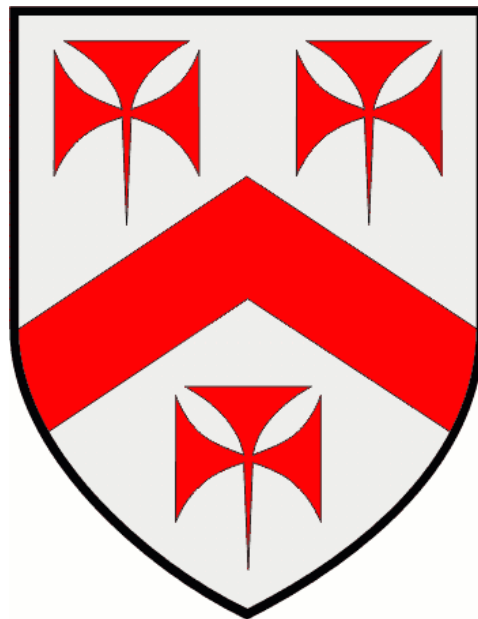


“DAVID”

**Hero, Seeker
Warrior,
Magician
Scholar**



Woodroffe

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Preface

Significant Archetypes for relevant for David

The following are the significant Archetypes I seem to have expressed in my life time. They are taken from “Awakening the heroes within” by Zen and “The art of making a living” by Laurence G Boldt. Calculated from the Myth index.

Archetype Score and Description

Warrior 27

Demanding, disciplined, hard working, Stoic cultures with a high premium on competitiveness. At best they band together to fight others. At worst, things break down into a brawl. The champion of the vision. He carries out the decisions of the Hero. He faces the blocks, fears and failures, opposes inner doubts and continues in spite of them.

Magician 27

Emphasis on empowering self and others in the context of mutuality between self and others, humankind and nature. Creative, transformative, rooted in connectedness. At worst, manipulative and out of balance.

Lover 26

Egalitarian, passionate, intense, placing high value on artistic expression, personal relationships and living well. High drama intensity and concern with the quality of life. At best, people feel good, have deep relationship and life is lovely. At worst, peace is shattered by bickering and undermined by submerged and acknowledged conflict.

Seeker 25

Also “The Hero”, “Dante” and “The Initiator, Decider”. The ambitious Seeker, planner and Hero decides the journey to be taken and the Warrior carries out the tasks. Very atomistic, individualistic. No one takes much responsibility for each other but everyone has a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. At best individuals find themselves. At worst they are all just very lonely.

Ruler 24

Emphasis upon governing, leading others and setting a good example.

Creator 23

High visionary, innovative culture in which the primary concern is what we are building together. Embracing imaginary power, being conscious of what your imagination is doing. At best the vision is actualised in some way. At worst, the desolation of the moment is excused by the great vision being realised some day.

Sage 22

High value on high mindedness. Authority earned by the attainment of greater wisdom or expertise. The old wise ones.

Innocent 22

Authorities honoured. High premium on following rules, traditions and value is placed on the culture of group good and not the individual good.

Fool 21

Cultures with emphasis on experience and on being fully alive, for its own sake. This is not motivated by achievement or material acquisition but rather by enjoyment, play and the fulfilment of the moment itself. Challenges are undertaken because they would be fun.

Caregiver 19

Everyone is expected to give unselfishly with no thought for their own welfare. At best this works and everyone is cared for. At worst everyone gives and gives and no one gets what they want because no one asks for what they want.

Orphan 16

People feel very fragile. At best people feel victimised but help each other At worst they victimise each other.

Summary

The Warrior is evident in most of my life, striving to carry out the decisions of the 'Seeker, Hero'. In the striving to educate myself and improve my abilities, "The Warrior" battles and strives to manifest my ambitions and to prosecute my ideas. His is the energy and aggression that perseveres and gets things done. He is my driver.

The Seeker or the Hero came into being at the end of my Evacuation stay at the Cheddar village, Somerset 1939. He took charge and has made decisions, plans and commitments regarding my life ever since. The Warrior fought to carry out each of the decisions and plans that were made.

The Magician and the Creator worked together and were the creative imagination and energy which I used in all my projects, experiments, training course and endeavours. He is also responsible for all my woodwork and wood turning activities.

The Ruler enabled me to lead, control and influence people involved in all my projects and organisations; Church; Samaritans; Training courses.

The fool is that part of me that takes pleasure in making things work and realising successful outcomes. He enjoys joking and taking the 'micky'.

The Caretaker surprisingly has a lower score than I would have expected. Not such a nice guy after all it seems and other motives and characteristics were at work. As seen above.

PART 1 Childhood

Chapter 1.

The beginning

When did I begin to 'Be me'? How far should I go back? When was the first intention for my Being created? Do I go as far back as the Big Bang or to the emergence of bacteria in the depths of the ocean? Or go back to the appearance of the first ape-man? It seems a bit ridiculous to go back that far. It would seem more sensible to consider conception or birth, but I would prefer to hypothesize before those events. So I think that I will settle for beginning at the time when my mother and father met at a dance in the Horfield Anglican Church parish hall one Saturday night. A courtship followed and they fell in love. Consequently they married on November 28th 1921 in Bishopston Parish Church, Bristol. Dad was 33 years old, ex soldier, a strong personality, working in the secure job of a postman. Mother was twenty-six, good looking and passionate and poor. She worked as a seamstress in a dressmaking shop in Whiteladies Rd, Clifton and looked after her widowed mother. Not long after the marriage they bought a house, No 73 Downing Rd, Horfie, Bristol and all three would have settled down there.

I consider it reasonable that my parents would have intended to have a child as soon as it was convenient. It was two years later they did but it wasn't me. In August 1923, Doreen was born. She was a much-wanted child and was greatly cherished by both Mother and Dad, although he seemed to spoil her, seeing her as 'the apple of his eye' and his 'princess'.

I like to think that they would have wanted another child and I suspect that Dad would have favoured a boy, having now had a little girl. I feel sure that my mother would have liked to have a boy child also. It was then another step towards me becoming an incarnate Being. However it was another four years before Mother successfully conceived again, which was in mid January 1927, and that tiny dot was me. She was 32 years of age and at that time she may have given up hope of having another baby by then. Most women in the 1930s would have had their family by the age of thirty. Also

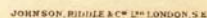
both Mother and Father would have been aware of the weak condition of her heart which she suffered from, and the dangers a pregnancy posed. That awareness may have inhibited successful conception during those four years. I sense that the news of her pregnancy may have been a surprise and caused her some alarm. A psychic healer I saw some years ago informed me that my mother feared another pregnancy and it was several weeks before she came to accept it and welcomed the reality of having another baby. She got over her anxiety and subsequently looked forward to my arrival.

She was then overjoyed when I arrived safely at 4.25 am on October 20th 1927.



David Charles Woodroffe

Again, from the psychic healer, I gather that my mother was put in danger of serious heart failure by the process of delivery and the medical staff had to give her emergency attention. Meanwhile, having been delivered, I was left unattended for an unspecified period of time until she was out of danger. I was left isolated, wet, and very cold and severely stressed by the time the attention came back to me. I had entered the world





Well, it's a Good Life

The only other situation I am aware of has come from general talk. That was that I suffered nasal congestion to the extent that I was unable to feed properly. It was a difficult time for my mother and myself. I had to have an operation after a few months to remove bone and clear the passage. However I always had a congested nose and never breathed through it properly. I subsequently had a series of operations when I was a boy of 9 or 10 but they never cleared the passages effectively. Only later in life was I able to breathe through my nose properly; even then, only some of the time! On the other hand Life was very good and I was a much loved and happy childhood.



Doreen at 4yrs old and myself at 8 months



Dad holding me, with my cousin and Doreen



In the back garden.



Doreen doing her bit.



Now aged five.

I have only one memory of my mother and that is indistinct. I was about 4 years of age when my father took me down into the Market Street in town, to see the shops at Christmas time. I found it very exciting and can just remember lots of horses and carts,

cars and buses all in a big jumble. I also remember a lighted shop window on a steep lane which had an electric train running around. It was a great trip and we enjoyed it immensely. As a result we came home very late; in fact after dark. My mother was very angry with him for keeping me out so late and she chided him severely. Apart from that incident, I have no mental images of her, or of life as a small boy. My sister tells me that my mother and I shared a very close bonding and a loving relationship over which Doreen was quite jealous. I sense that we did have a very sensuous, fun-loving relationship in which we emotionally depended on each other deeply. Thus was the beginning of the being which is me. Much of it, I can only surmise, but to me it feels true. The rest of my story - the development of my "Being me" is an eventful one and I like to think an interesting one.

Chapter 2

Mother



May Woodroffe, Wife and Mother.



Mother was a good looking woman, the daughter of William Goodridge, gardener, and Mary Ann, previously Porter. At the time when my father met her, her father had died and she was looking after her mother. She was a seamstress in a workroom in Whiteladies Rd. She was a bright person with a keen sense of fun. She was a bit puritanical and rigid in her attitudes but a very caring person. She loved Doreen and gave us a warm and cheerful environment. The relationship between myself and her was particularly close with lots of play and fun. Although in later years, because she suffered a heart condition which caused her to be exhausted, she was not always there for us.

And then, she just disappeared. Gone. She was no longer there. At one time she was there, loving, attending, laughing and scolding. And then she was not there, gone, not present. There were no goodbyes, messages or any communications of any kind from her that I can remember. I was five and three quarters at the time.

"Mummy has gone to hospital" I was told. I do remember being taken there with my aunt and grandma but I was not allowed in and was kept outside on the hospital lawn bench with my grandma Woodroffe. I remember struggling with her to go in to see Mother, but with no success. I do have a very vague half memory of white sheets and a bed with a person in it but I have difficulty in connecting this with my mother. It could have been the case that I was taken in to see her but the memory has been erased.

She died from Auricular Fibrillation following the birth of a baby girl. This was a condition, which was the result of rheumatic fever she had when she was a child. The fever had damaged a valve in her heart from which she suffered from time to time, all her life. She had struggled with this condition for five days before it killed her on the eighteenth day of September 1933. She was 38 years of age and had been married 12 years. The baby named Margaret died eight days later from being premature, (born in the eighth month).

During the birth and the following five days before her death, one wonders what she would have been thinking about. Mother would have been going in and out of consciousness and would have been in considerable discomfort. I surmise that she would have been quite anxious and fearful when awake. She would have, no doubt,

been concerned for Doreen and me, Dad and the new baby. As time went on she may have had a sense of impending death and gone through intense grieving over that and for those she was leaving behind. I can only imagine what a painful and a tragic situation that was for her and Dad. It seems such an awful tragedy and I can understand the desolation felt by both her and Dad. My father may also have felt extremely guilty for allowing a pregnancy to take place. It would have been quite a traumatic time for Dad, Grandma Woodroffe, Aunt Ada and, of course, for Mill, Mother's close friend. I don't think that Mother had any relatives at that time. Her mother who had lived with us at the beginning of the marriage had died several years earlier. I was not privy to any their discussions or feelings over the situation nor did I go to the funeral or told about it. I cannot remember anyone talking to me about any of the details until much later, even then only in a casual manner. None seemed satisfactory nor were they able to fill the emptiness of our lives. We were very unhappy children.

After it was all over, Grandma Woodroffe came to stay in order to look after my sister who was four years older and myself. Apparently that arrangement did not last long as my father was too bad tempered with her, so she left and went back home. I was then sent to stay with Aunt Sally and Bert, her husband. I think he was my Mother's uncle. They were a warm and earthy couple and gave me the security and support I needed at that time. The husband was a garbage collector working with horse and cart. He was a rough, cheerful character who took delight in teaching me a few swear words. They had a grown-up daughter with a small baby whom she fed to my fascination, whenever she visited. Nothing was said about Mother during my stay at the Goodridge's home. I assumed that Mother was still in hospital.

However, I remember some weeks later when I returned home from the stay with my Aunt Sally, asking Dad about Mummy coming back. It was while I was kneeling by the bed to say our prayers that I asked him the question.

"When is mummy coming home?"

His reply was that she was not coming home.

"Why?" I asked.

"She has gone to live with Jesus in heaven" he said.

"Why has she gone to live with Jesus?"

Why can't she come back home"? I insisted.

"Well, Jesus needs her and wants her to live with him in heaven".

I was not satisfied with this reply and continued to remonstrate with him although I cannot remember what I said. I think it was along the lines of

When she has finished being with Jesus will she come back then?"

The answer was "No, now hop into bed and go to sleep".

I was not satisfied but my father was obviously not going to continue the discussion.

"Get into bed and go to sleep", he said

I cannot recall crying or being greatly distressed but rather stoically putting up with the situation which was out of my hands.

The reality was that my mother went into hospital to give birth to a baby and had died several days after delivery. The baby also died a week later. Neither Doreen nor I saw Mother in hospital nor did we receive any messages from her. I assume now that she was suffering severely from the heart problem, going in and out of consciousness and therefore unable to communicate. When my sister and I came back home I am not sure how we survived, as my father, being a postman, had to go to work at 5 am every morning. He would come home about 3.0 o'clock in the afternoon. I recall that we did have a series of ladies who came in daily and looked after us.



*Omelia Hilda Millard, Stepmother and May Goodridge, Mother
Both good long term work friends*

Eventually nine months later Dad married again to Mother's best friend, 'Omelia Hilda Millard, aged 40 years. She was a tall, thin, gaunt person. Although she was not very cuddly she cared for us deeply, looked after us well and brought stability into our lives. She was very fond of both Doreen and I and committed her life to looking after us. Our lives, as a result, became steady and more normal again. Aunty Mill brought order and care into the home.

I had no knowledge of the funeral and the whereabouts of the grave was not discussed with me until I was much older. We were also not party to the wedding of my father and Aunt Mill. She seemed to have just arrived. Deaths, funerals and weddings, etc were not discussed with small children in those days. Children were not thought to have opinions or feelings on such matters. They were thought to be too young to understand or know anything.

Just before the marriage of my father to my stepmother, she and I were sitting on the back garden wall discussing whether I should call her “Mother” or just “Aunty”. She had asked me what I wanted to call her. I said that I did not want to call her ‘Mummy’. I realized by then that Mummy was not coming back, so after further discussion it was agreed that I should call her ‘Aunty Mill’. It was a title which I used from thereon. I cannot remember feeling pain over the loss of my mother although I would get into a state of rage and misery from time to time. It was much to the exasperation and bewilderment of all around me. I believe, however, that I had split off all memory and associations regarding my mother. I lived life from there on as if I had come late in attendance at a film show; that I had arrived well after the beginning and therefore had no knowledge of what had gone before. To this day I can look at her photograph for as long as I like, but nothing stirs in my memory regarding her.

Apart from this conversation with my stepmother, little or no reference was made to my mother from there onwards. Nor did I consciously think of her either until my thirties when I made attempts to remember and learn more about her. My father was reluctant to talk about her and it was not until 40 years later did I gain more information from my sister. Nevertheless I believe that the whole event of Mother disappearing was quite traumatic for me. No memory of her seems to have survived into later life. It would seem that the pain of the event was so severe that the mind had split it off and suppressed it. All I have is a reconstructed knowing of her from information gleaned from what others say. However, I have two letters written by Mother to my sister when she was on holiday at the age of 8 years with Aunty Mill. I treasure these. My own intuition and my imagination also make up images and impressions regarding her from these letters.

The consequences for me were lasting. Initially the effect upon my schooling, which I began just after at the age of six, was destructive. I gave little attention to the subjects and made little progress in the first two years. Hence I developed an educational deficiency and feel I never have enough. There are other long term consequences which I will discuss later.

Chapter 3

School Days

I was close on five and three quarter years of age in 1932, when my mother took me to the Ashley Down primary school in Downend Rd, Horfield, Bristol. There followed two years in a mixed primary school, run by women and for which I have little memory. Although I do recall that the head mistress was a dragon and I disliked her intensely; Then there was the period of seven years in the Secondary Boy's school, which was ruled by men. The school complex is still there and is still in use as a centre of education.



It was built in about 1918. 'Both boys and girls' schools consisted of tall single-story classrooms, surrounding a hall. They were made of red brick and had sloping grey slate roofs. Adjacent was a couple of acres of tar macadam play ground. This had a high wall across it separating the girls from the boys. At the top of the boys' playground were the toilets.

The school was only a third of a mile along the same road in which I lived, so it was an easy walk to school each day and convenient for coming home for lunch.



My house was the second along from the left, 500 metres from the school

There were certainly no cars parked on the road side in my childhood days and the road seemed a very wide expanse use mainly by buses which rattled the doors as they went passed.

I can well remember playing many games, some quite rough, in that playground. One of them was called 'weak horses'. It involved three boys bent over and linked one behind the other, with the front boy holding on to the railings. "Other bys" jumped on their backs until the ones underneath weakened or collapsed. The challenge was to see which team could carry most. We played before school started and also in the morning and afternoon breaks. Amongst other activities was the marble season and then following that were the seasons of the knucklebones, tops, soccer, catching and weak horses. There was a small amount of bullying and frequent fights, both friendly and serious. Most times there was a teacher in attendance mainly to see that we didn't kill each other. After eight years I came out of the system with a basic knowledge of arithmetic, reading and writing, a list of history dates which I could hardly remember, a basic idea of where most countries were and a dislike of school. The day started with assembly which meant that the whole school of boys assembled in the hall. We then sang a song or a hymn

followed by a reading from the Bible and notices for the day. We then filed off to our classes, usually about 25 – 30 to a class. We sat at desks which were plain tops with a shelf underneath. On top on the right was the ink well, a little pot of blue ink. We wrote with steel nibs which could double as darts, although if caught brought a punishment of the cane. The class periods were about three quarters of an hour each and at mid morning we had a play time where we were let loose in the playground for 20 minutes doing whatever we liked.

At 12 o'clock we had an hour and a quarter for lunch which we called Dinner. Dinner was called Tea Time. I used to go home for dinner, which was only a quarter of a mile along the same road.

My happiest times were when school was over for the day and at weekends. I was not bothered. It was a system in which I was continually at the bottom of the class and seemingly dumb. It was a system which was punitive and not very helpful towards those who, like me, did not try very hard to learn. Having to do Lines was both a way of teaching and of punishment. Writing outdates or a statement which I should have learned 30 times or 'I must not whisper in class' 50 times was a common punishment. The standard punishment for misbehaviour was a dreaded two to five strokes of a two foot long cane across the open hand. Ten strokes was the punishment for serious offences, such as fighting or sneaking off to the sweet shop opposite the school during class, under pretext of going to the toilet, you were often then referred to the headmaster. He caned you on the buttocks -quite hard. I am afraid that I didn't care about studying for most of the time. That was a mistake. I confess that was inattentive, misbehaved and came in for more than my share of the cane. However I did find a niche in doing woodwork which I enjoyed and was reasonably good at.

On the whole I was a bane to the school masters and a great disappointment to my father who was always upset by my annual school reports which were invariably bad. My excuse for being a failure as a student, on reflection, has always been the influence of my mother's death at the beginning of the first year at school when I was a month off six years of age. The trauma upset my ability to be an effective student so that I fell behind and never caught up. My reaction was to give up, not to care and retreat into

indifference concerning education. This didn't change until the age of 12, when I returned from my evacuation to Cheddar during the war.

Chapter 4

Evacuation

Crisis and turning point

War with Germany began in September 1939. Immediately there was fear by the British Government concerning the effect of German arial bombing upon the people. No country had experienced concentrated bombing of its cities before. The great fear was the number of casualties, which may occur and the impact upon the children of Britain. A major evacuation programme from the large cities and centres of industrial significance was put into action. Initially it was concentrated on sending children to Canada. My parents decided to put my name down for this programme of evacuation. However, the sinking of one of the first ships carrying many children by German U-boats early in the war stopped that plan.

It was now decided to pursue with more vigor a plan that was already in operation. This was to send city children into the English countryside. A mass evacuation of the schools in city areas was implemented.

My school, Ashley Down Council School, in Horfield, Bristol was one of them. On a sunny day in May 1940, the whole school, (some 200 kid) were packed into a number of double decker buses and off we went to the village of Cheddar, in Somerset, about 40 miles from Bristol. Each of us had a suitcase with all we needed for an indefinite stay in the country. We were all in a holiday mood, excited and looking forward to the prospect. I cannot remember any one distressed by the knowledge of leaving home. Perhaps it was because we did not realise that we were not coming back. Certainly I was excited and looking forward to what seemed to be an adventure.

When we arrived we were allotted our new homes amongst the willing and sometimes not so willing villagers. I and another boy somewhat smaller than me named Trevor were billeted in a very nice large house with large garden on the outskirts of the village. Both of us were overawed by the size of the house and it's plush interior. We were shown to our room, which was large, carpeted, with a double bed and furnished with a

nice wardrobe and dressing table. Neither of us had experienced such luxuries as carpets and wardrobes at our own homes. Neither had we known such posh toilets, indoor and upstairs.

Our hosts were Mr & Mrs Butcher who seemed to adjust well to having a couple of 12-year-old boys from a working class town suburb dumped on them. Mr Butcher was the manager at the local limestone quarry both he and his wife gave us a warm welcome. He was a big man, dressed in a smart suit and spoke to us in a quiet voice. We didn't see much of him at all during our stay. His wife was large and bosomy, pleasant and exercised a fairly strict discipline over our lives in the house. Trevor and I slept together in the large bed. We were told how to use the facilities properly and that we were expected to eat in the kitchen with the housemaid. She was a plump young girl of about 16 and it fell to her lot to look after us. She did this well in addition to doing all the housework and a lot of the cooking. She fed us and made sure we were cared for, clean and presentable. She seemed to take great delight in bathing us twice a week and washing us in the bath with a flannel, an action to which we reacted with giggles and much splashing. We were too young to pay much attention to this but I remember that she was fun. On Sundays we had to go to church and also to Sunday School, which was boring. But there was no escape. We saw little of Mrs Butcher except when we did something wrong and hardly anything of Mr Butcher. We had considerable freedom to explore our surroundings and spent time wandering around the famous Gorge and the river. Being summertime the weather was mostly fine and sunny and I felt that the countryside was so beautiful, it was magic. There was so much green country and farm animals to see and so many places to explore and things to do. Cheddar is a small village nestling at the foot of the Mendip hills about 40 miles from Bristol. It was and still is known for its scenic gorge and caves. It also had a stream flowing through the village, an old stone church and it was quite pretty. I took great delight in trying to fish but with no success. The Gorge was another attraction. It was about 3 miles long coming from the top of the hills down to the village, becoming deeper as it neared the bottom. The sides varied from 400 feet of sheer rock, to grassy slopes and rocky outcrop. There were several caves on the sides of the Gorge, which proved to be a fascination to my friends and myself. We were inveterate explorers and had a great time climbing the sides of the gorge and investigating the caves. They were quite scary and we didn't

venture far into any of them. We had a great time. It was like being on a long holiday. My parents and home were not very much in my mind at all.

School was no problem. To start with I just didn't go. I spent time fishing or pretending to fish for trout with a stick and a bent pin. I was exploring the Gorge and other parts of the countryside. However I must have felt that I should be at school as one day I climbed the school wall to see what the kids inside were doing. I was seen by the teacher, caught and deftly sat at a desk. But life at school was quite pleasant. The teachers were women and much less strict than the men in school at home. I remember one sunny day the teacher took us outside the school to sit under the trees. She was reading us some stories. But I was more impressed by the beauty of that warm summer's day, the buzzing of the insects and the country scene in the background. It was bliss.

I can also have images of willow trees by the little streams and hedges which separated the green meadows and yellow wheat fields stretching beyond. It was a magic time. But this wonderful holiday but couldn't last and it didn't.

One day a couple of months after we had arrived, Mrs Butcher announced that we would be going to another family to stay. Both Trevor and I were upset and wondered why. I can't remember the reason, but they obviously no longer wanted to look after us. They had done their bit for the evacuees. I was sent to a home where there were several children belonging to the parents. It was crowded and after the luxury of the Butchers seemed grotty and depressing. The boys about 10 and 12 didn't like me very much and I was harassed. I was not happy. In fact I was plunged into a bad state of anxiety and was very miserable. Despite how Mr and Mrs Taylor tried to comfort me, I was not able to overcome my feeling of desolation. The anxiety and state of dread into which I had fallen was too terrifying for me to cope with. After about 5 days I decided that I would go home to my parents. The Taylors agreed to write to my parents and ask them to come and pick me up. However that was not soon enough for me and I said that I wanted to cycle home now. I was used to cycling with my friends to Weston Super Mare and Clevedon which were seaside resorts on the Severn 'Estuary. These were distances of 20 and 10 miles respectively. So one morning, despite the Taylor's misgivings and protests, I set off with my suitcase somehow strapped on my bicycle I determinedly set

off for Bristol which was 35 odd miles away. I must have known the way or was able to follow the road signs enough to make the journey successfully. By the late afternoon, much to my parents and sister's surprise I arrived on their doorstep. They were of course delighted to see me. They accepted my explanation for leaving Cheddar and the description of how I felt with no argument. They were bemused and perhaps a little proud by my ability to do the trip on a bicycle unaided.

I slipped back into the usual life at home very quickly. I went back to school the next day to find that nearly all the children who had been evacuated had already returned home. They cheered when I entered the classroom.

However I did not slip back into my usual life at school. Something in me had changed. The recent experience of anxiety and dread had triggered off a deep feeling of insecurity and disconnectedness. I felt that I wasn't important and that I was a no-body and ill equipped to cope with the world. I found that I was no longer satisfied with being near the bottom of the class as I had always been. I was concerned about my schooling, no longer seeing it as a waste of my time and an interference with my playing. I was concerned about the future, something I had not been bothered about for most of my twelve and three quarter years. I now worried about my future and who I was going to be and what I was going to do in life. As a result I decided to do something about it. I was now anxious to learn. I began to pay attention and started to ask questions and respond to the demands of the teachers. I made a determined effort to catch up on all those years of falling behind. It was a forlorn task and one of the teachers, realising what I was doing, made efforts to help me. I never did catch up before I left school at fourteen to go into the post office as a telegram boy.

The evacuation experience resulting in the anxiety and state of dread at the end had triggered off a major change in my life. The resultant attitude towards taking my studies and life more seriously never left me. I was imbued with an internal driver to learn, improve, be somebody and be secure. It has stayed with me for the whole of my life from then on. It drove me to study and to catch up all through my teenage years. It has driven me to obtain three Degrees and to achieve significant successes in several areas of my life and in society, which I will write about later. It still drives me now to fill my days with activity and in this new writing career on which I am now embarking. This had to be

done by studying at home after work each day for years later. It still drives me now to fill my days with activity and in this new writing career on which I am now embarking. Gaining an adequate education was begun later when I was 15, through buying learning books and studying at home so that I could sit for Matriculation. I attended night school studying electrical engineering, geometry and maths. My drive to educate myself and enter the world of learning and be somebody of worth has been with me ever since.

Chapter 5

Entering the World of Work

Leaving school at the age of fourteen seemed the most natural thing to do, especially as I didn't like school at all. My last term was at the end of December, 1941. I had been attending the local Council School, which gave the most elementary and basic education system of the time – arithmetic, reading and writing, geography, history and woodwork.

My father was a postman which was a safe job and which he was able to get after the end of World War 1. It saw him and the family safely through the Depression of 1933 which was economically a devastating time for many people. A safe job was therefore of primary importance. He was still concerned over job security in 1941. He consequently advised me to go into the Postal Service whose major criterion was its security. I had neither ambitions nor inclinations for anything else and I allowed him to enter me as a Telegram Boy.

I began work just before Christmas from an office in the district of Southmead. I cycled to the office each day, which was about three miles from home over the hill through Horfield Common and down into the district of Southmead. I was given the heaviest bicycle I had ever seen. It must have been made of lead and was most uncomfortable to ride. I soon dumped the official bike and used my own. I had a pouch to hold the telegrams on a belt around my waist and an armband to signify that I was an official Telegrams Boy. Telegrams were telephone messages sent to the nearest Post Office of the recipient and then written on special forms. Telegram boys delivered them to the various customers. At Christmas time there were specially decorated forms and these were a popular form of greetings. As my employment began just before Christmas I was kept very busy up to and during Christmas Day. Whatever the weather, we were required to deliver. Cycling kept me warm enough, even on very cold and frosty days, and I enjoyed the times when it snowed. I found cycling particularly exciting and thrilling as I would slip and slide through falling snow and sometimes unceremoniously come off the bicycle. My body had resilience then, which I certainly don't have now!

I remember one accident, which occurred late one rainy afternoon on the way home from work. The area was out of my way and it was raining hard and getting dark. I was all clumbered up, wearing my oilskin waterproofs. When it rained I would gear up in waterproof oilskin leggings and a cape which came over the handlebars. If the weather was really bad I would wear a Sou'western hat which was a seaman's hat. This get-up kept me mostly dry, but it was very cumbersome to wear and took up space in the saddle bag at all times. When it rained I would gear up in waterproof oilskin leggings and a cape which came over the handlebars. If the weather was really bad I would wear a Sou'western hat which was a seaman's hat. This get-up kept me mostly dry, but it was very cumbersome to wear and took up space in the saddle bag at all times. I was very angry at having to deliver a telegram on my way home. I rode fast. When I came close to an intersection, a voice within me said: "You will smash into someone if you are not careful. Slow down". I ignored the voice and within seconds, with a grinding crunch, I went into the side of another cyclist coming through the intersection. We sprawled across the wet road - bicycles, waterproofs and bodies intermingling in a tangled mess. Fortunately no one was hurt and there was no damage to the bicycles. After listening to a tirade of abuse from the other cyclist, I made a humble apology and we went our differing ways. Mine was a much slower and cautious one, feeling very grateful that the accident had not been worse than it was. Since then I have never forgotten the incident and that voice of premonition. I most often will heed it whenever I've heard it since.

.My time at the Post Office was only about five months. I was fed up with the boring limited scope of the job. Seeing that I was so unhappy at the Post Office, my father found another job for me. This time it was in the wholesale grocery business. It operated from a very old warehouse in the oldest part of down town Bristol. It was near the docks, which are no longer used and was an old warehouse about 150 years old. It bought in food from primary producers and then made up orders to be delivered to individual shops. My job was to assist the truck drivers in delivering the orders. We went to all districts of Bristol and the surrounding villages. I remember well the trip to the city of Bath, which made us very late in getting home. It was heavy work, as I was required to carry half hundredweights of sugar and boxes of tinned food from the truck into the shops. I would struggle up steps and round narrow corners and down into cellars, humping what seemed to me to be heavy loads. I didn't mind the hard work so much as

the boring nature of it. It couldn't see much future in the job, nor did I like the men I had to work with.

I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life and had no clear ambitions. I was obviously unhappy and my father was frustrated with me for not knowing what I wanted to do. However, he obtained a job at the local Black and Decker portable electric tools supply and repair shop about two and half miles away in Kellaway Ave. A fastidious man ran the business. He worked hard at cleaning and repairing machines that were brought in and posting of spare parts. My job was to disassemble and clean the broken portable tools, keep the workshop clean and do the mailing at the Post Office on Gloucester Rd, a mile away. It was a busy job and initially very interesting. But my employer was a critical man and as I was not very efficient at what I did I came in for lot of sarcasm and reprimands. I was on my own much of the time and had no-one to talk to and I became very unhappy to the extent of being in tears at times.

My father could not understand my unhappiness, nor did he know how to help me. However a friend of mine by the name of Gordon Dennett worked as an apprentice at a mechanical and electrical engineering shop and was quite happy there. They were looking for more apprentices and he encouraged me to apply. He told me I would learn a good trade and would be able to attend night school and become very skilled. This sounded what I was looking for and felt safe. I spoke to my father and told him that to become an apprentice at my friend's workshop was what I wanted to do. He spoke to my friend's parents and investigated the engineering workshop concerned. After lots of discussion, negotiation and urging that this was the last job I could have, it was arranged. My father had to pay twenty pounds, which seemed an enormous sum of money at the time for me to take up a four-year premium apprenticeship. I was to spend two years in the machine shop and two years in the electrical and armature winding shop. On the 24th May, 1943 I began as the youngest apprentice in a work shop with six skilled men and four other apprentices. They were four important years in my personal development.

Chapter 6

Growing up Time.

The four apprenticeship years were another period of considerable growth for me.

On the 24th May 1943, at the age of 15 ½, I began an apprenticeship in Electrical and Mechanical Engineering with a J M Vaughan Ltd. The Indenture agreement came straight out of the Dickensonian era. The document, costing two shillings and sixpence, set out the conditions for the apprenticeship and hangs on my wall to this day. ‘

During the term I had agreed to:

“Faithfully serve my master, faithfully share his secrets, keep his lawful commands and every where gladly do. I shall do no damage to my master. I shall not waste the goods of my master, nor buy or sell without my master’s license. I shall not play cards, dice tables, or any unlawful game. I shall not haunt taverns nor ale houses, nor absent myself from my master’s service night or day unlawfully but in all things as a faithful apprentice, I shall behave myself towards my master. For the first year I shall receive the sum of six shillings a week, for the second year I shall receive the sum of eight shillings a week, nine shillings for the third year and the princely sum of ten shillings for the fourth year.”

In the third year I was 19 years old and doing skilled work. I guess I obeyed most of the commands as I never frequented taverns or gambled in any way. I was not interested in either activity nor could I afford it anyway. Whether I was an obedient, good and productive apprentice is another question!

The factory was converted from two three-story houses at 8 & 9, Triangle South, Bristol 8. They had combined the large basements which had all the heavy machinery. The windows looked out on the pavement at the front of the houses - an arrangement which

was ideal for looking up at the students from nearby Bristol University, walking by. There were several lathes of differing sizes, a milling machine, a heavy metal cutting saw and tool grinder. They were all connected with an overhead belt driven shaft system which drove a belt down to each machine. It was operating all the time just a few inches above our heads. So we didn't wave our arms around too much. The whole system was powered by a gas engine, firing every other stroke. It had to be started every morning with a handle process similar to that for starting cars before the arrival current battery method. This was a hard exercise for the youngest apprentices whose job it was to start it every morning. On cold mornings the engine could be very stubborn and slow to start and now and again take it into it's head to back fire and kick us in the guts. The downstairs machine shop was a dark, noisy, dangerous place with the gas engine puffing in the corner, and only eighteen inches above our heads the shafting whirled around the belts which drove the lathes at one's elbow. The men in pools of light were bent over metal turning tools which miraculously cut precision shapes in steel. Most of my time was spent in the mechanical engineering section on the ground floor above the basement. This was in the fitting shop where I learned how to cut, file and shape. Occasionally I went down to work on the lathes in the basement under instruction. Learning was by watching and assisting the skilled workers. There was little actual instruction and one learned mostly by trial and error. There were many mistakes. These were met by such comments as "You've made a right f..... up there. Move over" and you would be shown how to do the job properly. Some men were better and more patient in guidance than others. There I was taught how turn metal on a lathe. It was magic to start with producing beautiful shiny shapes out of ordinary metal but soon it became boring when the same process had to be performed over and over again. As a young apprentice I was expected to wash all the cups and do all the lunch errands for the skilled men, to sweep floors morning and afternoon and put the men's tools away in their own tool boxes. Woe betide the apprentice who stuffed up the lunch orders or who put the tools in the wrong boxes. They received a smart clip on the ear. Discipline was fairly strict and I soon learned to do things properly. Early in my time down stairs in the machine shops I was befriended by a young skilled worker by the name of Gordon. I remember becoming his apprentice assistant in the job of resetting a couple of lathes in concrete - a process which took us nearly a week. He tended to look after me in that rough environment of workmen and I became very fond of him. However, soon after that

event he left the firm to work elsewhere. I remember that I was quite upset at the time and grieved his departure.

There was not enough work in the machine shops to keep us busy and after a year I was sent upstairs to work in the electrical workshop where I spent the rest of my apprenticeship. This was in a large room above the street. It had a huge wide bench stretching out from the window. The workmen operated on either side and, as a result there was plenty of chat and arguments which gave a good social atmosphere. The men got on very well on the whole but now and again there was discord and an unpleasant atmosphere. The apprentices safely took a low profile. If they stepped out of line or made a bad mistake they got into trouble. At the beginning my job was to take apart the electric motors that came in for repair, clean them and help the skilled worker to strip out the old wiring. I was taught to make wooden formers for the numerous new wiring coils on which later I had to rewind. This was a tedious job and seemed to take hours. The man I was working for then had to put the shaped coils back in the motor and make the connections. This was a skilled job. Some of the motors were small and only about six inches in diameter but there were a few that were quite large and a full three feet in diameter. Moving them around from the truck that brought them in, and then back again, through passages, upstairs and through trap doors in the upper room floors, when repaired, was a large job. It was an exercise which involved all the men and apprentices in the shop. The large motors had to be man-handled with block and tackle, metal skids and lots of human muscle. It was an adventure for us apprentices and great times for swearing, jokes, and working together – not to mention, of course, danger.

During the four years at Vaughans, I attended the Merchant Venturer's Technical College in the centre of the city. For the first three years I studied for the interim Certificate in Electrical Engineering. During each winter I would cycle back into town three nights a week after dinner for two hours of lectures. These were in Trigonometry, Calculus, Technical Drawing, electro magnetism and motors. On the other two evenings of the week, I did my homework. It was a busy life and I found the study difficult to understand and the home work hard to do. I persisted and with the support of my friend, Len and my parents I past the first part. However I failed the higher Certificate which I studied for after my apprentice-ship had finished. I was then in London and life was initially too difficult then for adequate study.

My income from my apprentice job was very low - about 15 shillings a week. That is \$1.60 in today's terms. Of course a shilling went a long way in those days. To boost my income I did an early morning delivery of newspapers each week day and a Sunday morning delivery. Come hail or sunshine I was up at six and out delivering by 6.30 am. I would cycle to the delivery area then run round shoving papers into letter boxes. I got home by 7.30, had breakfast and was on my bike again for work in the city. Most days I was five or ten minutes late for work so I was docked two shillings out of my weekly wage. I got more out of delivery than I did from my daily work so I was not too bothered. It was a hard busy life and didn't leave much time for leisure activities. But I had a good friend, 'Len' at work. We also used to go ballroom dancing at a Dance Academy and on Saturday nights at the Dance Hall in town. At seventeen I also joined a Rugby Club and played almost every Saturday afternoon, travelling all over the Bristol District.

During the three and a half summer months there was no night school which was a blessed relief. I can't remember what I did in the evenings in the summer, apart from cycling and playing football on the common. At weekends a group of us would cycle to Weston Super Mare which was seaside resort about 25 miles from home. Similarly, to Clevedon or Severn Beach, estuary resorts which were nearer. All of these holiday resort were on the banks of the River Severn, a tidal river which had a very large tidal fall. The result was a very wide stretch of mud when the tide was out except for Weston resort which had a sandy beach and good shallow water when the tide was in. We did not swim in the Severn as the tidal bore is very fast and dangerous. However I do remember that one summer Len (my workmate) and I caught the train up to The Lake District for a hiking holiday. At the age of 17 years Len and I spent 10 glorious days hiking from Youth Hostel to Youth Hostel. We hiked with large ruck-sacks in beautiful sunshine, over the mountains and valleys of that magnificent countryside. It was a most memorable occasion which I shall never forget.

Chapter 7

Life at Home

The house in which I was brought up was built in 1922. My father and mother bought it new for about 400 pounds. It was a two storied terraced house with a small five and a half metre front garden. It was on a fairly busy road and a bus route so that the windows and doors rattled every time a bus or lorry went past the house.



The front room faced the street and the South which meant that it and the bedroom above enjoyed the sun which came from the South. The front room was the best room or the 'posh' room. It meant that it had a carpet all over. In the early days I can remember Aunty Mill cleaning the carpet with a dust pan and brush. Later she got a small mechanical carpet cleaner. The room boasted a sofa and two comfy chairs. By the fireside stood a bookcase where important books were displayed. Books, such as the Bible, History of the Great War and Illustrated South Africa. The front room was only used on Sundays or when we had guests and at Christmas. I remember also that when Aunt Mill died

she was laid out in an open coffin in the front room. People were invited in to view the body.

The front door opened onto a passage which led first to the stairs then immediately to the living room. This was where all the living, eating and general activities went on. It had lino on the floor, as did the rest of the house, except for the front room. This room had a

table and chairs, two easy chairs and a side board. It looked out onto the back garden and faced North, which meant that we had no sun in the room.

Off the living room was the kitchen with a red flag stone floor, a gas stove, a sink with one tap (cold), a wringer for wringing out washing, a boiler for hot water and a dresser for cooking. The pantry was under the stairs in the living room so most of the preparation for meals was done in the living room. Beyond the kitchen was the bath room and toilet. And next door to that was the coal cellar or bunker. All the fires in the house were lit by coal. The main fire was in the living room and had a hob either side for kettles or saucepans. It was the only fire that was lit in the house during the winter anyway and was kept alight most of the time. Upstairs were three bedrooms.



The smallest (mine) was at the top of the stairs. It was just about big enough to take a single bed and a chest of drawers.

Doreen's bedroom was along the landing and Mum and Dad's was the largest in the front of the house.

Out the back was Dad's shed where he did a lot of woodwork and odd repair jobs. Beyond that was a small garden about 12 metres long and 5 metres wide. Mostly it was grass and a small flower border.

This was my family home for the first 19 years of my life. It was a secure and nurturing place to be brought up in. Most of my memories of life in the home

involved my stepmother, Aunty Mill, sister and father.

Aunty Mill.

Aunty Mill worked as a dressmaker at the White Ladies' workroom where she met and became good friends with my mother, May Goodridge. She remained a good friend with her throughout the marriage of May with my father and when May died, Mill agreed to marry my father and care for us, his children. She was a spinster of 40 years when she married my father in June 1934, just nine months after May's death. It seems rather early for the marriage but then life was very difficult for Dad, looking after two small children and they knew each other quite well. It was a marriage of convenience for the sake of the children it would seem. Auntie Mill was the daughter of a Police Inspector who, when he retired, bought and ran an Ironmonger shop on Gloucester Rd, upper Horfield near Filton, Bristol. I remember being taken there as a very small boy. The shop smelled of turpentine, mentholated spirits and mustiness. It was dark and full of all sorts of hardware stuff. I was given a cane stick, I remember, to have for myself.

Mill had two sisters, Troy and Edith. I cannot remember much about them except that they lived together in a very nice semi-detached house up at Filton. I did visit there a few times but did not relate very well to them and never made any real attachment. Mill brought with her into the marriage with Dad some money that helped to pay off the mortgage on the house and also a lot of middle class standards and culture. As a result the quality of the household furnishings and the social environment improved considerably. I remember her as a tall slim gaunt woman, kind and a very good housekeeper and cook. She kept a very good standard in the home and laid a very nice table, especially for Sunday lunch and tea. She really cared for us kids and used to make suits and dresses for us. However she was not a very touching or emotional person. She seemed to spend many happy hours sewing on her foot treadle machine.

I think she had a hard time fitting in with us and father's standards and values. Her middle class standards and approach found it difficult to cope with Dad, who was rough, impatient and the "it'll do" approach to life. She often expressed her disapproval of some of his coarse ways such as spitting in the fire grate.

However, from our point of view, she was a stable, loving, conservative influence and helped to heal us kids from the traumas of the previous nine months and looked after us well.



We never called her 'Mother' but rather chose to continue to refer to her as Auntie Mill. I remember her asking me once, sitting on the back garden wall "*What would you like to call me?*". I suspect she would have liked the reply to have been "Mummy", but I remember saying that I couldn't call her that. So we settled for

Auntie Mill. The fact that I couldn't call her "Mummy" and would not respond to her with warmth and intimacy as I had done with Mother, was I believe, a continual frustration and disappointment to her. Doreen loved her and had a very close relationship with her before the marriage, but I suspect this was inhibited afterwards with her efforts to get close to me. Doreen was very sensitive to that. Aunty Mill's disappointment and hurt was intensified in later years when I entered the difficult, aggressiveness of teenage years and this no doubt added to her ill health. She brought security and stability into our lives and kept it going, in spite of marital difficulties and ill health in later years. She also gave us good standards for life. She was quietly religious and was a faithful attendee at the local Congregational Church in which she became involved. She encouraged us to attend too but not with much success. Dad often used to go with her.

The week had regular times of activity which were regulated by the programme worked out by Aunty Mill. It went like this: Mondays she did the washing; Tuesdays she shopped for the weekly goods, walking half a kilometre along the road to the Co-op and back again. She would be stopping every hundred yards or so to chat to a neighbour. On Wednesdays she would do the ironing, then on Thursdays she did the cleaning of the whole house and on Fridays she would do some cake cooking. Every day she cooked the evening meal and cleaned up the house. Friday night was bath night. Water was taken from the cold tap, bucket by a bucket, to fill the copper which was then heated for an hour. It was then taken, bucket by bucket, into the bath next door. Dad went in the

bath first, then Aunty Mill, followed by Doreen and then me last. It was some years before we had a gas heater installed over the bath itself.

Her trade had been a seamstress and so she also spent a lot of time on a peddle power sewing machine, making clothes for us kids and for herself. Life was safe and regular for me. I came home from school each lunch time and arrived home at about 4.45pm each evening. I went out to play with kids in the neighbourhood, often up the side streets which were safer, or in the back garden. After tea in the summer I would go out again to play. The boy next door was the same age as myself and so we would often play together. The games would be, racing cars, cricket, soccer, roller skates, cowboys and Indians, bandits, amongst others. In the dark evenings and rainy days I would play indoors, making **papers** ships, reading comics and books, painting and crayoning. In the evenings, especially Saturday nights, we would all sit around the radio and listen to "Brains Trust", or "In Town To-night" or some other popular programme on the radio.

On the whole, as I got older (from 11 years on), I had considerable freedom and I would take off with friends up to the Downs, to the Sea Wall on the river Avon, to the Severn Estuary and all kinds of place which could be 15 to 20 miles away. Time away from school with friends was pleasurable - getting around by cycling, walking, and bussing.



*Aunty Betty, Aunty Mill, myself and Doreen,
Weston Super Mare. 1935*

Weston Super Mare was a favourite seaside resort on the Severn Estuary. It had a very wide sandy beach with a very low tide, leaving a large area of mud. But it had all the trimmings of a fun end sea side resort and we were happy.



On the rocks at Weymouth, 1934.

Each summer Dad had a holiday from work and we would all go off to the seaside for a week or fortnights' holiday. Weymouth, on the South coast, was our favourite resort. It had a wide sandy beach, Punch and Judy shows and shallow safe water. There was a wide promenade, a pier and an interesting fishing harbour. Round the corner a mile away was a pebble beach which



extended for several miles. Nearby also was a large naval dock yard. What more could a boy want during the years of 7 to 12? I had a ball, swimming, Punch and Judy, fishing harbour, exploration. You name it. I had plenty of freedom and I did it.

Nine or ten years of age.



used

When I was young (6 to 10) Dad and I sometimes to play together - things like drafts, snakes and ladders, wrestling and he would always answer my questions. But he had a quick temper and if I did anything wrong he would lash out at me with his hand or give me the cane. Even up to the age of 15 I would go into a state of terror when he would come at me in temper. He could also be very morose at times and very unapproachable. So from the age of 10 or 11 years I tended to withdraw from him and resent him. My sister was also very resentful of his temper and used to complain bitterly about the way he treated her. I remember on one occasion I felt so hurt and miserable I decided to commit suicide by jumping off the top of the 500 foot cliff facing the river Avon. This was over five miles away and by the time I got there and looked over the cliff I changed my mind. But this incident demonstrates the misery that I sometimes felt. On the other hand he could be very kind and considerate and looked after the family's needs well. But one could never be sure of what his mood was likely to be or what response one would get

from doing or saying something. Eventually when I was an early teenager I actively rebelled and defied him. I was big enough to stand up to him physically and do what I wanted.

The marriage with Mill, although good for us kids and the home life, was not a particularly happy one and in later years was discordant. I can remember them having fierce rows and on one occasion I was foolish enough to make a comment about their continuing rowing with each other and received a back hander for my pains. As the years went by she became increasingly unwell and frail. The relationship between her and Dad was one of increasing conflict and friction. She disapproved of his aggressive dominance over us kids and some of his rough impatient ways. Doreen claims that she stood up to Dad for us kids in a way Mother never did. She argued with him on many issues and stood her ground until she became too ill to do so. Just before her death she told Doreen that she was sorry for taking us away from father. I don't think she did that, but she did try to protect us from his influence and particularly tried to counteract his modelling on myself. She even supported my evacuation to Canada during the War in order to get me away from his influence. The evacuation never took place of course. However later I was evacuated to Cheddar, 40 odd miles south of Bristol. The whole school was bussed and distributed amongst the population of the village. This story is told in chapter 4.

Most of the children returned home from their evacuee billets by the end of eight months. Of course it was then that the bombing started. No one suggested that the children should be evacuated again. Dad dug a hole in the garden for an air raid shelter but never finished it. When the bombers came at night we shared the neighbor's shelter. Then there was a time when I slept in the food cupboard under the stairs. That was thought to be the safest place if a bomb hit us. Later we all got blasé about the bombers and stayed in bed when the sirens sounded. Being in the suburbs we were in less danger than if we were near the centre of the city or near the airport or docks. We felt relatively safe. However we did have an incendiary bomb come through the roof next door and a big exploding bomb one street away. But compared with what destruction which occurred in the city centre, it was trivial and we did not change our lazy habits. During the daytime reconnaissance German planes came over to plan out the night raids. At the same time they would shoot down the Barrage Balloons which flew high up

over the city and other possible targets in order to keep the bombers out of range. This activity attracted to attention of British fighter planes which came over to shoot down the enemy. I can remember seeing a few 'dog fights' between the Germans and the British in the sky. They were very exciting. Unfortunately after a while the school authorities in protecting us from danger made us go down into the school air raid shelters. But we could hear the 'dog fights' and there was endless speculation as to who was shooting down who. The war for me was an exciting time for me and I had little fear, mainly I suppose because I had little understanding of all the implications. The only time I experienced any real fear and anxiety was when I was going on duty as a messenger for the Fire Service. When I was 15, I Joined the Auxiliary Fire Service as a messenger. If necessary, because of breakdown in communications they would use cycle messengers. I would go out to the local Fire Station a couple of miles away when the sirens sounded in the night. I remember on one occasion as I started off on my bike with my tin helmet on my head and my gas mask in my bag, hearing the shrapnel from, the exploding anti aircraft shells over head pinging on the roofs nearby. I realized that if one of those pieces landed on me I wouldn't survive. I was really scared then.

Auntie Mulls health deteriorated slowly over the years until she became very unwell. I can remember her sighing and puffing as she struggled up and down the stairs. I often had to cycle out to the Doctors at Filton for her bottles of medicine. I think the medicine was only a tonic of some sort. She seemed to suffer quite a lot in her mind as well as her body.

At fourteen years I left school and went to work, firstly with the Post Office, and after several other jobs I settled into an apprenticeship in electrical engineering. Then Doreen left home to join the Land Army, leaving Dad, Aunty Mill and I on our own. Several months later, Aunty Mill became seriously ill with a mental complaint and lost touch with reality. She rallied under medical attention but then died soon after from Hypostatic Pneumonia, on 4th November 1943 at the age of 50 years. Although I seemed not to be very much upset by her death, I was made to look back and see more and more of her saving nature and influence she made to all our lives. I feel a sense of sorrow for her life and gratitude for what she did for us and honour her for the contribution to my life and indeed the life of the family. I was just on 16 years of age.



Following her death Dad persuaded Doreen to come home and look after us. She was not too happy about that as it meant giving up a boy friend. She was miserable for several weeks. But Doreen was a resilient woman, making a social life for herself.

Doreen and her Husband,, Dudley Monk Baxter

She eventually met an American soldier and they fell in love. Doreen became pregnant. She subsequently married him. The wedding took place at Horfield Parish Church with several Woodroffes, plus a troop

of GIS in attendance.

Her husband was then posted overseas and life settled down to a routine family life with a small baby making it interesting and joyous.

However it was during this time that my father and I had a big row. I don't know what it was bout but I felt really angry and rejected. So I decided to leave home. I got out my savings for my coming holiday and decided to cycle down to the south coast and board a ship to the continent. The war had just ended and everything was in chaos. I thought my chances of boarding a ship to be pretty good. Off I set on my bicycle heading south to the coast. I left no note to say that I was going nor did I tell anyone. It was summertime, the weather was warm and dry so off I went. I covered quite a distance in that first day, about 40 miles, which brought me near to the coast. I enjoyed the ride through the summer countryside, had no thoughts of home or work and spoke to no one. When darkness came I made a hole in a hay stack and curled up there for the night. The following day I arrived at the coast. It was near Weymouth. I could see no opportunity for getting on board any ships as I rode east along the coast road, as any docks I came across were heavily fenced and guarded. I was not too upset as the weather was sunny

and the road along the coast has beautiful views. I was enjoying myself and taking pleasure in the bewilderment and anxiety at home. As I rode along the coast road it became clear that getting over to France was not an option. I had no clear plan of what I was going to do. I had little money, no where to stay and no human contacts. In the evening I arrived at Romney Flats, a boring featureless bit of coast line along which the wind blew relentlessly. I put up for the night in a disused tin army hut. It had a hard floor, cold and drafty. The roof rattled and some kind of animal kept shuffling around and gave me the creeps. It was then that I decided to give in and return home. I also decided that as soon as my apprenticeship finished I would leave home and live on my own. By then I would be earning a suitable wage and no longer dependent on my father.

The following day I returned home, cycling the 70 miles and arriving at about 7.0'clock in the evening. Both my father and sister were relieved and pleased to see me. There were no recriminations nor anger as I expected, only concern and interest as to where I had been. My father was shaken by my running away and was most conciliatory. I went to work the following morning giving an excuse for my absence of being sick. Nothing more was said about the incident and life settled back to normal. However my father and I treated each other more cautiously. There were no more big rows. I felt more independent and more confident as a result.

A couple of months later Doreen gave birth to a baby boy who was subsequently named Dudley Monk Baxter. He was a beautiful baby, full of fun and I enjoyed looking after him. Life at home was quite pleasant. Sadly, eight or nine months later Doreen and the baby sailed for America. I travelled to Southampton with them to see them off on their ship. It was a sad time and many years would go by before I met up with them again in America. I was now 17 ½ years. Dad and I continued on living on our own together until I left home. It was not a happy time. Dad was morose and I was preoccupied with work, study and the little leisure I had. I was free to do as I liked. We didn't communicate very much and basically tolerated each other. He was very caring in the fact that he kept the house going. He did the cooking and the house cleaning. I did little apart from doing my own breakfast, a little cleaning, washing up and keeping the fire going.

At the completion of my apprenticeship, at the age of 19 years of age in June 1947 I decided to leave home to live in London. This was my ambition. Although only 120

miles away, I had never been there and it always had a fascination for me in my imagination. Like the proverbial Dick Wittington and his cat, with great hopes I set off to seek my fortune.

My initial job interview in London was a disappointment. I disliked the factory and the environment. So, I looked around in the North West London area. By innocent audacity I managed to obtain an interview with GEC in Wembley, for a job in the x-ray manufacturing section. However they were impressed by my success in obtaining a preliminary certificate in electrical engineering, by going to night school during my apprenticeship. They were equally encouraged by my initiative in coming to London and seeking out employment. I was eventually offered a job as assistant to the production manager – a job which excited me. I was delighted to receive the offer and within three weeks I was living in a bed-sitter in Wembley and had presented myself for work in the production manager's office. I was on top of the world. Little did I know that the move to London was to be the catalyst for a most radical change in my life.

This story continues in a subsequent chapter as part of my religious journey.

Part 2 The Religious Journey

The Initiation years

Chapter 8

Just religion

Of course I was unaware of my first religious experience. At the age of two months I was sprinkled with Holy water in St Michael and All Angels Church of England, on Gloucester Rd, Horfield, Bristol. Thereby I was saved from sin and entered the Church of Christ. I was dutifully sent to Sunday School at about the age of six or seven with my sister. They were irregular religious experiences and my awareness was not a great deal more understood than the first one, although no doubt I learned from listening to stories of Jesus from a series of very patient ladies. I also remember a Harvest Festival service. It was a very colourful, bright and cheerful scene and the hymns were also bright and jolly. I can't remember what was said, but I remember being fascinated as I watched the oranges slowly falling off the ledge of the choir screens and rolling down the aisle.

My stepmother attended the Horfield Congregational Church at the end of the road. So when I stopped going to the Parish Church because it was too far to walk (I complained that it was boring anyway), I was encouraged to attend there. I did so for a period but I can remember that being boring also. I remember being taught hymns by a very enthusiastic little man and restlessly listening to the stories of the New Testament. They were told to us by long suffering lay teachers and we had to crayon pictures of the stories. At 11 years of age I refused to attend any longer. I had no further interest in religion except for the very occasional attendance with my father and stepmother to an evening service. But that was mainly to please my stepmother and I cannot recall being very interested in the proceedings.

However, I did join the Boys Brigade, which was a semi-military organisation run by the Congregational Church. It was mainly boys' club activities. It was quite active with lots of vigorous games and marching. I enjoyed that and I was a regular attendee. I can remember the boxing particularly because the man in charge thought I was good at it

and encouraged me to fight. On reflection I can see the contradiction of two people bashing each other's heads in and the Gospel of Love. I enjoyed boxing to a certain extent but it didn't retain my interest. It was also exciting to march in a church parade through the streets, following a band. It was all OK as long as there was not too much church attendance. My life in the Boys Brigade lasted about a year and came to an end as did my interest in boxing. I was good at 'the noble art,' but having my body and face pummelled hurt and my desire for it ended.

I remember talking to the brother of a friend of mine who was attending a theological college and training for the ministry. He told me that he was on his way to a prayer meeting and my response was to say how boring that must be. He responded saying that he enjoyed such activities and that they were very important in his life. I was baffled that this could be so and went away feeling sorry for him having to live such a boring life.

From then on, at the age of 14 thereabouts, I didn't attend church, nor did I give religion a thought. It was not until I was 20 years of age that I thought seriously about it.

Chapter 9

The Major Spiritual Change and Direction

Following my move to London and settling in the middle class area of Wembley Park, I started to attend a Congregational Church. From living in a working class culture and life on the shop floor in a male dominated atmosphere, I was plunged into a middle-class working level and a middle-class society - later to enter the intellectual atmosphere of a university and eventually the respectable and religious life of the church. I was to be working amongst the lower echelons of management - men of education with more polished behaviour and outlook than I was used to. I was now working amongst office girls, never having had anything to do with the opposite sex except for an older sister four years older than myself. I was too intimidated by them to be able to relate sensibly. I was required to answer telephones intelligently, when I had never used one before. I was terrified of them and of the office typists who used them so confidently. My brain would go blank whenever the phone rang and then my thinking went into spaghetti! I was expected to write instruction leaflets for the equipment when I had no idea how to write prose. The job was way out of my league. It was beyond my intellectual, social and emotional capacity. I was a fish out of water. However I struggled miserably for many weeks until it seemed obvious to the manager that I was unable to cope and I was transferred to the shop floor of the factory. There I was employed in testing the equipment - a job which was more geared to my ability. It was a great relief to be out of the office.

It was summer time and the weather was particularly good. I was living in a nice bed-sitter in a well-to-do house and garden in the suburb of Wembley. The landlady was a widow, supplementing her income by letting a room. It was a pleasant middle-class area with tree lined roads. I was very impressed with the quality of life there. However I knew no-one in London and was somewhat lonely. I sought for things to do in my spare time and some company. I had noticed that at the end of the road stood a tall impressive church, advertising some confirmation classes. I am not sure why, but I started to attend. I think that part of the reason was a curiosity about religion and that it might be a way of meeting people. Pubs were never my scene. The priest was an old man dressed

in a cassock. He began with the virgin birth and the elevation of Mary to be the mother of God in heaven. The church was full of images and icons and smelt heavily of incense. I quickly decided that this was not for me. The group consisted of three young teenagers, a housewife and an old man. Neither the company nor the instruction seemed to me to be what I was looking for and I left after two sessions.

However, across the road, at an intersection, stood a modern looking structure which turned out to be a church. It was advertising various services which did not interest me in the slightest. But what did attract me was a notice regarding a 'Youth Circle' for ages 16 to 21. It met each Sunday after evening service at 8 o'clock. So, on a Sunday in September 1947 I duly turned up at 8 o'clock and was confronted with a very lively and interesting group of men and women. I was shy and withdrawn in the light of their conversation and general confident demeanour. I was also fascinated with the discussions they had: The way they talked and the knowledge they expressed about music, poetry, ballet, and scientific subjects. They impressed me immensely. But I was also plunged into the same emotional seizure that I had in my work place. I was overwhelmed and I particularly suffered anxiety and shame when they played general knowledge pencil and paper games. I had always come bottom of the class in school. I realised that my leaving school at the age of 14 with little more than knowledge of the three Rs, when the majority of them were still in High School or even in first year university, was a serious handicap. Nevertheless, I was fascinated by this level of culture. I wanted to be like them. This gap and desire was to be the impetus for a radical change in my whole life. However, they welcomed me and the leader, Ted Gover, did his best to make me feel at home. I hung in there and was eventually accepted by the church community.

It was not long before I was attending church in the evenings before the club began. The church was in the Congregational tradition and the building was modern in style - light and pleasing inside. It was led by a thirty-seven year old graduate from Oxford. His sermons made sense and opened up this new world to me even more. He would also attend the youth club meetings, joining in the discussions and from time to time he would lead. I was impressed with what he had to say. I also enjoyed the experience of sitting in church, in the midst of a warm and friendly group of people. They also accepted me

and my gauche ways. So it was that each Sunday I went to church and attended the Youth Circle afterwards.

However, after about 16 months or so I began to drift off. I was making friends and particularly with a nurse named Mary from the Middlesex Hospital. At the age of 21 she was the first girl friend that I had had and I was smitten with her. I saw a fair bit of her during the weekends and I was also going to night school during the week. I was busy and preoccupied with my life. Whether I would have gone back to the church I am not sure. I think I would have, as they made a great impact on my life. However, I would not have gone back for a long time if it had not been for the fact that I received a letter from the members of the Youth Circle. They expressed concern over my absence and invited me to return. The letter was written by an older member of the club, a university graduate with whom I had had little contact. I was touched by the interest and concern for me and felt that people cared. I returned and remained a regular attendee despite the various vicissitudes of my life.



I became more and more interested in the Congregational Church and the Christian Faith. I eventually became a Church Member. The young people of the Christian Youth Circle became my closest friends and we shared many social activities and discussions together.



I had moved around to different lodgings as and when I got tired of them. I finally ended up in a very nice bed sitter situated in a pleasant tree lined road near the church. The other three occupants of the house was the landlady, a young married couple and Frank who became a very good friend.

In 1948 I lost my job in the GEC due to incompetence. I was out of my depth in the office and very unhappy. I had then been demoted from the office to the factory and although that was easier for me I was still very unhappy. I accidentally blew up some equipment and they promptly gave me my cards. I obtained a job in an electric motor repair shop. It was a very rough “make do and mend” concern with equally rough and bigoted workers. That job was exceedingly pressurised and boring. During this time I had attended Acton Technical College in the evenings, studying for my fourth year Electrical Institute Certificate.



My heart was not in it and I consequently failed the year-end exam. It was altogether a very disappointing time and I was despairing about my failure to succeed and be happy

with work. I was becoming more and more disillusioned with factory work and hated the environment. I had invested so much energy and thought into engineering but it seemed that it was not what I wanted to do any longer.

My contact with the people at the Church (particularly the intelligent and well-educated members of the Youth Circle) had given me new vision on life. But I didn't know what else to do apart from factory work. I was desperate and had moments of complete despair. I had moved several times from different lodgings because they had become unsatisfactory. And this did not help my morale which was low. I didn't know what to do or how to get out of my increasing misery.

It needs to be understood that the class structure in the 40s and 50s was still pretty strong and there was still a cultural difference between working class, middleclass and upper class. In fact there were distinctions within the classes. For instance, there was the lower working class and upper working class. The distinction would be the kind of work a person did and the general out-look they had. Lower working class were likely to be unskilled labourers (pick and shovel), live in poorer houses and have a lower quality of life. The upper working class were the tradesmen and skilled workers and lower office workers which, as a postman, my father would have been. The working class did not rise above the level of what was called secondary education, which was more or less the three Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic with a little geography, history, poetry and music thrown in. On the other hand there was the opportunity to go on to Grammar school if one passed the two secondary examinations. A opportunity not all families encouraged. However my friend Jeffrey who lived next door, being a bright student, passed with flying colours and went to one of the most prestigious schools in the city. My sister Doreen passed both exams but was not allowed to go to grammar school by my father who believed that a girl did not need a higher education. She wanted to be a nurse and was bitterly disappointed and never forgave him for not allowing her to go on to higher studies. Such was the prevailing attitude of some of the working class at that time. I was not a competent student and failed both exams, much to my father's annoyance and disappointment. Those who didn't go on to on to grammar school left at the age of 15 years with no expectation of going any further except as a trade apprentice attending night school.

When I left school at the age of 14 years my father put me into the Post Office as a telegram boy. His concern was for me to have a secure job. I was attached to West Ham post office and had to deliver telegrams on a bicycle throughout the area. It was the Christmas season and I had to work even on Christmas Day. The job was boring and lonely with little future, it seemed to me, and I left for another job within three months. Equally boring!

The distinction between the working and middle classes was not only in educational knowledge but also in cultural activities - i.e. classical music in the home; plays; concerts; lectures and the better quality newspapers and magazines. These would be among the interests of the middle class. They were more likely to have a phone and a car. Whereas the working class would favour pop music and comedy shows on radio, also dog and speedway racing. Football and Rugby would be common to both classes although a greater following and betting on the league games would be from the working class.

I have gone into considerable detail in describing the differences between the working class and the other classes in the 1940 and 1950s, because they had such a major influence on my life. I was now at the age of 21 years, feeling that I had got nowhere and had no idea of where to go in life. I hated my job and had lost interest in studying engineering. I longed to be like the people in the church and have the life and security that they had but didn't know how to get there.

Having learned that I had failed fourth year engineering in June 1948 I seriously began to reconsider whether I should continue in engineering. I felt that it would be a good idea to obtain a Matriculation Certificate as this would be necessary for any future apart from engineering. I registered at Wolsey correspondence school for Geometry, Latin, French, German and maths.

The work load was an impossible one on top of a day's work in the factory at Dynamo repairs. After several months of trying to catch up on the course requirements which came ruthlessly through the post every week I gave it away.

In June 1949 I came to the firm conclusion that I no longer wished to continue in Engineering as a career. It was too materialistic and impersonal. I felt that I needed to do something more suited to my temperament and which would be of more humanitarian use to the community. This would be the only way I could ever be happy. My main consideration regarding a career change was in the area of Social Work although I had little knowledge of what it involved. Neither did I have any idea how to get into it. By this time I had also become a believer in Christianity and had joined the Church as a member. I accepted most of the doctrines of the Christian religion and regularly prayed to God. The thought came to me several times that the Congregational Church Ministry might be an option. But I felt that I was not educated well enough, nor temperamentally suited, to that kind of life and ruled it out.

In March 1950, at the age of 22, I was still working at Dynamo Repairs. However, they had to put off some employees through redundancy. I agreed to leave in order to force myself to find some occupation other than shop floor engineering. A quote from my diary shows that I was also unhappy in my lodgings with the people in Acton and felt isolated and confused. I had no-one I felt I could talk to - not that I looked for anyone, and I felt that no-one would understand anyway.

Quote from my diary p22, 1.4.1950. Age 22 ½

"The work I wish to do in Welfare is barred to me until I have gained a little practical experience in welfare work of some kind. I am utterly depressed at the thought of going back into industry which is something which I am afraid I must do. (At this time I had left Dynamo Repairs because of redundancy and was looking for employment) I shall have to get work back in the factory or starve. All I can do is to trust in God yet I cannot feel any sense of implicit faith. Life is one damn struggle and a very lonely one at that. I must admit to intense loneliness at times. The fact that nobody can understand me; my attitude and what I really want from life; the uncertainties I have of myself as to whether my course is a good one. Worst of all I cannot find comfort and peace of mind in discourse to God who is the only one who can understand perfectly my state of mind and of course the only one who can possibly help me".

I go on to write later in the entry –

“Oh God if only I could feel and know that you are calling, if only I could believe without any possible doubt that I, slow witted and somewhat distorted in my outlook that I am, are one of chosen few; that I a sinner in every respect having no personality at all, can believe that you want me and want to use me and those few capabilities I possess. I pray God that you show me soon and quite plainly”

Shortly after writing this entry I obtained employment on the test beds with Lancashire Dynamo in Acton. It was a reasonably well paid job although boring and hard work. It was a fair way from where I lived and involved a double transport journey or a long cycle ride each day. They were long and tiring days. In addition to the stress of work, a sense of isolation and the worry over what I was going to do in the future, I was worried about a relationship I had with a girl in the church called Mary Gregory. I was quite attracted to her but she seemed not to be very interested in me. Her indifference to me irritated and depressed me and I entertained thoughts of finishing what little relationship we had. One damp and dismal winter's evening, on the way from the Acton factory, in the grotty lane at the back of my lodgings, I felt so desolate and in despair that I cried out to God to help me. I had joined the church by that time, attending regularly and I tearfully asked God to tell me what to do. Or if there was anything He wanted me to do. I would have prayed in this manner for about 15 minutes. It was something I had not done before and I found some relief from my despair, but no answers.

Influencing me were two other young men in the church, John Bradshaw and John Gregory, who were training for the church ministry. They were bright and dynamic men in their early twenties and I admired them both. There was also another man a bit older who was going through the process of being accepted for training for the ministry. Philip Le Bapty was his name and he was very friendly towards me. As a result of my cry for help and the influence of observing these other men entering the Congregational ministry, I subsequently had a notion to become a Minister. It seemed impossible at the time but the more I thought about it the more it seemed to be what I wanted and what God was calling me to do. Eventually, in June 1950 at the age of 22, I applied for acceptance to train to become a Congregational Church Minister.

Tom Brooks, the minister of the church, was surprised by my interest but supportive. He was of the mind that if this was a real Call then the doors would open. I had to have my request put before the church diaconate for approval. This was given and then it had to go before the whole church meeting. This church gave its approval although, I imagine, that there were several misgivings. They took the same line as the minister that if it was not God's will then there would be a stopper somewhere in the process, or that I would change my mind eventually.

I did not change my mind and had few if any doubts. My application went before the Moderator and the Ministerial Training Board and was accepted. I was then sent to attend Paton Congregational Ministerial College in the following autumn in September 1951. I was 22 years of age and would be 23 when I would start my training.

In the light of my decision to apply for Ministerial Training, I gladly left my job as tester of electrical motors at Lancaster Dynamos in the spring of 1951. It was a high pressure job and I disliked the boring grind. Instead I managed to obtain a job as a school board attendance officer with the Wembley Council. It was a temporary job replacing a person off work with cancer. And a very convivial one, I may say, as it was easy and light, giving me autonomy in time spent in visiting the parents of the school children. The struggle concerning my future was over and the progress toward attending Theological College was progressing well. The summer had arrived and work in Wembley was easy and pleasant and my bedsitter was comfortable in a house with congenial people. I had also made good friends with Frank, one of the occupants in the house, and life was good.

On the other hand I did have some doubts in the May of 1951.

I quote from my diary 1st May 1951.

"For the first time since my decision I am having serious doubts as to wanting to be a Minister. I have found myself, so to speak, and have found my confidence and my balance of mind. Now the white collar and black front, and all the discipline and sacrifice it will entail makes me think more. Previously everything had been stripped from me and I had taken this as God's wish and my only hope. But now I am clearer in my thinking and have found my capabilities. I am tempted

and worried. Is the Ministry my cup of tea? I am not a very religious type and rather wild and coarse, and at times do not take my attitude to God seriously enough."

Further doubts are expressed in an entry in June of the same year:

"How much must a person suppress self, suppress desires of pleasure. Sex and ambition. Does it depend on the strength of a person's call to a vocation? I live in fear of having to give up radical life and the prospects of a happy married life and enjoyable indulgences."

The struggle in my mind, concerning behaviour, pleasure, sex, travelling the world and what I perceived as the requirements of the religious life, continued on into college life and on into the Ministry itself. At one point after two years at college I seriously considered the Monastic Religious life at Kelham, an Anglican Institution. I spent a long weekend living there and although I enjoyed the experience I decided that I was not able to give up the prospect of marriage, freedom and travel.

Chapter 10

Theological Education

In September 1951, four years after finishing my apprenticeship in electrical engineering at Bristol, I began my studies at Paton Congregational College in Nottingham. I found it to be exciting and energizing. After the previous four years of turmoil and searching I felt that I had arrived. The intellectual stimulation was very satisfying and I gobbled it up. It was not always easy to understand and the Greek was particularly hard. The other students were easy to get on with and they provided a stimulating environment. I had a little trouble with the Irish students' theology and devotional life. They were fundamentalists and very devout in their prayer life and conversation. Consequently, I felt guilty about my own attitude, beliefs and devotion when I compared them to mine. They worried me with their certainty regarding the literal truth of the scriptures and their strict devotional life. It was a long time, several years, before I was free of that concern.

At Paton we were instructed in Old Testament History, the books of the Old Testament, the books of the New Testament, New Testament Greek, and Logic. Once a week there was conducted a Preaching Seminar. All students were required to prepare and preach a sermon in front of the whole college. I was then constructively criticized by a member of the staff. It was a year before my turn came and as far as I can remember it was a non event.

My main theological stance was middle of the road, accepting the critical and scholarly position on the Bible and the Credal Statements. Each Sunday we were all expected to go out to Congregational churches which were without a Minister and take the morning and evening services. We would be sent to small towns and villages all over the Midlands and East Anglia, holding forth to the many long suffering congregations that had no alternative than to put up with us. I preached a fairly conservative message about the Love of God and of Christ the Son of God, sent to save us from our sins. I enjoyed writing sermons as they were a creative activity and helped me to sort my thoughts out. No-one complained about my services or sermons as far as I know. There were one or two pleasant remarks about 'the sermon being helpful' at times.

After a year at Paton I accepted the opportunity to enter the School of Theology at Nottingham University which was nearby. With the passing of an exam I registered to do a three year Honours Degree in Theology, with a subsidiary in Psychology, at Nottingham University, whilst at the same time continuing as a student associate at Paton College.



Nottingham University was fairly new and its faculty of Theology, was also new in University life. The University regarded Christian Theology and the Bible as subjects to be analysed, rigorously criticised and taught like any other subject. The Theological Faculty drew its staff from all denominations based on their academic abilities. At the time I entered Professor Marsh was a Congregationalist and the other staff members came from Anglican, Baptist and Methodist traditions. They were male and female. The student body was similarly mixed,

having people from many different denominations - both male and female. Although we had a couple of Anglo-Catholics in the student body, there were no Roman Catholics in the department at all. Altogether it was a rich mix. It made for vigorous and interesting discussions and the sharing of important views and attitudes.

Below are the student, staff of the Theological Faculty of Nottingham University, 1953



There were interesting relationships which developed especially between the male and female students. In particular, between myself and a girl in the same year, by the name of Betsy.

Betsy – Centre. Myself, bottom

The relationship didn't develop until the second year of studies but then blossomed into a passionate affair quickly and lasted throughout our student life.

Theological stance was an orthodox one, holding to the main tenants of Christian doctrine. My biblical understanding was conditioned by the critical scholarship applied to the Old and New Testaments. We studied Hebrew language up to an elementary level which was as much as I could handle. I also continued to be stressed in my struggle with New Testament Greek which continued at Paton. Both the history of the Jewish nation and of the early Church were of considerable interest to me and I enjoyed them both. In the latter year we had the Christian Doctrine of the Creeds and Dogma. I enjoyed all this education and although it was hard and at times very stressful, it met a great need in me for knowledge. I swallowed it all whole and almost unquestioning.

My devotional life was regular but always a matter for guilt and anxiety. It was always not long enough nor regular enough. Confession was always around inadequate prayer life, being loving to others and, of course, sex. My relationship with Betsy was a very physical one. It was frustrated by the prohibition of full sexual intercourse yet nevertheless involved full intimacy and relief. The problems were never resolved but I learned to live with them. Confession eventually became an acceptance of my human frailty which God, who according to the New Testament is a loving, forgiving God who would forgive me. Nevertheless there was always a niggle that I should try harder to be more holy.

On two Sundays in each month I travelled to various towns in the Midlands, preaching. I usually took the morning and evening services in churches which had no full time minister. I hawked around the same two sermons each term which I was always amending. The congregations were grateful to have a student to take their services. They had someone to fill the pulpit when needed and at the same time they felt they were doing a service in the training of new ministers.

They put up with a lot in terms of misplaced fire and thunder or muddled theological doctrine.



In the summer of 1955 I was employed in a student Pastorate in the Congregational Church at Worksworth in Derbyshire . The town's main industry was a huge lime stone quarry a mile from the centre. They were a pretty tough lot but were very patient with me and supported me well. I was accommodated with an elderly widow in an old stone cottage on the side of a hill. She looked after me like a son. I was also able to visit a number of Derbyshire beauty spots and I enjoyed my stay in that striking county. I found that taking services was always a strain as I was never comfortable with public speaking. I never felt that I was clear enough or good enough. Study also did not come easy and I struggled hard to keep up. Despite the difficulties I found the whole experience of being a student stimulating and enjoyable. I persisted in my studies and was rewarded by passing all my exams.



In 1955 I proudly gained BA Hons. 2nd class theology and a subsidiary in psychology;

Betsy decided to go to Oxford to do a teaching diploma, whilst I went to Chicago Theological Seminary as a World Church Fellowship student.

This was for a year and it was a very exiting time for me. I felt rewarded for all the struggle, sweat and tears of the past years. I had come from an ignorant and confused 14 year old Post Office Telegram boy to a successful University Honours graduate, at 27 years of age, with a satisfying career ahead of me. It had been a long haul.

In Chicago I didn't take my studies very seriously. I did a lot of sightseeing and travelling. But I do remember reading Paul Tillich's book on "God as the ground of being". This was refreshingly different from the concept of the God of the Trinity, up and out there. It was the beginning of movement from an unquestioning acceptance of orthodox theology to a God intrinsically involved in the on going of creation. A movement which has been with me in varying intensity ever since.

At the end of the academic year in Chicago Seminary I was sent to do a student placement at a church youth camp at Yuciapa in the Mountains of southern California. I had responsibility for some of the religious programmes and general supervision. It was summer time and a beautiful environment. The tasks I had to perform with different groups of very lively and outgoing groups of American high school teenagers each week were very light. I found the older girls to be very assertive and sometimes quite provocative. Although I found some of the situations a bit of a strain I did nothing to blot my copy book. We were up in the southern Californian I mountains which were covered in small brush and small Oak Trees. The area was opened up by the Spanish in the 18th century. Whilst travelling through the rough scrub and trees they protected the bellies of their horses with Cow Hide called shaps; Hence to turn 'shaps'; for protective wear on Cowboy trousers. The area was wild and interesting. I found the whole experience was very enjoyable and I had a great time. Another plus was that I was able to visit my sister several times. She was living in Torrance, a suburb of Los Angeles, about ninety miles west.

Religious Journey Part 3

Chapter 11

Full time Ministry



On returning to the UK in September 1956, the Congregational Church Board found me a placement in Lincolnshire. I received a call from a newly formed church in a housing estate on the outskirts of Lincoln city. It was called Ermine Congregational Church, named after the famous Roman Ermine Way which ran from the South of England to the North.

On the 28th of November 1956 I was at last ordained into the Congregational Ministry and inducted into my first church. It had taken 6 1/2 years to get from that initial decision to become a Minister to my ordination and 8 years from my disillusionment with life as an electrical engineer. It had been a long time of re-education and adjustment to my being a different person, although there were lots of gaps and rough edges still very much in evidence.

Below is a photo of those involved in my Ordination at Newlands Congregational Church.



Neighbouring Anglican Priest, Bishop of Lincoln, Moderator of Cong. Province, Myself, Minister of Newland, Cong Church

The ordination and induction was a grand affair held in the Newland Congregational Church in Lincoln city. Loads of civic dignitaries and Church representatives were in attendance and the Bishop of Lincoln (plus gaters) gave the ceremony certain authenticity.



As seen on previous page the church building was a single hall with a small side room as vestry and for meetings. Attached to the side was a tower which did nothing but give the building some status. The hall was multi-purpose in that it was easily changed from a worship format to a social setting. At one end of the hall was a stage on which the Communion Table, Lectern and Pulpit could be placed on a red carpet. The whole setting could be closed off by a curtain. At the foot of the stage we were graced by a baby grand piano. The unpretentious arrangement worked reasonably well. When it was set up as a church it had the appearance of reverence. And when it changed to a hall it was a very social setting.

The congregation of about 25 people was made up of Methodists, Baptists, Salvationists, and a few Congregationalists. At the start I ran everything as leadership was not easily forthcoming. We evolved a Sunday School and a Youth Club and a Women's meeting which initially I led. Eventually, to my relief, a woman was found to lead the women's meeting and teachers came forth for the Sunday School. A shop owner became the treasurer and an ex -Salvationist became the Church secretary. We were blessed with a very good pianist who led the singing well. I still had the Youth Club. I was soon to learn that in a working class housing estate leadership skills were not very evident. I eventually concluded that it had been a mistake to establish in that area a Congregational Church which, by its policy and structure, demanded intellectual and democratic leadership skills. I know that might appear to be intellectual snobbery from a

young jumped-up working class person. But the main spring of a Congregational Church's way of life was its monthly meeting in which all matters of the Church life were discussed and decided. The Church life was socially democratic and theologically Christocratic. I often thought that the people on the estate would respond better to a more authoritarian churchmanship than Congregationalism.

I self-consciously and proudly wore a dog collar which, in Lincoln - a major Cathedral city, drew a degree of respect. Initially I got around on a bicycle. But within a year I bought a second hand car. It was a Standard Ten which served me for about a year, but it had a defect in the steering which I couldn't fix. I carelessly left it outside the Church for a week during a very cold snap in the weather and, as a result, the engine block cracked open. My second car was a small Ford van - a very handy and reliable vehicle which served me for a year or more, but then I got rid of it in favour of a very good Bull Nose Morris which lasted me until I was married when I bought a Ford Prefect. It needs to be noted that all these cars, except for the Ford, did not have a starter or any heating. A starting handle was the only way to start the engine.

On a social level I joined the local tennis club and also befriended a young man named, Keith Pearson, from the Tax Office. We started up a club called the 'Coffee Pot', which met every week in a hotel in the city for general chat and sociability. All kinds of social functions were arranged from those meetings which provided a rich social life. It attracted a group of about 50 very interesting, bright, single men and women from about 19-30 years of age. They organized a number of lively activities for week nights and weekends. The relationship with Betsy survived the separation of a year in America but broke up after six months of my being in Lincoln. She was living in Loughborough, a good 40 miles from Lincoln. The already strained relationship couldn't cope with the distance and the business of our lives; It was upsetting and grievous. However the Coffee Cup social group was a life saver for me. And I joined in with enthusiasm. Now fifty odd years later I am still in contact with Keith, my first friend after University days, and I visit him each time I go to the UK.

After four years I had had enough of doing everything and having little support from the local community. I felt the need to be leading a church which was older and had some

tradition and experience within its members. In April 1960 I accepted a call from Alkrington Congregational Church, just north of Manchester, and I was duly inducted.

Chapter 12

High Peak of Ministry



Alkrington Congregational Church Muddleton, Manchester

Alkrington was a 27 year old Church in a middle class suburb, tucked in between Oldham and Manchester. It had lots of rooms adjacent to the Church and plenty of space. The Church secretary and treasurer were well qualified people and very supportive. There was a very enthusiastic Sunday School leader and well led Scouts and Guides organisations. The Church membership was about 27 people and the Sunday congregation consisted of a few young families and the rest from middle age upward. However the area was opening up with young families moving in and growing and there was good potential for church growth. Their experience with the last minister had not been a happy one and they had been without leadership for 2 years. They were keen to have a minister and ready to go.

I was the right man at the right place at the right time. I was enthusiastic and had plenty of creative ideas which they were only too willing to follow. I reorganized the internal

structure of the Church, relocating the pulpit, the choir and the communion table to be more visually conducive. We had a different set-up each week until the congregation felt happy with the result. We also removed the back eight rows of seats in the body of the Church in order to bring the congregation forward. It all helped to make the worship more intimate and cheerful.

After a few months we introduced the concept of Family Church. It was an idea promoted by the Congregational Union which entailed a major visitation of all the families in and associated with the Church, inviting them to come to morning worship. They were told that they would sit as families for the first part of the service which would be styled to accommodate their needs. After the children's address the congregation would then stay for the sermon and prayers. Afterwards people could mingle before picking up their children. The visitation was a success. People had not been visited before by the Church and the response was beyond our dreams. The Church was packed. All the chairs, which had been removed, were brought back and more were moved in. Each Sunday was surprisingly the same and the Church became alive, busy and exciting.



Church parades were particularly popular with the flags and rows of uniformed children stacking up the front pews

Another good idea involved the men's

meeting which had been a bit boring. The men suggested a Christmas dinner for the Church; that the wives would do the cooking but they would do the setting up and decorating. That seemed to me to be too traditional and predictable, so I suggested that the men themselves do the cooking and serving as well as the decorating. This idea caught on. Other men outside the group joined in and the whole thing took off and was

taken out of my hands. It caught their imagination and groups of men were organized to take care of different aspects of the dinner, all to come together according to a grand plan. The event was a roaring success and went down very well with the women to great applause.

I baptized lots of babies, ran Church membership classes, did a lot of visiting and the Church grew.



The joyous couple bonded for life, hopefully very happily

I was also involved in a Clinical Theology Group and the establishment of the Samaritans in Manchester. This was the result of sad incident during my time at the Ermine Congregational Church at Lincoln. I was involved in an accident to my finger with an unforgiving lawn mower whilst mowing the Church lawn. While my finger was being fixed up by a very pleasant New Zealand Doctor we made a pleasant friendship. As a result, I met a girl friend of his whom I took out several times after he left to go back to New Zealand. She was involved in a psychological education movement run by a psychiatrist named Dr Frank Lake. The literature left lying around in her flat caught my interest, as some of it seemed to apply to myself. I linked up to the organization and consequently attended Frank Lake's lectures and seminars, which I gobbled up along with his charts and literature. When I went to Manchester I linked up with the Clinical Theology group

which was thriving there. They were mainly Anglican clergy from the central Anglican Diocese with a few Methodists and Baptists included. I became very friendly with them, particularly Basil Higginson, a rector in a central Manchester Parish and his wife, Cerridwine. He invited me to help him establish a branch of Samaritans, a telephone service for the despairing and suicidal in Manchester. I was interested in the project and excited by the prospect of creating something new. Basil asked me to take over the training programme about which I knew nothing. But I created a credible series of lectures from the principles and aims laid down by Chad Varah, the founder of the movement in London. They were just about adequate and did the job. They were refined as we went along and, incidentally, these lectures became the basis for all the counselling teaching that I evolved later in my career.

Both the Clinical Theology Movement and the Samaritans and the clergy whom I met as a result gave me new dimensions, horizons and the support I needed at the time. Clinical Theology gave me an awareness of my own psychological issues and also an insight into the psychological types and problems of people I was dealing with. Again a precursor to the career I was to take up later. They were exciting and fulfilling times and they had a lasting impact on my life and future.

Amongst the people who were influential in my life at that time was George Henshall who became Director of Samaritans and eventually left the priesthood to become a psychiatric social worker. Some years later I was to follow in his footsteps into Psychiatric Social Work. I became particularly friendly with Alan Overell, a single Anglo-Catholic priest. He lived on his own in a large rectory although there was always another man rattling around in the house. Alan was gay and did not disguise it, although he was later to marry and have a very successful married life. He was quite influential in my spiritual life and was full of wisdom. I remember teasing him regarding his high church symbolic practices, and images. He responded by saying "David, don't take too much notice of all those things. They need to be regarded only as 'windows' to the mystery of God." I have never forgotten that statement and it has provided me with a useful way for using images, myths and symbols to this day. Alan was best man at my wedding.

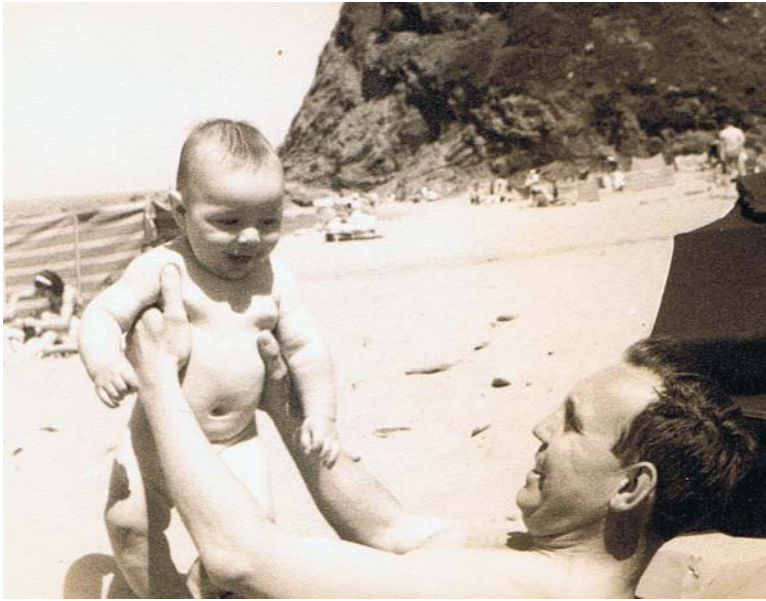
My theology during this time was pretty orthodox and traditional. However my interest in a more progressive understanding of the New Testament and Doctrine was stimulated by

John Robinson's book 'That I cannot believe'. It brought into question many of the beliefs which I already had doubts about. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth was rejected, although I was enamoured with the concept of God incarnate. (God in the flesh of a man). Also Adam and Eve, the Ascension into Heaven, Hell, and the Second Coming were also seriously questioned. John Robinson's other book, "Honest to God", also had an impact on me. I was entering a period in my religious life where I was seriously questioning the validity of the Doctrines of Christianity and the validity of the Bible. The process continued more intensely in my following ministry at Claremont Congregational Church in Perth, WA.

In September 1963 I was invited to join Basil and Cerridwin, Allan and a few others for a holiday on Iona, on the West coast of Scotland. Alan and I drove up together and met the remainder of the party up there. Amongst the group was a girl from Australia named Jenny. We hit it off immediately and continued the relationship intensely after the holiday. Jenny was a committed Christian with a similar understanding of the faith as mine and the relationship felt right. I was in love, and as she was about to return to Australia in January. I didn't want to lose her. I felt the need to propose fairly quickly and so I did.



We were married in January 1963 at Miles Platting Anglican Church by Basil, with Alan as my best man. My own Church choir sang with my organist playing the organ and my congregation turned up in mass.



In January 1965, to our great delight, Andrew was born. He was duly baptized and became very much part of the Church

My father and Aunty Maude, dad's sister.
Jenny with Andrew



Having been at Alkrington by then for five years, I had taken the Church as far as thought I could, so I considered moving on. After a discussion with Jenny, I decided to seek a settlement in Perth, Australia. The consequence was that after negotiations, I agreed to take over the Claremont Congregational Church, Perth, WA. The Rev Edwin White, the minister in residence, had been strongly advised to give up the work of ministry because of a serious heart condition. In September, later in the same year that Andrew was born, after many emotional farewells and anxious feelings, we migrated to Perth, Western Australia.

The next 40 odd years;

Chapter 13

Western Australia .



Claremont Congregational Church, on the main Stirling Highway from Perth to Fremantle was an old well established church. Its congregation was much older than Alkrington and much smaller. It had fewer children and hardly any young people. The officers of the church were older and well established in their ideas and outlook and they operated happily without much direction from me. There was not so much for me to do although adapting to a new environment and climate engaged my attention. Edwin White the previous Minister, had been a regular local broadcaster on religious subjects and was greatly admired for his talks. This had taken much of his time and brought the church quite a bit of kudos. So when it was learned that I had been involved in the Samaritan Telephone Service in the UK, the church was quite happy to give me the time and the support to start a branch in Perth.

This I did with the help of the Archbishop of Perth at a Public meeting in Royal Perth Hospital. I instituted the service in Subiaco and it is still serving to this day. It celebrated it's 40 th anniversary last year.



A full history of the organization and its activity has been written and is available in another booklet.

I was not very successful as a preacher and minister in that church. The shadow of the articulate previous minister was always in the background. I didn't know what to say to them and I couldn't make contact somehow. I tried various theological perspectives, becoming almost fundamentalist in my preaching. I went as far as alienating an important member of the congregation, a high court judge who used to blow in from time to time. A year after I arrived I was elected as Moderator of the Congregational Union of West Australia. I was elected mainly on the basis of being the minister of one of the oldest and well known of the churches which had been associated with a well known broadcaster. It was an interesting job. I was the representative dignitary of the Congregational Church at the Anzac Parade and was invited to preach at the Anglican

Cathedral. A bit of an awesome event but I didn't disgrace myself. I was also invited to visit a number of churches as Moderator and in particular to open a new church building in Busselton. These visits gave me an over view of the state of the churches in WA. They all seemed small and fragile to me and did not bode well for the future. My assessment was born out later when in 1972 the Congregational Church united with the Presbyterians and Methodists to form the Uniting Church of Australia.

Two very important events occurred during the four years at Claremont. The first was the birth of our second child, Bridget on the 10th February 1965, a year following the arrival of Andrew. This was a great event and we were highly delighted with her safe arrival. Then four years later, on 22nd October, Rebecca arrived. This was another wonderful event and we were again delighted. All three were active, healthy and happy children. We were now a busy and complete family and I was very proud.



*Bridget, Rebecca, Andrew
At play in the backyard at Thompson St, Claremont*

I continued reading the new theology which was coming into popular paperback print, such as :- 'The New Reformation' by John Robinson, 'Jesus Christ and Mythology' by Robert Bultman, 'The New testament in Current Study' by Reginald Fuller and the 'Guide

to the Debate about God' by David Jenkins. This reading coupled with my dissatisfaction with my church moved me on towards a more radical theological stance and a questioning regarding the usefulness of the church ministry. I felt frustrated in my contact with the people and couldn't get past a superficial relationship with them. Pastoral care seemed not possible as I couldn't get them to open up. Another issue which engaged me was the insecurity of not owning a house.

After four years as a fairly ineffective Minister, there occurred a serious altercation with the deacons. It concerned a decision which I had made which they reversed when I was absent on holiday. I felt that it was the last straw in my inability to lead the church and I decided to give in my resignation. In a consequent discussion with Jenny we made a decision to return to the UK. I saw this as an opportunity to change the direction of my life and the mode of my Church Ministry. I decided to become a Pauline Tent Minister. Paul earned his own living by tent making as he worked as a missionary. I would also earn my own living, provide my own accommodation and give a part time ministry to a church. For work to bring finance I decided to retrain as a social worker. I would follow in the footsteps of George Henshall and do a Psychiatric Social Workers' course at Manchester University. For six months, following my leaving Claremont, I worked temporarily as the Minister at Nollamara Congregational Church. During that time I was planning to return to the UK and to return to University studies in Manchester.

Part 3 Part time Ministry and change of direction

Chapter 14

The UK interlude



In September 1971 we all flew back to the UK. This is the family ready to depart out of Perth Airport;

We rented a flat in a large grey Stockport Anglican Church Rectory. The rector had been an old friend of Jenny's. It was a traumatic time for the whole family. Stockport was a harsh and drab industrial town; the children were registered in the local school and I assessed that they were too happy. I began at Manchester University Psychiatric Social Work Dept. as a student. Jenny also began a course in Drama and Literature. A little later I began a part time ministry with the Stockport Reformed Church Team Ministry. Initially it was a fairly progressive group of clergy and responded to suggestions for more modern hymns and recent songs. Apart from this the ministry was very mundane although the companionship of the other clergy was a plus.

Following my graduation with a certificate in Psychiatric Social Work I became employed by the Salford Social Services, (a dormitory town of Manchester) and seconded to

Prestwich Mental Hospital. I was responsible for the care of all psychiatric cases from Salford, entering and leaving the hospital. I was dealing with simple schizophrenia and paranoid schizophrenics who had deteriorated and needed to be hospitalised again. I was required to organize the doctor, the ambulance and sometimes the police in order to get them into hospital. I was also involved with caring for alcoholics, hysterical suicidal attempts and people wrongly committed to the closed wards of the old mental hospital. It was a scary, exciting and interesting job wherein I felt that I was doing something important and I enjoyed it.



We bought a house in Horwood Rd, Salford, Lancashire and settled down to an ordinary life. It was a two storied three bedroom house. The great advantage was that it had central heating through- out.

It was quite nice to come home from work and not have to go out again for church or Samaritan business and be able to sit at home

and watch 'tele'. Not far away was a park with children's swings etc. Our three kids were in the habit of skiving off there, a habit which we didn't object to as it seemed quite safe. However it was not to be. Andrew rushed home one day to report that Bridget had had an accident. We rushed to the park and discovered that she had caught her foot in a swing and had broken it. An ambulance was called and she was taken to hospital where she under went an operation. The procedure was successful and Bridget recovered well. Apart from this drama life was all very cosy .

We made a trip to Bristol to see the family of aunts and my father.



*My father & Self with
Andrew, Rebecca &
Bridget in the back
garden.*

*73 Downend Rd Bristol.
UK*

Dad and the children got on well and chatted happily together. (There is a recorded tape of some of that conversation amongst the stored tapes).

On the whole life was easy and pleasant. Although on the other hand it was a bit dull. Eventually I found the work in the team ministry was not very interesting and not at all challenging. I was bored with it. Although we enjoyed much of the life in Manchester and the job was satisfying we both missed Australia. England was not the same for me. It seemed crowded yet connecting with people was difficult. The summer holiday was not very pleasant as the beach was grotty and the weather miserable. After the sunshine and open and relaxed life style of Perth, England was dull and uninteresting. Following one particular wet and miserable week of weather and having mental flash backs to Cottesloe on a sunny day, we both agreed to return to Perth. Our application for an assisted passage to Australia was eventually processed and on November 1973, we all flew back to Perth to an unknown future.

The Religious journey Part 3

Chapter 15

Australia part time Ministry

On arrival we stayed in a beach hut up at Warwick. This was long before the development of that area it was quite undeveloped and natural. It was very pleasant to wake up in the morning to the sound of the waves and be able to wander 50 yards to the water. A delightful three months was spent there, whilst I worked at the Community Welfare Department in Fremantle as a Welfare Officer. It was not a very pleasant job and only bearable because of the summer dwelling shack.

Later we moved into a vacant **manse** in Stock Road, Melville. Whilst there, we linked up with the Applecross Congregational Church, ministered by Dorothy Wacker. She was a very innovative worker and I enjoyed sharing the ministry with her.

A year later in the summer of 1975, Dorothy felt that it would be a good move to join in union with the Canning Highway Presbyterian Church to form the Canning Highway Uniting Church. The Official Union of the Presbyterian and the Congregational Churches of Australia was about to happen and she decided to jump the gun. After a further year working with Dorothy she left to take up a call in the Eastern States. Late in 1977 I took on a caretaker role in the Church and led it until a new fulltime Minister was called. This was an enjoyable time as the congregation was receptive to my preaching and the new hymns which I introduced. They had been well trained by Dorothy. By now I was working at Murdoch University as Staff and Student Counsellor and we were living in a new house we had built in Bullcreek. We had built for a secure and supportive niche and life was good.

The new Minister in Canning Highway Uniting Church, who arrived nine months later, was an interesting preacher, but quite conservative. Many in the congregation were dissatisfied and I had difficulty in working with him. He also had problems in working with me but was very gracious about it.

I had in my mind a radical concept of Ministry which I discussed with several of the more progressive people in the Church. I put forward the idea that the Church as a body was the Minister. It was an extension of the congregational concept of Christocracy - that, although there could be a leader or chair person, the Church body was the authority and indeed could be the Minister. Any elected person from the body of the congregation could take the services, visit the sick, and minister. The Body of the Church could take on the role of minister.

The idea took off. In Sept. 1979, 12 members of the congregation led by myself separated off in a simple ceremony of commissioning. We worshiped in the Bullcreek Primary School. All the functions of each Sunday worship were divided up between the whole congregation in a special meeting, on what was called a 'dob in' sheet. Tasks, such as children's teacher, prayer leader, Bible reader, preacher, tea-maker, offertory, coordinator, were taken on as people were able. The congregation was divided into threes for pastoral care purposes. Each person had responsibility to care for two others and each person had two people looking out for them.

The congregation grew and involved about 60 – 80 people altogether. Many were delighted to do the different tasks which they had never done before and it was a very lively experiment. The established Church did not know how to deal with us and continually encouraged us to go back into the Church proper.

Late in 1980 the marriage between Jenny and I broke up and I left the marital home. It was a time of great stress and pain. The only person who was with me in this awful time was Alex Metropolis. I was too much in stress to be able to look for a place to live and it was he who found me a unit in Mill Point Rd.

I continued working in the Pilgrim Church, although my heart was no longer in it and I was feeling very depressed. By the end of 1982 the experiment began to lag. We had attracted a lot of needy people and the drain on peoples' resources was taking a toll. At this time the divorce between Jenny and I was finalized and I was finding it hard to cope with life. I could no longer be involved in the Church. Because of my anxious state of

mind I had given up all work in the Samaritans months ago. In June 1983 the Pilgrim Church folded up and people went off to other churches, mainly Manning Uniting Church.

I subsequently wrote up a full descriptive report on the life and structure of the Pilgrim experiment - copies of which are available.

I entered no man's land. I didn't go to Church or attend any church functions. I received no contact or help from the church at large. However, my religious faith was intact and I did not feel let down by God nor estranged from God. I realised that my position was my own doing. I knew that the pain would not last forever and that it was my own problem to work through. My main religious activity was times of solitary meditation wherein I gained some degree of peace.

Eventually I started attending Manning Uniting Church where many of the Pilgrim people had joined. The Minister, Ian Swanson, was not too happy with my being in the congregation and didn't acknowledge me as a Minister until he later decided to move to another parish. He then, in May 1987, inducted me as an Associate Minister and not long after left for another church. I then looked after the Church until a new Minister was called.

In 1988 Joyce Wilkinson was ordained into Manning United Church and I relinquished my role as Minister-in-charge. Joyce did not see herself as a preacher and was glad to share the pulpit with me. Later in 1989 a team ministry was formed consisting of myself, Andrew Glenn, and two others (I cannot remember their names). One was an elderly retired Minister and the other was a young student. We worked out a regular preaching plan which involved matching themes and following a set of subjects. It worked well and sometimes we would have a discussion or a debate in the pulpit. It was good fun.

The Religious Journey Part 4

Chapter 16

Beyond Orthodoxy

At this time I in 1990 I became interested in the theology of Matthew Fox. He was a Catholic Priest and was teaching what was termed "Creation Spirituality" - meaning that God was within all creation but also separate from it. He called it Panetheism. He wrote a book called "Original Blessing" which had considerable impact on me. The Original Blessing is the indwelling of the Spirit of God at birth in all people. It contrasted with the notion of Original Sin which has been an important doctrine since St Augustine.

I was so impressed with Mathew Fox at a conference at W.A. University, that from August I spent 4 months at his International Conference Centre in Oakland, San Francisco, during my long service leave. This was a very exciting time. There were 60 or 70 other students from all denominations and parts of the USA and the world and of both sexes. There were lectures on New Testament Theology, the Environment, Dreams, Circle dancing and Spirituality. There were visits to Yosemite, San Francisco, and lots of interaction between the participants. It was a very rich experience and made a lasting impact on my life.

On my return I felt that I had to tell my story. As a result, from April 1992 until 1995 I gave a series of courses on Creation Spirituality at St. Mary's Convent in Nedlands. There were courses which involved people translating the stories of the New Testament into their own personal everyday lives. I did a series on the "Four Paths", postulated by Matthew Fox. These were called Via Positiva - the Incarnation or God within; Via Negativa -The Cross or the Emptiness; Via Creativa - Divinisation and Via Transformation or Compassion. For each Easter and Christmas I also ran a series of courses. These sought to engage people on a personal level, by encouraging them to identify with the activities and people in the stories of the New Testament. This was discussed and acted out on an individual and group level. It was a very powerful method and was quite successful.

The authorities at the nunnery eventually grew suspicious of the kind of theology being promulgated in my courses and ceased to accommodate us. By then the courses had reached their 'used by date' and I stopped running them. (Details are in the files in the filing cabinet.)

However, I continued writing articles on Radical Theology for the Uniting Church Newspaper - "Western Impact". These spanned a period extending from 1992 to 1997 and continued much of what I had learned and was influenced by in my contact with Matthew Fox. They were unpopular with some of the readers and they would write letters to the editor protesting against what they considered false and heretical beliefs. I was a real bad boy! I never replied to them, thinking that they would not be amenable to debate. On the other hand I often met people who expressed appreciation of what I wrote. I later compiled some of the essays into a booklet which I had printed. Not many were sold and I gave many away. More than one way of killing a cat.!

(Copies are available in the side cupboard.)

In May 1997 I married Bridget and Graham in Manning Uniting Church. This was one of the last functions I presided at as a Minister in that church. Later in the year I decided to leave Manning and attend the Subiaco Uniting Church. I had been living in Subiaco for over a year and felt the need to sink religious roots locally. At that time the Minister there was encouraging the congregation to sell up and develop a more experimentally adventurous type of church life. The church building was eventually sold and the congregation moved into temporary accommodation in the Youth Centre in an old building next to the park in Bagot Rd. The Minister then left and went to live in Margaret River - well out of reach. A new Minister, Don Dowling, was called to plan and start off a new concept of church activity. I joined in, helping with the Sunday services and on the planning committee. It was an interesting time and the people (which was most of the congregation who, by the way were all pretty elderly), were very enthusiastic and innovative. We spent about a year planning and plotting. In fact we called ourselves "The Plotters Group". We eventually produced the following Mission Statement for the establishment of a Church Café.

Mandate.

“The Subiaco Uniting Church will establish a Café providing a stimulating, open, accepting and comfortable place where people can gather and develop relationships, seek and experience a Christian Presence within the Café.

The café will offer opportunities for:
people to meet and enjoy quality service and dining,
friendship and encouragement
counselling and care,
sharing stories and journeys of faith.

Church and community to have a common meeting place.

In 1999 a café was purchased in Onslow Rd, Shenton Park. It had been functioning as a café for some time and was called ‘The Warehouse Café’. It boasted a small warehouse at the back of the eating area where they had sold antique furniture. Services were run every Sunday evenings and once a month on a Sunday morning. This latter service was arranged as a special celebration. We spent a lot of time planning a series of special monthly Sunday morning worship themes extending over a six month period. These were celebrated while people sat at tables in the café. Don was a guitar player and entertainer. He was also a dab hand at computer projectors. As a result, he was able to project all kinds of themes with accompanying music. I assisted with the more traditional biblical stuff and the prayers. There was considerable congregational participation, discussions, circle dances, questionnaires and involvement in any way we could think up. These were a great success and we regularly attracted good congregations. I also instigated a monthly discussion group on ‘Creation Spirituality’. It was an open discussion group allowing people to express opinions and beliefs freely without rejection. This was also successful and the meeting continues to this day although the church closed in 2009. Another venture I started was a breakfast discussion group called ‘Spirituality on Toast’. This was initially successful but for some reason faded out after several months. Similarly a lunch time book club didn’t get off the ground and collapsed after a few weeks.

Another venture of mine was to erect a display at the back of the café portraying the religious theme of the day. I erected displays relating to the Crucifixion, Cornucopia and Christmas amongst other themes. They were moderately successful but required a lot of organization and work.

The church venture was quite successful during the time of Don's ministry although more could have been done and experimented with had the planning group continued and been given more power. But Don didn't have the energy and time to run it and he discouraged it functioning without him.

In 2004 Don left and John Berendrect took over. This marked a major change in the life of the café. The Sunday morning celebrations eventually ceased and emphasis was given to running the café and encouraging local voluntary groups to use its facilities. The only worship offered was a traditional service held on a Sunday evening. It was supported by a few elderly people with whom I had little in common. My eyesight did not allow me to read anyway to follow hymns which were out of step with my own theology. I eventually stopped attending as it seemed to have no relevance to where I was at in my spiritual life. Although I have continued to attend the monthly discussion group up to this day I ceased attending worship.

I have since attended the Wembley Downs Uniting Church several times. It reminded me of Wembley Park Congregational Church which I attended in 1949. It had similar modern building structure and lemon coloured pews, similar middle-class, middle-age-upwards congregation, same collection of hymns and a conservative sermons. In attending I felt that I had slipped back 60 years in time. This I cannot do and I no longer attend traditional Uniting Church. However I am still a religious person and have a spiritual hunger which is not truly satisfied.

The search continues.

Chapter 17

A full circle. Not quite.

So now in 2010 I do not go to worship anywhere and do nothing in the service of the Church. Except, occasionally I attend Choral Mass at the Anglican Cathedral. I believe that I am still confronted with myth and symbols which I cannot take at all in any literal sense; but they are presented in such a manner that I can use them as vehicles for and windows to the Mystery of the source of all Being. I do go to a religious book club which seeks to study and discuss progressive theology and I find that very rewarding. I will also attend occasionally the Unitarian Church meeting. They have some interesting topics and discussions but hardly any worship. This suits me. So, where am I in religious terms and in belief?

In the first half of my Ministry I held on to the traditional creedal beliefs. I was happy with them and enjoyed my ministry. But during the second half of my ministerial life, especially after leaving the fulltime ministry and doing it part time, I then found myself challenging the creedal statements. I also exposed myself to biblical criticism and more radical theology. More recently I have taken an interest in Modern Scientific awareness of the Universe, development of life on earth and micro-biology. The result is that I am confronted with Mystery on all sides. I guess that I am now non-religious in terms of church going and believing in the main doctrines of the Christian Faith. I do not attend any church to worship. Although I may attend the Anglican Cathedral very occasionally, I cannot give assent to any of the Nicene Creed and I cannot believe in a Deity 'up and out there'. I would like to believe in a 'Divine Thou' I could relate to and I sometimes talk to that fantasy. My present belief position is that the Universe is a mystery and the source and continuance of the Universe is a mystery. I want to believe in an Ultimate Being and source of all energy who is intimately involved in all life and matter and that there is no separation between all life and the ultimate source of Being. This is best expressed in the latter part of my last essay.

Quote essay , 1.2.2009

"The Kingdom of God is in your midst" Luke Chap 17. v21

Supposing, if Jesus had had the knowledge that we have today. That there are billions of worlds, galaxies and vast distances which are beyond comprehension and that our world is like a mere speck of sand. And with the realisation of the inter-dependence of all life on the planet which has evolved over billions of years through selection and mutations of the DNA, would He not have said something different about the Kingdom of God? I suggest that Jesus would have said "That Supreme Being and source of all energy we call God, which is beyond all time and space, is dynamically involved within creation and is within you now. There is no separation between you the Creator and all creation. We are all one. There is only 'At-one-ment' of all creation with God in the midst. "If we take this statement as valid, then prayer takes on a different meaning.

Instead of talking prayer to a presence up and out there, it becomes a process of communicating with God in the world around us. It is a process of communicating with the environment in which we live - the plants, insects, animals and, of course, the people we meet in our daily life. It is being aware of the immediate world around us which is permeated with the mystery of the dynamic energy of the Creator. Prayer occurs when we are being aware and responsive (or loving) manner to the environment facing us in the moment.

Saint Francis of Assisi portrayed this form of prayer in his attention he showed to the world of nature.

The Eucharist or Holy Communion also takes on a different meaning. Instead of taking the body and blood of a risen Christ, we now accept the reality of the atonement with the Supreme Being and Creation.

Drinking the wine and eating the bread (which is symbolic of the life force) portrays the reality of our 'at-one-ment' with each other and the mysterious creative force of the Universe. It is saying 'yes' to the ultimate relationship we have with the Being of God and all creation.

Jesus is the one who incarnates this truth into our world and no crucifixion can destroy it. The reality of the presence of the Supreme Being and energy in all life survives the death of the body. Not in a coming back to a bodily resurrection, but in the reality of the ongoing life of all creation. - Christ was and is the giver and the embodiment of the truth of the 'at-one-ment' and its reality. The hope offered by the Christ story is that the immanence of the Mystical Supreme Being is creative, evolutionary, and dare I say, progressive. The rise of the human race and the progressive nature of humans in terms of their social organisation and striving for justice is evidence. The tremendous advance in science and knowledge is all a testimony to the immanence of that Mystical Divine energy manifesting in the universe. There is evidence of momentum to greater and higher forms of life.

Albeit for us, painfully slow and at times retrogressive, it is hard to see this, particularly at the moment with current world events. But the time scale is not that of human desire and is likely to be far longer that we can conceive.

Already there is vast improvement in living conditions for the vast proportion of people in the western world, with enough food, housing education, and general peace and order which we never have had before in the history of the human race. There is still a long way to go in the rest of the world but they will catch up in time. The world is a becoming an interdependent trade and economic unit as never before. This will continue despite climate warming and exhausting fossil fuels."

This is what I have now come to believe so far concerning the Mystery of a God and the Universe. What then do I make of my conversion to Christianity, my becoming a Minister

of religion and all those years of preaching the Gospel? My reflection is first on my becoming Christian. It is that I was converted to a belief system and a way of life which was very appealing. It offered me standards and an anchor at a time of life when I was desperately alone, directionless and very vulnerable. When I left home in Bristol at the age of 19 and arrived in London, I landed in a middle-class social setting in which Christianity was a central part. I found both the middle-class culture and the Christian religion intellectually challenging and satisfying to my being.

The call to the Ministry was a realization that this role provided me with a path into that way of life and a niche which I sorely needed. I was desperately unhappy in engineering and I could see no other way of going forward in life except through the Ministry. I consequently found it a considerable challenge, an interesting life and much satisfaction as a result. One could say that God called through the extremities of despair and the life-line of culture and education. I can also claim that what we term God has worked through me over the years through my ministry in helping others to meet their own emotional and spiritual needs. I can live with that!

To be true to myself I cannot believe in the orthodox statement about a God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. However my person needs the old mythology and terminology, for comfort and peace of mind. So, in the absence of alternative modern images and concepts of the source of all being I give myself permission to use some of the myths and phrases as a means, a window and an entree to that which cannot be described, proven or understood.

So now in 1.3.2009 I live in and with Paradox.

Where to now? It is clear that I will not get very much further in my religious journey by intellectual means alone. It has led me to a barren and lonely place which although fascinating and exciting leaves me bereft. The alternative is to explore spirituality and the God question on the level of emotion, feeling and as Eckhart Tolle expounds, in the level of Being. This requires more time spent in Meditation and exploring the experience of being through that process. Also it means being more alive to the immediacy of experience in everyday living. I can also explore in the area of imagery through pictures and created modern myths. There is also the possibility of finding something satisfactory

in some of the symbolic worship practiced in some of the more orthodox and ceremonial worship services. It is a question of finding those that can serve me as 'window and vehicles' to the Mystery beyond. My spiritual journey to this end I now proceed.

End of 'Religious Journey' Parts 1-4

Chapter 18

Return to Secular Australia

England was too wet and cloudy, Salford was too bleak and soulless, and neither of us felt settled. We longed for the bright sun, the openness and the beaches of Western Australia. So, in November 1973 I resigned from Salford Social Services and we sold the house and did a second migration to Australia. Early in November on a freezing muggy night in Salford we drove in a very cold car to celebrate Guy Faulke's bonfire night. We were rugged up with all possible clothing. A week later we were in North Perth, entering a car which was too hot to touch, sweating in shorts and tee shirt.

I did not enter the full-time Ministry on my return. True to my decision to practice a Pauline Tent Maker Ministry (that is a part time ministry), I obtained a job as a Welfare Officer at the Fremantle office of Social Services of Western Australia. Having achieved a Certificate in Psychiatric Social Work at Manchester University during my three year stay in the UK, I had hoped that I would be employed as a Social Worker. However the rigid Social Work Institute in WA would not recognise the qualification. This was upsetting and demoralising. As a result I was stuck with the lower category and status of Welfare Worker on a lower salary. Compared with the task I had in Manchester. It was not very demanding, nor interesting. It was mainly administrative and short-term welfare. I was not allowed to do any counselling in depth. However it was a job and gave me an adequate income. Initially we lived in a beach hut at Whitfords and, being summer, it was a glorious place to be. The kids loved it and both Jenny and I revelled in the bliss of summer sun, sand and sea. Each day to drive all along the coast road to Fremantle was real pleasure. However, after two months we reluctantly moved into an unused **Manse** in Bicton. I linked up with the Rev. Dorothy Wacker, (now who was the new Minister at Applecross Congregational Church). I worked part-time with her as described in chapter 12 and fulltime at Fremantle Welfare office. In November 1974, Jenny and I built our own house at 18 Vigors Ave, Bullcreek. It was a great house with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large front room and kitchen. We landscaped the back garden and seeded a lawn. The front garden path we lined with roses in which I took some pride. Later we

put in a swimming pool and later again we built on a study. It was a good house and very suitable for our needs.



18 Vigors Ave, Bullcreek.
Perth.

We enjoyed this house. We were one of the first to build in Bull Creek and initially had no neighbours.

It was a wild and woolly place to live to begin with and only a nearby garage to supply any household needs. The children attended the local primary school and made friends with the few children in the area. Eventually, we had neighbours on one side - an Indian family with a little girl, with whom we got on well. The other side remained empty for a long time but was a favourite play area for the children. Not having any shops nearby was a severe inconvenience and eventually, when the population had grown and nothing was being put in, we held a protest outside the land agents who were responsible for the lack of shops. With placards and plenty of shouting we got our point across. A year later we got a few shops which now, years later, has grown into a full size shopping Mall.

In December 1974 I began employment at the new Murdoch University which was about to open in the pine forest nearby. I was employed as the Staff and Student Counsellor and I was very excited and very pleased that I had been selected. The University was to open after Christmas with about 600 students, so I was in at the preparation stages. To start with I was given a large empty room with adjoining office for a secretary. The rooms were soon furnished and eventually a secretary was employed.

There was not a lot to do in the early years and in 1975 the University allowed me to take a day off each week to spend directing the Samaritans Suicide centre in Subiaco. On my return to Australia I had linked up again with the Samaritan organisation and eventually became it's Director.

I had already enrolled at WA University in order to do a Masters in Social Psychology in



order that I could be accepted by the Social Workers Association. I continued the painful study until I finally finished in April 1977. The thesis was on 'Local Authority participation in regions under the labour Government. 1972 -1975'. I was 50 years of age and I was very glad to get it over and done with.

Later I was encouraged to design and run courses in Lay counselling skills. These were successful, having an attendance of 25 - 30 participants for each course. I eventually set up

courses in both elementary and advanced counselling skills plus a No 3 course in even more advanced counselling, bordering on therapy. I greatly enjoyed creating and running these courses and they appeared to be well appreciated. These were conducted during the whole of the time I was at Murdoch. Eventually at the age of 60, when I went on half-time work, I then set up these courses outside the University. I rented rooms

from Eric Harrison in Hay St, Subiaco. Eric was running Meditation courses. This arrangement worked out well for several years until I retired fully.

It was during this time that I started an experiment in Church life called "The Pilgrim Uniting Church". A group of about a dozen people broke away from Canning Highway Uniting Church and started worshiping in the Local School in Bullcreek. The worship and organisation of the church was divided up amongst the congregation. Every decision was made by the congregation and all the work and worship was done by the congregation. The experiment was quite successful for several enjoyable years and grew to 40 or 50 members. (A full report has been written up and is available). What with working at Murdoch, designing training courses, directing the Samaritan organisation, running the Bullcreek Church, I was a very busy boy. Too busy I guess for the family's sake and this no doubt contributed to the eventual break-down of the marriage.

Murdoch was a very pleasant place to be working in. It was small enough to be able to know a goodly number of people. The academic staff did not stand on ceremony, refusing to attach their status to their names on the doors to their rooms. They mixed well with students and administrative staff alike in the one restaurant. There were few buildings in the early days and the main meeting areas were the grassed tree area at the centre of the University and the cafe. The atmosphere was relaxed and convivial. The buildings were rather bare being of a light grey colour but this was being offset by the natural Australian bush planted all around.

The task of counsellor was not very onerous. The problems I had to deal with were nothing approaching the seriousness or the radical nature of those I had to deal with at Fremantle. They were certainly not as extreme as those I had met with in Salford Social Services. Much of the counselling was a little boring and I was glad to be able to do the Samaritan work and run courses. I had a good relationship with the Professor of Psychology and staff downstairs and used to frequently go down for coffee. I developed a good friendship with Doug Savage, the Professor of Psychology, and also Berne Bernbrourr, a lecturer, and also with Sally Coombes, Doug's secretary. She kept me abreast with all the gossip and played tennis with me during lunch time. Both Berne and Sally and I have met up again and renewed our friendship at Cottesloe Beach, now that

11 years later I am fully retired. We all became part of a swimming and breakfast group on Saturday and Sunday mornings at Cottesloe. However, sadly for us all, Sally recently died after suffering a prolonged period of ill health.

As time went on the campus grew, more buildings were erected and more staff were employed. More students attended and life became busier. Accommodation was opened up on campus which eventually became a large village. The counselling centre was moved to another location and aligned with the Chaplaincy service. Later again, in the late 1980s, a purpose-built centre was constructed in which the Nursing service was included, together with the counselling and Chaplaincy. Another counsellor was then employed. The University by this time was getting on to dealing with four or five thousand students and was a very busy place.

At the age of sixty, I worked half time, being at Murdoch all day Monday, Tuesday and on Wednesday mornings only. On the other days in the week I conducted training courses for voluntary workers at Eric Harrison's rooms in Subiaco.

Chapter 19

End of the Marriage.

In many respects the marriage was successful. We produced three great children who have grown into mature and pleasant adults. Jenny was a good mother and kept an efficient home. We had a very nice house and a well-run family life. However, I worked hard at a variety of projects which meant that I was not home a lot. I was more interested in doing things outside the home, (work, Samaritans, Training Courses and Church work). I guess I was not really a home body and was finding satisfaction elsewhere. Relations between Jenny and I became more distant. Fortunately she took charge of the home life but I eventually began to feel estranged and stressed by it. Matters came to the point when I did not feel at home, nor did I feel there was a place for me there. Intimate relations between us were never really satisfactory as far as I was concerned and they became less so as time went on. I was unhappy in the marriage and felt desolate and depressed. Eventually, towards the end, I had a relationship with a woman - a friend of the family. I am sure Jenny suspected this. In May 1980 we went as a family on holiday to Rottneest. It was an unhappy time for me. I felt stressed and imploded upon. Then at a week-end psychological workshop with 15 other people at York, I was exposed to a lot of confrontation and I realised that I had a real problem with intimacy and closeness. It was then that I had a terrible premonition of the end of the marriage. I realised that for some deep psychological reason within me, the situation was becoming unbearable and that a split was unavoidable. I remember feeling incredibly sad and painfully distraught. Communication between us was pretty miserable and eventually Jenny took the step to finally end it all. She said little but communicated by non verbal means. She cut off her wedding ring and left it on my side of the bed shelf then went and slept on the settee in the lounge. The message was clear, but we did not talk about it. We did go and have one session with a Psychiatrist - arranged by Jenny which was totally useless. Soon after, with little discussion, it was agreed that I would go and live separately for a couple of months and then review the situation. There was very little discussion between us about our whole relationship. Communication was mostly by body language and bad emotional atmosphere. As a professional counsellor I was

playing it very badly and not at all as I had taught my students. I was too much in confusion, anxiety and fear to be able to create a discussion.

Leaving home was very difficult. I couldn't do it. Alex Metropolis, a long-time friend, found me some accommodation down on MillPoint Rd, South Perth, in a single bedroomed unit. With a suitcase of clothes, a couple of saucepans and a frying pan, (given to me by Rebecca who was being as helpful as she could) I walked out of my home, marriage, children and beautiful house. It was September 1980 and I was a month off 54 years of age. I felt an awful pain of failure and desolation, but there was no other way. Jenny and I then kept in touch, meeting weekly over dinner in a restaurant. I saw the children regularly by inviting them to my unit each week. Finding things to do with them was a problem. Jenny disliked me entering the family home and was angry whenever I did so to clean the pool. After two months Jenny announced that she wanted a divorce, the house sold and that she would keep the children. I was surprised and asked her to reconsider over a couple of weeks, as I was hoping that we could sort things out. However, she told me that her decision was final and I had to accept it. I suspected that she had no intention of having any reconciliation before I even left home. I was not happy with this decision but realised that in my mentally confused and troubled state, it was for the best. However, whilst on a holiday with Andrew and his friend up at Kalbarri National Park a week or two later, I wrote a letter to Jenny. In it I expressed remorse, contrition and asked for reconciliation. After it was written I realised that the relationship would not work and that I could not go back to live with her. I consequently destroyed the letter. We then went through the agonising process of solicitors and the divorce proceedings, selling the house and finally ending up with divorce papers.

The year of 1980/81 was a period of pain and grief. I found that I had to give up work in Samaritans and I eventually withdrew from leading the Bull Creek Church. I ceased going to church altogether. Not that anyone noticed, as no-one visited or rang me from the central Church body. I also suspended running training courses for several months. I withdrew from several relationships, particularly those people in the UK who knew both of us. I was too engaged in my struggle with feelings of grief, desolation and abandonment (old childhood stuff) to be involved in anything requiring much effort. I told no-one in the UK, not even my father and sister. However, they all found out as Jenny seems to have written to them all. Although I was not suicidal I certainly considered it as

an option for the future if I couldn't cope. Fortunately my world at Murdoch was intact and supportive of me and I eventually gained strength from restarting my programme of courses. These, plus the support I got from Alex Metropolis, the Glenn's and a few others enabled me to survive. I also linked up with a couple of singles groups and enjoyed the friendships I found there. During this time I continued regularly to see the children once a week. Picking them up and dropping them off at the door was particularly unpleasant and painful. I would call at their home and wait outside for them to join me. We then drove to my unit where I endeavoured to entertain them with limited success. Later I would drop them off and desolately return to the emptiness of my flat. I seriously considered returning to the UK but felt the need to be near my children. To the satisfaction of Jenny and the children I stayed and consequently took out Australian Citizenship.

Chapter 20

Life as a single person

Eventually in June 1981 I took out a mortgage, bought a three-bed-roomed house in Davilak Cres, Manning. This was a good move as I was able to settle and make a home for myself. It was during this time in November 1983 that my father, at the age of 94, became ill and was taken into hospital. As a result I made a trip to the UK and sorted out his affairs. He had become quite ill with dysentery and was now unable to look after himself. I arranged for him to go into a Congregational Nursing Home up in Bishopston Rd, quite near to where he was brought up. He was happily settled there until he died in October 1988 at the age of 99, from kidney failure.

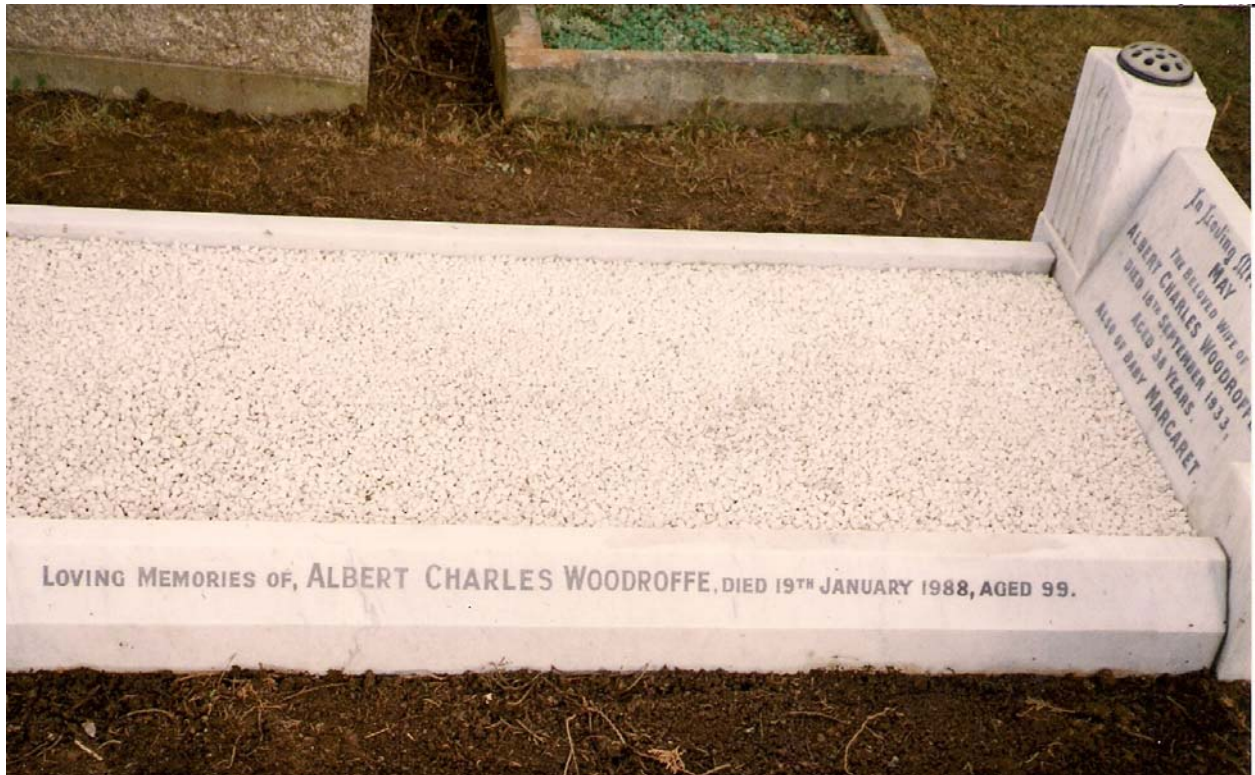
Whilst in the UK I took the opportunity to visit Sheila in Scotland. She and her husband had become friends to Jenny and I several years previously. She had since divorced her husband and had returned to her home in Scotland. I always had a soft spot for Sheila and was keen to take the opportunity of seeing her again. So off on the train to Edinburgh I went. We had a very beautiful time together and we consequently became intimate friends. We continued to develop the relationship by phone and letter when I returned to Perth. Eventually she decided to retire and come out to Australia to live. In December 1983 she and her two children arrived and came and lived with me in Davilak Crescent. This was successful and her two girls (12 and 9 years of age) settled in very well. When the house next door became vacant we jointly bought it. I felt the need for space and consequently moved in. Sheila was not happy at that although I never found out why we bought the house if we were not going to use it. This was a mistake on my part as the relationship never fully recovered from the division which happened. Subsequently Sheila went back to Scotland in March of 1985. It was an upsetting time for me although she seemed to be looking forward to her return. Later that year I took long service leave and went to the UK to visit her. We went on a very pleasant four week holiday touring the UK. It was very bonding and repaired a lot of the schism which had occurred. The result was that she returned to Perth a few months later and bought a house in Applecross. We continued a very close relationship, but it is clear that we cannot live together. I guess it is my reluctance to commit to that kind of close

relationship which causes the stress between us and although we struggled with the relationship, it finally ended in December 1985. It had lasted for two years. In the main it was good and I have ever since regretted that I could not make it work. It is a strange coincidence that soon after this break up, at the beginning of the new year in 1986, I was involved in a major car crash. A car came through a red light at Canning Bridge from the west and hit me on the left hand side, as I was turning right. My car was bounced onto the car on my right and back again onto the oncoming car. It all seemed to last forever and I wondered when the collision was going to stop. Whilst sitting there dazed and battered a police car drove up and a policeman enquired about my health. Good question! I was not sure, but I did not seem to have any bones broken and there was no blood anywhere as far as I could tell. I was dazed and bewildered, but managed to get out of the car and sit on the curb side. The driver of the other car was dragged out of his car very roughly, his head banging on the roadway, and was verbally abused by the police. He was an aboriginal and quite drunk. He had been followed by the police for some time. Pity he had not been apprehended before he got to me. My car was a complete write off and was taken away to a scrap yard. I was taken to Royal Perth Hospital for a check up. Apart from bruises all over and a very stiff neck and a feeling of total bewilderment, I was OK. Why me? What was I being and thinking to have attracted such disaster into my life? I was still grieving over the loss of Sheila and feeling blue but not raging or suicidal, so why did that car hit me? I could not come up with any satisfactory answer, nor do I to this day.

In 1984 My Aunt Ada died, leaving her son Roy to live on his own. She had been my favourite aunt. She had been lively, cheerful and motherly during my childhood days. In the latter years she had been rather a sad person and towards the end she had become a bit deaf and partially blind. I believe that she had Macular Degeneration of the eyes. She could only recognise me properly when she was up close. I guess she is evidence for me that MDA is partially an inherited disease - something which I now suffer from. Roy had always been looked after by his mother. He had never got married nor had a regular girl friend. When she died I think that he did not care very much for life, and although he had a heart condition he smoked a lot and allowed himself to run down in health. Apparently he did have a lady who looked after him, but I don't think there was much romance in the relationship. Three years after his mother's death, in 1987, my cousin died of a heart attack.

About this time I was beginning to attend church again. I went to the Manning Uniting Church in Manning. Ian Swanson was the Minister and he was not too happy to have me in his congregation. However I discovered that several of the Bullcreek congregation were attending there, including Andrew and Odile Glenn. The Minister got used to me after a while and eventually asked me to preach for him, then inducted me as Minister in Association. However it was not long after this that he left the church and I took responsibility for the ministry. This lasted until the new minister, Joyce Wilkins, was inducted in July 1988. I continued to be involved as a preaching team was formed consisting of Joyce, myself, Andrew Glenn and someone else (more is written relating to my church life, my stay with Matthew Fox in California, then the courses I ran in Creation Spirituality on my return to Perth, in the essay "My religious life." Part 4).

At this time I was continuing a relationship with Carol McGee. It was an affectionate relationship in which Carol was very warm and caring. It was what I needed at the time and gave me emotional balance. The relationship varied in intensity over several years. We were comfortable with each other and she was very caring of me. But we never did very much of great interest together, and I did not find her intellectually stimulating enough. Just before my birthday I learnt that my father was seriously ill with kidney failure. I was told on the phone by the surgeon in Bristol Royal Infirmary that he was not likely to live for more than a few days .and that he was going in and out of consciousness. I did not feel the necessity to fly to the UK as I would more than likely to be too late to see him before he died. I sent a message of love through the doctor to be given, if and when my father regained consciousness. I also rang the minister of the church of which he was a member and who had arranged for him to go into the retirement home. We discussed the situation and his involvement of care. A few days later, on the 14th January 1988, I was informed that my father had died of kidney failure. He was 99 years and 6 months. The funeral was held in the United Church which he had attended for many years, ever since before my stepmother died. She had introduced him to that church. My sister in California was in communication on the telephone with me, discussing and remembering my father at the same time as the funeral was taking place.



Loving Memories of, Albert Charles Woodroffe. Died 19th January 1999, aged 99

He was buried in the same grave as his two wives (first wife noted on the head stone) and baby daughter at Cranford Cemetary, Bristol. UK. (Grave No 192/LT/BL/EE). It was a sad and reflective time.

Although my father and I did not get on well I had a great respect for him and felt a strong urge to care for him. The grave was left badly disturbed after the burial, so when I visited it in August 1990, I had it fully restored and brought up to a respectable standard. (Photos are in the family album)

Following the death of Dad, I moved into 220 Hammersly Rd, Subiaco. I had been negotiating for several weeks for a house in Subiaco and this house seemed to suit me and I was negotiating for a loan. It was going to be a big one and I was a bit concerned. However, my father left me quite a tidy sum of money in Bristol & West Building Society fund to which he had contributed for many years. To my great relief this enabled me to buy the house outright without a mortgage. I redecorated the lounge and cemented the fire place to look like a stone setting. Then I filled in the small front veranda with a large

window and that became my office. It was just off the study and consulting room -very handy - and indeed the house was now very comfortable and I was happy there.

I continued to related to the children the best I could. I saw them weekly and tried to entertain them and be a father. Not sure I did a very good job. I felt very inadequate and really didn't know what was going on in their lives. I found communication not easy. However the relationships survived and developed. I eventually evolved good, healthy and close relationships with all three which I am happy to say I enjoy to this day. This is a complete contrast to the relationship I had with my father with whom I had little contact. I am very pleased with such a reversal.

The only discordant note in the move was that my cat 'Nimbu,' a male black Burmese, became diabetic and behaved in a very peculiar way, standing motionless and looking bewildered. On instructions from the Murdoch vet I gave him daily injections of insulin. He didn't like that at all, nor did I, as I would often bend the needle or miss and inject myself. He had several episodes of peculiarity and didn't look well. Eventually the vet advised that he be put down. That was a sad time for me as we had formed quite an attachment to each other.

Chapter 21

Semi Retirement.

In June 1988, at the age of 61, I went job-sharing, working half time at Murdoch. I worked Monday to Wednesday and had the rest of the week free. Another part time counsellor was employed for the latter half of the week. This worked well for me as I then set up a private practice in counselling and courses in counselling skills. I rented rooms from Eric Harrison who was running courses in Meditation in Hay St, Subiaco. This was a very satisfactory arrangement and I successfully conducted a variety of training courses in counselling skills and therapy for the next thirteen years. My logo was a 'Rose' and the words were "*Awareness, Growth, Change*". The courses were in Counselling Skills for Home and Workplace Interpersonal communication skills). They took place on one afternoon a week and ran for 10 weeks. I ran a No.1 and No. 2 course. These were accredited through a written process with the Accreditation and Training Council of Western Australia. This was a tedious and lengthy process in which I was required to give "Outcomes and Abilities Gained " for every lesson and set of procedures. In addition I was asked to provide a system of Homework and Marking. Painful and irritating as it was, I found it to be a good learning process and improved the quality of my courses.

From time to time I added a third course, on the 'Shadow' psychology, involving some simple psychotherapy. They were all very successful and provided a good income. I continued these until I fully retired in April 2001 at the age of 73 years. By then I had had enough responsibility and expectations and decided to let the training courses and the counselling of clients go. I then entered into full retirement - a whole new ball game! Life was not always work, though I have had an inner driver pushing me to do things, innovate and create. I did enjoy a good leisure life as well. I belonged to one or two singles clubs which had regular meetings. In addition I went to organised dinners and various outings. They were good fun.

In August 1990 I became eligible for my second long service leave which I spent overseas. I first visited friends in the UK with whom I had retained a connection--

Margaret Trimble, in Wolverhampton, Mary Horrocks by the beautiful Stoke-on-Trent canal. I also went to see the people at Alkrington Congregational Church and my old friend from Lincoln days, Keith Pearson. Following this I made a trip to California to see Doreen and then spent a whole four months attending a course in Creation Spirituality with Matthew Fox. This was a landmark event for me and had a significant influence on my religious life. I have written a description of this experience in "My Religious Experience" Part 3.

On my return I designed and conducted courses in "Creative Spirituality" for about two years. These were held at St Mary's Convent at Nedlands and were well received. About 25 people attended each course and I ran about three to four courses each year following the Christian Calendar. I very much enjoyed the process of creating the themes which involved bringing the Biblical stories into contemporary living. I then wrote a series of articles for the Uniting Church newspaper 'The Western Impact' from 1992 to 1994. I eventually published these articles in a booklet entitled "Not Radical Enough". Both these activities have been written up more fully in the essay "My Religious Life." Part 3. In 1992 I joined with Sue and Roger Philpot and Moi Rapayan in purchasing a plot of land at the bottom of Spring Rd, Kalamunda. We had previously been on a Meditation weekend and at the end had decided to set up a meditative retreat for ourselves. The block was on the side of a steep tree-occupied hill. It was opposite a national park and quite beautiful. We engaged an Architect who designed a rather fine and expensive house. This sat on the side of the hill and gave a wonderful view of the parkland opposite. Each of us had our own room, en-suite and veranda. It was very pleasant sitting and listening to the birds of an evening. We shared the kitchen, dining-room and an enormous lounge with log fire at one end. The spacious veranda at the front gave a wonderful view of the trees and hills of the park and gave us much pleasure for several years. We went up there quite regularly and did a fair bit of entertaining. I made several coffee tables out of jarrah floor boards and these fitted in quite well. I also made a magnificent large dining-room table out of 2m jarrah timber. It was a big and difficult job and brought about arthritis in my thumbs. I recall that I had my 70th birthday up at Kalamunda and also had some very pleasant times with others. However, the journey to the house was tedious and I often found it to be somewhat lonely. I also realised that the bush was not my scene as it was too quiet. I am not enamoured with the Australian bush. It always seems to be too dry and prickly. My place is near or at

the ocean and the beach. That is where I feel most at home. Consequently I sold out my share in 1998 and withdrew from the situation. It was a good experience altogether but I did not regret leaving.

In 1993 I went overseas again and visited Zimbabwe, Victoria Falls and a National Park. Apart from suffering a nasty head cold picked up before I left I had a wonderful time. At the same time I went to Germany, attending a course in Spiritual Development with Richard Moss. I then continued on to the UK, visiting Bridget who was at Nottingham University - my own University many years ago. Also I visited Margaret Trimble and enjoyed a holiday in the Cotswolds and went on to visit Mary Horrocks, the Bennets and my old friend from the Lincoln days, Keith Pearson. I again returned to California where I saw Doreen and did a course with Jim Musgrove at Lake Arrow in the San Bernardo Mountains in Relationship Therapy - "Keeping the Love you Find".

In January 1994 Bridget, who had been studying in the UK, returned to Australia with a Masters Degree. She came to live with me for a short while. Eventually she left to live in her own home in Perth. Soon after Rebecca came to stay with me until she also left for a trip to India. They led busy lives and were out working or gadding around but I enjoyed their company when they were in.

In March 1995 I attended an Anglican Summer School at Christchurch Grammar School. It was on progressive theology and involved some interesting discussion groups. Attending one of these groups was an interesting lady, Stephanie Alcock. Thus began a close relationship which has lasted to this day. I had a month previously ended the relationship I had had with Carol McGhee as it had become boring and lacked intellectual stimulation. The relationship with Stephanie came at the right time. and subsequently went through many ups and downs - from an intimate passionate one early on, to a couple of break-ups, to a good supportive friendship which we have now. She is a very controlling lady who can be very aggressive and angry. On my side I guess I can be too casual and withdrawn. However despite having some pretty torrid rows and splitting up for a period, we have maintained a good supportive friendship over the years. We have never gone back to a lover's relationship, but what we have now in 2009 is probably more enduring. In July 1995 I went on a 12 day white water river trip adventure through the Grand Canyon.



Canyon is a mile deep and twenty miles wide at the top in places.

¹The Colorado river is very cold. It comes from the bottom of Hoover Dam and cuts through 265 miles of Canyon.

At the bottom are meadows, wild goats, deer and many other animals. Flowing into the river are many small rivers and canyons. It is a wild complex and beautiful park. (See Photo album.)



At night the stars shimmering in the heat of the Canyon were incredible. There were 18 fellow travellers on the raft and we were well

looked after by four young men and women. Every day we stopped for morning and afternoon tea, and again for the night and evening meal. During each day we travelled down the river, shooting the rapids as we went. Altogether there were about 16 rapids, some of which were very violent and wet. Very exciting! I have some really good photos of that trip; Life was always busy and at times stressful. As a result I began to have a lot of stomach pain as a result of reflux. This was later diagnosed as Barrats Oesophagus. It is an initial stage of cancer and can be controlled by regularly taking a tablet called 'somalac'. Each July I have an inspection in Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital with a little camera sent down into my stomach to check out how things are progressing. So far all is satisfactory. I have now been taking it for a number of years and the condition has improved and I no longer have any pain and, providing I continue to take a tablet every day, I shall be OK.

After Nimbu died I procured two other cats. I can't remember where from but one was a tabby tom and the other a ginger female. The tabby cat was unfriendly and anti-social. I am not sure what he died of but I found him dead under a pile of leaves one day - quite dead. Someone had put him there. I was not that sorry and gave my attention to Ginger. However when I arrived back from America in 1995 I found that my cat had disappeared several days previously. Natalie, (Stephie's son's girlfriend who had been baby-sitting the house while I was away) claimed that she had no idea where the cat had gone. I was quite upset and annoyed at the disappearance but there was nothing I could do about it. She was a pretty ginger cat and very friendly. However, after some consideration and, influenced by Stephie's enjoyment in having a dog, I decided to get one for myself. I had made up my mind to get a short-haired terrier and agreed to look at one at Kenwick Veterinary Hospital. When I arrived I found that the one I had chosen had already been sold. I was presented with a very lively cheerful black long-haired dog called "Mutsy". She had lovely intelligent eyes and was very friendly. I couldn't choose her at the time but on the way home I had a strong feeling that I had to have her. The following day I returned and picked her up. I didn't like the name Mutsy and at Rebecca's suggestion, named her "Ella Fitzgerald". As Rebecca said, "She sings and she is black." I subsequently discovered that my mother's name was Ella.

She has proved to be a great companion and source of joy over these past 14 years - walking, swimming, riding in the car, one broken leg, infections etc. and generally being enthusiastically present.



Ella is now 15 years of age she is slow, rheumatic, half blind, a bit deaf and spends most of her time sleeping. The quality of her life has diminished considerably as it must inevitably for us all.

On 25th May 1997 it was a pleasure to marry Bridget and Graham in the Manning Uniting Church.

They had met as members of a cycling club. Graham the groom works as a Computer Programmer. The bride works as a technologist in an Invitro Fertilisation clinic. They should have no difficulty in programming their future. It was a significant event and the last important ceremony which I performed at Manning. The congregation turned up on mass and it was a great occasion



Graham, here signing the register. Bridget centre stage. Rebecca looking on.

This marriage was the first one to be celebrated out of the three children. Not to be the last as Rebecca was to follow three years later and then Andrew four years after that.



The Bride and a very proud father.

Not long after I left Manning Uniting church and joined up with Subiaco Uniting church.

I had been living in Subiaco for about 7 years and felt that I should establish my religious life there. This church was much run down although the few members of the congregation that were left were a pretty forward looking lot. They had gone along with the Minister's idea of selling the church building and going in for a church-cafe concept. I joined in the process which ended up with the 'Warehouse Cafe' in Onslow Rd. It opened in 1999. This has been described in part 3 of the essay 'My Religious Life.' My relationship with Stephie has been a stormy one. I reacted to her critical comments and her anger by eventually being angry myself. I must have been irritating to her in

some way and not being what she wanted. Eventually we had a big row and in March 1999 we broke it off.

By this time I had been living in 220 Hamersly Rd for 11 years. This was the longest I had ever lived in one place since I left home in Bristol. I felt that it needed some general repairs and a face lift. The roof needed repainting and the garden needed redesigning. I felt it was time to move. I put it on the market and eventually got a good price for it - doubling what I paid for it. However, I had not found an alternative home, so in March 1999 I moved into a rented unit at Glendalough for three months. It was a fortunate move as Bridget lived just round the corner. She had recently had a baby boy and I was able to visit them and take him out quite often.

Eventually I found a house in Connought St, West Leederville, and in June 1999 moved in. It was a modern two storied three bed-roomed house in a group of four in a very secluded street. I had a nice small garden, paved, with no lawn to tend. It was a complete change from Hammersly Rd in that it was a modern house - smart and light with white paint and windows looking out over the landscape. In the large bathroom was a large spa bath tub. This 'beauty' provided much pleasure on occasions. Further advantages were that I was near the shopping centre and cafe-strip in Oxford St. Many are the cups of coffee I had with friends during my time there. And again being near to Lake Monger was a great pleasure to Ella. During this time I had a short but torrid relationship with a lady named Brenda whom I had met at "Just Friends", a singles club. Some of it was very warm and sexy but she was very erratic and unpredictable in her behaviour that I never knew where her moods were coming from. Her rages were very distressing and I couldn't cope with them. The relationship continued - up and down, good and bad - until I finally finished it after I came back from my trip to the UK for Rebecca's wedding. I had by then also decided to fully retire and give up all my courses and counselling practice. I was in for a major change in life as will be seen in the next chapter.

Chapter 22

Full Retirement Years

In April 2001 I decided to give up running my courses in Counselling Skills and also private practice. I had had enough and wanted to be free from all commitment and responsibility. Consequently I was happy to go on to Centrelink which has now provided me with what seems to me a generous pension. Mind you I had been independently supporting myself for nine years beyond retirement age before I gave up earning my own living and sought a pension. So, with my Uni pension, a small UK pension, plus dividends from small investments, I have had adequate funds to live well and do a certain amount of travelling. In reference to that enjoyable activity, it was a great pleasure a year later in May 2002, to attend Rebecca's wedding in Matlock, Derbyshire, England.

*Rebecca slights from
the Rolls Royce at the
Registry Office*

It was a beautiful May Day. The sun was shining the bride and I drove in an old Rolls Royce to where the wedding was to take place. The bride and groom had chosen not



to have a religious wedding in a church. The ceremony was therefore conducted by a Registrar in Matlock Court House.

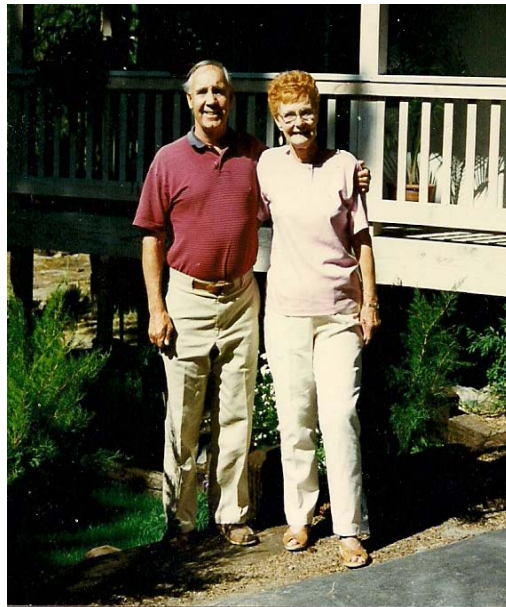


Proud Dad and Beautiful daughter.

However, I was able to give the ceremony some spiritual significance with a biblical reading and a prayer following the ceremony. The wedding breakfast was held in an old hotel garden and lounge. Rebecca looked wonderful and it was a beautiful wedding on a glorious English summer's day.

After visiting friends in the UK I flew to Los Angeles to visit Doreen. I was picked up at the airport by Doreen and driven 120 miles East near the San Bernando Valley. She was now living in a large walled retirement village. She and her husband 'Bob' shared a comfortable modern house. It was in a beautiful setting, surrounding a golf course, with the San Bernando Mountains in the distance. This was interesting, in that, way back in 1955 I had spent 3 months in those Mountains at 'Pilgrim Pines Youth Camp' as a Leader. It was good later to revisit the site which had changed little over the years. It was also important for me to be with Doreen at this time as I was able to be present on her 80th birthday. As it turned out this was the last time I was with her before she died, later in 2008. Whilst in California I hired a car and drove up to see Doreen's daughter Theresa and Marc her husband, at Mammoth Mountain, Northern California. They had

no children but looked after two horses, two dogs, two cats, a python and a large bad tempered lizard. Whilst up there I visited the fantastic 'Yosemite National Park'. Driving back down to Los Angeles I went through the Valley and into the north Los Angeles freeway system and visited James, Doreen's son by the first marriage. He is single and leads an unusual life on the financial edge and with very set views on health and the environment. He is an interesting man and I spent a very stimulating evening with him. The next day I successfully negotiated the Los Angeles freeway system all the way down to see Bruce and Christine on the beach front at Torrance. I had a wonderful time swimming and eating with them on the beach front. It was like a Hollywood film set. I then negotiated the freeway again and back to Doreen's place in the San Bernando Valley. It was quite a feat of driving and I am quite proud of myself.



Doreen and I at the home of Theresa, her daughter up in the high Sierras, northern California. Summer, 2000.

I had a sense, during the trip, that it would be the last time I would see these places and these people. I felt a bit sad about that.



Doreen on Theresa's horse with Theresa standing by.

Yes she could ride. She was always a feisty woman with a sense of adventure.

I have not visited the USA since. Now that Doreen has passed away and my eyes have become impaired it is very unlikely I will ever

return.

Soon after I came back to Perth I found that the relationship with Brenda, which had always been difficult was now becoming impossible. I therefore decide to let it go. It was a pity in many ways because we had some very special times together. However, it was not long after that I became involved with Val. We had known each other casually through one of my courses for some time. Now she had recently separated from her husband. We were both raw and vulnerable from our previous relationships and found great comfort and affinity in each other's company. The relationship flourished and grew into a rich and satisfying one. It became one of the best and closest relationships that I have had.

At that time I was also becoming dissatisfied with my accommodation at Connaught St, on account of it being isolated from people. I rarely saw any neighbours as they worked and kept very much to themselves. I felt lonely in that situation. So after four years living there I had itchy feet and looked for somewhere else to settle. There was also another factor, I was now 76 years of age and Val was about 51 years. I was very much aware of the age and ambition gap. She was very interested in exploring a career whereas I was ready for full retirement. She had a young family of three boys approaching teen years and she was wanting a family setting.

I did not think it through logically as I am doing now but I intuitively realised that a living together relationship would not work. Our needs, thinking and life styles would not be Compatible. In the light of this back ground awareness and my dissatisfaction with Connaught Rd I intuitively sought accommodation that would provide security, community and support for my full retirement. This gut reaction led me to investigating and eventually buying a lease on a Unit in a retirement village, - the new multi -storied village of St Ives, Jolimont. It offered facilities for all kinds of recreational activities, security and a community life which I felt I needed. Onslow, a three storied complex was in process of being built. I had the opportunity to wander around and select the best unit to suit my needs.



98 Onslow

I chose a two bed roomed plus study Unit, on the top floor facing west. It had the advantage of a skylight in the bathrooms and the opportunity to have roof air conditioning installed.



The picture is taken from the dining area facing west across the veranda.

There was a delay whilst I sold my house in Connought St but I was in by February 2003. It was a good buy and a suitable location and I am satisfied with it. Val was not too happy with my move but she eventually came to see the sense of it. She came to accept my reasons for moving. We continued to go out together but we realised that that relationship would satisfy neither of us.

In 2003 Val and I agreed to a friendship only relationship. She had already met a man she was interested in nearer to her age and position in life. We continued to meet as good friends even up to today. She has subsequently married him and has successfully settled in a new house. Full of energy and enthusiasm, he has now started a new career in professional counseling. Val, now Leah, has gone back to University to complete a Masters in counseling at Notre Dame. We still see each other from time to time for a chat over a cup of coffee. We are valued friends.

One of the pleasures in 2004 was the privilege of conducting the wedding of Andrew and Susanna. I conducted the ceremony in the open air and all went well.



The wedding took place at Point Heathcote, as you can see, overlooking the Swan River. The reception was held in the restaurant close by.



My Family at the wedding; Alice. Louis. Brodget. Self. Graham. Matthew. Andrew W. Isaac Rebecca. Susanna Andrew. Abigail

Chapter 23

“Living with a handicap

I remember one day in August 2002, sitting in the Blue Duck at Cottesloe, looking at the ocean horizon and being intrigued by the jagged lump on the horizon. It didn't go away and on investigation with my ophthalmologist I discovered that I had the beginnings of Macular Degeneration. For the previous 9-12 months I had been driving with the awareness that I couldn't see very effectively. I still felt that I was good enough to drive. I had even hired a car in Los Angeles and had driven up through the Sacramento Mountains to Mammoth Mountain. There I had visited my niece and her husband in their beautiful ranch at the top of a valley. I drove further into one of my favorite spots in the universe, Yosemite National Park. On leaving that place of grandeur and peace; I drove South through to San Fernando Valley where I visited my nephew. After spending the night there I then joined the Los Angeles freeway system proper, risking life and limb as I drove to Huntington Valley Beach in the South. By now I was blasé about driving on freeways and felt quite confident. However, I was still quite anxious about not seeing the correct road turn off as I drove east to my sister in Banning. Altogether I drove that car about 1800 miles, occasionally being aware that I was having some difficulty in seeing road signs. But it was not enough to think I could not drive. It was a rude shock when the Ophthalmologist at the Blind Association informed me that I was not to drive a car any more. This was the serious beginning of my new life 'living with a handicap'. In my case it is visual impairment. Although I accepted the doctor's orders I continued to drive in Perth but with guilt and an increased level of anxiety. I eventually told Andrew, my son, that he could now have my car, as I was no longer safe on the roads. However I did nothing about it and continued to use the car. My ability to see cars coming from the opposite direction more than 30 metres distant was seriously impaired and I had difficulty in seeing road signs. Although my judgment was still good in relation to speed and other objects, I was clearly a danger to others and to myself. It got to the stage where I was getting out of the car in order to go up close to see a road sign. Finally the anxiety and guilt got the better of me and I told Andrew to come and take the car away. It was a relief when he did remove it. I was freed from worry and was now encouraged to explore

how to get around without the instant availability of a private car. The old bicycle was dug out and made serviceable. I obtained bus and train timetables for routes I might need. I took a taxi for the first time. I was not sure whether I was supposed to sit in the front or the back. I nervously made a decision to travel in the back seat and enjoyed being carried like royalty, feeling that I should wave my hand at the proletariat. Distances from home base to train stations, to Subiaco shops, to the Cambridge St shops and other places which had been simple to get to by car, were measured and timed. I made lists of telephone numbers in large print. I obtained magnifying glasses to carry with me for general use. I installed a programme on my computer, which raises the size of the print to suit my needs. It is called Zoom. Light is crucial and I have installed more lighting in the living room. A TV with a larger screen was purchased but even still I need to sit within a meter to see it effectively. From the Blind Association I bought a reader. This is an arrangement whereby a suspended camera reads a book placed on a sliding platform and then produces an enlarged production on the screen. This was a whole new ball game to be discovered. But more than that, I realized that I was now being challenged to embrace the world of the handicapped and reluctantly the world of the aging, a kind of life and a culture which I had previously firmly resisted.

This new life had some interesting adventures. For instance, there was a time when I was travelling by train to Kalgoorlie. I needed to visit the toilet. It was occupied and I noticed a young man was waiting in turn outside. Wanting to be chatty and sociable I said to him "The train is travelling very fast isn't it and it seems to be very smooth running. It is better than the old ones?" His response was dramatic. He gesticulated vigorously with his arms and signaled to me to stop talking. With a struggle he took out his wallet removed a piece of paper and handed to me to look at. By this time I had guessed that he was deaf and wanted me to read about it. However I was unable to see what it said. I pointed to the paper and again pointed to my eyes, giving negative signals at the same time. It was like a game of charades. He grinned at me and his eyes gave an understanding. We both stood there like dummies grinning at each other until his turn came for the toilet. I realized that I had now entered fully into the world of the impaired. Another incident of interest was when I was waiting at a bus stop. In front of me was a frail old lady with a walking stick. When the bus arrived and had opened its doors, the lady did not go to enter. She said something and waived her stick at the driver. He promptly shut the doors of the bus. I was incensed at this, thinking that he was about to

drive off in a huff. I was about to yell at him when the whole bus slowly dropped its side towards us. The door opened and a platform slid out towards the pavement to rest on the curb. The lady happily walked onto the bus. I had again entered a little more into the world of the aged infirm. Nevertheless life is pretty busy for me and I still seem to do a lot of things.

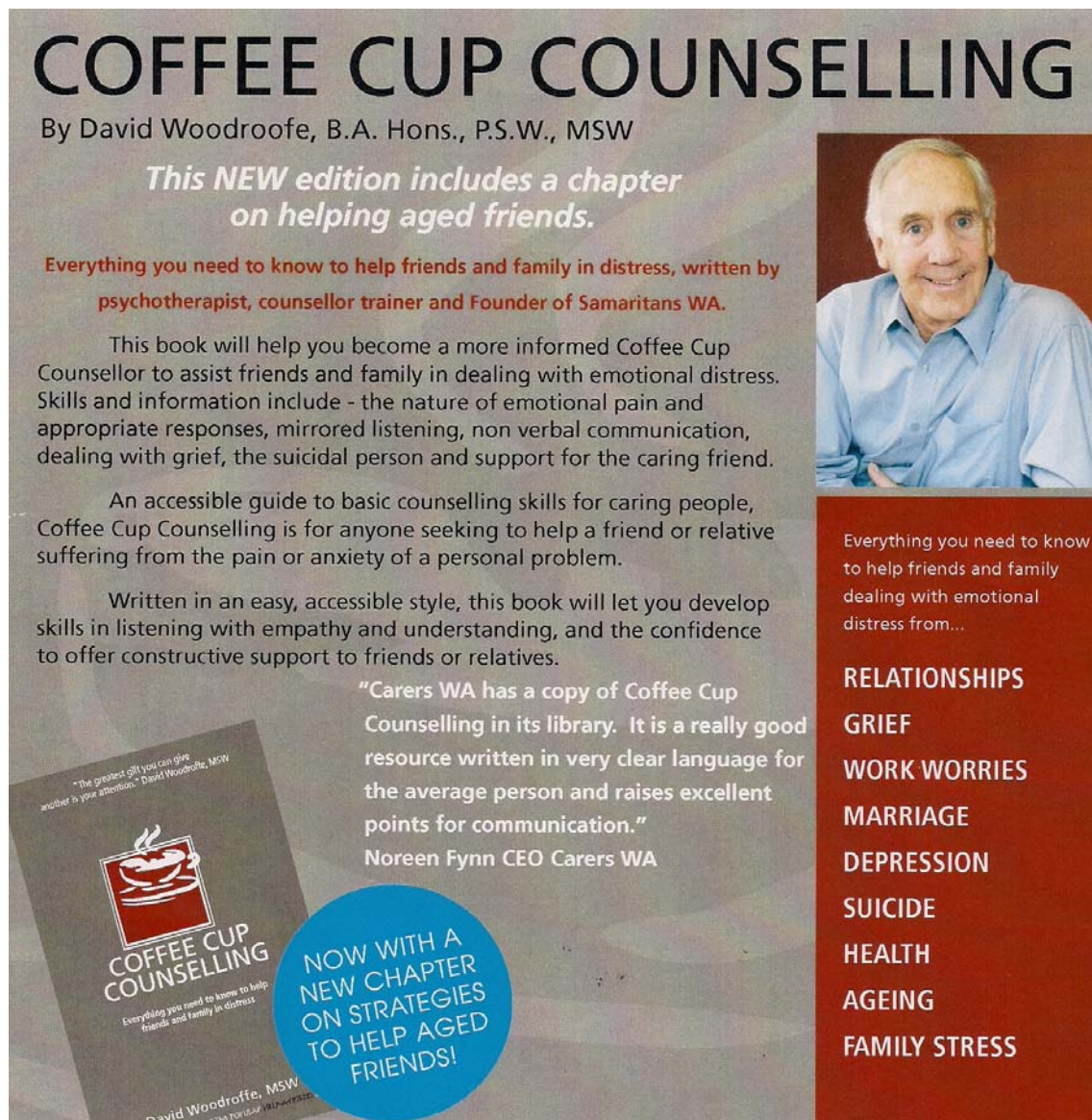
I now get around on a bicycle. I am a danger to the public as well as to myself, as have had two rather heavy falls these last few months. No bones were broken but quite a painful few weeks of recovery time. I took these accidents as signs not that I should stop riding a bicycle but that I should go slower and be more attentive. And too ride off the road whenever possible on the footpath and only cross the road at the lights. I do now keep to these decisions pretty well. Of course I will also use alternative transport such as train, bus, walk or taxi. Friends are very considerate and will also pick me up and transport me around. However, I am still able to play Paranaque and sometimes bowls. Although, at Paranaque I cannot see the cochineal if I look directly at it. But I get a glimpse of it with my peripheral vision, enough for my arm muscles to accurately do the rest. My guessing and judgment is very good. I still do some woodturning by feel and checking with a magnifying glass. I recently made a round jewellery box with lid for my grandchild, Abigail, in the UK. I continue to go to the beach for a swim on Saturday and Sunday mornings as long as it is not too cold. Normally I would go by bicycle and train. Bridge is another interesting social event. I am not too good at it and also tend to confuse hearts and diamonds, clubs and spades. My partners seem to get quite mad by this. Life is pretty enjoyable and I have a good network of both male and female supportive friends with whom I share a lot. One of the problems with visual impairment which I find really annoying is that things take a lot longer and are more complicated, needing more arrangements than normal. Life has to be planned and organized much more fully. I cannot read at all without some sort of magnification. The peripheral vision is intact however and enables me to get around and do most things. I have completed the injection treatment in the left eye to seal up the hemorrhage. Fortunately this has been successful and there has been no further deterioration. Compared with the worlds of the younger age groups such as that of the child; the teenager and the young parents, mine is much slower and ponderous. It seems that life is now run by 35 year olds who have perfect eye sight and hearing and endowed with computerized and digital brains and obtuse legal minds. Nothing is allowed to be simple any more. This makes for a

difficult life for the rest of the population. Particularly for the impaired and aged whose problems are **distinctive?** We have a different culture, different values and different attitudes. The world and life style off the aged is one of dealing with some impairment to living. I guess that there has always been a gulf between the generations but maybe it is greater than it used to be. On the other hand it is also a world of humour, developing patience, caring and support of each other. It is culture where wisdom is more likely to rule than the technological knowhow of electronic systems. It is a world where people oscillate between wise contented acceptances to being angry silly old buggers. It is a world where people learn to finally fully accept themselves just as they are. It is OK to be gracious and wise; to be bloody minded and imperfect in our individual way. I get frustrated, angry and depressed at times and am continually looking for more expressive swear words. I sometimes become morose and worry about what life is going to be like for me in a few years' time. My eyes are slowly deteriorating and I cannot see as clearly at times. A lot depends on how tired I am and how much I watch TV. It is a case of living each day as a bonus, staying in the Now and being occupied.

Chapter 24

“Coffee Cup Counselling”

Although I had decided to give up work as trainer and counsellor, I still had the energy and interest in doing something useful. I decided to write the contents in a book. The book was entitled “*Coffee Cup Counselling*”. This book was aimed at the untrained person seeking to help a friend or neighbour. It took two years from start to finish



The book was successfully launched in December 2003 at the Warehouse Cafe.

I marketed them through various bookshops in Perth and through address lists obtained from Social Service agencies in all the States. This involved quite a lot of work,

distributing and mailing but I quite enjoyed it. 1500 copies were sold by the end of the year. With that success I was persuaded to do a reprint with an extra chapter fun meeting the needs of the aged. This has not been such a success as I have been able to sell, to date, only several hundred copies. Hundreds more sit in my store room gathering dust. Marina Oakridge, my publisher, has tried to market them with little success. Without a car and with my vision quite limited, I have little interest in chasing up sales. I am resigned to a loss and am willing let the books go to any person who is interested in having them. Recently a Jo Anne, a friend of Kate, has taken on the task of marketing them. I am not holding my breath. My feeling is that I have gained considerable satisfaction , prestige and experience from writing and publishing the book that I consider myself rewarded enough already. If I do sell more, then it is a very pleasant bonus.

Chapter 25

Aging.. a new ball game

I realise more and more that as one advance further into old age that it is a process of deterioration and letting go. The body is less functional and one has to let go of activities and interest. Losing clear eye sight forced me to let go of driving. It also forced me to let go of cycling club activities because I could not drive to rendezvous points. I have also let golf go for the same reason and my clubs sit in the store unused and unloved. Having a successful knee replacement in 2004 has enabled me to cycle and walk quite adequately and swim ever since.

On October 29, 2007, I celebrated my 80th Birthday. I booked the Uniting Church Warehouse Cafe and invited my family which included all my friends. There were about 35 in all. John Berendrech the Minister and the Manager did us proud. It was a fine meal and everybody mingled with everyone else. A computerised photographic show by my son in law of me from an early age was shown and a few speeches were given. It was a great night.



A proud 80 year old father and his three children. Bridget, Andrew, Rebecca.

At the age of 82, in 2009, I was crippled by a frozen left shoulder caused by a spur digging into a muscle and a torn muscle and ligament. This has now been fixed by a painful surgical operation. After 8 weeks in a sling and several weeks exercising I have full use of the arm again and I am able to swim and also to use my bicycle again. However, my daughter Rebecca, has ordered me not to ride my bicycle ever again in case I have an accident which because of my age could be fatal or too damaging. Do I now let go of cycling also or defy my daughter and the odds and risk being alive on a bike? Well, I am actually cycling again, very cautiously again but with confidence. Don't tell Rebecca...

Last year I enjoyed a trip to Egypt, visiting the fantastic Pyramids and tombs which lie mostly on the eastern side of the Nile. The trip by boat down the wide muddy river was a very hot but pleasurable experience. I was very impressed with the numerous temples along the Nile. They are massive with huge tall columns every ten feet or so supporting the roof. Nearly all the columns and the walls would be covered in hieroglyphics. These would be telling stories relating to Kings of Egypt and their conquests. The temples were

awesome as were the pyramids, all of which were built over three thousand years ago. There were hundreds of tourists going through the temples and tombs. Part of my problem was that I would initially follow the wrong group and then become lost. The group eventually gave me a minder. My minders were particularly helpful when it came to shopping in the markets. These were very hazardous in that traders would aggressively thrust items on you and begin bargaining. I found it impossible to understand the coinage and the prices etc and anyway, I was hopeless at standing up for myself in a bargaining situation. The two women looking after me were dab hands at arguing over prices. I stood back and let them get on with it and did very nicely out of it. Egypt was a very informative and pleasant holiday.

Following Egypt, I flew to Birmingham where I met up with Rebecca and spent a very happy few weeks with her and I am catching up with the three children. I don't see them except when I visit the UK, which is every two years. I do however have a long period of quality time with them then. I was also able to spend a holiday in Wales with Margaret Trimble. I am very fond of Margaret and we have been good non romantic companions for over 40 years. Also have I been with Mary Horrocks who lives in a delightful cottage on the edge of a canal at Stoke-on-Trent. My stays with her are always very pleasant, we have some beautiful walks along the canal and most pleasant lunches in the pubs by the water's edge. Then there is Keith whom I have now known for over 50 years. We were good friends when as a single Minister of Religion I lived in Lincoln city. He now lives in St Albans which has an enormous and ancient cathedral. It is my delight, when visiting Keith and his very pleasant wife, to attend High Mass in the cathedral with the all male choir and wonderful organ. Which is an up lifting experience and provides me with a vehicle to the mystery of God and the Universe?

I was away altogether for six weeks which I found to be too long. I was glad to get home and into my own bed and have my dog Ella back again. However within two months I was off again visiting my other daughter Bridget who lived in Hobart in Tasmania. Again, it was good to see her and husband Graham, and of course the three children. Tasmania is a beautiful country and the wilderness has so many wild flowers and mosses. But it was cold and whilst I was up in the Lake Clare district, it actually snowed; I am fortunate that I seem to have friends all over the place and, of course, I have friends in Hobart. (Richmond to be exact.) Andrew and Odile, who have been good friends for

25 years; lasting from Murdoch and Bullcreek days. It was good to stay with them for a few days and catch up on news etc.

So, despite the aging process, the lessening of abilities and having to let go of certain activities, I am still able to live a full life. I have had to let Bridge go as the strain of trying to see the cards the other side of the table, as you need to, was causing me too much stress. I still cycle, albeit in a limited way and still swim in the ocean. I play Paranaque with some guess work and luck. I have now given up doing woodturning, just too dangerous and am struggling with dancing. I get a bit bored with it and it takes too much out of me. I currently use hearing aids sometimes at a concert and in a noisy room. Although I have slowed down considerably and spend more time at home on my own I do have a good network of friends whom I see often and have a good round of activities on which I am engaged regularly. I see Andrew and Sue fairly regularly and it is good to know they are near at hand. I have booked to go back to the UK in 2010 and I have also visited Bridget in the Gold Coast recently and at the same time looked up an old friend who lives there. Although I do not have any close friends here at the Village I am on good nodding acquaintance with many of them and the place is safe and convenient. I have made closer friends with my unit now and am quite happy spending time in it, providing it is not too long a period.

In May 2008, after an illness lasting nine months or more, my sister died at the age of 85. She had been diagnosed with cancer of the bladder. She had consequently decided not to subject herself to the problems associated with chemotherapy. Her husband had died a year previously and she was not in good health. She felt that her poor quality of life was not worth fighting for and so she decided to let the cancer take its course. In June 2008 after a period of pain she died gaining the peace she looked for. Her ashes along with those of her husband were taken by Bruce and Teresa, their son and daughter up to the High Sierras in Northern California. Each was carrying ashes in the side bags of their Harley Davidson motor bikes. The ashes were then scattered on top of the mountains. I felt that this was a very suitable thing to do as she loved the Mountains of northern California.

Before she died she stated that she has seen her mother, father and grandmother who had said that they were waiting for her. Reality or she was experiencing the result of

pain killing drugs? Who knows? I was a little bit sad but it did not seem real that she has died. I still do not feel that she has gone as for me there has been no closure.

It raises the question for me as I am the last in line for the big chop. I cannot believe in consciousness without a brain, unless there is a parallel conscious entity called David which survives the destruction of the body. We cannot know and the whole business of death remains a mystery, alongside all the other mysteries of creation, the universe and the source of all energy. Coming to terms with these unsolvable and unknowable mysteries is part of the process of aging I guess.

However it has been a very satisfying task writing up these memoirs. I am surprised at how much I have done by way of academia, initiating projects, careers, travelling and the different ventures I have been involved in. How many women friendships I have had and how many places I have lived in. It has been a full life and one of many bad mistakes and great number of successes; of excruciating painful losses and very pleasurable high experiences.

It could be said that my life has been scarred damaged by the death of my mother at the age of 5 ½. The black hole of abandonment and desolation has been a constant hidden source of anxiety and consequent restriction in my relationships and life. My drive has always been to avoid the emptiness and fulfill the need to be important, recognized and emotionally filled.

It would appear that one of the dynamics governing my relationships has been on one hand a fear of aloneness and isolation, and on the other a fear of close ongoing commitment. Consequently I have oscillated between close relationships and separation throughout life.

This has caused suffering to others and great pain to me.

At the moment I have settled for isolation in that I live on, my own with no shared life with another person. I have worked out a compromise in that I have developed a network of socially intimate friends with whom I share warm and caring relationships.

In addition I value the love and relationships I have with my children and grandchildren. I am as content as I can be.



Louis, Luke, Odile, Matthew, Abigail, Alice, Andrew, Rebecca

These pictures are showing my family, - children and grand children, with whom I keep in close contact. They live in Tasmania and UK and Fremantle. They have gathered together with Odile Glenn at Richmond Tasmania.



Graham, Isaac, Abigail, Bridget, Matthew, Alice, Andrew, Louis, Rebecca, Luke



Self, Andrew, Rebecca, Bridget at the Blue Duck, Cottesloe, my favorite beach.

My pot has rarely been full but never empty.

I could say that my pot has invariably been more than half full. There has always been someone there for me. First my Mother and then there was my stepmother. Later there was my Wife Jenny. Subsequently the many girlfriends I have had over the years. The drive to be somebody significant has driven me to create organisations and communities. These in turn have brought admiration, dependency and recognition from many people and quarters. I have constantly created an independent spirit. I acquired a survival skills base and an effective living skills base, an intellectual curiosity for all aspects of life particularly the life of the spirit as it is manifested in the creation. Altogether my pot has always been full. I have been blessed and have been given many riches in terms of emotional support, love, and recognition.

I could say now that my pot is fairly full. I still have problems with loneliness and isolation and still have desires for sensual contact. But I know that my pot is more than half full and I am reminded constantly, what it is full of family and friends, activities, interest, and a reasonably fit body.

What have I learnt from this life? Well, not to take life so seriously, communicate more – thoughts and feelings. Be kind, forgiving, be still and persevere.

As I go further into aging I realize that the “Now” is where we must live and create life. It is tempting to live in the past but the past is over and no longer has energy or significance for the now. We can only visit it in memory, now and again. It is dead and only an old story. The future is unknown and can only be imagined.

I conclude with the thought that only by being open to the new possibilities in the now, whatever they may be, can we live effectively, and maybe discover the mystery of the new world and the mystery of being. It seems to me that the challenge of life is to remain in the present, be mindful of what is available in the immediate now and explore all its possibilities. It seems important to the present life to have a variety of interests and do whatever is desired, now.

I indulge in repeating what I have written, that so much of Life is a mystery, the creation is a mystery, you are a mystery and I am a mystery. What we term good and evil, right and wrong is a mystery. I am aware that there is more mystery in this life than knowing and understanding. It seems to me that we may be living the mysteries through being present to the life we have in each moment listening to it, looking at it and feeling it.

I like to think that I live the mystery.

25.5.2010