

*Wherever, Whenever,
Whatever'*

Around the world with God
By Charles Widdowson

SETTLED?

“You and Alice are not leaving us yet.”

It was Bessie, the oldest member of our Mothers’ Union.

A few people were sitting in the Fairy Meadow Vicarage, New South Wales, enjoying cups of tea and chatting about this and that, when the subject turned to the length of time a Vicar should be in a Parish.

“The diocese stipulates not longer than ten years,” I told them

“But sometimes that’s too short. How long have you been with us now, Vicar?”

“Nearly five years.”

That’s when Bessie delivered her ultimatum.

I looked at Alice and winked.

“I don’t think there’s anything to concern ourselves about,” I told them.

“No,” Alice added, “we’re quite settled here.”

“That’s it,” I backed her up, “***We are quite settled.***”

* * * *

It was not until a day or so later, reading through James’ letter, that I came across Chapter 4, which just happens to remind us that “*those who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and spend money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow Instead you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’*”

Ouch!

Yet, for a while, nothing happened.

Then, in prayer one day, I felt Father God telling me to get ready to move on.

I sensed He was wanting both Alice and myself to move from pastoring to travelling (I’d always wanted to travel, anyway!) and that I would be ‘teaching teachers, training trainers and leading leaders.’

Immediately I reacted in a very negative way. That was definitely not my ministry.

Yet the vision wouldn’t leave me.

I shared it with Alice and she, too, reacted negatively. Yet in a very special way Father revealed to her that *was* His will.

Slowly we opened up to receive the vision and, the more we did so, the deeper the vision became.

Not only were we to travel, but also it was to be in total reliance on God.

He began to make it plain that we were to have no salary or allowances; we were not to ‘tout for ministry’ (He would fill our calendar) and we were never to ask for money (He would pay all expenses).

Here was a much deeper vision.

We found it awesome and a little unnerving, but deep inside us we knew that when God is in it – it works.

“For a couple of years it might be quite an adventure,” I suggested to Alice.

“Adventure or not, it still means we’ll have to split the family.”

Our two eldest children were in University and couldn’t be moved.

Alice was in tears and I was beginning to despair.

“Please,” I cried out to Father one morning, “Please give me a verse that will sustain us.”

Interestingly Alice was praying the same prayer at the same time.

We stopped, opened our eyes, looked at each other and said: Hebrews 13.5.

The nearest Bible happened to be the Amplified version. Hastily we turned to the verse, and read: *“Let your character or moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]”*

At the end of 1975 we were ‘un-settled’ from parish life and faced the future as we moved to WaggaWagga.

Alice and I travelled, either together or separately, for the next 21 years – and, every minute of that time, Father God faithfully kept His promise.

It’s from those 21 years that we’d like to share some anecdotes.

We hope they inspire you, bless you and excite you to become ‘unsettled’ for God – if it **is** His will!

MINISTRY – AND MIRACLES!

“It’s come, it’s come,” I shouted as I ran out to Alice in the garden.

We’d been invited to a small country town in New South Wales. It was our first invitation to minister and we jumped at the opportunity to ‘spread the message’.

There were five of us on the trip, Alice’s mother (Nanna), Judith (aged 15), Michele (aged 6) and Alice and myself.

It proved to be a hot and ‘sticky’ drive, but we arrived in time for the 8.00 p.m. Prayer and Bible Study group.

It was a terrific time of fellowship and I felt moved

to share on one of my favourite topics: ‘The Scriptural basis for the healing ministry.’

One of the ladies, Betty, had been in pain throughout the meeting. Evidently it was necessary for her to visit the osteopaths much more often than she wanted to. However, in response to the message, she came to the ‘hot seat’ in the middle of the room and we prayed for her.

News spreads and on the Saturday afternoon there were a few more for healing prayer.

Gasps and cries of awe suddenly rang round the church. It must have been like that in Jesus’ day.

One lady had come forward who was blind in one eye.

After prayer, as we gingerly removed our hands from the sightless eye, she opened both eyes and began to dance round the church.

“I can see,” she was screaming. “I can see. Out of my bad eye – I can see.”

Incidentally it was Alice’s birthday!

How precious to give a present away – and such a present!

Another meeting followed at 7.30 that evening but both Alice and I felt scepticism in the meeting. Nevertheless, people were healed and prayers were answered.

“You know, love,” Alice said as we both sank into bed, worn out, “I’m just about pooped.”

It certainly didn’t take long to fall asleep!

At the morning service, Betty shot her hand up.

“Please may I share a testimony of healing,” she asked.

Given permission, she recounted the events of Friday night. Then, jumping up and down she sang out: “And yesterday I played eight sets of tennis!”

It just set the rest of the service alight!

Another meeting followed in the afternoon and the final service was at 7.30 p.m.

Eventually, the time came to leave. The Minister stood at the door to say good-bye and, as he did so, he held out his hand.

“Thank you all for coming,” he said, “it’s been a good week-end.”

He shook my hand, turned on his heels and walked back into the church.

Neither then nor later did we receive any ministry gift!

“Nothing”, Nanna fumed. “I wish I’d known, I’d have told him a thing or two.”

“No, Mum,” Alice explained, “we must learn to trust Father.”

“Then start trusting, right now,” Charles added. “We’ve not much petrol, fifty miles to travel and at

this hour, in the country, there won't be one garage open.”

We prayed.

Within thirty miles the tank indicated 'Empty'.

We continued to pray, even little Michele, bless her.

The car went another ten miles.

We reached the outskirts of WaggaWagga and still the car was running, although spluttering somewhat.

Eventually it cut out completely – just as we pulled in to our local Petrol Station!

Praise God, He is no man's debtor and He keeps every promise He has made.

CONFERENCES AND CHARISMATA

Alan and Dorothy Langstaff's vision was 'Temple Trust', and from that had emerged 'Hebron', Vision Bible College *and* Conferences.

We had been invited to look after the speakers and one other block of delegates, and were happy and excited to do so.

For hours a group, including the two of us, had laboured until well past midnight to finalise the Conference packs and everyone was extremely tired.

At some very early morning hour one of the girls appeared with a tray of steaming cups of tea and coffee.

Very, very gratefully I took a cup of black coffee and was about to balance it on the arm of my chair – when it tipped over onto my lap.

I tried my hardest to resist yelling out. I leaped up from my chair and, grabbing my right thigh I dashed into the bedroom.

Alice, rushed into the kitchen and, made up an ice pack as speedily as she could, then followed me.

I was frantically tearing my (polyester!) trousers off my legs when Alice arrived.

Quickly and adeptly she wrapped the ice pack round my, now naked, right thigh and held it there, tightly.

There was a knock on the door.

“Can I help?” a female voice asked.

“Please keep out,” I yelled.

“But I’m a nurse. I thought . . .”

“Please don’t come in,” I shrieked, the pain now beginning to bite into my leg.

Alice opened the door and, through the slit, whispered that we’d manage.

First thing the next morning Alice drove me to the local hospital. My right thigh was one big skin bubble from crutch to knee!

Very gently one of the nurses pierced the bubble, and caught the serum in a tray. Then she bound up the wound tightly and we left.

Alan had asked us to take two of the speakers and their wives to see the Opera House, Taronga Park Zoo and travel on a Sydney Ferry.

My leg felt fine, so why not?

[For any who can still cast their minds back to the Conferences of 1970’s, two of the speakers of those days, were Robert Frost and Len Evans. Both were from the United States]

All went well until we were wandering slowly through the zoo.

I was with Robert and Len and we were walking ahead with Alice and Ruth (Robert’s wife) and Betty (Len’s wife) some paces behind.

Suddenly Ruth tapped Alice on the arm.

“What’s happening to Charles?” she queried.

Looking, Alice saw a white ‘tail’ slowly appearing out of the bottom of my trousers’ right leg.

“Oh no! It’s Charles’ bandage. It must have come loose,” she explained.

It was growing longer, the further I walked.

Interested to know what all the snickering was about, I whirled round to see the girls holding one hand to their mouths and pointing to my right leg with the other.

I grabbed my ‘tail’ and borrowed a safety pin from Alice, then dashed into a nearby toilet and fixed it all

up – pinning the bandage to my pants. It took a long time to live that incident down!

* * * *

Friday to Sunday was to be a mainly Roman Catholic gathering and the International Conference was to commence on the Monday.

All weekend I was carrying cases and settling folk into their rooms.

From one end of the N.S.W. University Campus to the other, over and over again for almost three days I was the ‘porter’.

There may have been problems from some of the delegates, but I had no problem with my right thigh!

The speaker that Friday evening was Fr. Francis McNutt, at that time a very well known, and loved, speaker and writer.

I noted in my diary that, after ministering a truly inspiring address on reconciliation, he called teams of priests and people together, from all denominations, to go through the assembly anointing with oil and praying for any who were sick.

We joined one of the teams and were so blessed, ‘being greatly used of God to His honour and glory.’

All day Sunday delegates were arriving for the International Conference and it was getting to the

stage where I wasn’t even able to have my meals!

Alice’s mother didn’t really help much, either. If she saw someone in difficulty, stranded or needing any kind of help she’d tell him or her I’d help, and sent for me.

However, by Monday lunchtime, most were where they should be, with their belongings around them.

* * * *

Big John Hall was the Conference Gospel singer. What a man!

He must have been almost seven feet tall and his bass notes were ‘ten feet under’!

We just loved to hear him sing, and our favourite was: ‘The King is coming.’

Beautiful.

By Tuesday we were so tired, we felt we might have an early night. All would have been well, except for the fact that Big John locked himself out of his bedroom!

We took him to see the Caretaker and, gingerly, knocked on his door.

He mumbled something about ‘never being left alone, day or night’, he poked his head round the door and we explained the problem.

He grabbed his master key he came into full view:

he couldn't have been more than five feet tall. (We discovered later he'd been a jockey!).

We followed them and to see Big John and Mr. Jockey walking together almost made the evening worthwhile.

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Sessions continued morning, afternoon and evening throughout the week. Every seat in the Hordern Pavilion was full – especially Thursday evening.

This rally was to be shared by Francis McNutt and his Methodist friend, Tommy Tyson.

Both spoke on 'Reconciliation' and then led into both a prayer and an act of reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants such as we have never experienced, before or since.

It just seemed that half a century of rejection and misunderstanding were wiped away for all those in that Pavilion.

It was incredibly beautiful!

Catholic priests and protestant ministers met on the platform and hugged and wept. Then, together, they went into the massed congregation to minister the healing and uniting power of Christ's love.

It was, truly, charismatic healing on every level.

* * * *

We were neither of us sure how late it was when we finally reached our billet, but we knew we needed to get to bed as soon as possible if we were to be up, bright and early, for the 6 a.m. Prayer Meeting.

We, sleepily, pushed open the entrance hall door and stopped dead in our tracks.

There, confronting us, with a most dejected look on his face (and a bunch of flowers for Alice) stood – Big John Hall.

"Sorry folks," he drawled, "but I've done it again."

"John," Alice told him, "we are far too tired to go traipsing over to the Caretaker's house at this time of night. You know the way, John. It's up to you."

Murmuring his abject apologies, Big John departed.

A full day followed on the Friday and, once again, when bedtime came it wasn't long before we were asleep.

One thing I remember saying to Alice before we finally dozed off was that, because there was no Prayer Meeting in the morning, we could have a lie-in!

* * * *

A gentle knocking on our door very soon became a banging.

Alice groaned and turned over. I squinted at the clock.

It was 5 a.m.!

Slowly I shuffled to the door and opened it.

Outside stood a middle-aged lady with a case at her side.

“Yes?”

“Are you Mr. Widdowson?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, good! Well I have a plane to catch at 7 a.m. and the Caretaker told me that, if I gave you a wake-up call at about 5 a.m., you’d kindly take me to the airport.”

I must have looked an absolute dill standing there in my pyjamas, half asleep and trying to make sense of what she was saying.

“The Caretaker told you?” I asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “When I asked him how I could get to the airport at such an early hour he smiled, told me to knock on your door and said: “He owes me one!”

Alice, awake by now, was laughing her head off.

“Never mind love, we can have an early breakfast and get started back to Wagga.”

When I returned from the airport, that’s exactly what we did and how good it was to get home.

As I got undressed that night, I just happened to look at my right thigh. It was fully healed and there was no scar.

“Thank you, Father,” we both breathed, “You are, truly, a miracle-working God.”

SEE WHAT HAPPENS, WHEN YOU LET GOD LEAD!

“I have never invited a so-called ‘charismatic’ preacher into my church and I doubt I ever will.”

“But Rev. Butler¹,” John replied, “you are the minister to everybody in your congregation and there are both charismatics as well as non-charismatics who love you and are loyal members of St. Stephen’s Church. Charles is an Anglican Priest, like you, and we’ve invited him a number of times to come to Newhaven for teaching seminars. He’s very good.”

1

¹ All names in this story have been altered.

“He is obviously *not* like me! Well, I’ll think about it,” Rev. Butler replied and walked away.

Needless to say, I was quite excited when Rev. Butler’s invitation arrived. I’d been told there might be one, but I wasn’t holding my breath.

On the Sunday morning I arrived at St. Stephen’s to find the Vicar in an absolute tizzy. He was pacing up and down in the vestry muttering to himself. He paused as I walked in and looked me up and down.

“I don’t go in for raising the arms and flapping them around, you know,” were his first words.

“Rev. Butler,” I assured him, “I am perfectly aware of what is expected of an Anglican Priest in an orthodox church and I am not one who is given to excessive behaviour.”

This seemed to calm him down – for a moment.

“And we don’t shout out ‘Hallelujahs’ and ‘Praise the Lords’ either.”

“That’s fine,” I said. “I have no difficulty with that at all.”

We prayed together before going into church, and I took up my position behind him as he opened the Vestry door.

With the door half-open, he suddenly turned to me and whispered: “And we don’t believe in healing,” and strode out to his seat at the front of the church.

Usually, a Vicar will graciously conduct a visiting

member of the clergy to their seat first. I was denied this courtesy.

“We will begin our service by singing, in Hymns Ancient and Modern, number 365.”

There was the usual intro. from the organ and we all began to sing:

*“Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to His feet Thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me His praise should sing.”*

Then, when the hymn was ended, the usual service of Morning Prayer began. There was still no reference to my presence.

Eventually we reached that point in the service when the sermon was preached and, with the shortest of references, Rev. Butler waved me into the pulpit.

I was totally undecided about my message.

Should it be the one I had prepared or should it be the one I felt was burning in my spirit as a result of my visit?

The latter won the day and, after a short opening prayer, I announced my subject.

“I will not preach about something you do not sing about. However, if you sing about something you do not know about, that – I sense – is what I should preach about.”

For the next thirty-five minutes I spoke on: “God’s healing power to-day.”

A couple of times I stole a glance at the Vicar and he was holding his head in his hands!

As I concluded I turned to him and said: “Vicar, there are a number of people here who need God’s healing touch on their bodies or in their lives. May I call them forward?”

The Rev. Butler just shrugged his shoulders.

“Thank you,” I told him and gave the invitation and about forty people responded, many of them giving testimony to healing after prayer.

After the service the Vicar was nowhere to be seen and I went home with John and his family.

It must have been quite a few years later that Alice and I were attending a three-day Charismatic Conference.

At one meal there was a lass sitting next to me and, as was my custom, I introduced myself to her and asked her name.

“Charles Widdowson,” she exclaimed. “I know you.”

“Really?” I questioned.

“Yes, my name is Mavis Brownlow,” she said, very slowly, “but before I was married it was Mavis Butler.”

“Do you live here, in Sydney?” I asked her.

“No,” she replied in a tantalising sort of way, “I still live in Newhaven.”

Bells were beginning to ring and I began to feel distinctly hot around the collar.

“And your father is . . .”

“The Reverend Butler,” she cut me short.

“OH! NO!” I groaned. She looked at me and laughed out loud.

“You really gave it to us that morning, didn’t you Mr. Widdowson?”

“Mavis, I could wish the ground would open up.”

“No need,” she told me. “Actually you did a power of good. We’d never seen anything like it before and, in fact, Daddy was quite impressed.”

“Really?” I was astounded.

“Yes,” she continued, “and, just in case you’re interested, from that day onward he held a healing service every month until he died a year ago.”

Alice who, of course, was listening just put her arm around my shoulders and said: “See what happens when you let God lead.”

JOHN 17.21

When the invitation arrived, we could hardly believe it. It was to a Christian Summit Convocation in Singapore from September 12th to 17th (1978) and signed by David du Plessis.²

“This Convocation is being held for the purpose of responding to the prayer of the first Eucharistic Celebration ‘that they all may be one that the world may believe.’ John 17.21

² David Johannes du Plessis (February 7, 1905 - January 31, 1987) was a South African-born Pentecostal minister, and is considered one of the main founders of the charismatic movement, in which the Pentecostal experience spread to non-Pentecostal churches worldwide. He was a member of staff and Pentecostal “observer” at the World Council of Churches in 1954 and 1961, respectively, and was invited to serve as Pentecostal representative at the Second Vatican Council. It was here that David became known as ‘Mr. Pentecost’ – a name that stuck to him the rest of his life.

We are convinced the world is waiting to see First World and Third World Christian leaders cross economic and other barriers to become truly “One in the Spirit.”

You have been invited as an Ambassador of Christ from your field of labour to tell your colleagues all about the possibilities for ministry among your people. At the same time you will be listening to those from other fields.”

“Why you?” Alice asked, wide eyed.

I could only shrug my shoulders and say: “Guess I’ll have to book a flight on Monday 11th.”

I did.

Jill, one of the dear friends we made when we moved from WaggaWagga to Melbourne, drove us to the airport and it was there Alice’s question was answered.

Three ministers were already at the airport when we arrived - one was Alan Langstaff. I told him, point blank, I had no idea why I’d received this incredible invitation and he confided that, knowing the Convention was coming up, he’d put my name forward!

The names of those involved probably don’t mean much to-day but maybe some people who were caught up in those heady days of the 70’s and early 80’s might recall Harry Westcott, Horrie Duncan,

Hal Oxley, John Hewitt, Dan Armstrong, Don Baker and Bill Warburton.

All of us were on that flight to Singapore and, although I didn’t realise it at that time, one day I would be ministering for nearly every one of them.

As our taxi threaded its way through the Singapore streets it was interesting to see that it still looked the same as it had done in 1954 when I was in the Royal Navy - with one exception. There were many, many more high-rise apartments and shops.

“First meeting to-night, I see,” Don Baker commented as we both unpacked in the room we were to share for the next five days.

What an incredible five days they turned out to be!

On Wednesday morning each delegate was allocated to a group comprised of sixteen delegates.

We met as strangers and, five days later, parted as firm friends. Indeed, as you read on, you’ll share with me just some of the amazing stories I’ve been able to tell as I visited their churches and taught their congregations.

In my diary, before going to sleep on Thursday night, I wrote: “I’m not sure where the Conference is going – or why God wants me here – yet! I’m sure you *will* show me, Lord.”

God answered very quickly!

The very next afternoon it was virtually impossible to hear any speaker because all words were totally over-powered by a sudden cloudburst. The rain absolutely bucketed down with all too frequent flashes of lightning and mighty thunderclaps.

Shouting over the public address system David somehow communicated that we should pray for and, maybe, prophesy over those around us.

Next to me sat a young couple, Tommy and Angeline, from Sarawak, East Malaysia and, as soon as I laid my hands on their shoulders, I knew why I was here.

I prayed for them and shared a vision with them, although I can't remember what it was.

As I did so, I knew God was telling me to spend more time with them.

“Through these, My precious children, I will give you My vision for your future ministry,” Father whispered in my spirit.

As the storm abated, and it became possible to speak to one another normally, I drew Tommy and Angeline aside and shared what Father God had told me.

They looked at each other and laughed

“That's easy,” they said, “in Sarawak we need somebody like you to come and teach us. We lack

teaching, we lack leadership and we lack people who can train us to be what God wants us to be.”

Father's words, spoken to me two years previously: ‘teaching teachers, training trainers and leading leaders’ came echoing back to me.

I shared this with them.

“Then you must come,” they insisted.

I drew in my breath.

“Hmm! There's a difficulty here. Father also said that Alice and I are not to go anywhere without an invitation.”

“Invitations will come,” the beautiful couple chorused in unison.

That evening Benson Idahosa and Jim (PTL Club) Bakker spoke and, again and again, God was underlining my meeting with Tommy and Angeline and their definite prediction that invitations will come.

For two years we had been going wherever Father sent us in Australia, now it looked as if it was going to be – the world.

A HUMOROUS INTERLUDE

Having come down to Melbourne from WaggaWagga, and the rules of the road being somewhat different because of the trams, Alice and I both had to sit a written driving test before we could have a Victorian license.

The test was two days after my return from Singapore. Therefore any spare time was devoted to studying the Highway Code.

The next morning we presented ourselves at Oakleigh Police Station and were directed to a Sergeant.

“Are you both healthy?” he asked.

We replied that we were.

“No nervous tension?”

“Only when taking driving tests,” Alice told him, although why only she knows.

The Sergeant smiled.

“You’ll be alright my dear,” he told Alice in soothing tones, and she smiled.

The test was a paper with questions, each of which had multiple answers with a box against each answer.

“Just tick the box with the right answer and you’ll be A-OK,” he told us.

He took my answer paper and put it on his ‘answer’ board (which showed up the boxes that should have been ticked).

“100%”, he told me.

Then he took Alice’s paper from her and placed it on his board.

A frown crossed his face and, sadly, he looked up.

“Sorry, my dear, but you haven’t got one right answer.”

The look on Alice’s face had to be seen to be believed.

“But . . . but . . . but . . .” she stammered.

The Sergeant paused.

“Oh, so sorry love, I’ve got your answer paper upside down.”

Alice passed with 100% as well – the Police Force had a hearty chuckle, I could scarce forbear a cheeky smile and Alice had a marvellous opportunity for forgiveness.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

Smiling, welcoming, chocolate coloured faces were everywhere.

It was 1978 and Vanuatu was called ‘The New Hebrides’. Then, as now, there was a precious simplicity in the people that somehow shone through. Despite what we might think were the simplest of living conditions, there is a joy in life that manifests itself in a cheery greeting and a loving, accepting disposition.

I’d been invited to take some meetings in Santo and then conduct a retreat for the clergy in Lolowai, staying with Bishop Derek and his wife, Sue.

What an amazing three days it was! Called a 'retreat' by the Bishop, it turned out to be an 'advance' for everybody there and a time I will never, ever forget.

We began at eight o'clock in the morning and no day's worship and teaching ended before ten in the evening.

The teaching sessions were from 8.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. followed by lunch.

I was then asked to be available for personal interviews and/or counselling from 2.30 until 5.30 p.m. at which time we all gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist.

It was in these sessions that I kept on sensing that there was something that was concerning everyone with whom I spoke. No one said anything that led me to discern just what it was but, for some reason, my spirit was disturbed.

There was a service each evening that, with teaching and praying over individuals with needs, went from 7.30 until appx 10.00 or 10.30 p.m.

What the participants felt I really don't know, I didn't ask them. Nevertheless I, personally, felt it a tremendous responsibility to minister to sixty Melanesian priests and catechists (through an interpreter!) who were all so open and eager to learn.

A fascinating aspect of these times together was to realise that, although ordained, some of the priests had not even accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Certainly they were not aware of the Pentecostal dimension, such as the disciples had experienced (Acts 2.4).

I, therefore, emphasised the fundamental importance of both the new birth and the necessity to be released in tongues (God's heavenly love language). By the end of the three days everyone present was baptised with the Holy Spirit, including Bishop Derek.

I firmly believe it was because of the unity and openness of everybody there, that the Holy Spirit was freed to do God's will and yet I still felt there was something that still needed to be addressed.

Bishop Derek was leaving and he felt certain a Melanesian priest should succeed him, and that was where the trouble began. From which tribe should the next Bishop be elected?

Every tribe had at least one person it could put forward and each candidate had ample reason why he should be chosen.

Here was the reason for my uneasiness of spirit!

After the morning sessions on the final day I suggested I take a photograph of the entire group.

Just before I'd left Australia I'd purchased the latest gimmick in cameras: a Polaroid. After taking the

photo, a square of white, glossy paper emerged from the front of the camera and, while you watched, the photo appeared.

The Melanesians were blown away by this and immediately gathered in a group.

I took the photograph and, immediately, they all rushed to see it appear and, when it did, everyone became excited and began to yell in their own dialects. I turned to Bishop Derek and had to shout to make myself heard.

“What’s wrong? What’s all the noise about?”

The Bishop quietened them down and took a long look at the photograph.

How it had happened I will never know but, somehow, the developed picture distinctly showed a flame of fire hovering over the head of Harry Tevi, one of the priests.

“It’s God’s Holy Spirit showing us that Fr. Harry is to be our next Bishop,” a priest excitedly told me in English. “Praise God you came Reverend Charles, praise God you came.”

That night I couldn’t sleep. Not only was my spirit so excited by the events of the last three days (especially the photograph!), but also I fell into an icy-cold sweat and then started shivering.

For no apparent reason, Bishop Derek happened to pop his head round the door and saw my condition.

“Charles, you’re heading into a dose of malaria,” he said, and immediately fetched some quinine tablets, which he told me to take then and there.

I returned to Santo the next day and was able to rest after receiving a wonderful healing.

Then I plunged into a four day Renewal Conference.

I’d spoken thirty nine times in eleven days, done hours and hours of counselling, lost track of the time I’d prayed for sick and needy people after the meetings ended and spent in usual conversation.

Now I was heading off to Fiji to do it all again! But, if for no other reason than the photograph, it was all so very worthwhile – and, incidentally, Harry Tevi **was** consecrated as the next Bishop.

3 LESSONS IN HUMILITY – HOW IT HAPPENED!

The dilapidated apology for a bus slowly chugged its way up the mountain from Baguio City to Kapangan.

My travelling companion and host, Andrew Sacuy-Ap (Archdeacon of St. Luke’s Cathedral, Quezon City, Manilla), sat beside me and reassured his far-from-comfortable guest that all was well.

(Andrew, incidentally, had been one of the Singapore Conference delegates in the same group I had been in. His invitation had come as a direct result of that Conference!)

The ‘bus’, he told me, had been in service twice

a day since the war and had only had minor break-downs. I noticed, however, he didn’t stipulate which war, and I refrained from asking for conscience sake.

The track on which we were travelling was only just as wide as the bus; the seats on which we sat were on the left side and the view was of a hillside, which descended some 600 feet.

“What happens,” I asked Andrew, “if we meet a vehicle coming the other way, or something happens to this – er - vehicle?”

He looked at me and smiled.

“Then Charles, you should be praying even harder than you are now. However it is most unlikely. You see there is no motorised transport in Kapangan.”

“None at all?”

“None whatsoever.”

“Then how do all the folk get about? How do they travel to church?”

“They walk, Charles, and just bear in mind that some families live some miles from the church and may well be walking for two or three hours,” he paused – and then added: “each way.”

“So how many will be attending church tomorrow?” I asked.

Andrew pursed his lips and put his head on one side. “Oh! There’ll be a meeting to-night and you can expect maybe 200.”

As I was taking all this in, the ‘bus’ lurched and stopped. I hung on to the seat in front for grim death, not daring to look at the steep drop down.

As I was about to express my concern, Andrew’s calm voice reassured me.

“Don’t worry, it happens now and then. It’s probably only gear box trouble and it’s probably happened before.”

Slowly he made his way over the sacks and bags, which were obstructing the gangway, handing off the occasional dog, pig or cockerel, until he reached the front of the ‘bus’. From the door he was able to chat with the driver and, looking pleased, he made his way back to me.

“Just as I thought,” he told me, “a bit of trouble with the gear box. Easily fixed with a rubber band or so. We’ll be on our way shortly.”

Eventually, with no further ‘mishaps’, after a three hour journey (to cover roughly 22 miles!) we arrived at our destination – and what a destination!

Andrew and I stepped into Shangri-La.

3 LESSONS IN HUMILITY – NUMBER ONE

As soon as we descended from the bus we were surrounded by a group of exuberant youngsters singing, “I am redeemed by the blood of the Lamb”, men and women wanting to greet the ‘Australian Reverend’ and, in their midst, Gavino Doang, their minister. All pressed in to welcome me by hugging me and loving me and telling me how welcome I was and how excited they were.

Totally overwhelmed, I did my best to hug and love in return.

I must admit that, from the moment Andrew had mentioned visiting Kapangan, I had had doubts.

These had increased when I saw the deprivation of the people and the state of the 'bus' and they certainly weren't helped by the breakdown. But now, phew! I felt utterly and completely humbled.

Somehow Gavino rescued both Andrew and me from the singing, shouting, praising welcomers and led us – with all of them following – to his home, pointing out the church as we passed.

I looked around and was amazed to see that this whole area was as flat as a pancake, and mentioned this to Gavino. "Ah!" he smiled. "During the last war the Americans used this as an air-base. They literally sliced the top off this mountain and, when the war was over, they gave it to the church."

I was shaking my head, more and more amazed at the incredible way Father God works.

Soon the 'praisers' had left and Andrew and I were ushered into Gavino's home, where we met his wife, Emily, and his seven children.

"Bring your case upstairs," he told me. I followed, and soon found myself in a small, bare room. There was a window with a bamboo 'curtain' and a trestle made from the Pilippino Narra wood: hard and black. "Come down when you're ready," he told me, and left.

"Excuse me, Gavino," I called after him, "Where's the bathroom, so that I can freshen up."

"I am so sorry," he called back, "we don't have any bathrooms upstairs. Come down and I'll show you."

I did. He took me outside the house, where there was a bucket of cold water.

"This is what you would call the 'bathroom'."

"But . . ."

"I know," his face broke into a broad grin. "Here we have no running water, no gas and no electricity. This bucket is your basin and -," he turned and indicated the bushes, "there's your toilet. Enjoy your 'freshening up'," he called back as he went off chuckling to himself.

I was assuredly 'back to nature'.

After a simple meal of rice and bananas ("I grow fifteen varieties of bananas up here," Gavino said proudly) we went into the church for pre-meeting prayer.

There were about 100 in church and Andrew whispered in my ear: "Sorry, I was wrong."

It didn't matter: they sounded more like three hundred as they sang out their praises to their God, led by Emily and an absolutely gorgeous choir of youngsters.

Andrew introduced me and I gave my testimony (with Gavino interpreting) following it with a challenge to accept Jesus as Saviour. Seven responded and there was clapping and shouting as the folk, who

of course knew all seven, welcomed them into God's family.

We finished with prayers for healing and 30 responded, many of whom testified to immediate results. This, again, was received with tumultuous praise.

It was, indeed, a night to remember.

My only concern as I, very wearily, made my way upstairs, was: how was I going to sleep on a slab of Narra wood? However I was too tired to worry and, using my rolled-up trousers as a pillow, I lowered myself gently on the wooden bed. It was as I lay there, thanking Jesus for such a precious evening, that a miracle occurred.

No longer was I lying on a wooden slab, it was as if there was a mattress of clouds cushioning me underneath and I slept like a baby.

How humble I felt, just to be allowed to be part of so precious a community.

3 LESSONS IN HUMILITY – NUMBER TWO!

I awoke fresh and ready for whatever the day held, and it held a lot.

The 9 o'clock service lasted about two hours and was more or less along the lines of the night before and included Communion. There was, however, no place for a message, which surprised me - especially as I had been asked to prepare one.

I looked at Andrew and lifted my hands and shoulders in a questioning attitude, but he only smiled and mouthed: "It's O.K."

The service finished and drinks of tea or water were handed round.

At about 11.30 a.m. we all trooped back into church and I was asked to bring the message God had given to me and they'd like it to last about an hour or so. So I shared from my heart on 1 John 3.1: 'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us' (NIV) and spoke on the charismatic power to love.

Lunch – more rice and bananas – followed and, at about 2 o'clock, Gavino clapped his hands and motioned everybody to sit round him on the ground.

"This afternoon," he announced, "we are going to open the meeting to everybody so that you can ask Charles to answer any questions. Let's give him another Kapangan welcome."

To shouts and cheers I stood and explained that I might not have all the answers. To this remark Gavino quickly replied, "If Charles cannot answer your question, he will show you which passage of scripture WILL answer it."

I wished I'd just kept quiet. But God undertook and all went well!

At almost 5 o'clock Gavino announced that it was only just over an hour to the evening meeting and tea would be served. There was no need to ask what it was!

During the break I took Gavino aside and told him how very thrilled I was that he had specially organised the day as he had.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Well," I replied, "the morning meeting without the message, so that I had plenty of time to preach. Then: the time of questions and answers this afternoon. It's so kind of you."

A look of astonished wonderment appeared on Gavino's face.

"This is Kapangan, Charles," he explained. "This is what we normally do. Please don't think for a minute it's been laid on just for you, it's our normal way of spending Sunday. Some of these dear folk leave home early Sunday morning, spend their day worshipping and praising God, learning from His Word and enjoying fellowship with each other and, then, after the evening service will walk back home, arriving late in the evening."

"Every Sunday?" I queried.

"Why not," Gavino said simply, "it's God's day and we give it all to Him. However," he added, "because you are here everybody decided that they would take a holiday tomorrow and we're going to do it all again."

For the second time I felt so humbled as I thought of my own attitude towards Sunday - and that of so many others, not only in Australia, but also around the world.

After the evening service that night I fell on my Narra-wood bed and sank, once again, into God's cloud of love.

3 LESSONS IN HUMILITY – NUMBER THREE!

Monday followed the same pattern as Sunday and ended with us all praying for Andrew and Gavino as I laid hands on them. I also had some prophetic words for the dear Kapangan folk.

My third humbling came on the Tuesday morning as Gavino, Andrew, myself and some folk who lived nearby, waited for the 'bus' to take us back to Baguio City.

Gavino took me on one side and put his arm round my shoulder.

"Dear brother," he said, "last night I hardly slept.

I spent most of it on my knees thanking God for sending you to us and as I was there, kneeling, before Him He told me to give you my most treasured possession.”

I was overwhelmed. Here was a man who was receiving the equivalent of \$A49.00 a month. With this he had to feed and clothe his family and pay for his children’s schooling. What could it be that he treasured most?

“When I was first converted to Christ,” he told me, “I walked these hills preaching the gospel as a travelling evangelist. I carried my Bible in the sack my forebears had used to carry the heads of their victims. It was hard going but, in time, God blessed me with converts and my very first convert made a cross for me. It was very simple, just two pieces of hard, rough Narra wood joined together. I have worn it round my neck ever since. As I have read my Bible, I have stroked my cross and, down through the years, it has become smoother and smoother. I want you to have it.”

From around his neck he took a smooth, shiny cross hanging from a leather strap. Taking my hand, he placed his cross in it. He then closed my fingers over it.

“There,” he smiled, “now it’s yours.”

I could only hug him and tears were in my eyes as

I thanked him.

Praise God, at that moment the ‘bus’ arrived and Andrew and I, literally, scrambled aboard.

I was not the only one who felt emotional as the ‘bus’ chugged away.

When I arrived back in Melbourne, I placed that cross over our bed-head as a constant reminder of Gavino’s sacrifice and God’s precious Kapangan family.

BIG BEN

“I hold a Saturday evening get-together, Charles,” Andrew informed me over tea. “Would you be prepared to take part?”

We were back in Quezon City and the meeting was to be totally informal and would be held in the Cathedral vestry.

“I’m in your hands, dear brother,” I informed him. “Whatever you feel is Okay with me.”

“Good,” he said. “I’m very keen on the question and answer kind of teaching and I thought we could have some time at the beginning as an open forum.”

We began at 7.30 p.m. and, after two hours of my being the ‘Aunt Sally’, Andrew announced: “Now we’ll have the service and Brother Charles will preach.”

Questions had been asked about speaking in

tongues and, to a lesser extent, word of knowledge³ and I felt that I should elucidate on both subjects, so I did.

At the end, three people accepted Jesus as their Saviour and asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit, as at Pentecost. Six more joined them: they had asked for the in-filling (and, therefore, had received it) but had not yet had a release in tongues.

All of them went home rejoicing as they praised Jesus in their new found love-language.

“Tomorrow afternoon I have a group of people who meet in my house. I wondered if you would come and share, especially on Word of Knowledge. I’d find that extremely helpful and, I’m sure, so would they.”

At 2.30 p.m., therefore, I taught on Word of Knowledge and then felt Father God was wanting me to pray for every individual there, giving a Word of Knowledge they could each take home.

Afterwards Andrew, who of course knew each person extremely well, confirmed that every word was spot on!

For one rather tall young man the Lord had given

³ A Word of Knowledge is a spiritual gift mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8 but not in any other New Testament list of Spiritual Gifts. It is a gift of knowledge given by the Holy Spirit to one individual for the benefit of another.

me a picture of Big Ben (in London), which I shared with him.

“But, of course,” I explained, “that isn’t the name of the clock or the structure itself. Big Ben is the name of the great bell and I believe God wants you to know that that’s how He sees you. You will be like a great bell, ringing out the Good News of the gospel north, south, east and west. How’s that?”

The young man shook himself as if he was waking up from a trance.

“Wow, that sounds great,” he said as he hugged me and thanked me.

“Oh, by the way!” Andrew added later, as he was driving me out to the airport, “that word you had for the big fellow: you said he was like the bell.”

“Yes.”

“His name’s Ben.”

MICHELE'S FAITH

It was Easter 1979 and the Temple Trust Easter Conference was to be held in Sydney. Alice and I had been asked to be speakers at the Conference and we had brought our youngest daughter, Michele (aged almost 10), with us.

Alan Langstaff, who organised the Conference, had asked a Canadian couple (Ian and Ann Mitchell) to look after us, which they willingly did – even giving up their bedroom, complete with en-suite, for us!

“Nothing,” they told us, “is too much trouble, we are delighted to have you with us.”

After a very full Friday at the Conference (and precious fellowship when we, eventually, arrived ‘home’)

we crawled into bed in the early hours and slept like logs.

Saturday morning was free and it was so good to relax and simply share God’s love and guidance in and through blessings and problems.

For some time Michele had believed that she would spend a birthday in Disneyland U.S.A.

I’d reminded her that we only ministered by invitation and that none had arrived from America. “They’ll come,” she would glibly reply.

“Darling,” I assured her more than once, “I love your precious, innocent faith but you know what Daddy preaches: “You must tie it back to God’s Word, the Bible.”

Without hesitation she replied: “All right then, Daddy, what about Psalm 37.4: “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart?”

As Alice pointed out: “You can’t argue against that.”

Needless to say invitations began to arrive! In fact we could well be in Los Angeles in May 1980, when Michele would turn eleven.

So, as we were chatting, Michele told Ian and Ann that she would be spending her 11th birthday in Disneyland.

“Darling,” I reminded her, “we might well be in L.A., but Glendale is a long way from Disneyland and if you think I’m going to drive miles on the wrong side of the road, you’ve got another think coming.”

Her sweet face looked at me and she just shook her head.

“Daddy, don’t worry, it’ll all work out.”

Ian and Ann burst into laughter and Ann, gathering Michele in her arms, just hugged her and hugged her.

Just at that moment the front door bell rang.

Ian, who answered it, ushered a lady into the room.

Evidently she was a friend of a friend of a friend of Ann’s, who happened to be in Sydney and had been asked to call.

“This is June,” Ian announced and introduced us all. When he came to Michele he added: “And this little lady says she’s going to spend her 11th birthday in Disneyland.”

June’s face lit up.

“When will you be coming, dear?” she asked Michele in a broad, but pleasant dialect.

“Look,” I broke in. “Michele knows that it might not happen. We’ll be at Glendale, for goodness sake.”

June held up her hand for silence.

“When will you be coming to L.A. Charles?” she asked.

“Most probably we’ll be landing on 6th May.”

“And when is your birthday, me dear?” the ‘rrrr’ was rolled and the question addressed to Michele.

“May 9th.”

“But . . .” I tried to intervene.

Again the hand went up as she rattled on.

“Good! That’s good! So, when you arrive, you get your daddy to ring me – I’ll give you my number – then catch the Airport Bus to Disneyland Hotel. I’ll pick you up and you can come and stay with Paul and me. We live a couple of blocks from Disneyland and you can walk round there on 9th. Now how’s that?”

We were all stunned, and looked it.

All, that is, except Michele, who just skipped around and from then on praised and thanked her loving Heavenly Father that she was definitely going to spend her 11th birthday in Disneyland.

She did and, in offering her love and generosity to us, June received a miraculous gift in return – but that’s another story.

FRIDAY JULY 27TH 1979 (SINGAPORE)

An extract from my diary:

An easy morning. James (Conon James Wong) collected me at noon to go out to St. Andrew's Junior College again – this time for a Staff Bible Study.

First we had lunch in the Canteen: rice, braised and b.b.q. pork, chicken curry and bean sprouts, coffee. Total for James and me: AU\$ 1!!!!

12.45 – 1.30 p.m.: First Bible Study on 'Victorious Living'. This was attended by

about 20 staff (including the Principal).

1.30 – 2.15 p.m.: Second Bible Study with about 6 present. Mainly Q & A on the Charismatic Movement.

In to Orchard Road (Lucky Plaza) to get a watch for Judith and a couple of Pilipino shirts for myself.

Back to my accommodation about 6 p.m. and changed prior to going to the Cathedral for the first of three evening rallies.

Into Your hands, sweet Father, I commit everything.

Prayer meeting prior to service and then into the (Anglican) Cathedral – packed!!!

I sat next to the Roman Catholic Archbishop and he was praising lustily.

A man gave testimony, the Anglican Archbishop (Chiu Ban It) spoke and I was eventually asked to speak at 9.25 p.m.

According to the Order of Service, prayer ministry was supposed to start at 9.45 p.m.

It didn't!

I spoke of "Faith in a faithful God" (more briefly than I'd wanted to!) but the way it slotted into salvation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit was beautifully of God. Hallelujah!

I gave an invitation for salvation (at 10

p.m.) and thirty or so responded. Later about the same number came forward to be baptised in the Holy Spirit – no it must have been at least 50 judging from the space taken up.

Then into prayer for the sick: bad backs, gastritis and all sorts of problems until midnight.

Back to my accommodation, tired but praising God.

Fell into bed at 12.40 a.m.

“HOLY FATHER, GUARD THEM”

The sun had set and rush lanterns lit the darkened field.

Alice and I, with Philip Torboe (who had invited us), his close friend Kami and Pastor Johnathan (our interpreter) were on a rather rickety platform at one end of the field and some hundreds of happy brown faces with wide white grins were clapping and singing as only New Hebrideans (now Vanuatians) can.

Pastor Johnathan, always the comic, quipped: “If you want to know how many are here, Charles, count their teeth and divide by about thirty-four!”

It was certainly a meeting to be remembered.

I spoke on “Victory through forgiveness” and, in my enthusiasm, told them “without forgiveness in their hearts they could pray until they were blue in the face and the heavens would be as brass.”

I paused and waited for Pastor Johnathan to interpret, but no interpretation came.

“Interpret, brother,” I urged him.

He just stood there with his hands on his hips, looked me straight in the eye and asked: “How I say ‘blue in face’ to this mob, eh?”

All those in the gathering who understood English collapsed with laughter. So did all the rest when Philip translated.

In three evening meetings, in addition to many healing miracles, we saw well over two hundred people come to Christ and receive a personal Pentecost experience. Alice and I were assured that they would all be slotted into local churches.

The Santo meetings, however, were also causing a disturbance and we knew nothing about this until after our final meeting.

Evidently a group of youths who lived in a village some distance from Santo heard what was happening and were determined to put a stop to it, and us!

The second night they decided to arm themselves with both rifles and liquor, drive a Jeep to, and then

through, the field where we were ministering and shoot us.

Others, who knew what they intended to do and wanted to warn us, followed them – praying fervently - and tried, in vain, to overtake them.

The route led along the coast and, no doubt realising they were being followed, the youths began firing at the other vehicle.

We will never know whether it was as the pursuing vehicle tried to overtake or because of too much drink, but somehow the youth’s Jeep went off the road, rolled and then blew up. Sadly, all of them died.

Jesus, in His great High Priestly prayer, prayed for all of us who love Him: “Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life.” (John 17.11 The Message).

In many ways and in many places around the world we have known we were being ‘guarded’.

An interesting sequel to our visit to Santo happened on the plane to Fiji.

Archdeacon Andrew Subramani (one of the ‘Singapore Conference’ group) had invited us to spend some time with him in Suva.

Alice and I were allocated seats either side of the aisle.

On Alice’s left was an ex-R.A.F. fellow who was scared of flying! Consequently she spent time

witnessing to him about the truth of 1 John 4.18. “There is no fear in love (and verses 8 and 16 tell us that ‘God is love’). But perfect love drives out fear.”

I, however, found myself sitting next to Charles and Joyce McLeod, two Presbyterian missionaries who had been ministering in the New Hebrides. Charles was a teacher in Whitesands, Tanna, and had taught Kami (Philip’s friend) to write and speak English.

How Father God arranged for us to meet was, surely, one of the most beautiful of miracles.

THE NIGHT OF THE E.C.M.E.

The first question you’re going to ask, of course, is: “What on earth is an E.C.M.E.?”

It’s an Ecumenical, Charismatic, Miracle Eucharist and it took place in the Church of the Resurrection, Baguio City and what a service it turned out to be!

As we walked into church that evening, Alice noticed a lady in a wheel chair parked near the entrance so, immediately, she went over to minister to her.

I continued to the front of the church and went into the Vestry to prepare for whatever Father God had planned for the evening.

By 7.00 p.m. the church was packed. Alice and I had led a praise service two days previously and we’d

seen some incredible miracles take place. The word had, evidently, got around.

I was leading the service and, as I stood up to welcome the folk, the lady to whom Alice had ministered (who everyone knew had been bound to a wheelchair for almost ten years) walked up the aisle.

She went directly to Juan, the Priest-in-charge, flung her arms around him and sobbed out her plea for forgiveness. For years she had been bitter about something Juan had done or said and it was her bitterness of spirit that had resulted in her physical condition.

Evidently, in the very precious way she has, Alice had coaxed all this out of her and urged her to forgive. It took some time but, eventually, she had responded and her walk down the aisle and reconciliation was the result.

Because of this, Juan asked if anyone else had a testimony and Marcello stood up and ran to the front of the church.

“Last Friday,” he told everybody, “I asked for prayer because I have a very weak heart. I could not run and I could not even walk far without puffing and panting. I could not, therefore, do the things I wanted to do and I miss all the hill climbing that gave me so much joy.”

He paused, wiping tears from his eyes.

“Yesterday,” he continued, “I climbed two hills and had no ill effects whatsoever.”

The church erupted into prolonged clapping and it was some time before I could continue.

We praised God heartily, prayed fervently and then – at the end of the Eucharist – I invited Alice to join me and we opened the altar rail for prayer. Every aisle was crammed with people and every minister and elder available was called to help pray.

It was gone midnight when I happened to look at my watch and the church was still jam-packed with people needing prayer.

I went over to Juan and asked where on earth all these folk were coming from. “They couldn’t have been at the service, there wasn’t room.”

Juan smiled.

“Haven’t you realised?” he asked me, “Those who have been in church are going home to tell their families and friends.”

We prayed on, and still the church was full.

At about 2 o’clock in the morning Alice and I had to leave Juan and his elders at it and retire. We were worn out and knew we had a busy day ahead of us.

A leisurely breakfast followed a very slow start the next morning and as we were eating Alice asked: “Charles, what’s all that commotion going on outside?”

With a combination of tiredness and hunger, I hadn't really noticed.

We went to the front door.

There were queues of people outside the church and coaches parked in the street.

We rushed across to the church to find it still jam-packed and Juan, with a group of very tired helpers, still praying for people – and the sick were still being healed!

“What’s happening?” I asked Juan.

“Dear brother, the news has spread like wild-fire and bus-loads of folk have been flocking from all the churches and villages around. We’ve been praying all night!”

Not until after lunch did Juan close the doors of the church and tell all those who were still wanting prayer that, next time, they must really come to a set service.

Our Ecumenical, Charismatic, Miracle Eucharist had become an eighteen-hour service of praise, prayer and healing.

Praise the Lord!

A MIRACLE ON THE MOUNTAIN

There were four of us on the trip to the Philippines: Alice, myself, our second daughter, Judith, and Ian: a very dear friend of ours who was a Youth Pastor from Broadmeadows (a northern suburb of Melbourne).

I had told them all about my previous trip and all four of us were excited at the prospect of being a part of my Shangri-La.

The plan was to travel to Baguio City, where we had been invited to minister for a couple of days and then go on to Kapangan.

But it was hot!

Evidently we'd arrived during a time of prolonged dry weather with little chance of a let-up for weeks

to come. We hadn't taken that into account! It also meant that water was becoming scarce and ruled out any possibility of a cool shower, or bath.

"Do you want to come to Kapangan, sweetheart?" I asked Alice, "Or would you rather stay here where, at least, there will some water and you can get a cup of tea?"

"We promised to go and, what's more important, we really believe that Father wants us to go. We're only going to be there a couple of days and I'm sure I'll manage somehow."

She paused.

"The only thing I am concerned about is the 'bus' trip."

Even though I'd tried to convince Alice that the trip from Baguio City to Kapangan really wasn't all that bad, she had remembered my vivid description after my first visit.

"Darling," I tried to encourage her, "forget the journey. Believe me its well worth every inch. I'll be sitting next to you and, once you meet Gavino and all the people, you'll be absolutely rapt. In any case the air could well be clearer and fresher up there - and cooler," I added.

To try to soften the thought of riding in the 'bus', we had lunch at the Peak Hotel in Baguio and then made our way to the Dangwar Terminal.

The 'bus' was there and, I must admit, it seemed slightly more comfortable than last time and not quite as crowded. The road, however, hadn't improved one bit!

Slowly the 'bus' jolted along and we all bumped up and down with every jolt, but the air didn't become cooler and dust and flies were coming in through the open windows. There was, of course, no air conditioning!

As we drew near to the Mission compound we heard the bell announcing our arrival. I looked at my watch. Praise God the journey had only taken two, instead of three, hours. It was now 4 o'clock.

Oh! How good it was to see Gavino and all the folk again.

There was such hugging and much laughter as sticky body was wrapped around equally sticky body. I introduced Alice, Judith and Ian to Gavino and he so graciously welcomed us all.

Then nearby, we heard something that is virtually impossible to describe: the crystal clear voices of Kapangan children singing praises to God.

We turned and looked.

A young girl, no older than seven, was the 'choir mistress' and, under her direction, pure harmony was filling the whole campus.

All we could do was to stand in awe of such innocent worship.

As soon as they had finished, all the children came rushing towards us, hugging us and putting their little faces up to be kissed.

“Yes,” Alice whispered to me while still being hugged, “this is heaven.”

It was only then, as we began to walk across to Gavino’s house, that we noticed all the other people who were there. In ones, twos and families there must have been fifty or more of them, carrying jugs, mugs or tins very carefully across the campus.

“What are they doing?” Alice asked me.

Gavino overheard and answered her: “Look up and see how clear the sky is. It’s been like this for weeks. None of us have very much water but we all know that you are from Australia and Charles told us that you like your cup of tea, Alice. So, out of their small supply, each one has walked miles to bring an offering of water. All four of you beautiful people will be able to wash, shave and have your cups of tea”

Suddenly, as we stood there totally overwhelmed by the sacrifice that was being made, it happened.

A cloud appeared in the clear, blue sky and it began to rain.

For about ten minutes sweet, refreshing, life-giving rain poured from above.

Then, as suddenly as it had started, it ceased. The cloud disappeared, the searing heat returned and, within minutes, the ground had dried and it was as if nothing had taken place.

“You know,” Gavino said, “that amount of rain will have re-filled every dam and tank in the area.”

We had a praise service on the spot and that night’s meeting was like none other that the four of us had ever been a part of.

Our God is the God of the miraculous. Praise His Name!

DOES GOD STILL HEAL TO- DAY? YOU BET HE DOES!

“Absolute rubbish!” he told his wife, after the meeting. “Who invited that couple to come here anyway? I’ll not be at the meeting tomorrow night, no way.”

“But you are the Rector,” his wife reminded him, “and God used you mightily to-night. It was in a way we’ve never experienced before.”

“It was a fluke, a total fluke,” her husband continued. Then, after a pause, “Well, I’ll be there, but I’ll just hang round the back so I can get out of the church quickly if anything more peculiar takes place.”

We were in La Trinidad and Alice and I had shared with some of the local clergy and their wives.

I shared on ‘Renewal’ and Alice had shared on her pet topic: “Healing.”

This had led to ministry and the Rector had told all present that he had never sensed God wanted to use him to pray for the sick. In her own, sweet way Alice had actually persuaded him to pray for two people present who needed God’s healing touch, and he had done so. Both testified that healing had taken place.

The next evening the Church of the Epiphany, La Trinidad was packed: possibly as a result of reports concerning the E.C.M.E.! The Rector’s wife was sitting at the front, with a friend, but her husband was nowhere to be seen.

“Is he not coming?” I asked his wife.

“He’ll prowl around the back and feel his way,” she told me and recounted what he had told her the night before.

The atmosphere in the church was not the liveliest, but a time of spirited (and Spirit-filled) singing ‘freed’ people up a little.

Alice shared on “Body Ministry” and, after some more praising I spoke on “The need to be renewed – in our thinking and in our physical bodies.”

We gave an invitation for people to accept Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit and about eighty people responded.

Then came the invitation for sick people to come forward.

Immediately the Rector's wife stood up and brought her friend to us.

"What seems to be the matter?" Alice asked quietly and the lady pointed to her mouth.

"My friend had an operation on her throat about a year ago and her vocal chords were accidentally severed. She cannot talk."

We laid our hands on her and began to pray. After a few moments in English, we then began praying earnestly and ardently in tongues. This was no light impediment with which we were dealing!

As I prayed I had a distinct impression that Father God was telling me that, as soon as our prayers ceased, I was to face this lady and tell her to raise her hands and say: "Praise the Lord!"

Was it just my forlorn hope, or was it really and truly God?

I just wanted us to keep praying but, of course, it had to stop sometime.

When it did I swallowed hard, turned her face towards mine and said: "If I don't say this I will be disobeying God. He has told me to tell you to raise your

arms and say: "Praise the Lord!"

The look on her face needed to be seen to be believed. She looked at me as if I was most definitely stark raving mad.

"You know I can't speak," she told me.

Suddenly she realised that she could speak and she raised her hands and shouted what I'd told her to, not once, but many, many times.

There was a rush of wind as the whole congregation gave one big shout of "WOW!"

I cast a glance in the direction of the back of the church, wondering if I could catch sight of the Rector. He was staring open-mouthed.

Swallowing hard, I invited others to come for prayer.

The entire church stood up and advanced towards us, almost pinning us to the front wall of the church.

Faith was high, however, and we only needed to touch people and say: "Be healed in Jesus' Name!" – and they were: astigmatism, curvature of the spine, deaf folk heard, migraines disappeared and goitres shrank.

It was well after 11 p.m. when a rejoicing congregation finally began to make their way home – and so did we!

A TRIP TO REMEMBER

It was Monday, just five days before we were due to set off on a bus tour of eastern Australia.

Michele had won the trip in a competition: a fourteen-day Ansett Coach pass for four. We were all getting excited.

There was, however, one big snag. Money! It was just before Christmas and, although the trip was free, it didn't include food or accommodation. We hadn't budgeted for that.

Michele had worked out how we could go right round the country in the two weeks, which would involve less accommodation since we would spend more time on the bus. But my wife, Alice, and I

disagreed with her. A certain part of our anatomy was in rebellion.

The doorbell rang and I was overjoyed to see a dear friend of ours, Gordon, standing on the doorstep.

'I'm not staying,' he told us. 'This morning in my prayer time I had a distinct impression that Father God wanted me to come and give you this.' He handed me an envelope and left.

Inside was a cheque for \$1000. Wow! We'd reckoned we needed about \$700 and here it was, plus more (even after we'd tithed it).

Needless to say, when Michele arrived home from school she was cock-a-hoop. She immediately rushed round to tell her friend Sandy, who was making up the foursome.

On Tuesday morning we had a visit from another friend, a man for whom we'd conducted seminars in both Bourke and Thailand but whom we hadn't seen for some time. As we talked over a cuppa, the subject turned to what he was doing now, and that's when I began to get a really funny feeling. He told us that the Lord had led him to start a 'helps' ministry that involved buying some premises.

'So I'm visiting old friends who I know love and serve the Lord, and I'm challenging them, if they really are committed, to donate \$1000 before Christmas.'

Alice and I were stunned. What were we to do? We did love God and we were committed. Moreover, I had a cheque for \$1000 lying on my study desk at that very moment.

But, Lord, I found myself protesting. You know we need that money. It was given to us especially for the coach trip. Michele will be devastated if I give this brother her money.

No word came, and I felt fairly certain that if Father had said anything it would have been something like: ‘Don’t ask me, you know what you must do.’

I looked across at Alice and she just shrugged her shoulders.

Well, of course, the long and the short of it is that I went into my study, wrote out a cheque for \$1000, put it in an envelope, went back into the lounge and gave it to our friend. Delighted and thanking us profusely, he left.

‘Now what?’ Alice said, summing up both our feelings. ‘We mustn’t breathe a word of this to Michele. Let’s spend some time in prayer right now.’

And we did, after which I went round to our bank and paid in Gordon’s cheque so that mine wouldn’t bounce.

Neither of us slept very soundly that night. Certainly we’d prayed, but there’s always the human spirit to overcome.

Wednesday dawned bright and clear. Michele went off to school, rejoicing in the fact that there were only three days left before we’d be off on the coach trip with all expenses paid.

Mid-morning the doorbell rang and I was surprised to see Gordon standing on the doorstep again. He didn’t look too well and was shaking slightly.

‘Come in, come in,’ I told him and ushered him into the lounge. ‘Alice, put the kettle on! Gordon looks as if he could do with a cup of tea.’

‘I’m all right, really I am,’ Gordon protested. ‘The fact of the matter is that I’ve been disobedient.’

Alice and I glanced at each other.

‘I really shouldn’t have given you the cheque on Monday.’

I did my best to restrain a fit of coughing and then spluttered, ‘Well, before you say any more I’d better tell you this . . .’ Gordon restrained me.

‘No, let me finish,’ he said. ‘As soon as I got back in my car I had this terrible feeling that I’d disobeyed God and that I shouldn’t have given you the cheque. It was too small an amount. God really told me to give you \$2000, and please forgive me for not doing so. Here’s the other \$1000.’

It surely is better to give than to receive, and we now know this is true both ways!

That trip was one of the most enjoyable we’ve ever had.

THE BREAKDOWN

“You know, I’ve been a-looking around your car and I reckon, judging from your ‘stickers’, you and me could get on real good.”

The fellow who was speaking to me was a typical farmer.

We, that is Alice, Nanna, Michele and myself, were on our way from Adelaide to Newcastle and, miles in the middle of nowhere, our Brougham had suddenly decided to vomit out masses of steam from underneath the hood.

With all of us praying earnestly, I was gently coaxing the car along but it was soon very obvious that it was a losing battle.

Then we came to a corner in the road and as I drove, - very carefully - round it, the miracle happened.

There, round the bend, and just past a sign that read ‘Jabuk’, was a garage!

With a sigh of relief I pulled in and there was no need to explain what had happened, it was glaringly obvious as soon as the hood was opened.

“Yer’ve blown yer gaskets,” the garage proprietor said.

“Can you fix it?” I asked.

“Oh yers, I can fix it, but not ternite and, if I can’t get the parts from Murray Bridge, he paused and sighed, “yer’ll ‘ave ter wait a week or so.”

“But we’re due to be in Newcastle in two days,” Alice sought to explain.

“Sorry, lady, but I can’t do what I can’t do. In any case that farmer’s brought ‘is truck in – and that’s me first job.”

“Well, if we really *do have* to stay,” I said, trying not to sound too put out, “where’s the nearest hotel, motel or whatever?”

He stood there, tried not to smile, and shook his head.

Then, looking the four of us over, he dropped the bombshell.

“There isn’t one.”

Which is the point at which the farmer offered to

accommodate us. Then, turning to the garage man he said: “Look, Darrell, leave my truck ‘til later. This repair is much worse than mine. Fix his first. Mine will wait.”

Turning to us he held out his hand, “I’m Col, and I live in Geranium, not far from here. You, obviously, love the Lord and so do I. Why don’t I take you home with me? I’ll ring my wife and tell her to expect you and you can stay with us until your car’s fixed.”

What could we say, except a deeply grateful: “Thank you”?

Returning his handshake I told Col my name was Charles and introduced all the family. We then climbed into his car and he took us home.

Clare welcomed us with open arms and, immediately, we felt part of the family.

After a most delicious – and welcome – meal Colin left the room to make a phone call.

When he came back he just looked at the four of us and burst out laughing. I must admit, I felt a little embarrassed.

“Hey,” he said when he eventually stopped laughing, “you’ll never guess what I’ve just heard.”

“No, Colin, we most probably will not,” Clare told him, “and so maybe you’d better tell us.”

“I’ve just been on the phone to Johnny. He’s our Methodist minister,” he explained for our benefit,

“and I told him we’d got a family staying with us and I thought he’d be happy to have a talk with you all. I mentioned your name, Charles, and you’ll never guess what he said.”

“Never guess, never guess,” Clare broke in, “Oh! Col for goodness sake tell us.”

“Well I told him we had Pastor Charles Widdowson and his wife and family with us and he said . . .”

Again he paused to stop himself from bursting out into another peal of laughter.

“ . . . and he said it was a miracle. At that very moment he was listening to one of your recorded tapes, Charles. He’s going to turn it off and come straight over.”

What a totally joy-filled evening of fellowship it was!

Then, to top it all off, Darrell rang at about eleven o’clock to tell us that every spare part he needed to fix the car was available and would be sent out first thing in the morning.

“And I’ll drop everything to make sure yer car’s ready to go by noon. How’s that?”

Praising Father God for His goodness, we thanked Him – and Darrell – and assured him we’d be at the garage on the stroke of noon.

“It’s way past my bedtime,” Clare announced, when we put the phone down, “and, quite frankly I

don't feel really well. I'm off to bed."

"We'll pray for you before you go," Alice insisted, and we all gathered round her and prayed for her total healing.

* * * *

It was a slow but eager start the next morning and Alice and I arrived in the dining room just as Clare was serving breakfast.

"How are you feeling?" Alice asked her.

"Why! I'm absolutely first-class m'dear," she assured Alice with a broad grin on her face. Then in hushed tones, "But I wish you'd pray for Col. His back plagues him something chronic at times. It's so bad that he can't do the shearing any more and that means it's an added expense getting shearers in."

Alice grinned at me and then said to Clare, "We'll see what Father can do, eh?"

Clare smiled.

"You've got a bad back, have you?" Alice asked as soon as Col walked into the room. "Sit down on that chair, put your bottom well back and let me have your legs."

She took his legs and nodded.

"I thought so. Come here Clare and look at Col's heels."

"Eeee!" she shrieked, "Col, one leg's shorter than the other."

Alice and I weren't listening, we were praying: Alice held Col's feet and I had my hands on his shoulders.

For several minutes all that could be heard was our low praying and Clare's gasps as she saw Col's short leg slowly, but surely, grow until the two legs were of equal length.

"Why, it's a miracle!" she exclaimed.

"Stand up, Col, and bend your back," Alice invited.

He did so and his face lit up with sheer joy.

"I can't feel any pain," he announced, shaking his head in disbelief. Then, grabbing Clare, he waltzed her round the dining room and into the kitchen.

"Hop in the jalopy," Col told us, "and I'll take you all for a tour of the farm."

The morning slipped by all too quickly and, almost before we knew it, we were hugging and kissing Clare good-bye.

Col drove us to the garage and Darrell had the car ready to go.

God had once again shown us what a precious family we were a part of, as His children.

Thankful that the car had been fixed, and very grateful to Col for his invitation and love, we said our

farewells and began the trip to Newcastle.

We heard later on that year that Col had been able to shear all his sheep.

**HEAL THE SICK
AND TELL THEM:
“THE KINGDOM
OF GOD IS NEAR
YOU.” [LUKE 10.9]**

James Wong had made a mistake!

Tom and I were in Singapore at James' invitation and he thought we were flying back to Australia on the Monday, but we'd booked flights on the Tuesday. Had James realised, he would have most certainly organised more ministry for us. As it was, we were free!

Margaret, a very dear friend of ours, had taken us to the Sheraton Hotel for a magnificent, delayed,

breakfast and then on a shopping tour.

Not that we bought much, but we enjoyed our hostess' bubbly company – and the free time!

It was early afternoon when Margaret drove us to a decidedly up-beat Chinese Restaurant for lunch.

The three of us were sharing precious fellowship, and not a few laughs, when a very distressed lady hurried across to us.

“Pastor Charles and Pastor Tom, forgive me,” she blurted out. “I recognised your laugh and have come to ask you to pray for a friend of mine who’s just collapsed. I think she’s had a heart attack.”

Excusing ourselves, we followed our distressed acquaintance to her table. Her friend was ashen white and slumped over the table.

While Tom and I lifted her up, the lady who’d come over to us dragged her chair into a more open space in the restaurant and we began to pray.

It wasn’t long before our prayers (in English) turned into prayer in Father God’s language of love. As we prayed ‘our patient’ began to groan, to open her eyes and, eventually, to sit erect. In fact she pulled herself upright, took a deep breath, looked around and said: “Hmm! I don’t think I had my deserts.”

So saying, she stood up, grabbed her chair and returned to her table.

Praising Father God, Tom and I returned to our table.

No sooner had we sat down than a voice rang out: “I don’t feel too hot, will you pray for me, too?”

In the end we had the privilege, not only of praying for five people to be healed, but to share briefly that Jesus is the Healer and that we were NOT doing anything because of our power, but because of His.

All this was whilst the Manager, waitresses, staff and every customer looked on.

Jesus received all the honour and glory and Tom and I learned that discipleship is a 24/7 profession of faith: wherever, whenever, whatever!

MICHELE'S BIG DAY!

Our Pan Am Flight landed at L.A. at 5.30 pm on 7th May.

Our luggage was finally retrieved at 6.25 p.m. (we didn't have to go through customs, we'd done that in Honolulu) and, with a very excited Michele bounding along beside us, we found a phone and rang June.

As June had directed, we caught the shuttle to the Disneyland Hotel where she was waiting with her car.

What a reunion it was, and there was no one more excited than Michele!

Thrilled by being with Paul and June – AND being in Los Angeles – we shared, reminisced, laughed

and didn't notice the time flashing by! By about 11 p.m. Michele was sound asleep on my knee and I suggested that I should put Michele to bed, and then head for sleep ourselves. Alice concurred.

The only member of our party who disagreed was Alice's mother, who lived with us and had consequently accompanied us. She was 85 and wide-awake.

"I think, Nanna, you'll be on your own," June told her. "Paul's had a full day and I'm pooped."

It was a very reluctant Nanna who made her way to her bedroom, although the hour was so late!

It was, also, at a much later hour in the morning that a beautifully refreshed Nanna arrived at the breakfast table the next morning.

Actually no one had risen very early. "So," (as June put it), "it'll be a running-meal for everyone."

A ring on the doorbell interrupted June in her description of what she had mapped out for our first day in L.A. It was her daughter, Julie.

What a day it turned out to be!

Knotts Berry Farm in the morning - what had once been an actual berry farm had been turned into acres and acres of rides, unique family shows and one-of-a-kind attractions. Eagerly we walked and walked, taking everything in. Then, after lunch, we split up. While the ladies went shopping, Michele and I enjoyed the amusements.

We were a reluctant quartet of Aussies who made our way home for the evening meal.

“Oh! But the day’s not over yet,” June assured us. “After dinner I want to take you to the Chrystal Cathedral: I work there for Pastor Robert.”

Michele wasn’t sure about the Cathedral bit!

“Then,” June rattled on, “I’ve a real surprise for you.”

She paused.

“You could be on television.”

Michele drew in her breath. “Daddy,” she said, “it’s all a bit too much, isn’t it?” I smiled at the expression on her lovely face, but had to admit she was right.

So, the Chrystal Cathedral it was, and then to Channel 40 for the live telecast of Paul and Jan Crouch’s ‘Praise the Lord’ programme. My heart jumped within me when I heard Paul introduce his guests for the evening: John and Dodie Osteen.

John and I had been speakers at the Full Gospel Business Men’s Convention in Adelaide the year before and Alice and I had come to know and love he and his wife dearly. Because they had had no transport, we’d the great joy of ‘taxiing’ them round, even taking them to meet some of our dear friends in and around Adelaide.

John and Dodie saw us in the ‘audience’ and made a point of coming over to us when the telecast was over.

We introduced them to Nanna and Michele and, of course, dear June.

“Now, will you be in the Houston area on your tour?” John asked, in his Texan drawl.

I shrugged my shoulders: “We can be,” I said casually.

“Well then, we’re going to put you up for a week in Lakewood and you can do some preaching and teaching for me. Just give me a ring when you arrive and I’ll fix up the rest.”

It was settled.

Tired but oh! so excited we arrived ‘home’ at about 11 p.m. and, then, it was bed – ready for Michele’s BIG DAY!

It was a very excited little girl who was up and about much earlier than anyone else. Julie was fetching us and by the time she arrived Michele had been dressed, ready and waiting for at least half an hour!

“Oh! By the way,” Julie asked, as she drove us to Disneyland, “do you know Larry Snow? He’s a friend of Scott McKinney.”

“Scott I know very well,” I told her.

“Well, Larry works in Disneyland. He’s meeting us and will get you all in for free. . .”

Michele was almost on the point of bursting, she was so excited.

“ . . . **and**,” Julie emphasised, “he’s giving all four of you enough free tickets to last you all day.”

So it was that Michele’s big day began, and from there it just became more and more exciting. Never have I seen Michele so excitedly awestruck as she was that day. We went everywhere and saw (almost) everything – from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Just before 1 p.m. Nanna said that she felt a bit peckish and suggested that we go to the Plaza Inn for lunch.

“I’m not hungry,” Michele announced, “and there’s so much more to see and do.”

“Sweetheart,” I told her, “not only Nanna, but Mummy and Daddy would like a little sit down for a bite of food and something to drink. We’ll still have lots of time to go round.”

Totally unpersuaded, Michele accompanied us to the Plaza Inn. Little did she know that I had been in touch with them (from Australia) and arranged a birthday cake, complete with Disney characters, as a surprise.

When the entire staff slowly emerged from the kitchen, carrying the cake and singing “Happy Birthday” we really couldn’t tell whether Michele was embarrassed or overjoyed. Maybe a bit of both.

As it does, the time slipped by all too quickly for our little precious and it was one of those contented but sad moments when we had to make our way down Main Street to the entrance, where Paul and June were waiting for us.

“What did you enjoy the most?” I asked Michele, trying to buck her up. “What will really stick in your memory?”

She didn’t have to think twice.

“Space Mountain, Daddy. Yes!” she affirmed, “definitely Space Mountain.”

Alice and Nanna had refused to accompany us on this particular ride because it was not only a roller coaster ride, but it was in the dark!

The day was far from over, however!

Paul and June took us to Angelo’s Pizza Place. It was a ‘farewell’ to Julie, who was flying back to Iowa the next day. It was, also, another opportunity to sing “Happy Birthday” to Michele and, again, all the staff joined in and brought her an Ice Cream Cake, with a candle stuck in the centre.

Do you recall that, in “Michele’s Miracle,” I mentioned June and Robyn’s blessing? Well, this is when it happened.

June came over to Alice and shared with her that her daughter, Robin, was devastated because she seemed unable to become pregnant and she, so

badly, wanted a family. June would also love to have a granddaughter, too!

We called Robin (and her husband, Phil) over and, right then and there, prayed a prayer of release to unblock whatever could be the hindrance. It was just a simple prayer, but Jesus told us there was no need for complicated crying out to God. He said: “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21.22).

Was that prayer answered?

To-day Phil and Robin have two precious daughters in their twenties and Paul and June have two beautiful granddaughters!

Kelly, the eldest, is now married to Shawn, a fireman, and both of them are full on for Jesus!

Father God, You are so very gracious!

LAKEWOOD

“Gee, you gotta accent!” the Texan checkout girl said as I was just ‘chatting her up’ while she priced and packed the few things we’d bought.

“Oh no, my dear,” I replied, purposefully putting on a very English voice, “it’s you who has the accent.”

She looked at me and smiled.

“Gee! That’s perty,” she sighed, “say it agin.”

John and Dodie’s Missions Director had picked us up at the Bus Station and settled us in the “Visitor’s Trailer”. Although the fridge and pantry had been very well stocked, there were just a few ‘favourites’ that we missed, which explains why we were in the supermarket.

It was Wednesday and the Osteens always held a mid-week service that evening. I was to be the speaker.

It was so good to see John and Dodie again.

There would be about 2,000 or so in the church that evening and yet it was less than half full.

“Wow!” I said to John as I gazed round, amazed. “Do you normally get this many at the mid-week meeting?”

“I’m so sorry, Charles,” he apologised, “I’d hoped there’d be more people to hear you. There must be some rival attraction to-night.”

After an incredible time of praise and worship Alice was asked to share, which she did for about twenty minutes, speaking about being God’s people.

I then shared for about three-quarters of an hour on ‘God’s love commitment’.

When I stopped, John urged me to go on a bit longer. So I did.

Again I stopped and, again, John urged me to continue. Always one who has never found it difficult to share God’s word and God’s love, I felt led to draw the married couples into a deeper relationship with God and each other.

This time, when I stopped, John joined me on the platform and hugged me tightly.

“Charles, just keep going for a little longer,” he told me, “these folk don’t care what you say, they just love your accent!”

Nevertheless, at the altar call, thirty-one people gave their lives to Jesus.

The healing elders then joined John, Alice and myself as we prayed for the sick and saw many beautiful miracles.

After the service, despite the late hour, we were overwhelmed with folk who just wanted to share God’s love with us.

Indeed one family invited us to a birthday party the following Saturday afternoon.

“It’s Vicky’s birthday,” we were told, “and we’d love to have you at our weenie roast.”

Your what?” I asked, totally ignorant!

“Weenie roast; you know frankfurters and barbecued other stuff.”

“Oh!” I spluttered, trying to stop myself laughing, “you mean a sausage sizzle.”

“Hey, you guys, that’s a good one. We’re having a ‘sausage sizzle’,” the spokesman said, and emphasised the two last words in his Texan imitation of my English accent.

We all doubled up with laughter, but it turned out to be a great party!

* * * * *

Post Script: Before we continued on our travels John and Dodie asked us if we were going via Orlando, Florida.

“We want to give you a love gift,” John explained, “and if you *were* going via Orlando, we thought it would be nice to treat you to three days in Disney World.”

I looked at Michele and she was as excited as we all were.

“WOW John,” I managed to stammer out, “that would be marvellous.”

And so it was!

NO ROOM IN THE INN!

Almost our entire journey round America was by Greyhound Coach. I sat with Michele, so that a certain amount of ‘schooling’ (set by her school teacher, back home) could take place, and Alice and Nanna also sat together.

“I do hope we get a nice seat, Daddy,” Michele had said at the beginning of the trip. “Near the front so we can see as much of America as possible.”

“Have you prayed about it, sweetheart?” I asked her.

“Daddy,” she sounded disappointed with me, “do you really think I wouldn’t have?”

“No, sweetheart, I know you have,” I told her with a smile.

Amazingly, incredibly, except for two hours on the trip from Florida to Michigan Michele and I were able to occupy the seat right at the front of the coach, just behind and on the right side of the driver.

Surely that must have been God-planned!

It was 7 o'clock at night when the four of us sleepily made our way, luggage and all, into the foyer of the Polynesian Hotel to book in. We'd been travelling since 1.00 p.m. the day before.

I joined the queue and Michele, Alice and Nanna sat on the cases at the rear of the foyer.

"Please," I asked the clerk, "I'd like to book four of us in until Saturday a.m."

The clerk looked at me in disbelief.

"You should know, sir, that here in Walt Disney World we are booked up for eighteen months ahead. There are NO VACANCIES WHATSOEVER."

"Well, I'm sorry," I stammered, "but I didn't. What do you suggest I do?"

She shook her head.

"You'll just have to go home and book in for some future date."

"Go home?" I must have sounded very taken aback. "We can't go home, we live too far away!"

"Where exactly *do* you live?" she asked.

I looked her straight in the eye, smiled and whispered: "Australia."

For almost thirty seconds she just looked at me and said nothing. She then swallowed hard and told me to wait where I was until she returned.

Where she went I have no idea. However, about five agonising (and prayer-filled) minutes later, she returned with a broad smile on her face.

"I've explained your circumstances to the Duty Manager and, if you would like to wait for about ten minutes or so, he said he'd see what he could do."

Returning to the three sitting on their cases (also praying!) I relayed our entire conversation.

Actually, we didn't have to wait ten minutes.

The Manager, himself, came to us and said how good it was to welcome visitors from Australia.

"There aren't any vacancies in any of the Hotels," he told us. "However, if you'd be prepared to be put-up, overnight, in a trailer – it's in Fort Wilderness," he explained. "You could then contact Outpost H.Q. tomorrow and we'll see if we can't sort out something between now and then. How's that?"

We all agreed it was terrific and were duly booked in and escorted, by run-about, to our trailer.

It wasn't, actually, a trailer at all! It was more like the mobile home we had stayed in at Lakewood. It had two bedrooms, with double beds and all mod cons!

We were overjoyed and expressed our grateful thanks to Father God as soon as we shut the door behind us.

The food at some of the ‘Rest Stops’ on the way had been so far below the standard we’d been used to in our travels that we were hungry for a good tuck-in.

So, leaving our cases to be emptied later, we made our way to the nearest food outlet. It was Pioneer Hall.

Michele spotted a ‘Do-it-yourself Pizza’ booth and we headed there and did just what it told us to do.

It was excellent.

“A portent of things to come?” Alice asked and, with mouths full of pizza, we all nodded heartily.

* * * *

At 7.30 the next morning I rang Outpost H.Q.

“Look,” the voice at the other end explained, “every so often we take out three or four of the trailers to give them a thorough clean and re-condition. Are you happy with the one you’re in?”

I told him we were more than happy: we were delighted.

“Good,” he said, “then stay there until Saturday morning and, when you’ve checked out, we’ll pull

your trailer off the ‘available’ list. Does that sound O.K.?”

I told him it sounded terrific and thanked him profusely.

I then rang off and relayed the situation to the others and we all danced a jig and praised the Lord!

Suddenly Michele stopped and almost sang: “Daddy don’t you realise how good God is? I delighted in the Lord and I spent my birthday in Disneyland. I know that you have, too, and you’re spending your birthday in Disney World!”

It’s true, I thought, because my birthday was the day we travelled to Orlando!

Three wonder-filled days followed.

From early morning until late in the evening we partied!

The second morning we caught the bus from Fort Wilderness and, as we chatted to the driver, we were thrilled and astounded to discover that he had lived in Radcliffe-on-Trent (in England) where I had been the Curate.

I was taking Michele to the Buena Vista Restaurant for ‘Breakfast with the stars’ and how thrilled she was to have Pinocchio, Tiger and Chip and Dale sharing breakfast that morning.

Then more God-incidences followed that afternoon.

As we took a trip to Discovery Island we ‘discovered’ a lovely couple and, as we chatted we happened to mention that I had been the Vicar of Christ Church, Newark in the heart of England.

The wife’s jaw dropped open.

“I was born and bred in Newark,” she told us, “and, what’s more, my sister was married last year – in Christ Church.”

It’s a small world!

Another late night and then back again, on Friday, for another full day.

Time went all too fast and it seemed that, in no time at all, I was back at Outpost H.Q. settling up.

Oh yes! Michele and I had been on Space Mountain thirteen times!

WINNIPEG VIA EDSON TO TENINO

June 29th and 30th 1908: extracts from my diary.

We were late arriving in Winnipeg and were told the onward coach to Vancouver had been delayed. However, in the event, it was NOT the coach via the Trans-Continental Highway but via Edmonton. Much further north than we had expected.

Departed Winnipeg at 12.30 a.m. and arrived at Kamloops at 6.15 a.m. for a breakfast stop.

From then on it was a wonderful trip – well worth the waiting.

The sky, however, was overcast and rain made it

very unsatisfactory to take photographs. So Alice, Michele and I prayed – and, suddenly, the rain stopped, the sun came out and it was superb.

Thank You, Father,

It was especially beautiful travelling through Fraser Canyon via Lytton to Yale.

Snow was still on a number of mountain tops and Michele loved it a lot.

1.15 p.m. Arrived Vancouver.

Our cases could not be located at the Bus Depot and further enquiries revealed they had been impounded at the boundary and were being held by the American customs. More prayer!

We asked what we were to do and our driver, tremendous fellow as he was, drove the coach right across to the American border especially to collect our cases, put us through customs and see us safely on our way to Tenino.

God will always find a way where there seems to be no way – a truth I was to discover later in the year, when I tried to return home from Thursday Island!

STUCK: A LONG WAY FROM HOME!

I was in pain. In fact, I'd been in pain for about three days.

My entire right leg, from the ankle to the thigh was in constant cramp. Well, almost constant. The amazing thing was that, when I was actually ministering, whether preaching or praying for people, I had no pain whatsoever.

The moment I relaxed after the various meetings, the pain returned.

Somehow, without anyone (except myself) being aware of my predicament, I managed to carry on for the remainder of the week I was on Thursday Island.

What a week it had been!

I was there at the invitation of the Bishop and, from 7 o'clock in the morning (or, sometimes, seven-thirty) I had been 'on the go' preaching, teaching, counselling and visiting constantly until almost midnight.

For two of the days I was conducting a Priests' Retreat that most definitely turned out to be an advance! Many who were suffering from aches and other physical problems were healed, most of them immediately.

Afterwards the Bishop told me that more seemed to be accomplished in those two days than in all the previous retreats. Praise God for that!

Then the news broke.

The day before I was due to return to Melbourne the aircraft refuellers decided to go on strike and the last plane to leave was at 12.50 p.m.

I made sure I was on it.

The only drawback was – it was only going as far as Cairns and no-one would (or could!) tell me how I would get home from there.

Nevertheless, at least I was on the mainland.

As he had done on the flight from Melbourne a week earlier, George (the Archdeacon of Cairns) met me at the airport.

"I've made enquiries," he told me, "but there is nothing after the 6.50 a.m. plane to Brisbane

tomorrow morning. From then on, Charles, you're on your own I'm afraid."

"Then it looks like an occasion for deep, believing prayer," I told him.

Of course, he agreed.

I have found it absolutely incredible how, throughout those twenty-one years that Alice and I travelled around Australia and the world, not once did Father God fail to get us where He wanted us to be – and then get us back home again – on time, or earlier.

"Precious Father," I prayed, "You have never, ever let me down and I will not believe that You will do so now. You know I am in pain and I know You want to get me home as quickly as possible. I give You all the glory, all the praise and all the thanks I can pour out for the miracle You have in store tomorrow. I ask this, as Jesus Himself has told me I could⁴, in His beautiful Name. Amen."

George and I arrived at the airport at 6.20 a.m. and, as we walked into the Departure Terminal, there were two windows open. One had the details of the Brisbane flight, the other simply announced: "Melbourne".

I queued up at the counter waiting my turn to be allocated a seat.

4 John 14.12-14

“I was told last night that there’d be only one plane this morning; the Brisbane flight,” I told the clerk.

“So it was, last night. However we’ve had so many requests for Melbourne that we’ve decided to put on a Fokker Friendship.”

“But . . .” I began.

“I know what you’re going to say, sir,” he replied. “You’re going to tell me the refuellers are on strike. We are only too aware of that, so you’ll be staging at Charleville.”

He then leant towards me.

“Charleville is so remote, the refuellers haven’t heard about the strike!”

In the end I arrived in Melbourne about thirty minutes earlier than I would have, had I caught the scheduled flight!

Alice rushed me to our doctor. He urgently called in a specialist friend of his, who was a specialist (who, incidentally, arrived all dressed up in his evening suit, because he was going to a big dinner in the city!)

After examination, he diagnosed a serious condition in the vein and told me to proceed directly to the Casualty Department of the Alfred Hospital.

“I will ring ahead and inform them that you are coming at my request and you will not have to wait.”

“What exactly is wrong?” Alice asked.

“Your husband has an aggravated thrombosis and, if the clot reaches any higher, he might well die.”

I spent the next three days in hospital. Then I was allowed home on condition I rested in bed, with my leg elevated for the next week - just ‘taking it easily’.

It had been a close call but, then, God’s timing is always perfect!

“What I can’t understand,” Rosemarie asked, “is: why you didn’t ask for healing yourself?”

I admit that I didn’t and, until she mentioned the matter, I’d never really thought about it.

Trying to think back, I can only say that I didn’t realise how serious it was and, when I was on my feet ministering, I didn’t feel any pain whatsoever.

I can only conclude that God’s love for us is so exceptionally great that, even when we neglect to pray specifically – as I had – He still sees us through and forgives us. I’m still here! Hallelujah!

NANNA'S EGGS

In England we often went to nearby farms to buy our eggs.

Nanna loved a boiled egg for her breakfast, and she liked her yolk to be a rich orange colour, but some of the 'shop' eggs weren't as fresh as they might have been and were almost a sickly yellow.

When we came out to Australia, however, there were no farms within 'cooee' of where we lived and 'shop' eggs were the only ones available.

One trip I took will always stand out in my memory – and Nanna's.

I had been invited by the Rev. Doug Peters to conduct a week's Renewal Mission in his (Anglican) Church in Forbes, New South Wales.

What a week it was!

The church was packed every night and many people gave their lives to Jesus and were baptised with the Holy Spirit. There were also instances of different miracles of healing.

People have often asked me why so many healings seem to be happening overseas and so few in Australia. It isn't true!

In every mission I have taken, all around the world, I have seen healings and other miracles occur.

At St. John's, Forbes, it was no different.

On one night, for instance, let me quote from my diary. "The fire fell and people burst into tongues and kids were healed – bow legs straightened, Linda's hips were healed, legs were untwisted and lengthened."

At another time I prayed with a man named Kevin who had a nasty, visible rash. The rash disappeared.

A lady asked for healing prayer because she had broken her hip. As I prayed, those who were near her testified that they actually heard bone grate on bone as God set it right.

In another meeting a lady, who told the gathered congregation that she had broken her leg, walked without a limp.

So it continued until the end of the final service on Sunday morning. I knew I was going to find it difficult to say good-bye and I was right. Individual after

individual, couple after couple, came to hug me and thank me for what I had shared and the difference the week had made to their faith and their lives.

It was useless to keep on telling them to give all the glory and the thanks to God because they only replied by saying: “Yes, Charles, but He used you!”

“I know,” I always replied, “but without His empowering none of us can do anything.”

To top it all off, Doug handed me a cheque for our World Outreach Ministry in the four-figure bracket that blew me over.

Boy! Was I embarrassed?

Eventually, however, the time came when I had to leave. I was just finishing packing and loading everything into the boot of my car, when one of the farmers ran up and blessed me with two dozen eggs from his prize hens.

I thanked him, hugged him, climbed into the car and waved everyone a fond, and a sad, good-bye.

I arrived home, unpacked and gave Alice the eggs.

“We’ll all have boiled eggs tomorrow morning,” she told me, smacking her lips.

The following day Nanna was just a little late arriving at breakfast. By the time she joined us we were all tucking in to the beautiful eggs.

She cracked hers, took one look and taste and, with a smile on her face, she declared: “Now these are **English** eggs.”

End of story – but not the end of a hilarious breakfast!

ALICE LEARNS A LESSON

At almost half past eight o'clock in the evening Alice and I touched down in Kuching, Sarawak.

Archdeacon Mike, Stephen Wong and Luke and Florence Lee met us. It was so good to see Mike and Luke again and it was a terrific time of reunion.

We were scheduled to spend the next six days conducting a mission in St. Faith's Church and then venture up country to minister in St. John's Church, Sibü.

As usual we knew we were going to be faced with a very full programme and prepared ourselves, spiritually, accordingly.

We weren't wrong, but we were once again so greatly blessed as Father God ministered to us and through us.

In one after-service prayer session a lady approached Alice and told her that her hearing was slowly deteriorating.

"Will you pray for me, please?" she asked Alice.

"Of course I will," replied Alice, placing her hands over both of the lady's ears. As Alice is in the habit of doing, she held the ears firmly as she prayed, pressing them back.

Slowly, tears began to appear in the sweet lady's eyes and run down her cheeks.

Alice smiled and thought that the Lord was doing a beautiful work in the lady to cause the tears to flow.

How wrong she was!

As Alice took her hands off the lady's ears she reached down and gave her a tissue.

The lady seemed relieved.

"Can you hear better, now?" Alice asked her.

"Yes, thank you so much, my hearing is much better" was the reply, "but can I share something with you?"

"Of course you can, do you have another problem?"

“No,” she replied, “but when you prayed for me Alice – and I know it isn’t your fault, how were you to know? – but for those of us who have pierced ears, the ear-rings have long points at the back. They stuck into my skin and brought tears to my eyes.”

It now became the lady’s turn to take Alice in her arms and minister to her.

That day Alice learned a *big* lesson on how *not* to minister!

That was, nevertheless, the first meeting in a series of power-packed, Holy Spirit revival meetings that set the place alight. During the week at least a couple of hundred people gave their lives to Jesus and most of them were baptised in the Holy Spirit.

ST JOHN’S, SIBU

Our next series of meetings was to be in Sibü, which is approximately 174 kilometres N.E. of Kuching.

When the plane landed we were met by Andrew Lee (Luke’s son) and Joshua Bunsu (an Iban Methodist Pastor). Joshua took us to Hoover House, the Methodist Guest House, where we would be staying.

After lunch it was a distinct blessing to visit Andrew in his air-conditioned office.

“Whew!” I exclaimed, “It’s much hotter and more humid here than Kuching.”

“Ah!” Luke said, “It’s the jungle, you know.”

I didn’t, but it was great to just sit, sip cold tea and chat.

“Now,” Luke told us, “I want you to prepare yourselves for a surprise.”

Our eyes lit up. We love surprises.

“I’m going to run you over to Bolly and Lilly Lapok’s for tea.”

“Who are they?” Alice asked.

“Bolly is the Vicar of St. John’s Church but he’s – er – different,” his voice went up as he finished the sentence.

Luke left us at St. John’s Vicarage gate and drove off.

We walked slowly up the path, wondering what could possibly be the reason for his remark.

We were very soon to find out.

We, carefully, pressed the bell.

A priest opened the door. He was dressed in black, and his skin was almost as black as his suit.

“The Reverend Bolly Lapok?” I enquired.

“Indeed it is, old boy, and Lilly and I are so absolutely overjoyed to have you with us.”

Alice and I tried hard not to laugh.

“It’s – er – great to be here with you.”

“Well, do come in. Lilly and I do pray that you’ll absolutely enjoy having arfternoon tea with us as much as we’re so absolutely thrilled to have you.”

I honestly felt like telling him to cut the ‘English’ accent and talk naturally, but the Holy Spirit stopped me.

We were shown into the drawing room, set up just like my dear old Grandma and Grandpa’s.

“Now then, doo sit down and make yourselves at home. Lilly will be in with tea in a mo.”

I had to say something!

“Bolly,” I began but, just at that minute, Lilly appeared with our tea.

Guess what?

“I do hope you like cucumber sandwiches,” Lilly said, as she deposited her tray on the mahogany table in the middle of the room. Then added, “It really is good of you to want to come to this rather hot and humid place and we are so thrilled to have you.”

Slowly and carefully she poured out the tea, from a beautiful china teapot, into equally delightful china cups and saucers – each with its own silver spoon.

“You were saying, old chap?” Bolly asked, after the introductions and tea pouring.

“Well, I’m not sure whether I’m being rude or not, but – well, Bolly, you don’t exactly talk like a Malaysian, do you?”

He smiled.

“You’ve noticed, old boy. Well bully for you. As a matter of fact I was an orphan. My father and mother were killed in a tribal war and I was taken into an orphanage run by an Oxford don. This is how he always spoke and we simply copied him.”

I just shook my head, and we exchanged chuckles.

There weren't many at the first evening meeting, yet five people responded to the invitation to enter into a Pentecost experience – and they did!

Luke, Florence and Andrew then joined Alice and me and we spent some time praying for those who were sick.

Nellie, I recall, had a bent finger perfectly straightened; a man with a liver complaint received an immediate release from all pain and a boy, blind in one eye (and his other eye was artificial) began to see.

They said nothing, but I sensed that Bolly and Lilly had seen nothing like this before.

After the news spread concerning what had happened, I'd expected a larger crowd the next night. However there were only forty present.

The final night was slightly better.

Andrew's sister-in-law gave her heart to Jesus and, with another half-dozen, was baptised in the Holy Spirit.

We then prayed for Bolly and Lilly and Andrew (in the Spirit) saw Jesus, in glory, with His orb pointing at Bolly.

Then, as we prayed for the sick, a lady who had dislocated both of her knees was instantly healed; a boy (who had been deaf and dumb) heard and said:

“Thank You, Jesus” very clearly; a blind boy saw me and hugged me and ran off to his rejoicing parents and another boy, with a sprained leg causing him to limp, received total healing and danced round the church.

Hallelujah!

Incidentally, as I was writing these incidents down, I had occasion to look up the Diocese of Kuching on the Internet. Imagine my delighted surprise to see that the current bishop, The Rt. Rev'd Bolly Lapok, 13th Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Kuching, was consecrated 14 May 2007. Andrew's vision has truly come to pass. Bully for both of them, eh!

JUNGLE BELLES!

“Before we set off,” Luke advised us, “let’s just get together and pray, shall we?”

Luke and Florence, with Joshua Bunsu, had just arrived to take us to an Iban longhouse - situated in dense jungle some 30 kms from Sibü.

We all agreed and bowed our heads.

“Er – we’ll pray especially that it doesn’t rain,” he added and began to pray with great fervency to that end.

“I presume there must be a very good reason for such a prayer,” I suggested, when we had all added our, very definite, “Amen.”

“Indeed there is.” Luke replied. “Indeed there is. I’ll tell you more when we arrive at the longhouse.”

With that, all five of us piled into the four wheel drive and headed for the jungle. Everything was great. The road was quite good (for that part of Sibü) and even the jungle ‘track’ was passable even though it slowed us down quite a lot.

Then, about a couple of kilometres from the longhouse, even the 4WD could go no further.

“From here on,” Luke announced, “we walk. Charles and Alice keep close to us and, please, do what we say.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” I said, coming to attention and smartly saluting – my Naval past emerging!

Luke just grinned.

For about a kilometre all went well and then Luke and Joshua stopped.

“We’re going to have to go over a swamp. Don’t worry there *is* a bridge – of sorts,” Luke told us, “but you’ll need to keep close together. Charles it would be better if you went first and then Alice could use you as a buffer if she slipped or anything.”

The bridge was certainly ‘of sorts’. It consisted, in fact, of large bamboo poles, lashed two abreast and to one another, and with a not too stable rope either side on which to hold.

Very gingerly, with Luke and Florence leading the way and Joshua bringing up the rear, we slowly shuffled over the swamp.

All went well until Luke called out to us not to look down.

You know what happens when you're told not to do something? You do it!

Both of us averted our gaze from the person ahead and looked down.

Beneath us was such a profusion of water life and reptiles that Alice nearly fell off the bamboo poles!

We both heaved a great sigh of relief when we reached the other side!

A small trek through the jungle eventually brought us in sight of the longhouse. To say the least it looked very primitive, not all that hygienic and both Alice and I felt that one day might well be adequate.

It was then Luke said: "Now I'll tell you why we prayed so hard this morning. When it rains in these part it **REALLY** rains! In fact doesn't just rain, it floods. If it rains, we could well be staying in the Longhouse for up to two or three months."

The longhouse, built mainly of grass and tree bark, was raised well off the ground on stilts and divided lengthways down the middle into two main areas. The biliks or 'family homes' of those living there were along one side with the 'public' area – really just one long veranda – in front of the 'homes'.

"All their livestock is sheltered underneath," Joshua

explained, "and all their fodder etc. is stored above the homes."

"But how . .?!" I began to ask.

"How did they come to be built in the first place? A couple would build their bilik and, then, as children were born, grew up and were married biliks were built for them alongside Mum and Dad and the 'veranda' was lengthened.

There are about thirty families, that's about 200 people, living in this one – and they're all related to the old chief. He's a Christian and he wants all his extended family to become Christians as well."

"Have any of them given their lives to Christ?" Alice asked.

"Yes," Joshua told her, "but not all. That's one of the reasons I invited you to come with me, today. Oh yes! The old chief is very sick and has asked for prayer. Will you pray for him?"

We both nodded and began to climb the ladder.

Joshua showed us one or two of the biliks. They were all built on the same pattern: a single door opening off the veranda and a wall separating them from the biliks either side.

Each bilik was comprised of a living and a sleeping space for each family. Their kitchens were 'added' to the back of their bilik, although one or two were built

away from the longhouse and Alice was tickled pink to notice that access to them was over a small bridge.

She looked enquiringly at Joshua.

“To prevent cooking fires spreading to the living quarters if they got out of control – and,” he added, “to reduce smoke and nasty flying things!”

“Where do they have their toilet?” Alice, who by now was ‘desperate’, asked.

Joshua asked the lass in the bilik, who pointed to the back of the kitchen.

We all waited until, eventually, Alice emerged ash-en faced.

“There’s nothing there except a plank and an open space to the ground below. I was hanging on to two bamboo poles for dear life.”

“Changing the subject, shouldn’t we go and pray for the chief?” Luke asked.

By this time, many of the families had begun to gather round us, especially the children.

We made very slow progress, therefore, but eventually arrived at the chief’s longhouse in the centre of the row of biliks.

As we entered, Alice and I both noticed numerous coconuts, strung on leather straps, hanging on the wall of the bedroom.

The old chief, bless him, could hardly speak or breathe and, as far as we were aware, was making

grunting noises. We learned later that, although a Christian, he wasn’t sure he could accept ‘the healing bit’ (as Luke described it).

Nevertheless, when we laid hands on him and prayed, the grunting ceased and his breathing became much freer.

“What on earth were all those coconuts doing in his bedroom?” Alice asked Luke, once we were outside his bilik and out of earshot.

Luke, Francis and Joshua burst into peals of laughter.

To make matters worse, Joshua translated Alice’s question into Iban and the entire longhouse erupted into raucous laughter.

“What is everybody laughing at?” Alice’s voice was kind of sharpish.

Luke put his arm round Alice and gave her a big hug.

“They weren’t coconuts, my dear,” he explained, “they were the shrunken heads of his enemies from the old tribal warfare days.”

It took some time to sink in but, when it did, Alice shuddered.

“A good Iban meal will fix that,” Joshua suggested and we all agreed.

We sat on mats on the floor of the dining area in the chief’s grandson’s bilik and his wife served us.

The meal of some kind of meat with rice and vegetables was served to everyone else on a large leaf. To Alice and me it was served on a Baked Bean tin lid, on a leaf. We asked why.

“Because you are not only the honoured guests, but also ‘white folk’ and these dear people know that white folks eat from plates. Those are your plates, Iban style.”

Alice and I smiled, looked at each other and instantly knew what each was thinking. The tin lid was rusty and not particularly clean!

We smiled and ate.

“As we were coming out of the jungle, into the clearing, I noticed a really beautiful water hole, surrounded by vividly coloured flowers. Some youngsters were having a dip there. What an idyllic setting!”

“Yes, idyllic it is, but just remember that’s the water supply for the entire longhouse. It’s the bathing place, yes! It’s also the laundry and the pool from which the water to cook your rice and vegetables was taken,” Joshua explained.

“And,” Francis added, “who knows what the kids do in the water!”

Alice and I were, mentally, re-saying our grace.

After lunch it would, normally, be siesta time.

Today, though, was anything but normal and so, surrounded by Iban families (with Joshua interpreting),

we answered their questions (Where did we come from? What family did we have? Why had we come?) and talked about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Then we showed them some photographs of our family. They loved them. In fact they loved them so much, they kept them and just would not give them back to us. For all we know, photos of our family are even now pinned to the walls of biliks in that longhouse.

They listened so intently, you could have heard a pin drop.

A few indicated that they’d like us to pray with them to accept Jesus as their Saviour, but all we told them about our Pentecost experiences was new. Indeed I sensed much of it was new to Joseph.

As Alice was sharing, I looked around the group: the old men and the young men, the older women and the young girls.

The conditions in which they lived were so incredibly different from our own, and yet they were all so comparatively well groomed and contented.

As we were, carefully, crossing ‘the bridge’ on our way back to the 4WD I couldn’t help but praise God for the adventure we had just experienced.

“Alice the fellows were so neat and well-behaved,” I said, ‘they’re Jungle Boys.’”

“Yes dear, and what did you think of the girls?”

“Sweetheart,” I replied with verve, “they really and truly are ‘Jungle Belles!’”

TO EACH HIS OWN

I first visited Durban in H.M.S. WARRIOR on the way home from Korea, in 1954.

I was a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy in those days and, when we went ashore, we didn’t wear uniform. So, in my ordinary clothes, I wandered the streets and took in the sights.

The only thing I really remember was the effect of apartheid.

Virtually everywhere you looked was marked either, ‘Whites only’ or, ‘Blacks and coloured only’: bus stops, some shops, toilets – there was no end to it.

Just walking down the street any man, woman or child other than white vacated the pavement and walked past me in the gutter.

I felt most uneasy and not a little sickened by it all.

When Alice and I were invited to Durban, therefore, I warned her what to expect.

Abel Govender, who was Secretary of the Scripture Union in Durban and an Indian, had invited us. However he told us that we weren't allowed to stay with him because he lived in an Indian enclave.

Consequently we found ourselves staying with a most gracious and loving Baptist Pastor and his wife who lived in Yellowwood Park.

Although every day was filled with ministry, two days stand out most in my memory: Thursday and Sunday.

Thursday was an early start.

Alice and I had been invited to address the Ministers' and Business Men's breakfast meeting and we were placed either side of Michael Nuttall, Bishop of Natal.

As we shared, he told me that he came into the Renewal in 1972 and that fourteen or so Bishops in South Africa were renewed.

From there we were taken to St. Dominic's, at The Bluff, for lunch and a meeting with the Ministers' Fraternal.

What a meeting that was! About thirty of the local ministers came together and we began with a truly

incredible time of Spirit-filled praise and worship.

It was there that I met Nigel Jukes and Rod Ellis, both of whom had graduated from the same Theological College in London that I had attended and, as if that wasn't enough, Nigel had been married in St. Nicholas' Church, Nottingham - the same church as Alice and myself.

God is so good!

Then came Sunday, a day of contrasts.

Abel collected us to take us to Shekinah Temple, where the congregation must have been at least a couple of thousand.

It wasn't a worship service, but a teaching service with hymns. Oh! But the singing was so s-l-o-w. Never have I heard 'Blessed Assurance' sung at such a snail's pace in all my life! All the time I was trying to 'pep it up', but Abel's arm on mine soon told me my increased tempo was not appreciated.

During lunch I asked Abel why the hymns were dragged out so much.

"Charles," he explained, "the majority of these believers have come out of sects and religions where the entire service is rushed and any singing is done at 'full blast' with shouting, dancing and total abandonment."

"What's wrong with that?" I butted in.

"Nothing. Nothing at all except that if we did

that in church they'd think it was no different from what they were used to, and return to their previous temples etc.”

Well, I wasn't convinced but to each his own!

Immediately after lunch we were taken to Phoenix, another large Indian enclave. Here, at the Greenbury Civic Hall there was a family rally and I was absolutely fascinated, and thrilled, to see Africans, Indians and white people all together in one place, with one intention: to worship God and hear His Word.

At exactly 2.00 p.m. the Worship Leader welcomed us all and then proceeded to lead us in some of the most passionate, inspiring worship of which it has ever been my privilege to be a part.

Oh boy! Did we let our hair down and sing, and swing, as we praised Father God.

Then, there was an awesome silence broken only by someone sighing, overcome with the beauty of the moment, or softly weeping as God's love touched them. It must have lasted for at least ten minutes.

Totally unexpectedly, to Alice and me anyway, there was a low humming which came from a group of Africans in the middle of the congregation.

Slowly it increased in volume, without becoming too loud.

Gradually the hum took on the form of an African tribal chant in perfect, unaccompanied, harmony as the singers rose from their seats.

Slowly, they made their way to the aisle swaying rhythmically to the beat and, eventually, came up on the stage.

By this time the chant had become a beautiful hymn of praise to God, in their native language and all who recognised it joined in.

I closed my eyes and entered heaven.

An incredible thought crossed my mind and I almost laughed out loud, but dared not.

Heaven, I thought, will be just like this. All God's people will be praising Father God, each in their own way and everyone else will be joining in. It won't be a cacophony of sound, however, but an absolutely glorious anthem of harmonious praise and worship. Hallelujah!

THE GRACE OF LAWRENCE ZULU

Abel very much wanted to show us a Game Park whilst we were in South Africa and we were as eager to be persuaded.

He had arranged ministry for us in Empangeni and, well within reach, was the Umfolozi Game Reserve. We arrived at about 9.00 a.m. and drove at least fifty miles during the day.

Alice and I had never seen anything like it. It was just one tremendous experience.

We saw kudu, wart hogs, and many small herds of wildebeest, vultures, monkeys and baboons galore. Giraffes crossed our path, impala, springboks and zebra were all round us. And there were such incredibly beautiful birds in just about every tree.

It must have been something like this when Adam and Eve walked in the Garden of Eden.

We were utterly and totally entranced!

“Tomorrow,” Abel announced as he drove us home, “I have a surprise for you. I’ll pick you up about eleven o’clock and we’re going to visit Bishop Zulu.”

“Bishop Zulu,” Alice sang out in glee, “we know him. He was at one of our Pentecost meetings in Melbourne. About three years ago.”

She then went on to recount how, in one meeting, a young lady had gone to the Bishop and told him that he and Ruth (his wife) were to have a daughter. Not only did she say this as a prophetic word, she presented the Bishop with a pink layette to take home with him.

“Well, it happened,” Abel broke in excitedly. “The Bishop and Ruth have a two year old daughter, named Joy.”

Neither of us could wait for the next day to arrive. We were both well and truly ready long before we heard the sound of Abel’s car. We could hardly wait to get to Eshowe.

It was a tremendously emotional reunion, even though Ruth was on crutches after a recent fall in which she broke her ankle. Such hugs! Such cuddles with two-year-old Joy!

“Now, then,” Ruth said to us after we’d had a cuppa and a biscuit, “you four go off for lunch and I’ll stay here with Joy.”

Naturally, we protested.

“No,” she insisted. “With these things,” and she waved her crutches in the air, “I’ll only be a hindrance. I’ll stay home and look after Joy, you all go and enjoy yourselves.”

“Let’s go to the George Hotel,” the Bishop suggested to Abel.

It was midday but, the moment we walked in, the restaurant was suddenly ‘closed’ and we were told, in no uncertain terms, to get lost!

There was a Hamburger Hut nearby and so we called in there.

Here, Alice and I were welcomed, but Bishop Lawrence and Abel were ordered out.

“This place is only for Europeans. There’s no place for you. These two,” the Proprietor said as he pointed to Alice and me, “these two can order.”

I told Lawrence later that I felt like telling the man I was not a European, I was an Australian, but he said that wouldn’t have made any difference and we might all have been refused!

Alice was fuming.

“But,” she protested, “you are the Bishop of

Zululand. This is Kwa Zulu. It’s your land and these are your people.”

Bishop Lawrence quietly smiled and led the way to a very wide, grassy median strip in the middle of the road right opposite where we’d bought lunch.

“Let’s pray,” he gently suggested and bowed his head.

“Father God, please forgive them because they really don’t know what they’re doing. Should there be conflict and should there be bloodshed, please Lord; help us to remain gracious, merciful and loving – just as You are to us. Now, sweet Lord, please bless this food and may our fellowship be filled with Your joy.”

That lunch was one of the most precious times of fellowship Alice and I can remember and our entire meal was permeated with the joy of the Lord.

That, after all, is our strength.⁵

VEREENIGING

It was late when we arrived in Vereeniging.

In fact it was very late: it was a quarter past midnight.

We'd been ministering in Johannesburg and, afterwards, a couple very kindly offered to drive us to Stan and Theresa's.

Alice and Theresa had been at school together in England and were very close to each other. In fact Peter, Theresa's brother had had a crush on Alice and had wanted her to marry him. So this reunion was very special to both Alice and Theresa. I hadn't met either of them and Alice hadn't met Stan.

We sat, drinking tea and talking, until nearly two o'clock and then, utterly worn out, flopped into bed.

Theresa woke us with a cuppa at about eight o'clock, sat on the bed and began to bombard us with questions about the Charismatic Movement, baptism with the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues.

"Theresa," I asked as delicately as possible, "I've just woken up, I've slept all night and, please, I'd like to go to the loo."

"That can wait Charles," she told me, "this is far more important."

The questions continued and, as we answered them one after another, the 'desire' slowly abated. Nevertheless, at half past nine, I just got out of bed and dashed to the toilet!

The next day Theresa woke us at half past seven and, again, the questioning continued: this time for three hours! I'd woken up just before seven o'clock and had made sure she wouldn't catch me again!

"Well," she suddenly said, "I can't stay here all day nattering to you two, I'll need to get breakfast and then we'll get out. I have shopping to do."

"As if it was our fault," I laughingly said to Alice.

Eventually we arrived at the super-market.

I made a mental note of both the smallness of the checkouts and the quite immense girth of the Zulu ladies who manned them, wondering how they could possible squeeze in or out.

As we were waiting in the queue to pay for our purchases we were, naturally enough, chatting.

“You know, Theresa, it is **so** good seeing you again and meeting Stan. Isn’t Father God good to have made all this possible.”

“And praise the Lord we were able to talk all about the renewal and you were able to explain it all to me. I’ve had so many questions buzzing about in my little Roman Catholic brain and no-one’s been able to help me.”

It was our turn at the check-out but, before one article was priced, the lass at the till paused, looked at us with such an immense grin on her face that her teeth shone white, even sparkled, against the dark, dark brown of her face.

“You love my Jesus,” she enthused in a more-than-ordinary pitch and oozed her way out of her bay.

She grabbed Alice, and then Theresa, and pulled them into her ample bosom hugging and kissing them.

I stood there. Surely she wasn’t also going to embrace me?

She was, and she did.

Her great arms enveloped me and, before I was aware of it I was, literally, smothered in the fullness of her embrace.

It was an experience I have never forgotten.

Have you ever been hugged by a waterbed?

Alice and I have two outstanding memories of Vereeniging: that Zulu embrace and the joy of leading Theresa through to her full Pentecostal baptism.

SOME TAIL WIND!

My friend Wilf and I had spent just over three weeks in North India taking meetings and lecturing in Itarsi Bible College, run by Pastor Kurien Thomas. The trip had been hot and humid, and at one point, for six days and nights, a Hindu festival had been in full swing, with 24-7 ‘music’ blasting forth from all the temples via loudspeakers.

On the seventh night, Wilf said to me suddenly, ‘Charles, listen!’

I could hear nothing and told him so.

‘That’s right,’ he replied. ‘Isn’t it quiet?’ The silence had woken us up.

The time to leave eventually came and we farewelled Kurien and his wife Anna. Their son, Jacob, accompanied by two students, drove us to Bhopal to catch the 3.10 pm plane to Bombay.

When we arrived at the airport, however, we were told the plane had broken down and the flight had been cancelled.

We asked the official how, then, were we to get to Bombay. He said that we would have to do what everyone else had to do: come back in the morning.

‘But we have to connect with an international flight departing at 2.00 am tomorrow morning,’ I persisted.

He smiled, wobbled his head from side to side, and said, ‘I’m truly sorry.’

Wilf, Jacob, the students and I decided the best thing to do was to pray, so pray we did. We walked round the terminal praying and praising God in a very audible way. In the previous ten years, Father God had never failed to get me to a mission in time, and he had never failed to get me home at the arranged time after the mission was over. Why would he start now?

As we were praying, I saw the official beckoning me to the desk. He told me that he had spoken to his superior and that Indian Airways would be prepared

to give us complimentary tickets on that afternoon's flight to Delhi.

'From there,' he told me, 'you can catch the 8.40 pm flight to Bombay, which will also be complimentary. Would that be in order?'

Praising God, I told him it would.

He turned to organise the tickets, but just as I was about to rush to Wilf and the others, he suddenly turned back.

'Er—there is one slight problem,' he said. 'The flight from Bhopal to Delhi takes two hours and the plane to Delhi is three hours late. It will arrive here in Bhopal at 6.15 pm and take off at 6.45 pm.'

We were rejoicing.

Er – but I am so sorry that you will miss your connection and in any case,' he added, 'because of security the gates in Delhi will close half an hour before take-off.'

I told him to wait while I checked with Wilf.

'To catch that connection we'd need to leave here no later than 6.00 pm,' I said. 'What do you think?'

We prayed and both of us received a tremendous peace in our spirits. I went back to the official and said that we'd take the tickets and leave the rest to God, believing he wouldn't let us down.

The Hindu official looked at me very quizzically, but he issued the tickets.

Knowing that we were at least going somewhere, Jacob and the students left to return to Itarsi. Wilf and I could now do nothing except praise God that he was working something out. We had to fly out of Bhopal by 6.00 pm.

Then it began to happen.

Up went a new ETA (estimated time of arrival), with take-off at 6.30. Then another alteration: ETA 5.45 and take-off 6.15. In the event, the Delhi plane arrived at 5.20, we took off at 5.45 and arrived in Delhi at 7.45 pm.

Then, for the first – and only - time I can remember, our cases were the first to arrive on the carousel. We booked in on the Bombay flight at 8.00 pm and the gates closed at 8.10.

As we settled back in our seats, we praised God that from here on it was going to be plain sailing.

We flew from Bombay to Singapore and went to the transfer desk at Changi Airport. But there we were told that, due to a strike in the UK, the earliest flight would not be until 10.30 that night.

What! We were booked to be back in Melbourne by 9.45 am Wednesday morning and this would delay us until at least 5.00 pm in the afternoon.

'Is there any possibility at all of changing flights?' I enquired.

'Sorry, sir, but on an Apex ticket there is none.'

‘None?’

‘None whatsoever.’

We were flying with British Airways, so I asked the official if he would please check with them. Very graciously, he did. ‘I’m sorry,’ he said, ‘but not only is there no possibility of changing flights, your flight will now not be leaving until midnight.’

Later and later!

Wilf and I were just leaving, to return to praying and praising, when the official called us back. ‘Look,’ he offered, ‘Singapore Airlines has a direct flight to Melbourne at 9.00 pm’—the BA flight was via Perth and Sydney—‘and I could try and get you both on it, if BA agrees.’

We both urged him to try. He rang them but the airline refused.

‘Sorry,’ he said. ‘You know, the only way I can issue you a ticket on Singapore Airlines is if the BA flight is indefinitely delayed.’

Incredibly, at that very moment there was a tap-tap-tap on the telex, and he turned to look.

‘You won’t believe this,’ he told us, ‘but the flight has just been declared indefinitely delayed.’

He issued us with two tickets, and we arrived in Melbourne at 7.00 am. Wednesday morning — two hours earlier than we had expected.

‘You know,’ Wilf said as we walked off the plane, ‘God has promised that He will honour those who honour Him.’

How very true that is!

‘GOD WILL MAKE A WAY’

It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon one October day in 1992 when we landed at Shevemyevo International Airport, Moscow, and were cleared through Passport Control.

As soon as Alice and I walked into the main area of the airport we immediately found ourselves surrounded by what we presumed were taxi drivers pulling and pushing us in a most alarming way, I grabbed Alice and ducked into “Information”.

Somehow I was able to get through to girl behind the counter that we had just landed from Germany and were travelling to Kiev. Please could she tell us what we needed to do now?

Slowly and painstakingly it emerged that we had to go to Vnukovo, the Domestic Airport.

How were we to do that? Was there a Shuttle bus?

Have you ever tried to explain to a Russian, who can't understand much English, what a 'shuttle' is?

Eventually we recognised from what she was saying that a taxi was necessary and the going rate was US\$40.

Back into the melee we selected one of the men, handed over our money, and were led into the biting chill of an October evening (it was sleeting and two degrees centigrade!) where rapid exchanges took place with a taxi driver.

We discovered later that the 'men' in the airport were all members of the Russian mafia who have the monopoly on the taxi service. The 'real' fare was approximately US\$2!

At last, in the back seat of the slightly warmer taxi, and with our cases stowed in the boot, we very slowly drove out of the airport into dark and very uninviting Moscow streets.

As we crept along on our journey we noticed a distinct 'jerk' in the car's motion. In fact at one point the driver ["No speak Angleeski"] had to stop and check that all was well.

Finally, just as we were turning into Vnukovo airport drive, the car gave a splutter – and stopped dead.

While our driver had his head under the hood and fiddled about, Alice and I were sitting in the back seat, shivering and praying urgently and ardently.

After what seemed hours the driver lowered the hood and climbed back into the car. At his first attempt to start it, nothing happened. Alice and I continued to praise God for His love and power - out loud - and, suddenly, the engine burst into life and we finally arrived at the airport.

The journey of 40 kms had taken well over an hour but, praise God, we had arrived.

Picking up our cases we entered the airport and stood rooted to the spot. As I looked around I thought I was back in ‘Doctor Zhivago’. The scene was identical to the one on the platform when the family was leaving Moscow for the east. All around us were people, dressed virtually the same as they were in that film, sprawled on the floor.

As we walked through the airport we had to lift up our cases and pick our way over prone bodies.

All the notices, adverts etc. were in Russian: there was no English anywhere.

“Just wait here, love,” I told Alice, “I’ll see what I can discover,” and picked my way to a door that I

found led to another part of the airport.

Suddenly I heard a frantic cry of “Charles” and turned to see Alice waving wildly. She had asked a woman in uniform what to do and, with a remark about “touriste”, she had picked up our hand luggage and disappeared through the same doors through which we had entered this mess.

Alice shot after her and I followed as quickly as I could, lugging our two very heavy cases.

The woman led us through another door, past Customs, and into a Reception Hall which had certainly seen better times – as had the few foam seats scattered about.

With a smile she pointed to what no one but a local would have recognised as a Check-in counter, and walked off.

The taxi driver had, in fact, driven us to the wrong entrance.

By this time both Alice and I were bursting to go to the loo and, we maneuvered our cases to a reasonably unoccupied area – next to a group of Mongolians, with absolutely massive ‘back-pack parcels’ and innumerable red, white and blue plastic bags – where I stayed, while Alice went.

She returned with an expression of sheer disgust on her face, announcing that the toilets were filthy and were only ‘holes in the floor’. I made my way to

the Gents, and realised what she meant. The urinals stank, one had even overflowed all over the floor, and all around was rust and decay. I did what I needed to do and ran.

At 8 o'clock the baggage check-in opened and, eventually, I was able to fight my way through the crush to check in our cases.

Now another problem reared its head. How were we to know from which gate our flight departed? Every announcement over the, very crackly, tannoy system was in Russian.

We decided we needed a change of atmosphere and had noticed an escalator, which looked as if it hadn't worked since the Bolshevic Revolution, so made our way upstairs, sat down and, again, held our own prayer and praise meeting, asking Father to show us what the next step was to be.

Two young lads came and sat down next to us with some obviously new 'toy', with which they were playing. It was, obviously, something very amusing because they were having great fun and laughing profusely.

When I made some remark to Alice about how pleasant they seemed one of the fellows thrust their 'toy' under my nose. There, in English, was a question: "Are you English?"

I smiled and nodded.

The 'toy' – miraculously - was, in fact, a hand-held, language computer. Evidently the two had come to Moscow to purchase it only that afternoon and were now on their way home. One was from Karkov and the other was Vietnamese. 'Karkov' spoke a little German, as did Alice, and 'Vietnam' (over here to learn Russian) spoke French, which I had learned at school – 'Un peu'!

'Karkov' told us, via the computer, that their plane left after ours and he would listen for our departure information and let us know in good time.

We had a great time together and we able to share with them that we were English born but now lived in Australia. They asked us why we were going to the Ukraine and we told them: "To preach and teach."

"What do you teach?" they asked us, and so God opened the door to tell them all about Jesus and His love via the translation computer.

At 10.15 p.m. we were called through, into the bitter (zero degree) night to await a tarmac truck. There was none. So as soon as the airport doors were opened everybody dashed across the tarmac pushing and shoving each other to get on board the plane.

Finally we managed to clamber on board the Ukrainian aircraft. There was no seat allocation, no seat belts and it was only our weight that kept the backs of the seats upright. Everybody was tired and

unpleasant and stacks of hand luggage were scattered everywhere. Eventually the plane took off at 11 o'clock.

We settled down the best we could, overcome with the goodness of God Who had truly made a way more than once where, it seemed to us, there was no way, and had allowed us the privilege to minister to two young men who had never heard the gospel.

‘DON’T GIVE UP MEETING TOGETHER’

We were devastated, disappointed, disillusioned and darned annoyed!

The Missions Department of our Australian Church had asked us if we would visit the Ukraine to teach for three weeks or so in a Bible School not far from Kiev. We had jumped at the idea.

Father God had placed a desire to visit Russia in our spirits, for some time. Now, it seemed, that desire was to be fulfilled.

However, when we arrived in Kiev and were in touch with the local church, we were told that there

must have been some mistake because the Bible School was in recess!

So here we were in a totally foreign country, unable to speak the language.

Smoke permeated every room in the hotel and our room was both dingy and small. The bathroom had rusty pipes, the towels were full of holes and a shade of grey, the food was almost inedible and it looked as if we would have nothing to do for three weeks!

Alice and I went on our knees to Father to commit ourselves to His plan for our stay. I opened the Bible and we read Luke 13.35: “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamp burning.”

Opportunities for service certainly came.

The local Free Church, to which the Bible School was loosely attached, telephoned us and invited us to minister there.

Naturally we were only too happy to do so, and I preached a number of times to a full church of over 1,000 people.

I remember one particular service, after which we were invited to join the ministers and some elders in a supper. However, knowing that food was short, both Alice and I hesitated.

“We really aren’t used to eating at this time of night,” I protested but my interpreter only laughed

and told us it was bad manners to refuse in the Ukraine.

“Sometimes,” he added, “we must learn to supper for our faith!”

We ministered in a church in Darnitsa, which met in the Cultural Hall, where - at one time - the Communists held their rallies!

It was at this service that the fire of the Holy Spirit fell and there was an incredible time of praise and worship.

A couple of dozen precious people came forward to receive their personal Pentecost.

However, there was a snag. Sergei, our interpreter, needed to ‘pay a visit’ and, prior to him having to leave for a few minutes, he asked if anyone spoke English. Pastor Victor confirmed that no one could and so, during Sergei’s absence, he instructed the people and we prayed and laid hands on those who had come forward.

One lady began to praise God, magnificently, in Queen’s English.

“I thought you said no-one could speak English,” I protested.

“No-one can,” Sergei told me. “That is her tongue and, before you ask, I know that it’s her heavenly language because she is pronouncing words in a way no Ukrainian could, except with a lot of tuition!”

Wow! God is so good.

We took a weekend evangelistic mission in Berdechev [180km south-west of Kiev], where the Pastor and his wife were precious enough to insist we slept in their bed, while they slept on a table.

Alice, however, was amazed – even shocked! – when she first visited their outside ‘dunny’. It had a fur seat.

She remarked on her surprise.

“Ah!” the Pastor told her (through our interpreter, who had come with us), “If there was no fur, in the winter your rear end would stick to the seat! Very messy.”

In Rogozeev a Pastor took us to a house church. We went as far as we could by car and, because the snow was so deep, we had to walk the last kilometre with snow almost up to our knees.

It was a Communion service, which incorporated a ‘foot-washing’. How precious, and humbling, it was to have a Pastor wash and kiss my feet and pray that: “God’s love would walk with me in every place He took me.”

I, then, had the honour of washing his feet and praying over him.

As day succeeded day, the places to which God led us, the people we met and the incredible ways in

which He graciously used us completely overwhelmed us.

It was, however, in a house meeting about 25km out of Kiev that one of our greatest challenges came.

Although only twenty strong, this group, had met regularly – at least weekly - for many years, even during the darkest days of the Communist Regime.

The group’s leader recounted stories of those days when Christian meetings were forbidden. Three times he was imprisoned.

On one occasion he recounted, with all the blood-curdling details, how two Pastors attended the meeting and the K.G.B. raided the house.

“They shot one of them on the spot,” he told us, pointing above Alice’s head to a hole in the wall.

“That’s where the bullet embedded itself,” he explained, “The other Pastor was eventually sentenced to nine years in a labour camp. Because I have a badly injured right leg (the result of a K.G.B. ‘period of persuasion’) I was imprisoned for a while, starved and then released. We keep that bullet hole to remind us of God’s grace, and thank Him for all who were protected that night.”

It was during those years, Slavka (not his real name) told us, that he lost his job five times because he refused to relinquish his Christian faith.

The meeting followed their usual pattern: a prolonged time of prayer, praise, and hymn singing. Then Slavka spoke of their gratitude to God for bringing them, victoriously, through the past years. He went on to thank God for our being there and reflected on what it could have meant for him and the church if they had had visitors in the past.

We sang another hymn and I was asked to share, which I did from 1 John 3.1, extolling God's lavish love for us and praising Him for the privilege of being there with them.

Ministry followed and, then, Slavka announced there would be a 'light' supper in the next room.

We had already experienced at first hand how poor many of the people are and how difficult – and expensive - it is to buy food, but the hospitality shown by Slavka and his family was overwhelming. The supper was far from 'light'!

Brawn and different salads preceded Slavka's wife carrying in a tray on which was a beautiful apple cake and a bottle of pears in syrup.

As she entered, Slavka rose to his feet and came to stand behind Alice and myself.

"This is to honour the two special guests Father God has sent to our home," he announced, placing one hand on each of our shoulders and squeezing us – hard. "Marta and I have had these pears hidden

away for many years. Our house has often been searched, but God has kept them safe for this very evening. He has told us that we are to honour you by opening them to-night."

How we thank Father for those three weeks, and how misplaced was our disappointment!

Alice and I often remember all the wonderful people we met in Kiev and the other places we were privileged to visit. We recall their love and their humility. Above all we remain challenged by the fact that their faith meant so much to them that they were willing to risk all - even their lives, if necessary - rather than 'give up meeting together' with each other and, above all, with their Lord and Master.

A MIRACLE IN SINGAPORE

Once you're settled in an aircraft, the sooner you take off the better.

We'd been sitting, waiting to depart for Kuala Lumpur via Singapore, for almost half an hour and a lot of folk were becoming 'edgy.'

Then we heard the engines being revved up, and we began to move slowly.

Take off at last!

"We are sorry for the delay," the voice came over the inter-com, "and we regret there will be more. Please be ready to vacate your seats and disembark when the plane stops."

We weren't taking off, obviously, but were being moved to a distant part of the airfield.

We disembarked and waited, and waited.

Another thirty minutes passed and baggage handlers began taking the entire luggage out of the hold and lining it up on the tarmac.

"Please will you go and stand by your case," a crewmember instructed.

By this time all sorts of rumours were flying round and no one seemed to know exactly what was going on.

As a crew member passed me I asked why we were having to be delayed like this and was told that the number of cases loaded onto the plane was in excess of the number registered. It was a safety measure.

The plane was searched - police, security guards, tracker dogs were everywhere. Sure enough, two cases were singled out and discarded.

Three and a half hours later we took off for Singapore.

"I think we might have a problem," I told Alice.

The fact is that we had received no visa to enter Malaysia. Why it hadn't arrived I never knew. However Bob, our sponsor, rang and said that he had received permission to meet us at Kuala Lumpur and ensure our passage through Immigration.

With the delay, there was no guarantee we would be able to get an on-flight booking and how would we let Bob know?

Alice, always practical, simply said: “We’d better pray and put it all in Father’s hands. He knows what’s happening and I believe we’re going to see a miracle.”

So we did, and settled back for the flight.

We landed at Changi Airport, Singapore, at 9.45 p.m. and rushed to register for an onward flight.

There was only one flight left for the day and the queue was a long one.

Slowly we drew nearer and nearer to the booking office until there was just one person in front.

“I’m so sorry,” the lass at the counter told him, “the plane is now full. There are no more seats available.”

Muttering something to himself under his breath, he reluctantly left.

“We must get to Kuala Lumpur to-night,” I explained, “because a friend is meeting us and he has our visas.”

“I’m sorry, sir,” was the reply. “You heard what I said to that man. There is not one seat available. The plane is full.”

I heard Alice softly praying in tongues behind me.

“Please,” I pleaded, “couldn’t you just check one more time and make sure there are no seats.”

“There is no point,” she told me in a rather sharp tone of voice.

I gave her my best smile.

“We’ve been travelling all day and would have caught the earlier plane, but our flight was delayed in Melbourne. Please, just one more peep?”

She smiled and slowly shook her head as she, once more, checked her computer.

“You are so precious,” I told her.

She shook her head again and her brow wrinkled in a frown.

“This is impossible,” she said.

Excitedly, Alice and I almost shouted out: “What is impossible?”

“When I checked for that man there were no more seats available, the plane was full.”

“Yes?” in chorus.

“Now the computer is showing two vacant seats together. It isn’t possible. The computer’s made a mistake.”

She tried again and, again, the two seats showed up – vacant.

“Oh! Well,” she shrugged, “they’re yours.”

Grabbing our new Boarding Passes, we thanked her profusely and headed for the departure lounge. Once there, we contacted a very helpful MAS lass who offered to chase up our luggage and have it transferred to our flight.

We eventually arrived in K.L. just before one o'clock and a very tired, and very relieved, Bob was there to ensure our safe passage through Immigration and Customs.

Praise God for His mercy, grace, love – and miracles!

ATTAPPADY FIRE

Josef and Benjamin collected us from our hotel, the Indraprastha, at about half past eight in the morning and, with Saju Mathew as our interpreter, we were whisked by taxi into the hills of Northern Kerala.

Benjamin had asked us earlier if we could spend a day with him, ministering to leaders and particularly emphasising the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

“The best way to do this,” he had suggested, “would be for me to organise meetings in three centres and we could then go from centre to centre. The number in each place might reach seventy, but probably not more than that.”

We were, of course, delighted to be asked and we readily agreed.

Our first stop was Mannarkkadu, to Pastor David's home.

The house was packed with Pastors and wives from all round the area and, when we arrived, they were singing and clapping enthusiastically and their prayers were fervent and from the heart.

We were thrilled.

I spoke and Saju Mathew interpreted and well he must have done it.

As I began to explain what was necessary to enter into a full-orbed Pentecost experience, every arm in the place was stretched skyward and there was such an outburst of praise that my voice was totally drowned out.

Benjamin and Josef were pushing through the throng listening to the prayers and praises and, eventually, he came up to me and, shouting in my ear, informed me that every single one was speaking in tongues.

"I don't recognise one native tongue in the entire crowd," he told me.

Knowing that God's fire had fallen in such a way overpowered both Alice and myself.

We left amidst excited farewells and every single one of them wanted to hug us and kiss us.

At about half past one we arrived at Pastor Mattai's home in Agali.

"It was here," Benjamin told us, "that I made my first convert. Now there are twenty-nine churches in this area."

Again the house was packed and at two o'clock the meeting began with prayer and singing.

Both Alice and I shared and again, as I began to prepare for people to receive, the fire fell, just as it had at Mannarkkadu – almost without a word of encouragement being spoken.

Our third, and final, stop was at Kalkkandi where Joseph was building a new church.

Here there were more women than men and Alice shared from Psalm 133. I spoke on "Four reasons for tongues" because Josef told me that most, if not all, of the leaders had received a Pentecost experience but didn't necessarily have release in tongues.

However, at the invitation, fifteen came forward to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and everyone who had NOT received a love-language did so. Praise the Lord!

The whole house erupted in enthusiastic praise, worship and rejoicing.

They're a 'wild bunch' these Kerala folk – but oh! so beautiful in God's eyes.

SUNSET

“And that’s it?” Rosemarie asked, after she had finished the final editing. “Leaving everybody up in the air!”

If I am, I apologise. Yes! There are more stories, lots of them but these are possibly the best of the bunch!

What you might be wondering about is why I’ve chosen the title I have.

To do this I need to go back fifty-two years.

I was a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy in those days and I’d been appointed to Cyprus, to join the Commodore’s staff as his Assistant Secretary and to be Secretary to the Chief of Staff.

The job was a challenge, and I have always loved challenges, and I thoroughly enjoyed what I was

doing, but there were two clouds on the horizon that unsettled me.

The main cloud that hung over me was that, because of the terrorism and conflict in the island, wives and families were not allowed to join their husbands.

In addition to this, I knew that God wanted me out of the R.N. and into a Theological College to train for the ministry of the Church of England and, in February 1957, the chances of that happening were absolutely zero.

Four months later the first miracle happened.

The head of the terrorist organisation fled to Greece and his number two was captured. An uneasy peace reigned and families were allowed to take passage and be together.

Alice, bless her, with our two children Rosemarie and David (aged three and a half and eighteen months), docked in Limassol and we were overjoyed to be together again. Our journey from the ship to the – sadly, as yet unfinished - home that I had rented was laughter all the way.

That very first night, we put the children to bed and, not having anything like T.V. or radio at that time decided to get an early night ourselves.

However, before we climbed into bed, Alice and I knelt down alongside it and spent time in prayer, thanking Father God for bringing Alice and the

children safely out to Cyprus and keeping me safe during my days in Nicosia, prior to moving down south.

Realising it was virtually impossible for me to be released from the R.N. and enter Theological College unless, that is, we had a whole series of miracles, we prayed this prayer together: “Precious Father, this night we re-dedicate our lives totally to You. From this moment on we submit ourselves to Your will, and be prepared to go anywhere, at any time and do anything. Amen.”

We didn’t realise it at the time, of course, but since then God has continued to dot the Is and cross the Ts on that prayer – and over fifty years later He is still doing just that!

And Alice and I wouldn’t have it any other way!

Then *was* I finally released from the R.N.?

Was I released at exactly the right time (i.e. a week before the first term of the Academic Year began) and, if so, how?

Did anything spectacular happen in College?

Did anything incredible happen between being ordained and ministering at Fairy Meadow?

To all those questions, and to many more, I can only answer: Yes, indeed, many, many amazing events did happen and are still happening, today.

I am now over 81, and in the sunset of my life. I don’t think and move as fast as I used to.

However, if you’re interested, you’ll just have to wait until I get round to writing some of them down.

If you are - well then, why don’t you just email me and tell me, and I’ll see what I can do.

God bless you all.

