least liked people to come before a pastor are the community sex offenders.

At the bottom of the social ladder are sex offenders - especially those who offend against children. No one else in the community will talk to them. Yet like most sinners, they need to be counselled, helped and guided.

Whenever there is an offence against children by an adult, society closes ranks against that person. Sexual abuse against a child is unforgivable by those who have been hurt. Often the abuse upon a child is so traumatic not only for the child at that time who is robbed of his or her innocence and normal childhood growing, but it may also be long term and have a profound impact upon that persons ability to enter into a marriage or into a trusting relationship with another adult. All of us know the horrendous consequences of child abuse.

One of the things that came right into my face in the first months of being at Wesley Mission was the fact that when child abusers have finished their term in prison they discover themselves total rejects in society. They usually cannot go back to the place where they lived because the local population is very much up in arms against them. Slogans are spray painted on the front of their house, rocks are thrown through their windows and the people want the dirty pervert moved out.

Neither do former friends or business acquaintances want to have anything to do with the offender. So what does the offender do? Where do you go when there is absolutely nowhere to go to? I have known over the years a number of sex offenders against children to have committed suicide finding that death was preferable to living with guilt.

And some come to Wesley Mission. The first of many I met was in 1981 when a man, new to me, started attending our church services. Not only did he attend our church services but he also attended some of our volunteer functions. In the middle of Sunday afternoons he would always

come and help some of our volunteers set up tables for the LifeLine tea for the homeless we conduct every Sunday evening. It was obvious from just a simple conversation with him that he was a single and rather inadequate man. When I asked him about his work he told me that he was a manager of a video games centre which was attended by crowds of children but he refused to open it on a Sunday afternoon. I was rather cynical of this explanation. He believed that the work he was doing as a volunteer at Wesley Mission was far more important than making profits on a Sunday afternoon. After a couple of weeks he hinted to me that he would be happy at any time to be a helper at a youth camp that was coming up and also if we needed help in our Sunday School.

Red lights began to flash in my mind. I never allow men whom I do not know thoroughly to become involved in either youth camps or Sunday School teaching. I asked him to come and have a cup of coffee with me and we would talk about it.

I explained to him why I would not allow him to become involved in these two ways he had suggested. He looked at me with big open eyes “But I thought you knew me.... You’re a friendly person and I thought you would have recognised me. The fact that you spoke to me told me that you did know me and you were going out of your way to talk to me.”

I instantly knew there was a story attached to what he had to say and encouraged him to talk on. He was open and frank.

“I’m Hedley Smythe of Baulkham Hills you know - the Scout leader. In 1976, I was in all the newspapers. Don’t you remember it? I was one of the worst they ever caught. 87 counts against Scouts at camps. But I’m completely reformed now, I will never do it again. Can I stay and work here? I am a very experienced youth leader.”

I looked at him squarely “No I did not recognise you. I was only appointed to this position in 1977 and I guess that by then the scandal of your paedophile activities had been put behind by the community. And no, I will not allow you to work with any of our youth camps nor children nor Sunday School.”

He looked absolutely crest fallen. “Can I stay in the Mission?” I thought for a moment and then replied “You can stay coming to the Mission to the adult activities on these conditions; that I tell at least a dozen of our elders and leaders who you are and what your story is so that they can be on the lookout at all times. This is to protect our children and youth but it is also to protect yourself from getting into any compromising situations. And further I want you to come and see me at least once a

month just to have a chat and you can raise with me then any problems that may be coming up. If you do find that you're being overwhelmed by the old temptations I want you to ring me day or night. I will always spend time talking with you and together we will work them out. But I want you to understand this very clearly, for the sake of the children who are here and our young people and their parents, if I ever catch you talking to any child or young person then you will be barred from the Mission. There is no second chance. Do you understand?"

Hedley nodded, he promised me most sincerely that he would never again re-offend. He had learnt his lesson and his time in gaol had been so brutal and the beltings he had received from other prisoners had so penetrated his mind that he would never ever offend again.

We watched Hedley like hawks. It was quite sad really because apart from one or two of us who went out of our way to speak to him he developed no friends. In fact he found it very hard to relate with adults and we wouldn't allow him to relate with any children or young people.

As the years went by I gradually dropped off the appointments. Hedley came in and out of a service, shook hands with us, drew his heavy overcoat around him and walked out into Pitt Street. Over the years of talking with us, ours was the only place he could come and get a cup of tea and speak to at least two or three people.

I was wondering what we should do with Hedley some years ago when he took a stroke and he was placed in a nursing home. I still see him every now and again as Beverley and I attend the nursing home and take a service among all of the residents.

Adults who abuse children inflict terrible abuse upon their victims. The victim's whole life can be ruined by the physical and sexual abuse of some adult who had the child in their power. Those adults usually manipulate the minds of children so the child feels that if they are to say anything then they will be punished. Hedley has received severe punishment both from the community and from his own mind as well as what he suffered at the hands of other prisoners. But it is nothing compared to the suffering of the children he abused.

A few years ago another sex offender against a small girl came to my attention. When I first met him he was an unemployed homeless young fellow of about thirty years of age. Rufus was his name. He had been sleeping round the streets of Sydney for some time before he came into one of our centres. We found out over a period of time that Rufus had no family, at least no family that cared. We tried to trace down any known relatives but again we were unsuccessful. I always

regarded him as a very sad and sorrowful looking person. He somehow didn't belong to the homeless persons scene. He, like many of the homeless, was intellectually impaired and was quite slow. I always felt that if there was a mother or even some woman who cared for him then he would be a totally different person. But finding willing mothers to care for intellectually disabled homeless and unemployed people is very difficult. Rufus drifted in and out of our care over a period of years.

One day I was in one of our homeless persons centres I was having a cup of tea with a group of our clients. I noticed Rufus standing at the back of the group. He was handing out some sticky buns to people who had already got a cup of tea and I could tell within that fleeting moment that he was quite a different person. Leaving the people with whom I had been speaking, I caught up with Rufus as he did his rounds with the tray of sticky buns and started to ask him how he was getting on. He was almost totally different in his outlook. And that was because of a volunteer and his wife who came to our homeless persons centre. This couple were very fine Christian people who were wanting to help other people less fortunate than themselves in the heart of the city. They gave themselves to regular visitation of the homeless. Frequently they brought their three young children with them. The oldest was about 14. Wanting to do something more for one of these people the couple invited Rufus to go on a holiday with them down to the South Coast. They had hired a holiday house by the beach. And so Rufus joined the three kids and the volunteer couple in what must have been a wonderful holiday.....until it happened.

I heard the story from several sources and I don't know all the details. But apparently the adults asked the kids if they would be all right playing while they went up the street to do some shopping. The three kids were all busily occupied and Rufus stayed with them.

Their youngest child, a little girl went into the house. According to one of my sources, Rufus later said "We were playing hide and seek and she went and hid. I put my hand under the bed to see if she was there and I touched her down here". He pointed to his crotch. When the parents returned their daughter was very distressed. The oldest boy was having a great deal to say about Rufus. My understanding was that there was an indecent assault with Rufus touching the girl's panties but there was no penetration of the girl and no violence. Never the less the parents did what was right and reported the offence to the police thinking that the young man would be severely reprimanded, would be frightened by being detained in the police cell and that would be a good lesson for him.

Everything went wrong from that point on. The police charged him and received permission from a magistrate to detain him in the cell as he was a homeless person with no fixed address and it was feared that he would not return to the court. Someone contacted me and I sent one member of our

staff down to visit him in the cell and another member of staff to go to the family and provide them with comfort and whatever support they needed. The parents recognised the risk involved in volunteering and blamed themselves for leaving their children. The little girl, fortunately, showed no signs of continuing trauma.

My staff person was a well-experienced colleague and he like myself believed that Rufus would be brought before a magistrate, given a stiff lecture and then released into the care of Wesley Mission. We would have the job of overseeing him for probably six or twelve months.

I will never forget the time when my staff member came back from the day in court. "I can't believe it. The magistrate has sent him to gaol for fifteen months!" I couldn't believe it either. I had been to court hundreds of times during my early life as a parole and probation officer and I had never heard of a first offender being sent to jail for fifteen months on the matter of indecent assault. But the fact was Rufus was homeless. The magistrate apparently thought that a stiff prison sentence might bring him to his senses and stop him re-offending. There was no question that Rufus was guilty. The only question was what was the best punishment to fit that crime.

In this case I am glad to say that the little girl apparently suffered no ongoing trauma although I am always very slow to make that observation because sometimes the trauma does not come out until years later.

When Rufus went to gaol there commenced a series of unbelievable events. Often prisoners assault those whom they call 'rock spiders' who sexually abuse or assault little children. Sometimes the assaults are grievous.

Over the next few months as my colleague went and visited Rufus in a Wollongong Prison, I heard terrible stories of the assaults upon him. Rufus was an easy target. He was intellectually disabled, he offered no resistance and he couldn't fight back. I believe several men raped him. I was also told that on one of these occasions, to teach him a lesson, a steel pipe was forced up his anus into his bowel and a length of barbed wire was poked up through the centre of the pipe. The pipe was then withdrawn leaving the flesh to gather around the barbed wire. Any bowel motion would cause the barbed wire to tear into the wall of the bowel. It was barbaric treatment. Rufus was taken to surgery and took a long time to recover from his trauma.

He was released after about eight months and when we found him, shifted him into one of our community units. He was a trembling, shaking, thin weed of a man.

One day I thought I'd better catch up with Rufus. He had been on my mind ever since I had heard about his trauma inside the prison. I found out where in our units he was living and called in to see him.

He met me at the door of his unit having called out "Who's there?" several times. I had responded identifying myself and making sure he realised it was safe to open the door. The door was opened. There was Rufus thinner than ever with a straggly growth of beard around his face. He was walking with the aid of two aluminium sticks, the kind that grip your arm below the elbow.

He invited me in. He was very unsteady on his feet. One leg threw out sideways when he tried to walk and his arms seemed to be uncoordinated. It was just as if he was spastic. This was totally different to the last time I had seen him before he went to prison. Something happened to his brain. Some physical spasticity had set in. Maybe because of the bashing on his head in prison - I don't know. All that I do know is that Rufus will always be a victim. He is permanently crippled. His mind has been horribly scarred. I doubt if any treatment could make any difference to him. After a few years, I was not surprised to hear he jumped into the path of a train and was killed.

Sex offenders cause so much trauma and so much long term hurt to their victims that I have no hesitation in believing that they should be gaoled and should pay for their crimes. But our prison system doesn't seem to be the kind of gaol where these mentally sick people should be punished. When they are caught they also suffer much trauma and at the hands of the system their punishment is very severe.

Some people say that is the justice of God. It eventually catches up with them. They say "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small; although with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all!" I don't agree with that. But I do know that justice for the sex offender is usually long and hard and sometimes out of all proportion. When people offend everyone suffers.

Marriage.

I have stood before over two thousand individuals to declare them man and wife. Before the wedding service there was two or three sessions of helping them with details, counselling them to improve their chance of their marriage lasting, and counselling on difficulties they face. My experience usually cut through the difficulties and outstanding marriage services resulted. By teaching over a thousand teenagers each week at Cheltenham I was inadvertently allowing hundreds

of teenagers to get to know me, which led in turn them coming to me to marry them. Even late in life, as a parliamentarian, I am approached to marry, bury, counsel and conduct family celebrations of all kinds.

Beverley and I purchased a magazine “Marriage Works” edited by Jim and Grace Vine; to publish every three months by outstanding professionals to help thousands of young marrieds cope with the issues they face. This is a unique aid to improving marriage for thousands of couples.

One key function of a pastor is to be a priest on behalf of god’s people, especially in praying for them. Beverley and I have spent time praying together for our members, people in the public eye, and community leaders, as well as any known to us who are suffering or facing surgery. The role of an intercessor is one of our most important and consistent functions. Beverley’s prayer list and journal records our concerns and God’s answers to our intercessions.

Being a pastor opens people’s hearts and homes, and it is a great privilege to enter into both.