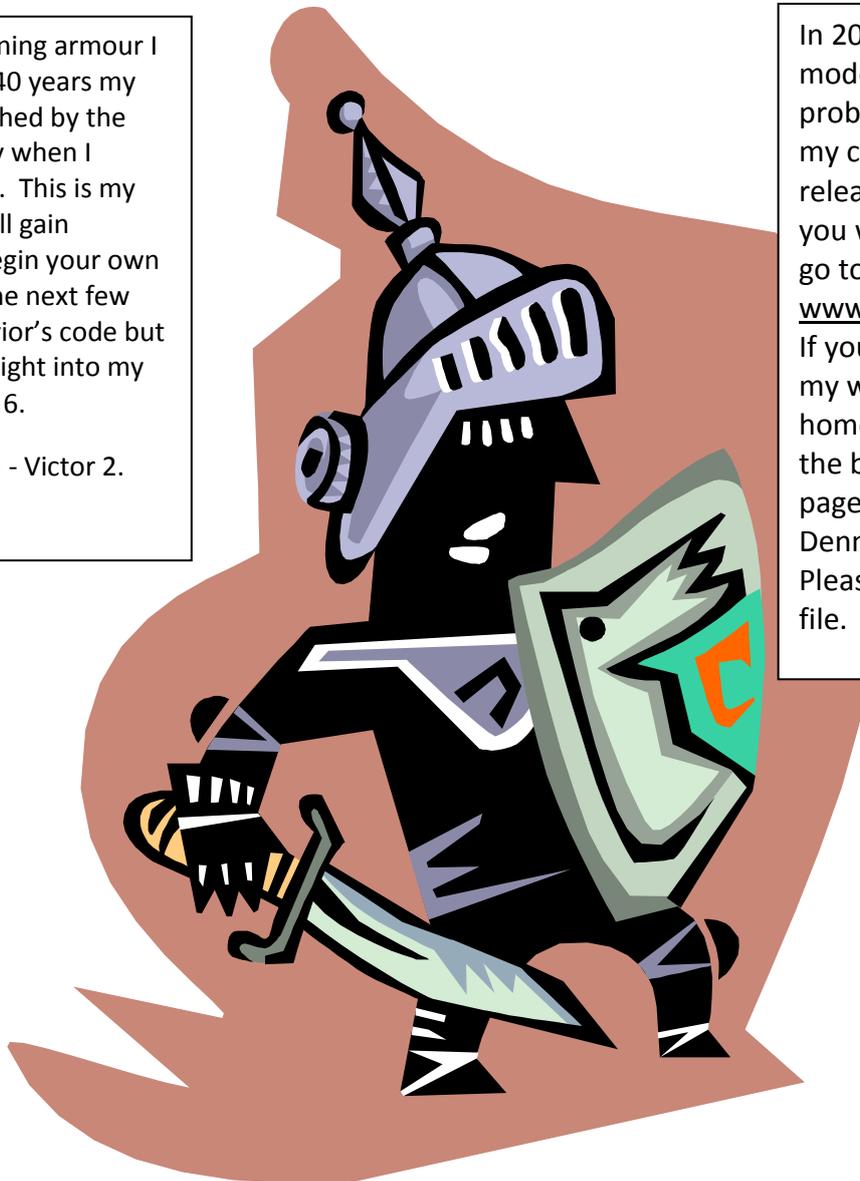


A Knight's tale

It was as a Knight in shining armour I went to war. For over 40 years my armour has been tarnished by the rejection by my country when I returned from Vietnam. This is my story and I hope you will gain something from it to begin your own journey of recovery. The next few pages concern the warrior's code but if you want to start straight into my story please go to page 6.

Dennis Griffin – 210685 - Victor 2.



In 2011 I made a group of models that portrayed my problems with rejection by my country and subsequent release from this bondage. If you wish to see this PDF file go to www.VietnamWar.govt.nz If you don't see the photo of my wife and I on the homepage go to memoirs at the bottom right and then to page 2 and look for my name Dennis Griffin. Please feel free to share this file.

Most boys dream of being a man, a warrior who has faced his enemy in battle and been the victor. To stand victorious on the field of battle, blood dripping from his weapon which is raised above his head as he screams a cry of triumph.

I was such a boy and I became a man when I took up my rifle and walked towards a fortified bunker system in Vietnam, knowing I would kill or be killed.

It is not popular in today's society to exalt the warrior but every male knows there is no higher achievement in the male world than to be a warrior who risks his life in combat. All other achievements are inferior.

I came across the Warrior's code in 2011. I identified with much of its content and it helped to free me from the disability of survivor guilt and also clarified my thoughts on honour.

Dennis A Griffin 210685 - A New Zealand soldier

THE WARRIOR'S CODE OF HONOR

As a combat veteran wounded in one of America's wars, I offer to speak for those who cannot. Were the mouths of my fallen front-line friends not stopped with dust, they would testify that life revolves around honor.

In war, it is understood that you give your word of honor to do your duty -- that is -- stand and fight instead of running away and deserting your friends.

When you keep your word despite desperately desiring to flee the screaming hell all around, you earn honor.

Earning honor under fire changes who you are.

The blast furnace of battle burns away impurities encrusting your soul.

The white-hot forge of combat hammers you into a hardened, purified warrior willing to die rather than break your word to friends -- your honor.

Combat is scary but exciting.

You never feel so alive as when being shot at without result.

You never feel so triumphant as when shooting back -- *with* result.

You never feel love so pure as that burned into your heart by friends willing to die to keep their word to you.

And they do.

The biggest sadness of your life is to see friends falling.

The biggest surprise of your life is to survive the war.

Although still alive on the outside, you are dead inside -- shot thru the heart with nonsensical guilt for living while friends died.

The biggest lie of your life torments you that you could have done something more, different, to save them.

Their faces are the tombstones in your weeping eyes, their souls shine the true camaraderie you search for the rest of your life but never find.

You live a different world now. You always will.

Your world is about waking up night after night silently screaming, back in battle.

Your world is about your best friend bleeding to death in your arms, howling in pain for you to kill him.

Your world is about shooting so many enemies the gun turns red and jams, letting the enemy grab you.

Your world is about struggling hand-to-hand for one more breath of life.

You never speak of your world.

Those who have seen combat do not talk about it.

Those who talk about it have not seen combat.

You come home but a grim ghost of he who so lightheartedly went off to war.

But home no longer exists.

That world shattered like a mirror the first time you were shot at.

The hurricane winds of war have hurled you far away to a different world -- the Warrior's World -- where your whole life is about keeping your word or die trying.

But people in the civilian world have *no idea* that life is about keeping your word -- they think life is about babies and business.

The distance between the two worlds is as far as Mars from Earth.

This is why, when you come home, you feel like an outsider -- a visitor from another planet.

You are.

People you knew before the war try to make contact.
It is useless.
Words fall like bricks between you.

Serving with warriors who died proving their word has made prewar friends seem too untested to be trusted – thus they are now mere acquaintances.
And they often *stay* that way because, like most battle-hardened Warriors, you prefer not to risk fully trusting anyone whose life is not devoted to keeping their word, their honor.

The hard truth is that doing your duty under fire makes you alone, a stranger in your own home town.

The only time you are not alone is when with another combat veteran.

Only *he* understands that keeping your word, your honor, whilst standing face to face with death gives meaning and purpose to life.

Only *he* understands that spending a mere 24 hours in the broad, sunlit uplands of battle-proven honor is more deeply satisfying to a man than spending a whole lifetime in safe, comfortably numb civilian life with DNA compelling him to anguish endlessly over whether he is a brave man or a coward.

Only *he* understands that your terrifying – but *thrilling* – dance with death has made your old world of babies, backyards and ballgames seem deadly dull.

Only *he* understands that your way of being due to combat damaged emotions is not the un-usual, but the usual, and you are OK.

Although you walk thru life alone, you are not lonely.
You have a constant companion from combat -- Death.
It stands close behind, a little to the left.

Death whispers in your ear: “Nothing matters outside my touch, and I have not touched you...*YET!*”

Death never leaves you -- it is your best friend, your most trusted advisor, your wisest teacher.

Death teaches you that every day above ground is a fine day.

Death teaches you to feel fortunate on good days, and bad days...well, they do not exist.

Death teaches you that merely seeing one more sunrise is enough to fill your cup of life to the brim -- pressed down and running over!

Death teaches you that you can postpone its touch by earning serenity.

Serenity is earned by a lot of prayer and acceptance.

Acceptance is taking one step out of denial and accepting/allowing your repressed, painful combat memories to be re-lived/suffered thru/shared with other combat vets -- and thus de-fused.

Each time you accomplish this act of courage/desperation:

the pain gets less;

more tormenting combat demons hiding in the darkness of your gut are thrown out into the sunlight of awareness, where they disappear in a puff of smoke;

the less bedeviling combat demons, the more serenity earned;

serenity is, regretfully, rather an indistinct quality, but it manifests as a sense of honor, a sense of calm, and gratitude to your creator – which lengthens life span.

Down thru the dusty centuries it has always been thus.

It always will be, for what is seared into a man’s soul who stands face to face with death never changes.

Writer’s Note (1):

This work attempts to describe the world as seen thru the eyes of a combat veteran.

It is a world virtually unknown to the public because few veterans talk about it.

This is unfortunate since people who are trying to understand, and make meaningful contact with combat veterans, are kept in the dark.

Those who wonder why they cannot connect with combat veterans need look no further than these few lines to understand why this is so.

How do you establish a rapport with a combat veteran?

It is very simple:

Demonstrate to him out in the open in front of God and everybody that you too have a Code of Honor --that is, you also keep your word -- *no matter what!*

Do it and you will forge a bond.

Do it not and you will not.

End of story. Case closed.

I offer these poor, inadequate words – bought not taught – in the hope that they may shed some small light on *why* combat veterans are like they are, and how they can fix it.

It is my life desire that this tortured work, despite its many defects, may yet still provide some tiny sliver of understanding which may blossom into tolerance – nay, acceptance – of a Warrior’s perhaps unconventional way of being due to combat-damaged emotions from doing his duty under fire.

Signed, a Purple Heart Medal recipient who wishes to remain an unknown soldier.
Life Member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), member number L63550.
Life Member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Dedicated to absent friends in unmarked graves.

CONTACT

All comments are welcome, both positive and negative, and may be emailed to the writer at 10625@cox.net

12) 10/26/06 Viet Nam Veteran

“Try to understand”
If he stays home alone,
and doesn't like to hear the phone
If he won't answer the door,
'cause he doesn't want to see anyone anymore.

"Try to understand"
If night time is something to dread,
And his sleep is restless and fleeting in bed,
If he quietly gets up in the night,
So as not to disturb your pleasant respite.

"Try to understand"
If he becomes nervous and jumps around,
At unexpected movement or a sudden sound.

If he sits in a restaurant with his back to the wall,
Because he can't have anyone behind him at all.

"Try to understand"

If he shows no fear and wouldn't turn if he could,
That part of him has gone that says you should.
If his anger seems quick and extreme,
He's only trying to control intense emotions unseen.

"Try to understand"

If he seems emotionless and indifferent some days,
And perhaps he just says "Go Away!"
If he becomes depressed and may seem unkind,
He is only trying to spare you the agony in his mind.

"Try to understand"

If his mood changes and alters
And he becomes unsure and often falters,
If he becomes sad and stares into space,
He has only gone to some other place.

"Try to understand"

.....Because he can't.....

I will now attempt to language what happened to me in combat:

I was an 18 year old kid who died in combat when a stranger slipped into my body,
a MAN from a different world where you keep your word of honor to stand and fight
instead of running away like you desperately desire to do.

This suicidal custom is known as:

"Doing your duty."

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A Vietnam Veteran's journey to health

I sealed the letter to the Veteran's Oral Survey and stood up. I felt it coming and to my surprise started to cry. I only cried for about ten seconds but when it finished I knew a dramatic change had taken place. I was no longer an alien in my own country. For 40 years I felt like an alien and unable to fit back into society, now I was free from Vietnam but to reach this point I had to come to terms with all that happened to me since my father died.

A Damaged Psyche

I was ten when he died. I can still see the coffin, surrounded by flowers and crying people.

Looking back through the years I see a small boy in an adult world trying to be brave, a knight in shining armour. It may have been the lack of grief counselling or it may have been the stupid relative who took me by the hand and said, "You are now the man of the family" that sowed the seeds of personality damage. From that point my life was more difficult than it needed to be. If I knew who that person was I would have great pleasure in kicking him squarely in a very sensitive place.

I became a rejected personality:

- Rejected by my father who died when I needed him
- Rejected by society because I refused to be a part of it because I had to stay home and look after my mother, instead of living a normal teenage life
- Rejected by the church who only visited to ask us to take part in a stewardship campaign
- Rejected by myself because somewhere I had accepted the idea I had killed my father

You will realise the rejections that shaped my life were all false but it was not until I was forty seven that I began a journey towards freedom through an eighty-year-old lady.

The damaging power of ideas

Nana was a bitch. Strong words you might think but I attribute to her the curse of me thinking I had killed my father.

It was a shock to my system, at age 46, when I discovered she was living with us when Dad died. I had no recollection. It was then I realised I had very few memories of my life before the age of ten. There was a block in my memory preventing me remembering events associated with my early life. It was only when I arranged to meet my sister I learned something of my life before Dad died. It was not all bad.

My sister tried to kill me when I was two

She was only four so I can't complain of evil intent because she was trying to help me at the time. I was a premature baby, born seven weeks before my time and sickly for much of my early life. I had ointment for my chest and my loveable sister had seen mum putting this on. It was a potent mixture and only to be used sparingly. My sister appeared to think she would like to help so while I was alone, smothered my chest with it. Fortunately it was discovered before I choked to death.

She was afraid of mum because she was a strict disciplinarian, as many of that generation were. We did not lack the essential things of life but one – love, expressed through cuddles, kisses and tenderness. I don't think we were alone in this because we were raised in a time where many adults found it difficult to show emotion to those they loved.

Was I loved?

Don't think we weren't loved, we were, but in the way of the disciplinarian rather than the lover. Our mother was a hard-working, caring woman who did her best to raise us to be good citizens. It was not her fault Dad died and left her with problem children like us.

In those days the widow's' benefit was not very much, so she turned to housework to raise extra money. Even now I don't think I appreciate the hours spent on her knees cleaning up other people's mess so we could have the extras in life.

She lived her last years in Matamata and went slightly gaga. Since dad died a tumour grew in her brain. This was removed but with it went part of the memory cells so over the years her short-term memory deteriorated. She entertained you with the same questions over and over again, but she battled on for many years until she died in a Matamata Resthome. She was a battler and many times I thought she deserved better in life than having me for a son.

I have three sisters. Two were grown up when I was born and I only felt close to my sister who was two years older. Like most families it was the older two who had the tougher life, according to them. We, coming 14 years later had it much easier. Overall, my early years were good and I do not regret them. I only wish I could remember more.

Cutting heads off & killing things

My early years were spent in Papatoetoe, south of Auckland. I have few memories of this time and after mum's dad died we moved to Te Papapa, near Onehunga. We ended up in a State house that had a hill in the back yard. I know it had a hill because I remember running down it and nearly decapitating myself on the long clothesline at the bottom.

I must have had a thing about cutting heads off. I had a pet duck after dad died and after arguing with mum about its future I had to cut its head off. I grabbed the duck and dragged it to its fate. It made quite a racket as I held it down and reached for the axe. I found it very hard but being of an impulsive nature swung the axe downwards and sliced part of its beak off. This made me even unhappier but I knew there was no turning back now. The duck accepted its fate and with my next blow I severed its neck. I was left with two parts of a duck and a guilty conscience. To a young boy raised in the country my experience of killing may seem laughable, but to me it was a very emotional experience and for years I felt angry over being forced to do it. Ever since, I have been grateful for Meatworks. I didn't eat very much of that duck, after all, he was my friend.

My other experience of killing animals came later when I had my slug gun. I ranged the back yard looking for victims. Next door was an orchard and I wasted many slugs trying to hit the sparrows. In frustration I finally threw the gun to my shoulder and fired. I hit one. I could have cried. Here was this small defenceless creature lying on the ground with my slug inside it. I jumped the fence, gathered it into my hands and tried to heal it but it died after a few minutes. I never shot at another animal. Even now I don't approve of hunting animals for sport. After all, in Vietnam I hunted man. At least he had the chance of killing me and this seems more sporting.

The son of my father's old age

I was the son of my father's old age (he was fifty when I was born) and this may be why I don't have many memories of him. I remember him under the car, fixing it; he was good with his hands. He used to repair bicycles but after marrying my Mother travelled the Waikato showing movies. I thought this very romantic and understand it was only through pressure from mum's family that he gave this up and moved to Papatoetoe. I knew nothing of this for many years. It was from my oldest sister I received this insight after I started to need to know more of this shadowy figure, called dad.

He was into cricket. One day he arranged with the school for me to go with him to a test match. I didn't know it then but this was arranged because he was going into hospital and might be the last time he could have with me. It was one of the most boring days of my life and turned me off cricket for years. If I had understood about his illness it might have been a time of closeness and communication but in those days this was not thought to be proper and so the opportunity to lessen the effect of his death on my future life was lost.

Another time he came to my football break-up. This was unusual because he never came to watch me play. I didn't know I was to be awarded a trophy for the best behaved boy, on and off the field. This was my only claim to fame as a rugby player. They always used to put me in the "lock" position and I can't say I enjoyed clasping boy's bums as a way to future "All Black" fame. My rugby career was cut short when dad went to Auckland hospital, to be slaughtered by the medical profession.

I surprised everyone, including myself, by winning the Thrift essay at school when I was in standard three. I remember this not only because it surprised everyone, including my teacher, but because dad and mum rewarded me with a meccano set. I can see them now, coming up the path and me running to claim the gift under his arm. My story was about a poor boy whose mother couldn't afford a bike so he worked hard to buy one for himself. It was stolen and he had to struggle to get another. This was heartbreaking stuff. The next year I wrote an even better story about a snail crossing the road, from the snail's viewpoint. You should have heard the scorn ladled upon this great literary effort. In my opinion it was the better story and I can still imagine the feelings of my hero as the gigantic truck roared towards him. This may account for my reluctance to write essays when I went to High School. But not to worry, I still think my snail story deserved to win the prize.

I do have one unpleasant memory concerning dad. I ran away shortly before he went to hospital. Why I ran away I don't know but I stayed away all day and when I came home he took me under the house and smacked me. I always believed it was mum who made him do it. It was about the same time I was caught lighting fires under the house, for which I was duly punished. I remember these incidents because of the accusation of causing worry to my father when he was due to go into hospital.

A psychiatrist I went to when I was older said this was classic behaviour from those who hate their mother (burning fires under the house). This thought was the beginning of me examining my feelings about my mother.

So ends my memories of my father. It's not much for ten years of life but it is more than others have and for what I remember I am grateful. At least I don't have bad memories, which I might have had if he lived longer. As a man looking back I grieved for my lost childhood and the guidance he could have given me. It was many years before I stopped looking for a "father" replacement.

My psychology studies tell me I am the product of my genes, environment and experiences that are unique to me. My father's death was one of the unique experiences that laid the seeds for maladjustment (anti-social behaviour) in later years.

His death

Dad went off to hospital and I was shunted down the road to a neighbour's. I suppose this was normal in those days but it made my father's illness distant for me.

The day came when I was summoned to the hospital, not knowing he was dying. I can still see the scene; the hospital bed surrounded by curtains and my mother standing at the foot of the bed with me beside her. There were other people present but the focal point was this man on the bed, smiling at me. He didn't have much hair left but his face was kindly and as I came towards him he smiled. I had to kiss him. His forehead was sweaty. He gave me a smile but I don't remember him saying anything. To this day I feel cheated because I did not know he was dying. I often wonder what I would have said to him if I had known this was farewell. I didn't know and only felt uneasy at what was happening. We left and I never saw him again.

It was the next day that someone met me on the street (I think it was mum) and told me I no longer had a dad. I remember bursting into tears and running back to the place where I was staying. (I didn't run into my mother's arms).

It's strange to think back to this time and see me playing with a large meccano crane acting as if I was okay. I didn't have to go to school and was treated as someone special, but no-one talked to me about death and my dad. He just ceased to exist.

The funeral

It was the flowers at the funeral I hated most. Lilly's, lots of Lilly's. The smell pervaded everything. For years I hated the smell of flowers because they only reminded me of death. It wasn't until I met with Jesus Christ I lost this phobia and was able to appreciate nature again.

For years I blocked out of my conscious mind memories of the funeral. It was not until I studied Psychology at age 46 I realised the importance of facing these memories, and by using self-hypnosis was able to recall much of what I now remember.

How would you like to be told at age ten you were now the man of the family and must look after your mother? This statement alone scarred my teen-age years and damaged my normal development.

I stayed with neighbours for a week after the funeral and remember mum lying on the bed, drugged against the pain of her suffering. I understand she wanted to die but it was the needs of my sister and me that broke through her grief and enabled her to begin the battle of life again as a widow. As I write this I am aware of love for this battler and thankful for all she was able to give us.

I can't say my sister and I appreciated her at the time. One night we were sent to bed in disgrace and had a hate session, accusing her of never loving Dad. I think the seeds for distrust were sown because she did not allow us to share her grief. We were left to adjust the best we could and

neither of us succeeded too well. Still, I believe I have dealt with these scars now and am sorry I cannot sit down with her and talk about these things. This is because she is not able to follow abstract thinking and trying to discuss serious matters is futile.

A medical system that kills

The hospital killed my Dad or that's how I understand it. He was in hospital to have a growth removed from his gullet but the doctors removed the stitches too soon and the operation fell apart inside him. Thinking back on this it doesn't make sense as the stitches were inside him. What exactly happened I don't know but my mother said the hospital made a mistake and that is why he died. According to Mum, the Auckland hospital authorities pleaded with her not to sue and in her shocked state she agreed. I think she should have sued the bastards for all she could get.

It isn't surprising I distrust doctors and the medical system. This was reinforced in later years and has proved to be a hindrance throughout my life.

This was illustrated when my wife went to hospital for a day operation. My nervous system collapsed and took a week to recover. I had visions of her dying and wasn't much help to her at that time. I had no trust in doctors or the hospital system.

So we come to the end of my early years and the seeds are sown for problems I experienced later. These were increased by the cauldron of Vietnam. Looking back I think it wasn't too bad. I honour my mum who sacrificed much of her life for my sister and me. The years following Dad's death were to be ones of struggle as I grew into puberty without a Father to guide me.

Seddon Technical College

Seddon Tech. was an important part in my psychological growth. It was here I started to fantasize about girls, though the closest I got to a date was at a school dance. I danced with her all night and things were going quite sweetly when I remembered I had to be home by 10.30 pm. I excused myself and ran for the bus. Mum was quite surprised to see me home so early and I found I could have stayed longer but by then it was too late and I lost the girl. This feeling of protectiveness for my Mother became a curse as time went by and contributed to the crippling of my social skills.

It was at Tech. where I had my first experience of a dirty old man. At least I think he was; now I look back at it. He was the deputy principal and was in charge of the school cadets. To prepare us to be soldiers he used to have us come out of class and go to a disused prefab. Here we had to strip to our underpants, roll them down to the pubic hair and practise standing at ease with our stomachs pulled in and our chest out. It may have been innocent but we were pulled out of class 2-3 times a week to perform for him. I can't imagine him getting away with it nowadays but then I thought it was great fun and I felt special. I suppose it was because I was looking for a father image and in many ways he was that for me. I have to chuckle about it now but I don't know if mum would have.

I was a slightly built lad with large ears and used to suffer the torment of being called "Big Ears". That wasn't so bad but there was one bully who used to make my life hell. During this time I used to dream I was being chased by an ugly witch with a big club and would wake up sweating like a pig. It got so bad that one day I had had enough and challenged him to meet me in the gym. He accepted and after school I waited for him but he didn't show up. I was greatly relieved and when I saw him the next day he avoided me. I learnt a valuable lesson that day. That night I again dreamed I was being chased by a witch but this time I faced up to her, ripped away her club and beat her senseless.

I never had that dream again. This experience helped me to understand I had to face the things I feared.

I don't think you could call my schooldays a great success as I seemed to believe I could not succeed therefore it was a waste of time trying. I never used to study and when exam time came, failed miserably. I didn't enjoy this but failure did not drive me to study harder. I believe this lack of motivation is related to my father's death and the belief I had killed him. It seemed I had a self-destruct program in my sub-conscious that said because I had killed my Dad I was not worthy to succeed and deserved to fail. I say this because I have been delivered from this curse and in looking back can see how it affected many of my actions.

Destroying words

Another destructive episode took place in Boy's Brigade. I offered to cut out a sign for the group as part of my badge work. Unfortunately I was not very good at cutting out letters with a fretsaw. They were rejected in front of the whole group and someone else made them. I didn't get my badge and consider this was one of the episodes that reinforced the idea I was useless and my labour not worthy of payment. This attitude troubled me for years – that my labour was not good enough for payment.

School Cadets

School cadets was where I found my place. We all have to find our place and in the cadets I found a missing element in my life. It gave me a sense of importance in belonging to a special group. It was not all fun and games though. At one camp I had my balls (testicles) blackened with nugget; there wasn't much point in resisting and it did help me feel I belonged. I have now distaste for initiation ceremonies and despise those who revel in them. I have a distaste of all bullies and think they are the scum of society.

Another time we had an exercise where we had to capture the opposing forces' flag. It was night and I was creeping through the undergrowth pretending I wasn't scared when this massive Maori leapt upon me and tried to take my head off. I gasped I belonged to his side so he apologised and set me on my feet again with the advice I speak quicker next time. I learnt the value of a lie.

Life in the Army seemed like an exciting way to live and in my fantasy world this excitement was very attractive. The thought that I might get killed didn't worry me because I thought I would only live till age 20 anyway. Where I got this idea from I don't know but I see the same thinking in my sons so it probably is not abnormal.

Speaking of being strangled reminds me of the time the neighbour across the road was mad at me and tried to strangle me. My sister saw my problem, came across and began to choke him. I thought it was most unfair as I was the only one who had no-one to strangle. Fortunately for me my sister was quite effective at strangling boys and he let me go. I wonder if she learnt her technique on me.

I found my teenage years a struggle and my relationship with mum stressful. It got so bad that my neighbour, (mother of the strangler) advised me to talk to my teacher and like a fool, I did. I have always wondered what happened, but as I can't communicate with Mum about it now I will never know. Looking back, with the hindsight of being a parent of teenagers, I think it was a silly thing to do and probably only caused embarrassment to all involved.

So far I have wandered back and forth in time as events occurred to me. I found this necessary as many memories no longer exist from before dad's death. I often wondered what my life would have

been like if he had lived but I realise I will never know the answer to this question. I am left with feelings of sadness when I think of what could have been. The social life I would have had, and the relationships that would have helped me develop without many of the hang-ups I ended up with.

Life is never that simple and I can only be grateful for what I have had and I am not in a Mental hospital costing the Government a fortune to keep me. For this I thank God, and my wife, for without them I would have committed suicide when I was in my 40's but that is for later in this story.

Achievement without working for it

I wasn't much of a scholar. I wanted to succeed and do well in exams but seemed unable to apply myself to study. I passed many of my exams by going sick the day before.

I suffered from asthma and bronchitis in my youth, and became expert at imitating the symptoms, especially at exam time. I used to cough and groan in my room until Mum suggested I stay home. Like many youth I learnt to play on my mother's love and concern for my health.

Accidents were part of my life too. I was returning home from delivering the Star newspaper when I thought I would try to ride down the hill without brakes. I was going well until I hit the gravel on the bend and ended up groaning on the side of the road. That kept me off school for a few weeks but was a drastic way of solving school problems. I blistered my thigh with a double dose of sunburn one summer and can still see the blisters but as this was exam time I didn't mind. I conveniently managed to injure myself or catch something just before exam time, most years. It didn't matter greatly at Seddon Tech. because I was credited with the average mark the others achieved. This probably meant I received a higher mark than I would have if I sat the exam. The times I did sit exams were not great triumphs for the Griffin name.

I always felt I was in a class above my abilities and went through my high school days in academic classes when I would probably have been better off in technical. As you will realise my training ground for working hard to achieve success was not strengthened by my experiences at school.

When we are 14 life seems full of possibilities and like many others I dreamt of being a fighter, a great scientist or a bank robber. I lived at times in a fantasy world where all would be well and under my control, but like others of my age our futures were determined not by us but the thinking of the time. It was okay to have a dream but one also had to have a job.

The electronic mistake

Apparently my future was to be in the radio industry. I slid into this area because my mother was a widow and because of this I was made a lab boy in the Electronics lab. Here, I used to while away my lunch hours cleaning instruments and pretending I was interested in electronics. I should have been out in the playground beating heads and lusting after girls but I thought I was different because I didn't have a father. (This feeling of being different because I didn't have a father was a curse that blighted much of my early life).

I remember the lab era because it was the first time I was aware of my inadequacy when faced with the prospect of working hard to achieve something. I wanted success, money, etc. but I didn't want to work for it. I think I accepted the idea of being supported by others because I was disadvantaged by not having a father. I also think there was resident within me a self-destruct principle that said it wasn't right for me to succeed because I had killed my father. Whatever the real reasons were, I know that in looking back I am aware of this failure mechanism working in my life.

It was a result of being a lab-boy the next phase of my life began. I was offered an apprenticeship in radio. Before I started work I went on holiday with my brother-in-law. We went to Warkworth and it was fun except I got the “pip” because he wouldn’t loan me money to buy mum a present. This resulted in me returning home in a bad mood and doing something (I don’t remember what) that resulted in an explosion. I was sent to my room in tears and mum came in threatening to send me back to school. Horrified, I was quickly brought to heel as the thought of the embarrassment broke down my rebellion. Fortunately it was all threat and the next day I started work.

Apprenticeship slavery

I went to work for a firm in Ponsonby and so entered what I call a cheap labour system; one that would only increase my sense of failure and inability to succeed.

The firm didn’t want to train its apprentices but only required them to assemble radios and eventually the televisions they manufactured. The two other apprentices had been in this system for four years and it was only by going to the Union they finally received some proper training.

When I began I didn’t know all this and thought all my boats had arrived in port at once. I was free from school and earning money. I had a power cycle and was free and independent.

The power cycle illustrates how good mum really was to me. She arranged for me to get, not a bike with a motor on the back, but one that was like a small motorbike. How proud I was to put-put down the road at a fast 40 mph pretending I was a hot-shot.

I failed my first exam and the next year only just passed it. I failed because I did not study. Why didn’t I study for it? One reason was that TV started at this time and I was able to purchase one by building radios at home. The boss had a sweet thing going here. We used our power, our time and he paid us low rates. I still got my TV though and spent many a happy hour watching Robin Hood fight the evil Sheriff of Nottingham. Of course this didn’t do anything for my ability to pass exams because I usually left all my study till the last week.

These failures didn’t teach me anything and as my employer didn’t either I learnt very little. The first radio I built for myself only smoked so I gave that away as a waste of time. I can put a lot of blame on my employer but looking back I realise I could have passed all my exams but didn’t have the initiative to do so. Time has proved to me that the electronics industry was not the career I should have been in. I left this employer before my time was up and went to another as a storeman. I would have left before my hours were finished but the Army made me finish my apprenticeship before they would accept me.

I used to pay back my employer by working overtime and slacking. I also helped myself to tools, parts and anything else I could lay my hands on. I had an artistic bent then and found I could make some quite fantastic shapes out of melted solder – it helped to pass the time.

My two co-workers were both Christians (Baptist) and many an hour was whiled away in loud argument. We would get louder and louder as these two evangelists tried to convert me until the office door slammed and the boss would storm out and tell us to shut up. He was an accountant by trade and this is probably why I have a distrust of accountants. Still, it was an enjoyable period of my life.

It was through a technician there that I began my acting career. He used to take me home with him to Howick and together we would go to the local theatre to take part in productions. I only ever played an old man of 60 and remember standing by the fireplace sucking my pipe. I thought I was

terrific even if no-one else did and found I enjoyed the stage and the limelight. I describe myself as a loner at this time, without close friends and uncomfortable in social situations.

Through the agency of my Baptist workmates I went to a number of camps. I went to chase the girls but they didn't seem interested in me and I usually spent time in these camps on my own and feeling out of it. The main part of the camp was the meeting where I was supposed to get converted. There we all were, with the preacher giving hellfire, and me eyeballing the preacher. I wasn't going to become a stupid Christian. I didn't believe in God and couldn't see any reason for doing what the preacher wanted.

There is none blinder than the person who doesn't want to see. In front of me were two young men living a good healthy life and had great futures in front of them. One of them built his own boat and the other eventually had his own service agency. Looking back I think their witnessing did influence me though it was some years later I gave my life to Jesus Christ. At that time I was an arrogant young man who thought he knew all the answers.

A bit of a wallflower

Mum and I used to play the "silence game". I would be obnoxious and Mum wouldn't speak to me for days. It was quite effective and as the days went on I would feel guiltier, especially as TV programs often dealt with subjects we had just argued about. I don't think I ever won those battles and ever since have been determined not to inflict this torture upon my family. It doesn't do much for relationships.

Mum sent me to John Young's dance studio in Khyber Pass in Auckland. Here I learnt how to dance and so began my social life in the dance-halls of Auckland. I was the proper gentleman. I would go up to the young lady and bow, requesting the honour of the dance. I laugh now when I think of this but I had my standards and used to think of myself as a knight in shining armour.

Unfortunately I had this identification with the sad sacks of life and would make sure I asked the "wallflowers" to dance, the older ladies and the younger children. Why? I don't know, but it was a real waste of time. In my fantasies I stripped off the clothes of the nubile maidens and together we floated off into the sunset in sexual passion. In reality they said thank you very much and I never saw them again.

I never liked the modern dances like the Twist because I like to hold girls in my arms and couldn't see much sense in twisting and writhing by myself. How can you talk with a delicious piece of fluff when you're one metre away competing with noise from the band? I belonged to a gentler age where you could at least hold her hand or have an arm around her so she couldn't get away. At least it gave you a chance to see if there was any future in pursuing her.

I wanted to get married. Some of us are like that. Every girl I took out was a prospective wife and as I didn't take many out I think I was lucky to be spared until I met the lovely lady who eventually became my wife.

One girl I met at a dance agreed to go out with me to the pictures. I picked her up in my old car, which didn't seem to impress her much, was looked over by her older brother, went to the pictures where she wouldn't let me hold her hand and afterwards, gave me the brush-off. Girls have no idea of the emotional strain of my generation trying to decide in the dark of the theatre, "Will I hold her hand or can I risk putting my arm around her". Another girl was the opposite. She nearly ate me alive and introduced me to the groping game. I was lucky to escape her clutches. At this time I was a gentleman, a knight in shining armour, a male who would not take advantage of a beautiful damsel. Nowadays I look at the modern generation and think they have lost this romantic strain.

They miss out on the joys of being a knight in shining armour. As you will see when I move on to Vietnam it was in the role of the knight I went to kill the dragon of Communism. I think this viewpoint probably came from having to look after my mum, to protect her during my impressionable years.

I also seemed to have an attraction to lonely people. At dances I felt pity for the groups of single men who lounged around the floor in groups pretending to be John Wayne or some other hero of the time. As a loner I was attracted to loners. One of these became a friend through much of my teenage years. He went into the Army before me and served in the Special Air Services. He was a ratbag. His father seemed to hate him and gave him a tough life. He was a liar and used to fool me with his stories. One time he had me believing he was a secret agent for the government and planes flew over his place to signal him. I went to stay at his place, when his father was away, and together we waited for the plane to fly over. I was gullible, and still am. The only thing I found out that night was he had a bony bottom because we had to sleep in the same bed. Being my main childhood friend we roamed the gullies, rubbish dumps and other areas and he was an important part of my teenage years.

This period of my life was when I was having major problems, relations with my Mum and also with alcohol. My friend was to be married to a nice girl and at the engagement party I drank too much booze. I had to drive home and with a car full of people, including my mum, I drove off. How I got home I don't know, all I remember is driving up the final road to home with no recollection of how I got there. Mum and I had an argument over that period and I remember telling her if I wanted to get drunk and spew over everything (apparently I did this) then I would. I was an obnoxious teenager and when I look at my sons now I think I know what my Mum felt when trying to guide me. Serves me right, I think.

The fight club

Every young knight needs to know how to fight so I was enrolled in a small boxing club. It was run by the Catholic Church and was the closest I got to that religion. The priest used to live in a large square house and many were the fantasies I created about his life there.

The boxing club took me to see a fight and I pretended to be interested. After that experience I soon lost interest in the pugilistic arts. One night I came home to find my brother-in-law waiting for me. Being drunk he thought it would be a great idea to spar with me. I was afraid he might hurt me so I let him have it, right between the eyes. It just goes to show that every small piece of knowledge is handy at sometime. He didn't bother me again.

My musical years

Working at slave labour in the radio factory gave me the chance to learn the trumpet and also introduced me to my first love. First loves are always expensive and she was no exception. She was also not inexperienced in the ways of boys and girls but I hurry to inform you she did not have her way with me. Not because I was too intelligent but because I was too stupid. We used to be on the bed in her bedroom while her parents were out and I was too honourable to do anything. The greatest moment I remember was getting a mouthful of saliva while in a passionate embrace which didn't do much for my romantic ardour. She was eventually sent to her Grandmother and before we finished our relationship cost me quite a few dollars.

The trumpet was my attempt at musical greatness and like other things I attempted, failed. But not before I annoyed my neighbours (they were shift workers and for some reason became incensed at my attempts to play). My boss also was not amused when I took it to work and practiced during my

lunch hour. One of the reasons I did this was so I could look through Truth magazines, for semi-naked girls. It was no wonder I had trouble playing sweet notes after surveying breasts and forms that fed my fantasies. But before you think I was the worst trumpet player in Onehunga let me tell you, I did have one fan, my faithful friend and companion, Sally the dog. She used to sit under my window and howl as I played my finest notes. I always thought dogs had more musical sense than people.

Me and cars

We all remember our first car. I don't, but I do remember rewiring one of my cars. It caught fire under the dashboard so I thought it would be a good idea to rewire it. The only problem was I only had white wire to use. I don't envy the person who tried to trace a wiring fault after I sold it. It's crazy what we attempt when we are this age and aren't afraid of failure. The teenage dreams are magic when we believe we can do anything and dreams only need time and opportunity to become reality.

The army was my dream

In my fantasy world I dreamt about doing heroic deeds, waving my sword wildly above my head and with a battle cry upon my lips dashing towards the enemy. It was in school cadets this vision was born but it was not till I was 18 I was able to join the territorials. It was great fun at the weekend to play at being a big, tough soldier. They gave me a uniform, boots to polish, a rifle to use and I even got to ride in jeeps. I had one claim to fame as a signaller – I learnt to read Morse code. This meant I was a valued member and received extra training to improve my efficiency.

I thought it was great fun to have a week off work and play at being a soldier but my training was brought to a halt when the Staff Sgt. was called up by the SAS to go to Borneo. This was the height of excitement and I envied the man his opportunity. I was an avid listener to any one who had been in the Borneo conflict and still chuckle at my naiveté at that time.

Other episodes I recall are:

Standing sentry in the middle of nowhere on an exercise during a frigid night resulting in spending the next week in bed with a cold. I had brought a hand warmer, shaped like a cigarette case with a cloth cover. The burner heated the case but the outside was pleasantly warm.

Another time we were in the back of a truck listening to the sexual exploits of an imaginative soldier-very stimulating.

There was nothing like "Hell One", near Waiouru. This was our annual camp but I was disappointed I wasn't allowed to drive a truck down and became so disagreeable that a corporal made the camp a misery for me. I don't blame him because I had a very bad habit of becoming disagreeable if I didn't get my own way.

I think it is hard for someone like me to get away from the idea we are special and a cut above the ordinary bloke. Since Dad died I had been different from the average guy, and lived a separated life from my peer group. This left me with the idea I was different therefore deserved special treatment. Even now at age 47 I have difficulty with this concept. It really gets up peoples noses and this tends to work against you when you desire their help.

SAS Trial

Of course, since I was special I had to try and join the SAS so on a Friday night I joined the other hopefuls for a weekend trial. It began tamely enough but soon developed into a test of our physical and mental abilities. I didn't do too well on either, especially the mental side. I was given command of the group and had to arrange the checking of a bridge. This was around Mercer and we had slogged through thigh-deep swamp to get there. I sent off my scouts and we waited, unfortunately I didn't wait long enough and moved the group up to the bridge, with the result I could have been wiped out by my own scouts. Needless to say I failed the weekend, especially when they analysed my psychological tests and discovered a personality defect that made me unsuitable for the Territorials. At that stage of the proceedings I couldn't have cared less and collapsed on the sofa when I arrived home, exhausted. Still, I don't regret trying. I would rather try and fail than fail by not trying.

I've got to hand it too Mum at this time, she never tried to discourage me from my ambition to be a soldier and it was only when she thought I might be sent overseas she interfered. At least I think she interfered. I came home one weekend and told her I might be sent overseas soon and the next weekend we received a lecture about not panicking our parents about overseas service. I always suspected her of being the parent mentioned.

Army life was fun and working in the radio business was going from bad to worse. I had transferred to Autocrat Radio as a storeman to finish out my apprenticeship and was prepared to break my contract with only three months to go, to join the Army. My plans were quickly squashed by the Army and I had to finish my time. This turned out to be a good thing a few years later.

Breaking free

Relations withy mum at this time had deteriorated and I was desperate to break the apron strings. We were not communicating and the silent treatment was working overtime. Who was at fault? I don't think either of us was. For me it was the normal teenage thing of wanting to do things my way. For mum it was the battle all parents go through - how much freedom to allow and how much to restrict. As a parent myself I have more sympathy with her now and a short time ago apologised for being such a selfish, self-centred, obstinate brat. Mum's mind is not what it used to be and I think it was a bit late for my apology to have the affect I intended.

Sally

What about Sally? Who was she? She wasn't a fantastic girl but a short-haired terrier, a mongrel whom I loved as a best mate. We were inseparable. She slept on my bed and loved me with passion. I don't remember any other pets before her and it was on Sally I lavished much of my money. She had eczema and for years I took her, during the summer, for treatment. It didn't matter how much I spent because I loved her. At that stage of my life she was probably the only one I loved, beside myself. My girlfriends weren't a great source of blessing and at least Sally didn't refuse my caresses.

Even Sally could not keep me from the Army and the day finally came when I could join up. I had difficulty not laughing when I took the oath because when we reached the part about the "Queen and her heirs", I pictured me swearing allegiance to the hairs on her arm. Suppressing a smile I joined the others in finishing the oath and became a member of the New Zealand Army. In doing so I began on the roadway that would lead me to the greatest rejection of my life- rejection by my country, after Vietnam.

Waiouru

The train shuddered to a halt at two in the morning on the on the eight September, 1965. I had finally arrived at Waiouru.

My memories are few of basic training and it seems it is the unpleasant I remember most. One of these was when I was chucked out of a dance because I was found in the food area before time. It wasn't that I was greedy. I had paid to attend and wasn't enjoying myself, all the girls had partners and it was non-alcoholic so I had had enough and wanted a snack before I went home.

It was an officer who marched me out of the place and probably began my antipathy towards the officer class. I have never felt comfortable in the presence of officers since and it was many years before the embarrassment of that moment diminished.

I had no close friendships during this period and when I think back on my life I realise I have always preferred the solitary life rather than the group scene. Even when drinking with others I still felt alone, usually ending up staggering back to the barracks by myself, stopping on the way to spew up the meal I had consumed.

This was the period when the ballot system was in for National Service. I used to feel good as I sauntered across to get my meal while watching National Servicemen running to theirs. We had it easy compared to them but after all – we were Regulars.

They had one advantage over us. Political pressure at the time meant that officers were told to take it easy on these conscripts. This resulted in the beginning of the disintegration of authority. Non-commissioned officers (NCOs) would charge a National Serviceman with disobedience but when brought before the officer he would be let off. This meant the authority of the NCO was undermined, with the result they didn't bother charging National Servicemen because their officers would not back them up. It seemed to me the authority structure in the army was crumbling and I felt insecure within it.

The greatest challenge I had at this time was to enter in the 30 mile road-walk. I didn't think 30 miles was very long but by the time I finished had changed my mind. We could have won this except one of our team pulled out. I was disappointed that no-one seemed to appreciate what we had achieved, especially as I had given up a leave to do it. Still, it was an achievement for me and I was proud of finishing the course.

My disappointment at the end of the course was intense when I read my report and found I was not recommended as future NCO material, however, I had finished the course and it was with a feeling of pride I left to join the Signals Company in Papakura.

Chickens home to roost

I began my Army career as a fraud and my chickens were soon to come home to roost. When the Territorial Sgt. Major heard I was joining up he persuaded me to go as a technician. This was because of my radio training and meant I could have a higher rate of pay. What he didn't know was I was utterly useless as a technician and without extensive retraining would always be so.

My original plan was to go as an operator (signalman) and learn to be a good one, using my Territorial knowledge as a foundation for future knowledge. I should have stuck to this but the idea of more money sounded good so I began on a pathway that would lead only to failure. The end result was I received proper training in neither.

I arrived at Papakura and began a period of frustration and boredom. As a technician I had nothing to do because I could do nothing. The technology was way above my head and I was always pretending I knew something, when I really knew nothing. You could get away with this in the Army for a time but eventually I was told I had to go to Waiouru and sit exams, to keep my two star rating.

So back to Waiouru I went but this time, in fear and trepidation, to sit a test I hadn't the faintest hope of passing. This proved to be the case and my answers must have caused great hilarity when they were marked.

I consider this a turning point in my life because it taught me you can't pass exams unless you study the subject and I swore to myself I would never sit another test unless I was prepared. It had taken me twenty years to learn this lesson and the learning experience was very painful, not one I would recommend.

My Infantry Training or lack of

I returned to Papakura determined to no longer live under false pretences. I wanted to become a signaller, to lose my star rating and start at the bottom.

I set my sights on overseas and made application to go to Malaya but as the wheels turned very slowly I became more and more impatient. I saw my Commanding officer go into the toilet one day so grabbed my opportunity. Standing beside him I asked again about my transfer. This must have been the last straw. The poor man couldn't even go to the toilet without me appearing and soon after, I received my posting. The timing may have been coincidental but it does suggest that an authority figure is at a slight disadvantage when standing at a urinal.

Off I trundled to Burnham Military Camp, full of hope I was beginning on the "great adventure". I spent the next eight weeks doing nothing – no training in warfare or as a radio operator. No-one seemed to know where I fitted in and I was left to amuse myself. I did this by consuming sausages at the canteen and very little else.

It was here I met Geary, a beanpole of a man with ginger hair. He was an optimist who didn't let setbacks affect him, a loner and in many ways a misfit but as I was also a misfit, but didn't realise it, we grew accustomed to each other.

Together we nearly drowned a platoon of soldiers. We had been sent to be the radio link back to Burnham but we just sat around while they did all the work – I think it was to get us out of the way.

We had finished our last radio check for the day and closed down for the night when the river started to rise rapidly. The officer was getting apprehensive as he saw his platoon threatened with drowning and kept on trying to get us to contact someone. We tried all frequencies, even tried shouting Mayday, Mayday, on the radio frequencies but no-one seemed to hear us. The river rose higher and higher but it wasn't rain that was dampening our shirts as we struggled through the night. Fortunately we were on high ground and were spared death by drowning. It was shortly after this we were sent on our final leave (they probably thought they would be safer if we were overseas).

Christchurch and its night life

Christchurch at that time of year (June) was often cold and blustery. The Square was bleak and barren as I struggled through the winds to reach the back door of the local paper. I went there because I could get a ride back to Burnham for about 50 cents in the back of the delivery truck. It was the last way of reaching the camp before morning as the trains stopped about 10 pm.

Being only 21 I needed to see a bit of the night life and to experiment with freedom from the “apron strings”. I went to a strip-tease show. I remember the young Maori lass with the bored expression gyrating in front of me. I had been told if you stared at the strippers they would come and allow you to unfasten part of their costume so, with hot blood coursing through my veins I fixed my steely gaze upon her and waited. It actually worked and with a bored expression she came over and patiently waited while I fumbled with the catch of her panties. The lights went out at the appropriate moment and I stumbled out a bit disillusioned with the whole idea of sex shows.

As a young man I had fed my mind with fantasies over love and the female body and to find this atmosphere of hardness and boredom present put me off going to strip shows. Unlike many of today’s youth I, at 21, still had morals and a sense of right and wrong. I am grateful that was present in the society I grew up in.

Unforgiveness and bitterness

Another interesting lesson I observed was how an unforgiving nature embittered a person. I roomed, at Burnham, with a soldier who assured me if anyone wronged him he would pay them back, even if it took all his life. I wasn’t a Christian then but I was impressed with the uselessness of unforgiveness and how it embittered the human spirit. You can see that my time at Burnham was not a complete waste because I was learning about myself and the society I lived in.

My final memory of this time is of standing on the railway platform outside the camp in the early hours of the morning, feeling cold and alone as I waited for the train. The steps I had taken were to lead me on a strange pathway but at that point I did not know the future. I was at the helm of my ship and ready to face the enemy. Little did I know I wasn’t in control.

A digression

I will digress here and ask if you have noticed a pattern appearing in my life? Think for a moment of a normal life (if there is such a thing). We start at school and learn the trade of being a scholar, progress to taking exams after receiving the proper training, leave school and enter employment, where we start at the bottom and progress up the ladder as our expertise increases. When we reach our limit in that field we transfer to an allied field and, building on our previous knowledge progress up the ladder again.

What became obvious to me as I wrote this was the normal progress of training bringing success, with a sense of fulfilment and security, enabling me to face the next challenge was not what I received. My wife is like this and is far more secure in herself than I am. I seem to have missed out on this basic progression since my father died when I was ten. It was replaced with a dependency viewpoint reinforced by me finding situations where I would be out of my depth. This brought failure and as time went by more failure because I kept making the same mistake.

I believe it is true when they say failure breeds failure and success breeds success. For me it has been a painful road of self-discovery but I think it has been worthwhile and the future will be better than the past.

Final Leave

My final leave was exciting. I was the hero of the hour, off to face the foe. It didn’t matter if I was causing pain to those who loved me because I was only interested in myself and what lay before me.

After visiting the family and saying goodbye to mum and Sally (the dog), I packed my gear and returned to Papakura. It was late in the day, about 6 pm that the trucks took us past the end of our street on the way to Whenuapai Air force base. There was a sense of loneliness when we passed our street. Our departure was delayed for two hours but I didn't call home because we had said our goodbyes.

Perth and beyond

We boarded the Hercules aircraft and settled ourselves in the webbing seats where we were crammed like sardines the length of the plane. Our first stop was Perth, eight hours away. It was the sandwiches that were most memorable, real government economy jobs; the Australians provided a better meal the next day.

We arrived in Perth, my first time out of New Zealand and I looked around with interest. My memories only contain pictures of empty streets, windy sidewalks and large grey buildings.

I thought for a short time the New Zealand Army had finally appreciated my true worth when my name was called out at the hotel. I had been promoted to Sergeant and was to share a room with a Sgt. Boyd who I had met at Papakura. Unfortunately, like my Army career, this also was a mistake and the next morning I boarded the plane as a "private" again.

The next eight hours were more interesting as each hour brought us closer to the Far East, the land of mystery and fantasy. I wasn't disappointed either. The atmosphere had an attraction and mystery for me I didn't feel in European cultures.

The plane rolled to a stop and we unstrapped ourselves while the staff sprayed out the insides. I was aware of a smell creeping through the plane and it was with excitement I realised I smelt the Far East at last. It was magical. I loved it- the smell of Chinese cooking, exotic spices, and other not so desirable mixtures I learnt about later.

I was enthralled at the atmosphere but not about being swindled out of my New Zealand currency by a soldier who said he would change it with soldiers returning home. When he next appeared I found he had given it to them. I presume he sold it and pocketed the profit.

Changi to Terendak

We left Changi airbase and travelled to the British camp to stay until the train trip to Malacca. The British had a very good system for feeding troops. No lining up for what army cooks decide is best for you. No, here I could choose what I wanted, have it cooked for me then go back for more. They certainly knew how to feed themselves.

I was in fantasy land and enjoying every moment of it. I walked down the road soaking up the atmosphere: Asian music, exotic smells and the magic of being twenty-one, alone, in an alien culture. It was great to be alive and I felt like a knight in shining armour ready to "waste" the foe. The soldier who gave our money away, (being his second trip overseas) went off to the local brothel but for me it was enough just to be in this strange land. I have a romantic nature and was living my fantasy but still, very much a loner and unwilling to become one of the boys.

The next day we boarded the train and started on a very long journey that seemed to go on for hours but every moment was thrilling. I stood on the platform between carriages delighting in all I could see. The Asian countryside, the water buffalo pulling the plough and the farmer tramping through muddy, paddy fields, the strange looking trees and even more fascinating, the atmosphere, titillating my senses with promise of future excitement.

The trip finally ended and we were trucked to Terendak Camp, in Malacca district. I stood on the back, near the front, so I wouldn't miss out on any sensation. I wasn't disappointed. The Chinese tombs, animal life and people, all made my trip to Terendak stimulating.

We finally arrived at the gates and the truck rolled through them to finally bring us to First Battalion lines of the New Zealand Infantry Regiment (1RNZIR). I had arrived.

Terendak to Borneo

It was the orderliness that struck me first, the roads were clean and houses stood in regimented rows, all in their place without a speck of grass out of line.

Terendak was a beautiful place. The sun mostly seemed to shine and when it did rain it was warm and not unpleasant. The heat was unlike New Zealand and you could walk around without a shirt on and not get burnt so long as you were moving. If you stopped and sunbathed you ran the risk of burning.

We were met by the Regimental Sgt. Major and given his standard lecture. We had a choice: to go home with trunks full of things we purchased or trunks full of old clothes and memories. The difference between these choices depended upon the amount of booze we drank which was cheap and in plentiful supply.

Geary and I were only in Terendak two weeks before we were transferred to Borneo (not acclimatised and with no infantry training other than what I had in basic training). I don't remember much about the trip except when we got off the plane in Kuching, the heat hit me like a solid wall. It was far hotter than Malacca district. Geary stayed in the main base and I was sent to Gulan-Gajah because I was proficient in Morse-code.

Gulan-Gajah

Gulan-Gajah was primitive and as I remember it, surrounded what seemed to be a large crater used as the rubbish dump from which came many large rats. I heard hair-raising stories of how they killed them during a rat catching competition.

I was met by the Signals people and allotted a bed in one of the bunkers. Life soon settled down to a routine which was quite dull as there hadn't been much action on this tour of duty. The Indonesians seemed to have lost their will to fight and I'm not aware of any action up to my arrival. Most of the action had taken place the previous tour. The only action I heard about was when our forces killed a son of a local chief by mistake and had to pay a ransom to appease the father.

My commander in Borneo was Colonel Ponanga, a man I greatly admired who did his utmost in caring for his troops. I felt I could trust this man.

Never trust your mates

Life here was okay but I was keen to go on patrol so, after two weeks I was appointed as second signaller on the next one. My buddies told me I would be going to a village where I would sit for five days acting as a radio link for the patrol. They packed my pack and loaded me with extra blankets, a thick book and extra food – all the comforts of home. When the morning arrived, I struggled into my harness and stood up. I could hardly stand. My knees were shaking and I staggered rather than walked to the start point, hoping this village was not too far away. To this day I don't know if they packed my pack this way as a joke or if they were sincere. It was not to a village I was heading but up a mountain, and ahead of me was one of the most humiliating moments of my life.

I staggered at the rear of the patrol for four hours, growing weaker by the minute. No-one was looking after me so; when we came to a stream I didn't fill my water bottles. Instead I staggered through the stream to the base of the mountain and started up. It had started to rain. I was at the end of the group so I was treading in the tracks of all who had gone before. The track became muddier and more slippery as time went by. I found it increasingly harder to climb with the weight on my back and the soldier behind me was becoming quite irritable with my progress.

Finally I had had enough; I felt I couldn't go any further. The next step was only four inches high but to me seemed like a six foot wall. I tried three times to climb it but each time slid down upon my face, growing more exhausted at each attempt. Finally, I fell forward on my face and said I couldn't go on. I had never thought I would ever reach this state in my life. I believed I could conquer all obstacles and still laugh at the end. Instead, I found myself in the middle of the jungle prepared to just lay down and die. As far as I was concerned they could go on and leave me.

Word was passed to the officer who came back and assessed the situation. He encouraged me to go a little further where they would make camp. I struggled up and couldn't have cared less what anyone thought of me because I had had enough. Fortunately he was telling the truth and they made camp on a small ridge just above me.

My next shameful act

I rested for a few minutes then struggled to put a cover over my head before I made myself a cup of tea, but when I set about this I spilt my water and was only left with a small amount. I decided on mixing a soup powder with it but put in too much and ended up with a very thick mixture which did not do much for my thirst.

There I was: wet through, worn out, hungry, thirsty and facing the prospect of dying of thirst. I didn't regret being there though because this was the great adventure. I had volunteered for this patrol but I could have done with some water.

The unfeeling sods even put me on sentry duty and it was here I committed a most shameful deed. I stole another man's water. I was thirsty and only took a few mouthfuls but it was a deed that filled me with shame for many years for, in my romantic fantasies, this was never done.

I survived the night and next morning the Iban guide went thorough the lines and came back with fresh stream water that apparently flowed just below us. I was saved, and was able to enjoy a lovely cup of tea and a hot meal.

My next most embarrassing moment

The officer came to see me and helped me repack my pack. He chucked away my extra blankets, food and thick book (others grabbed them) and helped me on with it. To my relief it felt balanced and light and I felt that maybe I could make it after all.

As each day passed I became fitter and more acclimatised, feeling better every day. Two others fell sick and when they were choppered out I was given the opportunity to go with them. I should have taken it as that night my next most embarrassing moment arrived.

I was woken for sentry duty and sat down behind the Bren gun. It was a moonlit night and I felt happy to be there, in the middle of nowhere, far away from home. While in this happy frame of mind I shifted my legs and in doing so knocked the gun from left to right on its stand. To my horror it went off. It was a magnificent sight as the surrounding trees were lit up by the flash and it was even more stimulating to see the platoon erupt into action. They were out of their beds in a flash

looking for the enemy. Fortunately it was still dark and they couldn't see my red face as I confessed to what had happened. (If I'd had my wits about me I should have pointed to the trees and fired another round pretending I had seen someone). I spent the rest of my sentry duty with visions of a court martial when we returned. My comrades supported this viewpoint and it was a glum Dennis who shrugged on his pack and took his place in the line the next morning.

That was the low point of my first patrol and from then things went a lot better. I was soon swinging through the trees with the best of them and by the time the patrol had finished, was feeling fit and ready for anything. The officer advised me I had performed well since my two episodes so he was not going to report them and the only debit I had at the finish of the patrol was a very large scab in the small of my back where the pack frame had rubbed. I had light duties for a few days until it healed.

Back to Terendak

The rest of my tour was uneventful and it was not long after this patrol the Battalion's tour finished, the war being over it was returning to Terendak.

We arrived in Kuching to board a ship that would take us to Singapore. Kuching was to my eyes the image of the books I used to read, and looked like a scene out the 19th century. I observed this from the boat and was my last view of Borneo.

We were crammed into a troopship with tiers of bunks filling a large space. I didn't mind the cramped conditions because I was sailing the South China seas. My fantasies were getting real encouragement during this period. Here I was, a simple man from New Zealand sailing the seas where pirates were active, ready to repel boarders when necessary. It was magic.

All fantasies come to an end and after four days we arrived at Singapore and made our way back to Malacca and finally to Terendak again. I was in Borneo long enough to get my campaign medal and consider it represents two of the most valuable learning experiences of my life.

- I could reach the point of physical, spiritual and mental collapse.
- I would steal to survive.

I think I was lucky to learn these lessons early in my life.

Life at Terendak

Life at Terendak soon settled into routines and I found myself with spare time so I turned to getting myself as fit as possible. Each afternoon I put a pack on, filled with old radio batteries and off I would go, up the tracks behind the camp glorying in the smell of body odour, sweat ran freely down my body as I ran under the shade of jungle trees.

One day as I ran my usual tracks I noticed soldiers in the jungle but as they ignored me I continued on. My run came to an abrupt stop when a group of soldiers grabbed and hustled me to the ground. I tried to fight them off but it didn't do me much good and soon I was dragged before the officer, who accused me of spying for the other side. It appeared I had run into the middle of a training exercise. They were not amused.

During the tussle I lost a ring given to me on my twenty-first birthday. It was my father's wedding ring and had a trumpet sculptured in it. It meant a lot to me but I never found it again and had to confess to Mum it had gone. I think it upset her but there was nothing I could do about it.

Physical fitness was important to the Army but I never saw many of my comrades exercising when they didn't have to. One of these times was the fitness test we all had to do each year. I used to enjoy them because I had given up smoking and enjoyed running beside a smoker who, after a few miles used to start panting and wheezing.

Giving up smoking was of great benefit to my health and after the first few days I used to be able to breathe in and feel the air reach the side of my lungs. I still smoked occasionally but only other people's. It was not until I met my lovely wife I finally gave up completely.

The motorbike disaster

Mobility was important so I purchased a motorbike, a 125 cc Honda and on my next days leave; set off to explore the countryside. I gingerly went round the corners enjoying the countryside when a group of Chinese youths roared past me on their 90 cc Yamaha's. I shrugged my shoulders and tootled on my way until I turned a corner and found this group spread over the road being tended to by others. I sold my bike.

Another time I went to Malacca by taxi. It's hard to describe the sensations I felt as we tore along: the seaside, beautiful beaches boarded by palm trees, Malay villages, where if you stopped for a moment you found yourself surrounded by children who silently stared at you.

Christmas, girlfriend and holidays

Have you ever danced with Santa? I have. It was Christmas and I was drunk. Somewhere I had purchased a large blow-up Santa and ended up at a dance club. I couldn't find a partner so I danced with Santa. The Chinese present giggled at this mad European. I did enjoy myself but it is the feeling of loneliness that remains in my mind – to be far away from loved ones at Christmas was difficult to handle. Fancy dancing with Santa when the area was full of beautiful girls but, I was an European so they were out of bounds -the good girls anyway.

It was a good girl I eventually found as a girlfriend. She was Malayan Catholic and had good morals. I know this because she wouldn't let me touch her. I went to her house once and needed to go to the toilet. She, in great embarrassment directed me to a shed out the back. I entered and found a concrete floor with a walled off section containing water. With great curiosity I tried to work out what I was supposed to do and eventually figured that the small hole leading outside was the area to aim for. This I did and used the water to wash my effort through the hole. This may seem primitive but it wasn't as bad as another time when I found a western type toilet in a town and upon entering, found it full of unmentionable things.

I liked the Chinese

I was drawn to Chinese people and even today feel this attraction for China and its people. I don't know why, possibly the reason lies in my childhood somewhere. The attraction proved a problem when I found my girlfriend had a Chinese friend who was far more beautiful than she. I was always trying to find a way to be noticed by her friend but I never succeeded. This was probably a good thing because if I had married her I would have had to be responsible for her whole family, which I think would have been a bit more than I could have handled.

Together we went to the Zoo where I was impressed by the cleanliness of the grounds and the animals and it was here I saw the only snakes during my time overseas.

My girlfriend was a good Catholic and was in love with me. I put her in a difficult situation because I used to teach her about independence and the right to decide her own destiny. I was wrong to do this because I would be leaving and she would still have to live in her society. When I went to Vietnam, she sent me long impassioned letters which I never answered because, for me, it was over, but for her it was not as she faced being forced into marriage with an older man. I don't feel proud of my relationship with her and hope she has had a good life. The problem for her was I knew I had not touched her in an immoral way (she would not let me) and she knew it, but society probably condemned her and she was the one to suffer for knowing me. If I met her now I would not know what to say and hope she has stayed true to Christ and learned to forgive.

Port Dixon

Holidays were times when we had to leave camp so a few of us decided to go to Port Dixon and camp on the beach. (I didn't drink much by then; a few months before I was standing at the urinal watching all my money cascading down the wall, when the thought struck me of how useless it was to waste my money in this way. I had seen my share of 18 year- old drunkards and had no wish to be like them. I traded booze for 7up and coca cola – lovely after a hard run.)

The beach was beautiful, white sand with palm trees and warm night air. The company was pleasant and the locals didn't bother us. While the others went drinking I cooked a meal of rice, fish and raisins. When it was finished I enjoyed eating it but it wasn't appreciated by the others. In the end I couldn't even give it away to the local kids. They were not that hungry, in fact they looked well fed.

Kuala Lumpur

After five days I decided I had had enough and was going to walk to Kuala Lumpur. Putting my swag on my back I set off. I had been walking for a few hours when a car of Chinese pulled up and asked where I was going. They said I was taking a big risk to walk through the country like this and offered me a lift. I was grateful for my feet were sore and climbed into the car. The family were gracious and concerned for me, feeding me at local stores, not allowing me to pay and when we arrived in the city, took me to the Youth Hostel. With a wave they disappeared out of my life, leaving me with a good impression of the Chinese race. If they hadn't been the kind of people they were, my trip could have been a disaster.

The youth hostel was a simple affair, I met some interesting people and fell in love with one of the girls (I never got anywhere with her either). It is interesting to note that Christians were cropping up in front of me. One group were the people who gave me a lift and opposite the hostel I met another. This was a Malay family who invited me in for a family singalong. I was fascinated by the happy homely scene and fell in love with the daughter of the house, (no luck there). As I look back it seems there was someone guiding and protecting me before I found the living God, through Jesus the Christ.

Two other interesting people I met were Chinese as well. I think their motives for befriending me were selfish but they made my first trip to the city a happy one. He was a watch repairer and had a small stall as part of a café. His friend was probably a gangster but between them they spent a lot of money showing me the sights and feeding me in restaurants. I still don't know what their motive was but suspect it was something to do with prestige in the eyes of their mates or it may have been something more sinister. Either way I benefited. In later trips they were not as generous.

It could have been that if they took me out they could also take out the girls from the hostel and this may have been their motive. In their company I saw much of the city and was greatly impressed. It was relaxing and no-one bothered you. You could have a holiday here whereas in Singapore you were always being bothered by touts of one sort or another.

Back to Terendak

The next few months were uneventful and full of army routine. I watched the football games and band parades. I nearly joined the band when they advertised for drummers. I was given sticks and a side drum to practice on but could never keep the drum where it was supposed to be. Our big day came when we were to lead the rest on parade. By the time I finished, the whole lot were out of step as I tried to chase the drum around my hip. That was the end of my musical career.

Terendak had been built by soldiers of the Malayan campaign. They landed on the beach and built it from scratch. The end result was well laid out areas with a shopping centre, picture theatre, Olympic size swimming pool, drinking centres and churches. Here you could shop, drink or just laze around. The beach front still had barbed wire left from the Emergency but the water was warm and the situation for beach parties idyllic. The place also had its Jungle bar, organised and operated by soldiers, primitive but had atmosphere. I wasn't into much drinking and preferred to spend my money on objects such as a stereo, camera and records.

I used to write home every week and found if I put on a record of inspiring music, the words seemed to flow out of me. I described the colour of the grass, the sky, and the atmosphere around me. I am sorry these letters were not saved because they were an important record of my life.

When I left this camp it was being prepared for the hand-over to the local army who, being Muslim would tear out our cook-houses because we had cooked pork in them. We felt the camp would deteriorate after it was handed over. (2007 - Malayan vets visited Terendak and said it was still a beautiful place).

The boot-boys (age 30 up) char wallahs and dhobi (laundry) boys would all lose their jobs, so we felt a great deal of misery and poverty would fall on this area.

At the entrance to the camp was a commercial village which would go out of existence. Here you could buy a great variety of things and have them sent home. One person I will not regret being gone was a little lady who gave me a shave with a blunt razor (cut throat) and pulled every bristle out, one at a time. It was excruciating but being a brave Kiwi, I pretended it did not hurt at all.

I can't finish this section without a reference to Army cooks and the fine job they did. I did get tired of roast dinner every night but it hasn't turned me off them and every time I enjoy my wife's roast I give thanks to those men who gave their all in the cook-house.

I enjoyed my time here, an oasis in the middle of a foreign land, it was exciting and my forays out were stimulating. But a soldier's job is to fight and as the New Zealand Government had decided to be involved in the Vietnam War, the battalion was asked for volunteers to go to Vietnam.

Pre-Vietnam

I don't remember taking too long to decide to go to Vietnam. Others decided they had had enough after Borneo and didn't volunteer. Those who did, and I stress we were all volunteers, did so for various reasons. Mine were quite simple; I wanted to go and believed it was right to oppose communism. I also believed it was better to destroy another man's backyard than your own. I was disappointed I was not chosen to go in the first company but would have to wait another six months.

I found myself in the platoon of the officer who helped me in Borneo, and the Sgt. was the same as well.

Our training was okay but stressed group action rather than individuality. I wouldn't have called myself highly trained to go to war but it was more than I had had previously. In many ways it was boring. I kept my physical training up and didn't really understand why others weren't preparing themselves for what was to come. I experimented with different ideas. One was to see if I could hide in my shirt, razor blades, fishing line and anything else that might help if I was taken prisoner. Another was to take my machete and sharpen the blunt side so I would be able to make a backward sweep and slice a man's throat open.

I bought a movie camera to record my adventures and in every way tried to prepare myself. When the Army arranged for us to make wills I was determined to stipulate in mine that, in case of death my body was not to be returned to New Zealand. My zeal as a Shining Knight wanting to spare his mother grief was deflated when I was informed the Army wouldn't bother wasting their money anyway and I would be buried overseas.

Army Justice

It was about this time I experienced Army justice. The first episode was when I had a camera stolen from my locker and found it in the shops at the main gates. The culprit was identified and I felt it was up to me to beat him to a pulp. I challenged him to fight but he refused and denied his guilt. I didn't know what else to do so let it rest. He was later convicted and sent home. My other episode happened in the canteen when a soldier belted a local. I witnessed it and testified against him, for which I received a commendation from Col. Ponanga. It was probably why I didn't have many close friends as many would have disagreed with me testifying. I had no problem with it because I had always been on the side of the underdog and had a strong conviction of right and wrong - (Knight in shining armour again).

Before I left for Vietnam, a soldier returning home promised to visit Mum. He did so but I found out after I returned home he spent part of his visit telling Mum all that would happen to me if I was caught by the Viet-Cong. Why he would do this I have no idea but he caused her great misery and stress. I owe him a kick in a very sensitive place.

The time was fast approaching when we were to go to Vietnam and our final leave arrived. I decided to go to Singapore. This visit would be one I would never forget because it changed the direction my future life was to take.

Jesus and me

Sandies soldier homes were Christian-based organisations throughout the East, providing economical and comfortable lodgings where you could rest without being bothered by anyone so I decided to spend my final leave here.

I set out to contact Dr. Phio Chan Bee, a leader in the Methodist mission work. I had an introduction from the animal doctor who treated Sally my dog for eczema. When he heard I was going overseas he gave me Dr. Phio's address. I had tried three times to contact him but when I was in Singapore he was at his house in Kuala Lumpur or vice-versa. This time, we were in the same city at the same time and when I rang him, he invited me to his house. I didn't know he was a Christian or I might not have gone.

I arrived at his house and much to my disgust had to endure a sermon while I was trying to swallow a very sticky cake. He also turned out to be a member of Moral Rearmament, a group I had never

heard of. I pretended to be interested in what he was saying and as soon as I could I excused myself, taking a few of his books with me. I can still picture this small Asian man giving me the Christian message over a cup of tea.

I went back on leave and didn't think much more of him until I arrived back at Terendak where, while sitting on my bunk, pondering the thought I could get killed in Vietnam, his words came back to me.

I had faced the thought of being killed but whenever I thought of death all I could see was blackness – nothing but blackness.

The words he said were these, "If you want to find Jesus, go by yourself, kneel down and say, I don't know if you're real, and I don't know if you're here but if you are real and if you are here then I want to know you."

I thought, what have I got to lose so, making sure no one was watching me, I walked out the door and made my way to the 25 yard firing range. It was a beautiful starry night and after checking no one was hiding in the shed, I knelt beside the incinerator. I had one more look around and said those words. As soon as I said, "I want to know you," I was aware of someone in front of me. I couldn't see anyone but I knew it was Jesus, a man who had been dead 2000 years.

If I had called on the name of Buddha or Mohammed I would not now be a Christian, but I called on the name of Jesus and knew I was now a follower of Jesus, a Christian. I was aware of a sensation of tremendous love and for some minutes wallowed in it. I went from not believing in God to believing, and life seemed wonderful. I felt loved, clean, and so happy.

After a few moments I became aware of another presence approaching through the jungle. It was all evil. The impulse was to run away but I knew I had to stay. The words from a Psalm I had learnt in Sunday school years ago floated into my mind, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death you are with me." I said this phrase once and felt this presence stop; a second time and this sensation of evil approaching withdrew. I said it a third time and it went away. It wasn't until later I learnt I had had my first encounter with satan. (I refuse to honour him with a capital)

In looking back at this scene and considering all that has happened since, I have been grateful many times for such a dramatic conversion because no matter how depressed I became in the future, in the bad years, I could not get away from the fact that God loved me. I would not be a Christian today without that experience.

I rose to my feet and joyfully went back to the barracks. God was alive. Jesus loved me. Now, when I looked at death I no longer saw blackness but a light on top of a hill; a hill I would climb throughout my life, until the day I died and moved through this light to meet my Maker.

The barracks when I returned were empty as most were still on their final leave but over the next few days I was able to share my experience with a few. We didn't have a lot of time left and within a few days were sitting near the gates waiting for our transport, to begin the journey to Vietnam.

Vietnam

Vietnam, a place I wanted to go to. I believed in why I was going and was ready to face the enemy when and where I found him. My sharpened machete was on my hip, my rifle oiled and ready to fire. Impatiently, yet nervously I waited to begin the great adventure.

We arrived in Vietnam and were immediately flown by helicopter to the Horseshoe, (called this because of its shape) in the Phuc-Tuoy province of South Vietnam. I enjoyed the Horseshoe and felt

safe there. At the base of the hill was a main road leading to, and from a village. During the day we manned a roadblock, controlling the traffic and the lives of people but at night the Viet-Cong ruled, murdering at will. It was not uncommon to find local villagers, tied with barbed wire, dead at the bottom of the hill.

My Vietnam Christmas

It was the patrol we did on Christmas evening that sticks in my mind. We had had a good day celebrating and the chaplain had been in to share dinner with us. He told a very good story about angels, seeing a world of blackness after the crucifixion until, one by one, lights sprang up as the followers of Christ began to witness to God's love. I don't know what others thought of it but for me, it was my first Christmas as one of those lights; a time when God was real, prayer was real and I had no doubts I was forgiven and loved by God.

We left through the sentry point and slowly walked into the night. It was black, so black I could not see my hand in front of my face. To locate the man in front and behind I had to click my fingers but I could not do this. No matter how hard I tried, no noise came from my frantically rubbing thumb and finger. I had to end up going click-click with my tongue – highly embarrassing.

We moved across the countryside trusting in our officer to get us to the right place. We measured distance by counting our footsteps; it seemed to work for we eventually arrived beside a large lake and waited for daylight. It was a fruitless trek though because we saw no enemy except a spider as large as a dinner plate plus made contact with a few leeches. Leeches can get into some funny places at times. Once I took off my trousers to find one hanging off my penis, which had turned green. It was quickly disposed of and I was greatly relieved to find the green colour fading. We dealt with them by using salt or a cigarette. On this occasion I used salt- do you blame me?

Death was no longer death

It was during this patrol I had to deal with the news my music teacher had died and Sally (the dog) had had to be put down because of her eczema. I looked up at the stars, a beautiful starry night, and felt very close to God as I prayed in the middle of this dangerous countryside.

I wasn't afraid to die because my fear had gone when I met with Jesus. I had lost my distaste for flowers (a phobia from my father's funeral) and loved the beauty of the countryside around me. I used to run dirt through my hands and love it because tomorrow I might not be able to even see dirt. Life was exciting and my senses were finely tuned to nature. I loved it. There is a real sense of freedom in the middle of a strange land as a Christian.

I was committed, I couldn't run home to mummy and the lives of others depended on me doing the best I could. Added to this was the knowledge that if I died, I was going to be with God. I was alive and knew it.

Nui-Dat

It was in early January 1968 we left the Horseshoe and moved to Nui-Dat, our home for the rest of our stay. It was well laid out with good accommodations; well fortified and had many luxuries not present at the Horseshoe.

Our operations were mainly long-range ones where we would try to ambush those using the trails leading into our area. We would be flown into the bush for three to four weeks at a time then back to Nui-Dat until required again.

Vietnam was a time of walking with sweat pouring out and aching shoulders, with occasional contacts with the enemy. I used to discipline myself to only drink on the hour. After my experience in Borneo I always carried an extra water bottle at the bottom of my pack, just in case. Others drank as they needed and without regular supplies coming in by helicopter they would have been in trouble.

I must admit that the events I recall now, after 40 years, are confused. Events and times are probably mixed but what I do recall, are events that meant something to me.

Vietnam events

One of these events was an American who flew in on a chopper (helicopter). He appeared to be one step in front of the Military Police; when they got close he got on another chopper and went somewhere else. If the war was still going on he would probably still be going from one base to another. Another was the noise of the guns, firing at unseen targets. On one patrol I came across a tree with a large piece of shell rammed into its side. If it had hit me it would have cut me in two.

Bloody Aussies

It was the Australians who did the most damage to us. We had been on patrol for a week, stopped to make camp for the night, and as usual the gunnery rep. crept mortar fire in so if we were attacked it could be called in on predetermined positions. This was progressing happily when a bomb landed in the midst of us, followed by four others before it could be stopped. One bomb landed in front of a large tree I was lying behind, the blast picked me up and slammed me back on to the ground. I shakily looked around and saw my Corporal grasp his arm and fall into a depression in the ground. I rolled after him and had the joy of being able to practice my first aid because he had a mortar splinter in his arm and I was able to put a ring bandage on. I looked around afterwards and concluded by the large amount of shrapnel lying around that if we had rolled into the depression earlier we would have caught the main blast and would have been seriously injured, if not killed. The Australians put four of us out of action, more than the Viet-Cong did during our tour.

God answered my prayer

It was on our first mission from Nui-Dat I proved to myself that God answers prayer. We had been making good progress and all was going well when we received a message over the radio we were in danger of being cut off by the enemy. We had to force-march to reach a pick-up point before we were cut off. I realised I was afraid so ripped off a quick prayer and was amazed to feel my fear disappear and a great sense of peace take its place. I don't remember being afraid again because I was no longer afraid of dying. If I was killed I would go to God who loved me and if I lived, then He would stand by me throughout my life.

A Christian killer

I believe that being a Christian made me a better soldier, able to do my job without constantly being afraid of being killed. Being a Christian made me a more efficient instrument of death. I mean by this that I would be efficient at my trade and if my trade was to be a soldier then I would do my best to be a good one. I did not hate my enemy but meant to kill him or her, if I could. I had decided,

after hearing of the way Viet-Cong women treated captives if I saw a man and a woman attacking my position, I would shoot the woman first. I took part in the killing of 52 people in Vietnam and am not ashamed of it. I was a soldier and soldiers are trained to kill as his first vocation, if need be.

A hand-black night

One night we were camped beside a trail and two of us were out in front of the rest, waiting for someone to come down the trail so we could blow them to bits. I held my hand in front of my eyes but could not see it except when the fireflies flashed in front of me. It was quite nerve-wracking and after 30 minutes the soldier with me couldn't stand it anymore and scuttled back to the safety of others, leaving me alone. He was never disciplined for this and I didn't trust him fully again.

We had sporadic contact with the enemy. Once, we were fired upon and as we rushed toward the spot I became tangled up in vines and couldn't move. I was a sitting duck for the enemy but before he could kill me, he was killed. I believe I was under God's protection at that time.

The Australians had stumbled across a base camp full of North Vietnamese and come under fire, causing heavy casualties. We were sent in to relieve them and as we approached, could see fighter planes whooshing over our heads, firing rockets into the camp. The Australians withdrew and we braced ourselves to attack but for some reason it was called off until the morning. Only a soldier will be able to identify with the feelings I experienced that night as I waited for the dawn. You knew you were going to attack the next morning and might be killed. I don't know how others handled it but for me, it was time to reaffirm my new faith in God and prepare myself to possibly die.

The morning finally came and we lined up with about six feet between us and walked slowly forward. I can still see myself moving forward, holding my rifle ready to fire. We came to a suspicious looking bush and threw two grenades into it. It was the first time I had thrown a grenade in action and it went off with dull sound-not like the movies at all.

All in all it was an anticlimax because the enemy had pulled out during the night, leaving only a few wounded behind. They were in a bunker and I felt disgust as soldiers threw in grenades and fired flares into their bodies. It didn't stop until officers came and restored order. I can understand this release from tension but it seemed to me the veneer of civilisation was very thin, on all of us.

We carried on through the camp. Shots sounded in front of us and we saw an enemy soldier lying on the ground. It was standard policy to not approach a body until two more bullets were put into it because of the experience of Americans, whose buddies had been killed by fanatics pretending to be dead. This was done and I was glad I did not have to do it. The body was removed and our perimeter moved out. I found myself beside a pool of blood and gore and for many years could smell this peculiar odour. We searched the camp and before we left, two bodies were hung in a tree for the enemy to find.

Another incident that stuck in my mind for many years was when a New Zealand soldier was killed. His body, along with the one who killed him, was waiting for a chopper to take them away. We received word the enemy's body was no longer needed so we buried it but didn't bury it deep enough and by the next day it had begun to smell. This was another odour I found hard to forget, the sweet smell of decaying human flesh. The other body had been flown out the previous day. While coming back from sentry duty the night before, I had to pass it, the moon was full and bathed the scene in light. As I approached I could see this shape with boots sticking out. I was suddenly struck with fear and couldn't go forward until I prayed and asked for protection. I moved quickly past to my bed but it was an eerie experience.

The Tet offensive

It was on our last operation before coming home we saw most of our action. It was the Tet offensive and we were in the way of reinforcements coming down the Ho-Chi-Min trail. I found this operation the hardest because I knew if I survived I was coming home. Up till then I had not thought of surviving but when we started on this operation we all knew it was the last.

We had been fired upon during the afternoon, a bullet going through the pack of our commander, Major Worsnop and another killed a young observer from the British army. It was a tired group of soldiers who set up camp for the night. The area was rocky, making it impossible to dig in so we built walls of stone for protection. My partner was the one who ran out on me while on sentry duty and as the wall had to be propped up with sticks I looked around for better protection. Beside me was a large stone so I decided, if needed, I would go behind the stone rather than stay with my trusty mate. (Today I consider I was not right in doing this but then it seemed like the sensible thing to do.)

We had in front of us an anti-personnel mine with the trigger by us so, after making a meal we settled down for sleep.

We always got up before dawn in case of attack. We were conscious of a noise coming towards us. It was the enemy and I was surprised at the noise they were making. We found out later it was at least a company of North Vietnamese who had spotted us. They had laid vines down to us before dark. It was these vines they were following down in the darkness.

The officer came and asked if we had the plunger ready. I had it in my hand and it was in disbelief I heard him tell me to press it. I must have looked stupid because he repeated the order so pressing it into my stomach I curled over and pressed it. All hell let loose. The officer disappeared and, grabbing my gear I threw myself down behind my rock.

It is strange what you do in moments like that. I remember thinking to myself, 'This is where you stand and fight'. I felt no fear and taking out my double-sided machete plunged it into the ground for use, if needed. I quickly emptied out extra ammunition which was a silly thing to do because I had to waste valuable time picking it up again later. It was now I fired my first shots in this war as the enemy passed in front of me.

The main attack came in where a machine gun was placed. I understand the gunner swivelled it to either side, while keeping his head below ground level. He must have had it in the right place for most of the casualties were killed here. The whole action probably didn't last very long and the enemy were heard retreating, taking many of their casualties with them. We found fourteen bodies.

I, with others, was moved out past these bodies while the area was searched. I knelt beside a large well built Vietnamese whose foot had been chopped off by machine gun bullets. He looked like a nice guy, well fed and strong. My last memory is of stacking the bodies in a heap, to be found by other enemy forces. I was too late for good souvenirs but did get a blood-soaked neckcloth and notepaper with lists on. I kept these for many years.

Vung-Tau and the operation I missed

One operation I was glad not to be on was while I was away in Vung-Tau because I had expressed a desire to know more about the people and the country. I went with the Intelligence officer to see a display of how the local militia in the villages, were trained to resist the Viet-Cong.

The trip began in shame for me because I hadn't smartened myself up before I left and on the chopper, were S.A.S soldiers who had. I ignored them and pretended to be surveying the countryside but I felt like a poor relation. Upon arriving at Vung-Tau I went to an Army club, still in my shabby uniform and had a whisky. I stood before a large window, pretending to be a war-weary veteran as I surveyed the view. I laugh at this now but then I still saw myself as the Knight in shining armour, come to rescue the oppressed. It was a bit of a shock when I had my pocket picked by one of the oppressed later in the day.

I had a brylcream hair shampoo and found it very relaxing, having it massaged into my hair but after a day it became stiff and uncomfortable so I had to wash it out. It was a welcome luxury at that time.

Upon returning to Nui-Dat I met the platoon, returning with silent voices and serious faces. I asked why and was told me they had been on ambush duty, when a group of villagers had been caught taking supplies to the Viet-Cong. The ambush had been set off and the group decimated. What upset the guys was when they heard female voices calling for mercy and they had to fire another volley into them. I'm glad I wasn't on that patrol.

The policy was to not take chances because the enemy booby trapped bodies and fanatics would hide a knife or grenade then try to kill you before they died. If it came to a choice between them or me then I would rather it was them.

B 52 strike

One impressive experience was when we were moved from one valley to the next because a B52 strike was expected. It was very impressive. We were on one side of a mountain range and after hearing the bombs strike, could see the pressure rings rising above the mountain, and so could imagine what it would have done to us if we had been caught in the middle of it. Another experience was watching a napalm bomb cascade fire as it exploded.

War affects us

I suppose it was experiences like these that increased my feeling of being different from others. How many of my generation have seen dead bodies piled in a heap, or been shot at, or been the hunter of men? These are unique experiences only those involved in can relate to.

Chemical poisoning

The chemical poisoning question is a debate that has gone on for years. My own experiences were these: seeing the large plane slowly spray the area around the Horseshoe, wading through defoliated tidal swamp, and having large blowers backed up to our quarters to blow chemicals in to kill off the bugs. The other danger of contamination came from helicopters that blew up large clouds of dust from contaminated soils. I was diagnosed with sarcoidosis, an inflammatory illness with no cure (This is now doubted). The latest evidence of cause comes from an American decision to grant a War Pension to a sailor with sarcoidosis who experienced dust contamination while serving in the area.

Increasing persecution complex

I found my sense of being persecuted by my officer, very strong in the latter stages and even had to talk to him about it. My sense of alienation from others gradually increased and I believe my

personality problems were greatly increased during my time in Vietnam. How much of this was due to chemical poisoning and how much to stress, I don't think I will ever know.

12 year sign-up

During my time in Vietnam I decided to stay on in the Army and filled in my papers. I wasn't to see those papers again until Terendak but by then I had changed my mind. This change came about because my faith in the Army had taken a severe battering during Vietnam.

The first episode was when I heard that a Corporal, at the edge of a paddy field had called to his men, "follow me". He was halfway across the field before he realised he was on his own. It may have been a silly decision to cross an open field, but what upset me was that the soldiers were never disciplined for disobeying an order.

The next episode was when we went to a gun-base and stayed for ten days. I had a chance to look around me: at my sergeant who was forty and still running around with a pack on his back and at a young officer who got off a chopper who looked to be only eighteen. I realised I wouldn't want to obey his orders.

It was a progression of events that climaxed with the realisation I was no longer prepared to be under the control of others. I knew it was time to get out and when I was given my papers to sign on for another twelve years, refused. I see this as the beginning of my problems with authority that have plagued my life ever since.

You will have noticed I have not described many of the men I fought with and it will not surprise you to learn I never felt a bonding with them. Some I liked, but for most of the time I was a loner and not "one of the boys". As a result of this I have not kept in touch with my platoon and having destroyed my photos cannot remember many of their names. This isolation was not healthy and instead of being able to have healing talks with others, I ended up alone, with more mental health problems than I needed to have had.

Farewell Vietnam

Six months after arriving in Vietnam we boarded a plane and my last view of the country was of the sun descending behind the hills. It was not long before we arrived back at Terendak, ready for some leave.

Was I right to go to Vietnam? I believed so then and still do today. The sense of betrayal I have struggled with comes from the rejection by my country, and the betrayal of the Vietnamese people by America and her allies. We should have won that war and blasted the Communists in North Vietnam off the face of the earth, for ever. I have believed for many years that the only good Communist is a dead one. I refer to the card-carrying dedicated Communist, not the people who live under this system. I agree with an author's title, "You can only trust a Communist to be a Communist". He is dedicated to the State and what will serve the ideals of Communism. If a lie will serve this purpose then a lie is the truth. How can you deal with people whose truth is only what will further the cause of Communism? However, I respected my enemy, who was dedicated to the cause.

When I was in the Salvation Army a few years later I was witnessing in Wellington, to a seller of the Communist paper. I looked into his eyes and could see the earth being turned on my grave. Then, I knew my enemy. Of course this is all academic now with the collapse of the Communist system but one wonders what will eventually take its place. Hatred is still hatred and the enemy I faced in Vietnam, I may one day face on New Zealand streets.

Terendak – the last three months

The three months left to me in Terendak, before returning home were relaxing as no one knew what to do with us. My final leave was spent at Singapore again and my memory of this is of walking in the rain, by the wharves, happy to be alive and happy to be a Christian. The locals seemed slightly perplexed at this mad New Zealander walking in the rain singing, “Just singing in the rain” but I felt happy and it was good to be alive.

A strange incident happened in Singapore. I foolishly walked in the back alleys behind houses and stores by the wharves. The dangers of doing so did not seem to occur to me. I could have been robbed or killed. I was suddenly aware of a young Chinese man who appeared to be on a ridge above me. We watched each other as I hurriedly exited back to the main street. I have often wondered if he was an angel sent by God to protect me and lead me back to safety.

I had to go on one more exercise before coming home. This was as the radio operator for a training exercise for the next group to go to Vietnam. I was fit and used to what was happening and was perplexed by the moaning of the soldiers who were like a lot of “moaning nellies”, complaining at the pace, the weight they were carrying and anything else they could think of. I was not impressed and wondered how they would manage in Vietnam. I was impressed with the officer I was with and thought of volunteering to go with him but resisted the impulse.

I left Terendak as guard for a prisoner. This was part of my “loner” attitude because I didn’t want to go with the others. I think this, more than anything else illustrates the depth of my isolationist tendencies that had increased during Vietnam. I arrived in Singapore, scruffy and that’s the way I arrive home, scruffy and glad to be away from the others. I think this is a sad way to end what was, for me, a major era in my life. I think the rejection by my country had entered my system some months before when we heard about the demonstrations against the war. I didn’t mind them opposing the war but to oppose us, volunteers because our country asked us to go, was deeply hurtful and affected my life for many years. Nether-the-less I am not sorry I went to Vietnam.

Home again

We landed at Whenuapai, probably to avoid protestors and, after passing through customs I was once again in my mother’s arms. It was at Whenuapai I met George, the man she married while I was away. He was a fine man who went through the horror of the trenches during World War 1. He joined the Communist party to try to bring about the changes he had fought for but left after becoming disillusioned with their methods.

He met mum shortly after I went overseas and probably made the biggest mistake of his life. Nether-the-less he was loyal through all the mental problems she had in the years ahead. They divorced when it was impossible to go on but remarried after Mum had treatment and a tumour was found in her head the size of half a tennis ball.

The curious thing was he had to have the same operation my father died from and my mother had to endure the same experience twice. He later died from stomach cancer and Mum nursed him at home until his death. He was a fine man and I grew to admire and respect him. He died a non-Christian, as he had lived, a gentleman and a man of honour.

The years following my return were difficult. My relationship with mum deteriorated because I was not the same person who left to go overseas. One night she challenged me in the car with the question, “If I had to choose between God and her, whom would I choose?” Being an ignorant but sincere Christian I foolishly answered her. I don’t think she ever forgave me.

My strained relationships with her increased from that point and over the years we have grown distant from each other. I still love her but because it is difficult to communicate now, I find it difficult to mend past hurts.

A job again

I never went back to the army because my time expired before my leave was up, instead, I found myself looking for a job. I went to the Rehabilitation board and obtained their assistance in subsidising my training in the TV industry. Unlike today there was a shortage of technicians so I found a position at Dominion TV in New Market. They were a good firm to work for and the boss, Mr. Pemberton, was a fine man. Unfortunately my increasing paranoia soured my relationship with this firm and I left. This was one of the many mistakes I made, caused by my past rejections going through the cauldron of Vietnam, which affected my career.

My mental health was deteriorating during this period, but it was the silence that affected me most. Vietnam was not a subject to talk about.

Fatigue

In the first six months after returning I experienced a three week period of extreme lethargy. I went to the doctor who seemed to think I was pulling his leg. He didn't seem very impressed and said there was nothing wrong with me. This lethargy passed after three weeks but from then on I went through a four week cycle. I would experience extreme lethargy for a few days then be all right, until the next cycle came around. I found it difficult to make decisions and to react to people during these periods. I reacted harshly or impulsively and upset them so they tended to leave me alone, increasing my isolation from society. I reached a stage where I didn't trust myself with people because of the way I behaved.

My relations with my family deteriorated and poor old mum used to get upset when I would come home and not answer her questions about my work. Eventually I moved into a flat.

I used to get this feeling people were persecuting me: my mum, Dominion TV and every other place I worked at. I would be okay for a while but would then interpret other's actions and body language as hostile. This was self-defeating and unhelpful in my career.

Dominion TV to Union Rep

I continued in employment that reinforced my inadequacies. At Dominion TV I was able to do the job but not to the ability of someone else, my TV basics were not solid. I went to Tisco to service radios but as my radio experience was limited to the one I built - which only smoked – I was again out of my depth. I left Tisco through my paranoia and went to a TV firm run by another accountant. He had us climbing through windows to repossess TV's so I soon fell out with him.

I decided to get out of the TV industry and applied for a job as a postman. If you asked me to describe the job I would have liked most, I would have described a labouring position where I worked outside and sweated copiously. This was not to be and I found myself having to use my brain more than my muscles.

I enjoyed being a postman for a while but then ran foul of management, over mistakes I made. I went to the Union and with their muscle behind me put fear into the power structure of the branch. It was here I learnt to watch my back. I was one male amongst fifteen females and in the end, they gave it to me – in the back.

I was unsuited to be a union rep. because I could no longer take the stress of bad human relationships. To go to work and have half the ladies plotting against me was more than my nervous system could take. It was here I should have learnt I could not handle stress and bad personal relationships but I was still full of arrogant pride and couldn't see what was happening to me.

A Christian soldier?

When I returned from overseas, I was still a Knight in shining armour and it was with pride I walked down Auckland's Queen St. - in my Singapore suit – looking like a bronzed warrior. I was so happy to be back, and alive.

People kept looking at me but no one ever spat at me or called me a baby killer. I swaggered but deep within, there was an unwillingness to admit to being a Vietnam veteran. It was like Vietnam didn't exist and there was something shameful about being there but I didn't know what. I felt I was different to normal people and other people were a threat to me.

This feeling was increased by being a Christian. I believed the Bible when it said I was a "new creation". It was like being born again into a new lifestyle and I knew I was now a member of God's kingdom. The problem this created for me was that everyone else who did not have this relationship with Jesus, could not be in the kingdom of God. This reinforced my awareness of being different and special. My family rejected me primarily on this issue.

It puzzles me how denominations today can talk about unity between the Christian faith and other religions because my conviction, after my conversion experience, is that Jesus is the only way to God. The Bible agrees with me when it says in John 14:6, "**I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me**". If there are other ways then Jesus was a fruitcake and I have wasted my life.

I do not understand God's dealings with the Jews today but I do realise that without them there would be no Christianity, no Bible and no Jesus so I thank God for the Jews and pray God's blessing upon them. If I had to choose between the Jews and their enemies, I would always choose the Jews because they are still God's chosen people and to curse them is to bring a curse upon myself. Being very much interested in my own welfare it is not surprising I am a supporter of the Jewish race.

Scouting

I now had a job and to fill in my spare hours decided to get involved in the Scout organisation. Here again I was heading into a trap as my ideal of what scouting should be and the reality, were two different things.

The Scoutmaster I trained under was just right for the task and I learnt a lot under him; a large man, happy and dedicated to the kids, he helped me through the early days and eventually I was ready to take over.

By this time I was becoming paranoid again and thought he was interfering too much. I wrote down all my arguments and gave them to him. In it I had written what I thought was the truth and suggested he got out of my way. It says a lot for the man that he could sit there and read what I had written without kicking me out of his house. He swallowed it all and gave me enough rope to hang myself.

I now began to run the group as I thought it should be run - full of self-importance and short on knowledge.

One weekend I took three venturers to a farm. The exhaust fell off the car and we had to be picked up by my relation and taken the last few miles. We settled down for the night after doing the things scouts do, when an agonising pain ripped through my head. I rolled around my tent in agony all night and the next day called for help. I went to the dentist when I returned only to find a filling had fallen out. I knew I shouldn't have eaten my own cooking.

Another time I went with a larger group and spent most of the time feeling out of things. The other leaders were invited to campfires for meals but I was left out – even my own group didn't want me. I felt alone and miserable so one night I went to the leader and spilled out my misery, seeking the answer to this great gulf of loneliness. He didn't know what to do with me but I left his tent feeling better after talking to him. I have done this a lot in my life – gone to other people thinking they have the answer – only to be disappointed when they have not been able to help.

There was an older leader who had a remarkable knowledge of native trees and it was with him I felt most comfortable. I think I was seeking a father image.

I had this great feeling of loneliness and of a gulf between people and myself, a need for a father and a need to be accepted but, my behaviour and viewpoints only caused a greater gulf to open between society and me.

I think there are middle-aged ex-scouts who still grind their teeth when my name is mentioned. It wasn't really my fault their scarves were too small. I was on the committee organising our area to go to the Jamboree in Christchurch. Along with others I was given the task of deciding the colour of the scarf. We decided on brown and the material was purchased. Unfortunately not enough was purchased and when divided up left a very small square of material to be made into scarves. The trouble was, no one at the Jamboree wanted to swap their attractive scarves for these small pieces of material that looked like something you normally left in the toilet. I was slightly unpopular in Christchurch but my real misery came from a beautiful lady who didn't write me one letter while I was away and left me forlorn and lovesick. Let me introduce you to my wife.

God's gift to me

Proverbs 31: 10-31 describes her though I have found a few faults as the years have passed.

I met her in the doorway of the Onehunga Methodist church I attended briefly in my youth. When I went to live with George and mum, after arriving back in New Zealand I went here one night (the house was only a street away).

She and her girlfriend were greeting the people as they came in and let me sit beside them during the service. She won my heart by giving me a cold sausage roll during the sermon but it took me months to persuade her that her Knight in shining armour had finally arrived.

She got slightly upset when I threw her over my shoulder while dancing at the youth club and as I had a habit of embarrassing her, our future looked shaky for a while. However, she finally did accept me and on August 16, 1969 we were married in this church she had grown up in. I think that's all I'm allowed to tell you about this lovely lady though I'm sure she won't mind me mentioning the dented rubbish tin lid.

In all great romances and ours was this, there is a moment of indecision. Should I or shouldn't I? Mine occurred one night when I decided I didn't want to be trapped and said goodnight to her, without making another date.

I lived in a flat on the same street which was fortunate because God wasn't going to let me sleep until I had undone my actions. I found I could not go to sleep and tossed and turned on my bed and

at 2 am I gave in, leapt out of bed and trotted down the road. The moon was shining, I thought I was mad but knew I could not wait till morning. I went around the back of the house and found the rubbish tin; climbing on to it I pushed my head through the top window of her bedroom. She was awake and after listening to my garbled plea for forgiveness agreed to see me the next morning. I think she agreed because she was afraid her father would come in. Happily I went, putting the rubbish tin away. I don't think her father ever did know how his bin lid got a great big dent in it but I sometimes suspected he did.

I have always believed it was God who wouldn't let me go to sleep because my wife was the one he had chosen for me. Later events have proved him right because without her I would have committed suicide.

I wanted to get married. I don't know why I had this compulsion but every girl I took out (there weren't many) was a prospective wife. Other men seemed to be able to take many girls out without this complication but not me, I wanted a wife. I got a pearl without price. She's lovely.

My church ideal becomes tarnished

We set up house in Otahuhu in a small flat. In it we put our furniture and for some nights I rushed home to a candlelight dinner. We stayed there until we moved into our house in Mangere the next year. I took advantage of the Rehabilitation loan with 3% interest and should have stayed there but it was not to be because within me was the desire to serve God – to find his perfect will for my life.

It started with my disappointment with the Methodist church's lack of evangelism and grew to a point where I no longer wanted to stay in this church. The curse of perfection that plagued me in the army now passed with me into church life. I would start in a church and for a while would be happy, until the day I realised it did not meet my ideal of what it should be. I set my ideal on a pedestal and when it proved to be made of clay, instead of marble, I could not handle it. I became disgruntled and unable to accept what was going on. I repeated this over the years wherever I went and ended up with the same result – alienation from people and more isolated as the years passed.

We nearly ended up at the Presbyterian Church because the minister was a man I felt could guide me through the Christian maze. He was called to another church shortly before we were to make our final decision. I have wondered if God's hand was in this because the next flag that waved in front of my eyes was the Salvation Army's.

The Salvation Army years

You would have thought I had had enough of armies but I think I still wanted to be looked after. I remember a man in the pub, when we were selling the War Cry, challenging me, accusing me of escaping from the real world. I denied this, pointing out the difficulties before us but I think there was some truth in his accusation. I did not want to take responsibility for succeeding in a world, without protection. Even today I do not think I am suited to survive in a competitive world. I am suited to work within an organisation where I have a regular income that is not dependant upon the hours I work. The Salvation Army suited this requirement. We joined the Onehunga Corps which eventually became the Mangere Salvation Army.

Now began a period of my life when I was in demand. I had a testimony to share. My experience of coming to Christ was not usual so I had opportunity to speak at different venues. One time was at the Auckland town hall to a Methodist youth group. I went on so long the leader tried to shut me up but I carried on until everyone was thoroughly bored. I haven't forgotten his rebuke but have learnt to forgive him and now can chuckle about my immaturity.

Another time was at the Auckland town hall again where I testified before a Salvation Army youth congress and told them if they had done their job properly (preaching the Gospel) I would not have blood on my hands. I felt good on a public platform and enjoyed the feedback from the audience. I would describe myself then as a brash and ignorant young man who wanted to be totally committed to Jesus.

I followed my normal pattern of putting the Sallies on a pedestal and it was not long before I started to grumble again. I decided God was calling me to become an officer so I could run the Army as it should be run so, after persuading my wife, I applied to the Army to be accepted into the next years' intake at the training college in Wellington.

We appeared before the selection panel and I answered their questions with my usual honesty. I was a Knight seeking to help those in distress so how could they not accept us. My wife was not overjoyed at our good fortune.

We set about preparing to enter the college but God had something else in store for us - the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. If we had come into this experience before appearing in front of the panel, we would not have been accepted but this happened after the panel, before leaving for college.

The Holy Spirit

It was a Saturday morning and I was off into town on some errand but the car refused to start. It was while I was fiddling with the car the Mangere Methodist minister arrived at our door. He said later he had a strong impression to call on us. He was in the Charismatic movement and had been used by God in the Mangere area. I saw it as an opportunity to question him about the movement and invited him inside.

I had been examining the subject by reading a book by Dennis Bennet "9 o'clock in the Morning" and after reading it had knelt down beside a chair and did what he said to do. The result was a babble of noise which I interpreted as tongues. It was so easy I had doubts about its reality and was glad of the opportunity to question him about it.

The discussion did not go well as I was arguing with him but at the end I surprised him by asking him to pray for us. We knelt down, he prayed and I again came forth with the babble of the week before. This did not impress me greatly but the affect on my wife certainly did. She groaned and moaned and acted like something was going through her. It was this that convinced me of the reality of the experience.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was for me a baptism of power, to enable me too minister with boldness as an officer in the Salvation Army. It was to be a great blessing and also a great curse because I was entering an organisation that did not appreciate this gift of the Holy Spirit.

It made a difference in my life. I was working in a factory making welders when this occurred and while I was drilling holes and making extra noise I used to praise God in tongues. It was great.

Spiritual breathing

Whenever a thought entered my mind that was obscene or I recognised as not being helpful, I used to picture Jesus there as well and the thought disappeared. Spiritual breathing was when I knew I had dwelt on one of those thoughts, or, I had done something I knew was displeasing to God. I would breathe out and confess my sin (1 John 1:9) then breathe in again asking the Holy Spirit to be "boss" in my life once more. Using this technique I was able to keep my life free from the guilt of

thoughts and actions I knew were displeasing to God. I was able to walk, not perfect as we think of perfection, but blameless in the eyes of God.

1 John 1:9 is worth knowing. *“If we confess our sin he is faithful and just and will **forgive** us our sin and **cleanse** us from **all** unrighteousness.”*

Did satan visit us?

We had a weird experience before we left. It was early in the evening when I sensed a presence in the kitchen. I could see a man, about 5 ft tall, stocky with dark hair. He was dressed in tight fitting, dark clothes. We prayed against him and he disappeared. Who was it? I don't know for sure but the experience was very real at the time. This was my second experience with the sense of evil; the first was at my conversion in Terendak.

We leave for Wellington

My wife hid her fears well and together we arranged to sell the house. We should have kept it but I felt there should be no strings attached to tempt us, when the going got tough. It sold within a week and now we were committed. This was another of the many foolish things I have done in my life but I never thought we would leave the S/army until we honourably retired.

We nearly didn't get to go because of our plans to adopt a child. We had been trying for a child for sometime and finally decided to adopt. When the Army heard of our plans they put pressure on us to not adopt and go as a married couple. We resisted this idea and a few months before departure received a healthy baby boy. The Army accepted us anyway.

The big day finally arrived and together the three of us boarded the plane for Wellington. The plane taxied off and much to my consternation, Linda burst into tears. She soon got control of herself and settled down and within half an hour we were landing at Wellington. The next phase of our lives had begun.

The Training College

Major Cross met and took us to the college in Aro St. He was “Army Barmy” but a man I grew to love and respect. He spent many an hour in prayer over me as I bludgeoned my way through college. He died of a heart attack a few years later, a man dedicated to God and the Salvation Army, loved by those who trained under him.

After settling in we met the other cadets, staff and the man in charge. He was to play an important part in decisions I made over the next two years.

The years spent here were challenging with a mixture of strife and friendliness. Some of the cadets we got on well with, others we avoided but overall we were a happy bunch as we all had a common goal – to become Salvation Army officers. We were a large session, 29 in total with an age range from 19 to 29. Some came from S/Army backgrounds and others, like us, from other churches. About half are still officers in various parts of the world as well as New Zealand.

College life for our son was not good for the bonding process because we had to leave him in a crèche until lunch time, and for a start it was heartbreaking to hear him crying in bewilderment as we walked away. It was then I knew, in part, the heartbreak of God when his son was on the cross and he had to turn away because the sin of the world was upon him.

The afternoons were spent in private study or assignments. My wife's workload was lighter than mine but she still had to do many of the assignments and to take her share in preaching and witnessing. The mothers were excused the Friday night open air meetings in the main street; it was here I felt most at home, in direct confrontation with people and preaching the gospel. We all took turns leading the meeting, the singing and preaching. Usually most people ignored us but I enjoyed it anyway.

The Army seemed to have lost something in its "open-air" ministry. One officer had written a book on the ministry which was first class but no one seemed to want to read it. I tried out his techniques and found they worked but the next week we went back to the same old way which the public ignored.

Selling the War-Cry in the pubs was enjoyable and brought you into contact with diverse people but I never saw much result from it. For most of us it was the activity at the end of the week which we had to do. In later years I enjoyed the contact with the pub public and had many good conversations.

Alcohol

It was at Wellington I developed my hatred for drink and the affect it has on people. The cadets found an alcoholic woman and it was decided we would clean her and her flat. She was filthy and her flat more so. It was a degrading place to live and every publican and booze maker should spend a night in it – the end result of their craft. The lady stayed off the booze for a short while but went back to it so all our hard work was a waste of time.

The Bridge programme was another centre where the problems of drink were visible. Men whose lives were ruined were helped back to sobriety but many were too far gone to be helped, primarily because they wanted not change but a cheap place to live while they recovered from their last binge. It was depressing but many officers tirelessly spent years of their lives trying to give them another chance.

Sundays were special

Sundays were special because we went to local corps (churches) and took part in the meetings. We challenged, amused and bored, groups of Salvationists for two years but they responded by billeting and feeding us magnificently.

We had half a day off each week and together we explored Wellington. Having no car limited us, but we still spent many happy hours walking the streets. Our son was not unhappy and together life seemed full of hope.

The old problem

I was still suffering from the cycles of tiredness and found it difficult to manage at times. I didn't mix well with the other cadets and spent most of my time with my wife. This was good for our marriage but didn't help me relate to the world around me. My sense of being special was increased, as the difference between the world and us was emphasised, also the difference between the officer and the soldier. I was part of an elite group training to lead others into battle. This was fine but in practice I found the soldiers weren't all that keen to be led into battle.

The Army of today is not the Army of William Booth's day and as my ideal was based on my understanding of the early Army I soon found myself spending a great deal of time discussing what

was wrong and how we would change it. With only one exception (he rose to be the leader in NZ) we were all guilty of this superior attitude and I found this habit very difficult to stop, continuing to tear the leadership to pieces whenever we got together. Eventually I was reluctant to meet with fellow officers because no matter where we started from we would end up tearing the Army to pieces once more. My conscience was convicted time and again about doing this but I found it very hard to change.

Army music and trouble

Music was a very important part of Army ministry and some of our time was given to musical instruments under the baton of Major froth and bubble ---, a man who used to spit all over us as he attempted to turn our efforts into a reasonable sound. Other times were spent in singing practice, learning parts and taking part in productions such as "The late great planet earth", an "end time" production that was popular at the time.

Watchman Nee

It was during my first year I received in the mail a parcel wrapped in brown paper with no sender's address. It was a book by Watchman Nee, the "Normal Christian Life". I read it and when I came to where he writes about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus I had a vision. Into my mind came the picture of Jesus on the cross and I was immersed in his body. When he died, I died. When he rose from the dead I rose, free from the power of satan and his kingdom because I was now legally dead, so far as satan was concerned. This understanding has been one of the cornerstones of my understanding of what Jesus actually did for me. I was born again, a new creation. This is what baptism in water is all about. (See Romans chapter six, verses one to six.)

Rest home hell

Near the end of our first year we were sent to do our social training at a Resthome in Christchurch. This was our first posting while in college and it was with joy we packed our bags and went to board the boat. It was not a pleasant trip. Stuck in the middle of an iron hull in the middle of a storm did not do my stomach any good and I ended up leaving my dinner behind me. Linda and Nick travelled well but it was not until the boat reached Littleton I was able to rejoice again. We caught the train and soon arrived in Christchurch where we were met at the station and brought to a home for elderly ladies, where we were to stay for the next three months.

I had trouble with the single lady officer in charge because she seemed to resent men and was bitter about being shunted into social work when she enjoyed commanding the local corp. Unfortunately this was the future for many single lady officers and seemed to me a waste of talent.

We were given a room for the three of us between two rooms of old ladies and it was not long before we found that running an old peoples home was more work than fun.

Our son had a tough time here. He was eighteen months old and unable to talk. The officer provided an old fashioned cot for him he didn't seem to like but, as we were both under pressure to work he had to be put down to sleep.

At this time of my life I still believed in authority and was at a disadvantage when faced with obedience to others. Here, I should have decided what was best for my family and not allowed this lady to intimidate me. The Army indoctrination was very efficient about obedience and this reinforced my regular-army training so it was natural for me to obey rather than question decisions.

Needless to say I am not the same today. If I had been different then we would not have experienced half the troubles resulting from our time there.

The cot

We came up to the room one day to find his head caught between the rails, screaming. He was never happy to go into it. One night he woke screaming at one am. We tried everything to calm him but nothing worked. After one hour he stopped and we went back to sleep. There were old ladies to the left of us and the right but they never commented on the noise. This went on for seven nights and we were at our wits end because we did not know the cause.

From this time he became impossible to discipline. Whenever he wanted his own way and we refused he would throw a tantrum that ended with him screaming. We tried persuasion, smacking and anything else we could think of but he continued to defy us. We finally found a solution in shutting him in a room by himself.

This put tremendous stress upon us all but it was not until he was nine we found the answer. We cast a demonic spirit out of him. From that point he was easier to manage but much damage had been done to our relationship. We believe this demonic spirit entered our son while at this rest-home and had something to do with the cot he was given to sleep in.

Personal victory over Satan

It was here at the Resthome I experienced my first personal victory over satan and his spiritual kingdom but I did not know enough about spiritual warfare to connect our son's episode with satan.

I had come into contact with a writer from America (C.S.Lovatt) who wrote "Soul Winning Made Easy". One of his books was on defeating satan so when I felt a heavy depression upon me one day I decided to try out his system. I talked directly to satan and commanded him to leave me alone because the Scriptures said "greater is he that is in me than he who is in the world" and on the basis that Jesus defeated him on the cross. I was amazed to feel my depression lift off me like a cloud and so I began to learn how to defeat satan and his kingdom. The Resthome was the place where we came under spiritual attack and did not know it because in the Salvation Army at the time, spiritual warfare was not a popular subject. Like many Christians today they refused to face up to the fact that to defeat satan it is not enough to praise God. We have to move on the basis of what God has done for us and defeat him ourselves. I don't believe I can tell God what to do but I do believe I can tell satan. Once you have experienced it you will never allow satan to have free reign in your life again.

We were in Christchurch when the Commonwealth Games were on but the only thing I remember was the cars with stripes on the side used to ferry competitors around.

The Resthome was not a happy place and understaffed. The officers had to do much of the work themselves and the ladies just sat around. It was custodial care mainly and the main task was to settle them in front of the TV so we were free to do the cleaning. Not much fun for staff or residents. A lonely task for a single female officer and it was not surprising her nature was slightly acidic.

It was with relief our purgatory ended and we said farewell. We returned to college to find others with more horrific experiences than ours. I was not impressed with what I had seen and heard of the Social side of the Army work and had no desire to experience more of it.

College continues

I found the studies reasonable and received average grades. I was good at doctrine and the Bible and okay on the other subjects. Other cadets received terrible grades because they would not fit into the system and tried to be free thinkers in a rigid system. One cadet brought great wrath on his head by suggesting Jesus as the founder of the Salvation Army and not William Booth. He was correct but this attitude was not appreciated by the staff who could not mark his assignment because it did not fit the requirements. In many ways we were a rebellious intake and did not fit into the Army system easily. This may have been because many of us were not from Salvation Army backgrounds.

Dunedin campaign

Each intake does a campaign somewhere in the country and ours was to be in Dunedin. We caught the boat and then boarded the Southerner for the trip south. This was exciting stuff – off to face the foe and defeat the forces of darkness. The Knight in shining armour was off again. Our son had gone to my wife's parents and we were free to do our thing. This we did: Open Air services, door to door visiting, visitation of the sick and the old people in the Corps. We took the Sunday services and all in all did what we were meant to do.

I went to a house and an old lady asked me in. We went upstairs and she listened while I told her of the love of God. She prayed the sinner's prayer and I went away rejoicing. I led another person to Christ but it is this lady that has stayed in my mind. I was the only one who enjoyed door to door evangelism although I found it very stressful.

The great day came. I was to give the sermon on the Sunday morning. I waited and waited but the officer leading the meeting took a long time before she let me up. I felt I was running out of time and being a good soldier decided to cut my sermon down so people would not be late for dinner. This was a mistake and a source of embarrassment for many years. I was struggling with the conflict of being under discipline yet doing what I felt was the Lord's work. We learn from our mistakes but it was becoming obvious to me that others did not have this burning desire to preach the Gospel.

The campaign was a success and a valuable learning experience. It was disheartening to turn up at a University to hold a meeting to find we were entertaining ourselves and empty chairs. No one seemed to care we were there but we enjoyed ourselves anyway.

I saw my wife rise to the challenges many times. She had to do her share of preaching and witnessing on the streets of Dunedin and I caught glimpses of what she would eventually become as God moved her through his training course.

Wanganui East corps

Our next adventure after returning to college was to be the practical training in a Corp (church). We received our posting at the graduation of the cadets who were one year ahead of us.

Wanganui East was our posting under the guidance of the officer at Wanganui. The accommodation was small but we were on our own at last, ministering to the few who attended the meetings. It was an interesting start to our career and we would have matured in a more solid way if we had stayed under the guidance of the officer at Wanganui. This was not to be because after six weeks we were posted to Stratford, to command the corps as their officer was needed to fill a sudden vacancy in the Social work.

Stratford Corps

Arriving at Stratford we settled in under the shadow of Mt. Egmont (Taranaki). It was stimulating to rise in the morning and look at the snow-covered mountain that dominated the landscape.

The house was large and heated by an old coal range and as we had arrived in winter we were able to enjoy this. I didn't enjoy so much stoking the potbelly in the church because I had to arrive before everyone else to heat the place.

We had some good meetings and one I will never forget was my first dedication. The parents were young and wanted their child "done". By the time I had shared with them what I understood "dedication" to mean they weren't so sure but agreed to go ahead. On the Sunday morning I turned up with a sermon prepared on "dedication" and the phone rang to tell me the husband had chickened out. I gave the sermon anyway.

The people in the Corp. were solid Salvationists and helped us as they could. It was here I bought our trailer and had it sign-written with "Jesus Cares". One of the members did a lot of construction work on it and would not take payment. He and his wife supported us in many ways and were typical of many we would meet in the Army world, who looked after young officers with a smile and an encouraging word.

First Army disillusionment

I had a soldier who openly drank alcohol and when I found out did what I thought I had to do. I wrote a report recommending he be struck off the role as a soldier until he gave up the drink. I was naïve. I believed the doctrine and rule book we had studied in college was still adhered to. The Divisional Commander at the time did not see it as I saw it and to my knowledge nothing was ever done about it. I was in a dilemma and did not how to handle it. I had trusted in my ideal of the Army and now was finding it on a very shaky pedestal. I was expected to abide by laws that those in authority were not going to enforce. This was betrayal to me and was influential in destroying my vision of being a Salvation Army officer.

I didn't realise it then, but I was looking for something to trust in that was perfect. If I was going to live my life for Jesus then the organisation had to have the same fervour I had. I put people and organisations on a pedestal and when they did not live up to my expectations, lost faith in them and the organisation.

My father betrayed my trust by dying. The regular army betrayed my trust by not enforcing discipline. The Methodist church had not lived up to expectations and now the Salvation Army had a system they were not prepared to back me up on. This experience shook the foundations of my existence. Increasingly I was losing faith in man and his systems.

I was also becoming aware that others did not have this burning desire to serve Jesus. I was an evangelist without an army. The "fire" I use to read about seemed to have been extinguished in the Army I was now an officer in.

Our son seemed to be getting worse in his tantrums and it was at Stratford we found the only way to stop him was to shut him in a room and leave him. I wonder sometimes how this affected him.

Getting decisions for Jesus was easy but?

“Fishing” is a term used in the Army when you roam around the meeting looking for people to encourage to give their lives to Jesus. I was quite good at it and led quite a few people to the front for prayer but I’m not aware of any being changed in their lifestyles and remaining true to Jesus. I was zealous and keen to win souls but overall it was a disappointment – this method of bringing people to God.

Lethargy cycles increasing

During this time period my cycles of lethargy were taking place and my eyes seemed to be very tired. I found that when my eyes had this strange tiredness my whole body felt tired and thinking was difficult. I went to the Optometrist who advised me to wear my reading glasses all the time. (You should never trust a specialist who makes his living by the products he advises on.)

It is my belief my symptoms were caused by chemical poisoning during Vietnam and were temporary. If I had known then what I know now about this subject I would probably not be wearing glasses all the time. (I am now 63 and only wear glasses for close work.)

After three months were up we returned to college, wiser in many ways but wondering if we fitted in.

Our second son arrives

We had put in to adopt another child and after returning from Stratford was notified a boy was available. The Army gave us permission this time so we went to Wellington hospital to see a small bundle we hoped would make our family complete. We weren’t sure this time and went away to think about him but were back the next day to say, “Yes”. He arrived in our family and was to be a source of great joy and happiness until the dark days of our elder son’s illness arrived.

Graduation but only just

The rest of our time at college was a time of preparation for graduation but I had one more hurdle to cross. On the contract we would sign as officers was a clause that said we would be true to the Army as long as we lived. This caused me some problems because I could not say for sure we would stay in the Army for the rest of our lives. I talked with the officer commanding the college and came away with the understanding that many officers have had to withdraw at times but have still stayed true to the spirit of the Army. I found this to be true for though I am no longer an officer I am still true to the covenant I signed. In my theology and way of looking at life the Army left its stamp well and truly in me. (I had to deal with this before I was able to be free to live a new life, outside the Army. In many ways it was a curse that produced guilt and prevented me from fitting in with other church groups.)

The big day finally arrived and we were on the platform waiting to hear where our posting was to be.

Riverton – the southernmost posting in the world

“Riverton” he said and our photos show our shocked reaction. We didn’t even know where it was. It turned out to be past Invercargill and was the southernmost Corps in the world.

The next day we caught the boat and started down the South Island. The trip was enjoyable and our anticipation increased as we passed the turnoff to Invercargill and saw the sign that said, Riverton, 16 kilometres.

We came past the hospital and found the place where a soldier was waiting to feed us before we went to the quarters. She was a friendly soul who had been feeding impoverished officers for years.

The house was behind the hall and comfortable. The cupboards were filled with goodies and it was not long before an ex-officer arrived at our door to welcome us. He had fallen ill and been pensioned off. Friendly at first he became my antagonist when we moved in the gifts of the Spirit. Without him we would probably still be in the Army today. God bless him. Little did he know he was probably in the will of God and his instrument to remove us?

The Knight in shining armour had arrived to cleanse the town of sinners and bring a grateful people to God!

We were welcomed by the officer from Invercargill at night and met the people who were to endure our ministry for the next twelve months. Most were over sixty and had been afflicted by many ignorant, enthusiastic officers. A few were open to the Spirit of God but most were not.

With great enthusiasm I preached each Sunday, inspiring myself if no one else. It was great to have a church pulpit and a position of respect although I was never sure about the respect side. The respect seemed to be with the United and Anglican ministers and I was the poor relation.

Not deterred by the opposition I built myself an outside lectern and with the help of a battery powered amplifier held one man open airs outside the church building. My soldiers were embarrassed about this as the night I was haranguing the pub across the road was their bowls night. I still carried on and when finished used to go down to the estuary and aim my speaker at the other side, preaching and singing as the twilight came down. I don't know if anyone heard me but I enjoyed myself.

Riverton Hospital

I went at night to the Riverton hospital and sang to the old people, roaming the wards and singing the old songs such as "Nearer my God to Thee" and "Just a closer walk with Thee", etc. There was a Christian couple who lived across from the hospital. He worked as a nurse at night and sold Christian books by day. He didn't mind my attempts at singing and I had some very loving moments with those who were near death.

Funerals

Speaking of death, one of my fondest memories of Riverton is the funeral of an ex-undertaker who had served the district for many years. His wife assured me he had no Christian faith so I planned a non-Christian service.

I based my sermon on what he would have heard, and preached the good news about Jesus to a hall full of people. It was the best funeral I have ever been to. For some reason it was a time of triumph and not of gloom but it was not until we had left the Army I found out why. I received a letter from his daughter informing me he had accepted Christ three weeks before he died and thanking me for the service. The heathen turned out to a Christian.

The next one was supposed to be a triumph. The lady had been a strong Salvationist all her life but for some years had been in the Hospital. Together we prayed many times and I knew she was right

with God. The funeral was terrible. Her family had gone away from God and there was a dull feeling in the service. The lilies were overpowering in aroma and it was a sad time for me. We went to a disused cemetery to bury her. It was raining and the ground, brown clay. The whole affair was sad and sordid and not what I had expected in farewelling a good Salvationist.

My first funeral though was a small affair with only a few friends. The director told me he would appear at a certain point in the service to take over so I confidently went through the service. Arriving at the last song I looked expectantly for him but he did not appear. I sang the song again, then again, said a few more words and sang another song. The sweat was running down my neck before the ratbag did appear and took over. Now I look back and chuckle but then it was no laughing matter for a young lieutenant doing his first funeral.

Pub run and annual appeal

I extended the pub run and each Thursday and Friday would trot off on my pub collection. My reception was quite good and at times I had to sing for my money. I went from Riverton to Tuatapere then to Otautau and home. On the other night I did the local pubs. These were an important source of income for us.

Each year the Army has its Annual Appeal and is the nightmare for officers alone in small Corps. I sat down and planned my strategy which was for me to do the organising and on the day do no collecting. I rang all the groups I could think of and had most of my area covered. This was my only claim to fame in the Army viewpoint – the ability to raise money.

Another scheme I hatched was to take off for a holiday in the uncollected parts of the country and sell old “War-Cry’s”. I raised more than enough to cover my expenses and had a holiday with the family as well. We added to this income, monthly jumble and cake sales. I rang people on the phone asking them to bake a cake for the Army. I was surprised at the response; people I had never met dropped cakes in to the hall. In this way we raised most of our finances but still needed help from Divisional HQ at times.

Poor but rich

This was a time in our lives when we had money to burn because we managed our money well whereas other officers got into a real mess with their finances. We could afford to take holidays and buy presents for the children which we couldn’t do once we left. Financially we have never been better off than when we were officers even though it would have been considered a low wage. We only had to pay for power, food and clothing. The car expenses were paid for and we received a mileage allowance for repairs. Life was good but trouble was waiting around the corner.

Tongues etc

It came in the form of a Maori lady who just wanted to praise the Lord. Inoffensive, she lived by herself in a picturesque house on the side of a hill, spending her day in prayer and living as if God was real. She was like a breath of fresh air after the rigidity of the soldiers in the Corp. A lone Charismatic, (a person who not only believes in but practices the gifts of the Spirit of God) she had a relationship with Jesus I envied.

I was also coming into contact with a few other Charismatics who were not being looked after by their church. This was in the days when the gifts of the Spirit were looked upon with suspicion by many in the church.

I had a “brilliant” idea. Why not gather all these lone Charismatics into a prayer cell? The idea was approved by them and we started to meet in the youth hall each week. I did not tell the Army folk about it but we had one lady from the Corp with us. Here, we sang in tongues and sought the Lord. I don’t remember a lot happening but it was a beginning and would have developed if I hadn’t done a very foolish thing.

When I first came into the Baptism of the Holy Spirit it was through reading a book, “Nine o’clock in the morning”, by Dennis Bennet, an Anglican priest. This told how God had led the Bennett’s into the Charismatic movement. He said his one mistake was not being open with his people. When they finally found out, the church erupted and he had to leave. He went on to see God work in another run-down place.

I decided not to make his mistake and tell the people what we were doing, inviting them to attend. In doing this I made the biggest mistake of my life, or so I have thought for many years. (God sees things differently and now I am able to look back and see God’s hand as he violently started us on our way out of the Army).

So, full of confidence, I rose to my feet the next Sunday and blew my brains out. I told them what we were doing and invited them to attend. I heard some years later that one account of this said I had stood up and prayed in tongues and as the story spread so did the differing accounts.

There was no violent response but at the finish of the meeting my old friend the “pensioned Major” informed me if I didn’t stop he would have to write to the Divisional Commander because he did not believe this was of God and should not be a part of the Salvation Army.

I replied this was his right under the Army system but didn’t feel greatly alarmed. Most of the folk didn’t seem worried about it but as the weeks went by it became uncomfortable for us all. I had real peace about what would happen and carried on with the meetings. I stress here the peace I had. I knew what we were doing was of God and believed he would provide the solution. The solution wasn’t quite what I expected.

Six weeks later a car pulled into our driveway and the Divisional Youth Secretary got out. He was quite nice about it all and was here to get my side of the argument. We never did hear from the Divisional Commander but I have a vague recollection of receiving a letter commanding us to stop until the Field Secretary came down a few weeks later. I had no problem over obeying this command for, as an officer, I had signed my Articles of War and promised to obey the orders of the Army. I moved the group out of the Army buildings, set it up in a house and withdrew from it. This was the Army’s loss because these were praying people and the Riverton Army was short of these.

The Field Secretary came and we had a friendly chat over the subject. The Army viewpoint of that time was it was okay for an officer in his private devotions to use the gift of tongues but you could not have a meeting in Army buildings where tongues was used.

A challenge I could not meet

I believed then as I believe now, the Army should have been big enough to cater for the Charismatic people, allowing them to have a midweek meeting under the covering of the Army. The only alternative for many who came into this experience was to leave and join a Pentecostal church. This was a loss to the Army because the “on fire” people were leaving.

I weighed my options and as we did not believe we should resign from the Army, I decided to stop. This surprised the Field Sec. And I think it was with a grateful heart he went away but now I had a problem.

This was – when I felt the urge to praise God in tongues what was I going to do? I decided to sing an Army chorus instead and for a while tried to do this but whenever I felt the urge to praise God I could never think of a chorus to sing. It was very frustrating and gradually I found myself slipping back into tongues. Now I had another problem! I had told the Field Sec. one thing and here I was doing what I said I wouldn't do.

I struggled with this until our holiday at Queenstown where, before I could relax and enjoy it I had to write to him and confess I had gone back to tongues; that we didn't believe we should resign from the Army and would leave the situation in his hands. I felt greatly relieved and we enjoyed our holiday. The future was in God's hands and we could relax.

The pressure in the Corp. was increasing as my friend the Major campaigned against us. This pressure was increased when I found myself facing the same problem I had faced at Stratford – a soldier who frequented the pubs. I should have learned my lesson but I still believed in the Army and its doctrines. I wrote to the Divisional Commander.

The end result was nothing, again. He came and saw the soldier but nothing was ever done about him and again my faith in the system was badly damaged. This time fatally.

The axe falls

December the third arrived, my wife's birthday and with it came the envelope we half expected – our orders to leave Riverton. We were to go to Addington in Christchurch to command the Paper Reclaim Industry. The axe had fallen and we were banished to the Social side of the army.

We were devastated. What a birthday present for my lovely wife. We left for Invercargill for a birthday dinner in a mood of despondency. Social work. Yuk!

Arriving at the restaurant we parked and gazed out the window, struggling to see this as the hand of God and not spiteful man. We had been reading "Prison to Power through Praise" and now had a chance to practice what we preached – to praise God no matter what happened and to see all that happened to us as coming from the hand of God. We bowed our heads and committed this move into God's hands confessing our trust in him. Instantly the misery was gone and we had confidence this was in the will of God. From that moment we were content to go. We entered the restaurant and enjoyed Linda's birthday meal.

We felt God was showing us his sense of humour because the man we were replacing was the son of the pensioned officers in the Corp. We had heard so much about what a wonderful man he was and how he was irreplaceable and now we were to replace him. We had to smile each time we saw them.

The last few weeks passed quickly and without fuss we disappeared from Riverton streets.

Riverton memories & anxiety increasing

Other episodes that were interesting: My first wedding. This was the daughter of Pentecostal-type Maori folk who I had come across. It was a strange wedding and I don't think they took much notice of what I said at the pre-wedding talks but it went okay. We provided them with our caravan so they could have a short honeymoon. I remember this because of the anxiety I felt letting them have it. I wasn't happy again until I got it back. Another time we let a couple borrow the caravan and our car for a holiday and I was worried all the time they were away they would have an accident.

My anxiety states were increasing and I was starting to be aware of anxiety in many situations. I think it was at Riverton my nervous system began to drastically affect my work and wellbeing. I was still experiencing the four weekly cycles of lethargy and when I came under stress during these times it was very difficult to manage. It was like trying to think while your mind waded through a morass of sludge.

I couldn't just relax and enjoy life. If I wasn't doing something, I felt guilty. It wasn't until years later I overcame this inability to just enjoy life. The Army system was one of service and if you took a day off to enjoy yourself you felt guilty because in the college there was this indoctrination of work, work, and work. It was a curse for me and because of it my stress levels didn't have a chance to go down when not under pressure so I was living with increasing levels as time passed.

Tantrums and pets

Riverton wasn't all bad and we had some good times with the people. It was also a time of learning with our eldest son. He still went into tantrums when frustrated and we were unable to discipline him properly. It was a battle each time.

I would be in my office and he would be outside my door screaming at me. My office was close to the main street and people walking past had a clear view of the officer's son screaming for at least half an hour. Another time we were in the ladies' meeting (Home League) when he went into his act. I had had enough and grabbing him by his shirt front, lifted him above my head and marched out. The old dears were shocked but we were at a loss how to deal with him and my nervous system was under extreme pressure. Despite all this we had many happy times as a family, eventually entering into the pet business again.

A three-legged cat adopted us. My wife is no pet lover but I was, and of course the boys wanted a pet so we took in this cat plus another stray. Of course I had to have them neutered and so, putting them on the back seat I took them to the vet. While waiting I smelt a putrid aroma from the back of the seat and being of an impetuous nature thrust my hand downwards into a warm, smelly mess. The three-legged cat had left me something in payment for the indignity he was about to suffer - what a pong.

Overall we were a happy family in Riverton and the boys were a blessing. My wife was a tower of strength, taking her share in the preaching and leading the ladies groups. I think they would rather have had her stay and me to go somewhere else but we were a team and the day finally came when we hitched up the caravan and left on the next stage in God's training school.

Addington

Addington was a shock. I found I was effectively removed from ministry and required to only manage the paper reclaim industry. I was not to be concerned in the running of the home, except as duty officer, and the welfare of the men was not my concern, they had their own officer with this responsibility.

The Army had taken away my pulpit and in doing so removed from me my main source of personal uplifting. I enjoyed proclaiming Scriptural truths even if I bored everyone else but now had to suffer under other officer's preaching, often coming away wondering why I bothered going. Linda was now a housewife without responsibility. They could have done nothing better to fertilise the desire to go to more fruitful fields.

The previous officer had been sent on holidays because he was worn out. He used to start ripping up cardboard at five am and finished at ten pm – a dedicated man. I thought he was a fool and had no intention of repeating his “dedication”.

My first morning

This was a disaster. I arrived full of good will to find one of my drivers acting like a five-year-old child. He looked at me and left. I should have let him go but not having a HT license I allowed him to be persuaded to return and carry on. Eventually I fired him but by that time I found the experience quite enjoyable.

The Industry

The industry was started by the officer who was then in control of Addington. He started with trucks to collect rubbish, which was sorted by the men from the night shelter, baled and sent to the mill. It was therapy for the men and brought in extra money. In my opinion it should have stayed small and as therapy but he expanded it and by the time I arrived, it was a business with fully-paid drivers and a large amount of cardboard to rip up, as well as a large rubbish collection. The overheads were heavy; income had dropped because of the loss of the Australian market. We were running at a loss when I arrive and by the time I finished, even with increased production were still running at a loss.

The hostel workers could only work for three hours and only volunteers were allowed. They had to rip up heavy Kraft cardboard with their hands and tended to smoke more than they worked. One of the first things I did was to buy Stanley knives for them. I wasn't surprised the previous officer had to work so hard – more fool him.

Shortly after I arrived I benefited from his actions. A fork-lift arrived and with it we were able to revolutionise the industry.

Pen-my salvation

A good foreman is worth his weight in gold and I had a beauty, Pen was his name. He was a Salvationist and a really nice guy and one man I would like to meet again. They should have put him in charge but the Army has this system which puts round pegs in square holes and I suppose they had to put me somewhere. I was most definitely the roundest peg this square hole had ever had.

I determined to put Pen in charge and eventually make myself redundant. I achieved this in 18 months but this only made my position worse because I now had nothing to do, but more of that later.

My great idea?

I found myself in charge of four nine-ton trucks, a large warehouse that kept filling with rubbish and cardboard, a work force of four old men and my drivers. Without the physical work of Pen, we would never have cleared the floor each day. We also shredded newspaper for packing material. We had three presses operating and I found another outside so I put it into operation as well. We were an efficient organisation but the overheads were too large and we still ran at a loss.

So clever me put my brain to work and came up with a plan that would eventually destroy the place. I think it served the Army right for putting a round peg in a square hole – I didn't have the knowledge

I needed. I did have an advisory board with successful non-Christian managers but when I sought the chairman's advice only received approval but not discussion. I think he didn't really want to be bothered. I was on my own with power to alter things but not the knowledge to do it correctly.

I decided to raise my prices for collecting rubbish. We didn't charge because we recycled most of what we collected. With my figures in my hand I marched into the office of a major client. The manager listened then asked me to come back in one week. I did this confident we would get a price of some sort and marched out five minutes later having lost a large part of our projected income.

We decided to drop all rubbish collections and concentrate on Kraft cardboard. We found other sources and increased our output significantly. We baled newspaper for export and I had my first experience of driving through the Lyttleton tunnel, overloaded with pallets of paper, hoping a traffic cop would not see me.

We all worked hard but to drop the rubbish collections spelled the death of the venture eventually. After I left the Army, Pen was made manager but I understand the industry is no more, which I think is good as it should never have been more than therapy for the men.

Death at Addington

It was here I saw my first dead man since Vietnam. He was an alcoholic and only seemed to want to drink himself to death. The drink had ruined his life and now he was with us operating our largest press. He worked well but one day collapsed amidst the cardboard. I thought he was playing a joke and laughed but when he didn't move I went across to him. As I approached he gave two heaves of his chest and died. I knew he was dead because a fly spiralled down and settled on his lip. Dead people lose something – life. I shuddered and arranged for the doctor who only confirmed his death.

I was filled with an uneasy feeling and that night came to the industry to face my fear. I entered and stood in the darkness, full of fear when I looked upstairs where he had been. I prayed and then climbed the steps to stand where he had been. In doing this I faced my fear but it was another eerie experience in my life.

The next death was when I couldn't find one of the residents. He was found in the toilet – dead! We had to carry him out, pull his trousers up and wait for the doctor. He arrived, declared him dead and made a joke about "dead meat". I didn't enjoy this part of my duties but am grateful for them, for the experience of dealing with death. Death has always been important to me because it is the final frontier and Christ Jesus either has the answer or Christianity is a sham. Funerals were the high point of my career. I enjoyed them.

Watties

Another alcoholic appeared who had been a successful engineer but lost everything through the drink. He came up with the idea of making inserts for Watties cartons. He knew how it was done so I arranged for him to do it while I went to Watties and agreed on five cents per insert. This was very profitable but we didn't have enough suitable cardboard to make the money we hoped. It was a thrill though to deliver our first load of inserts and to find them acceptable.

Lester, Bob and Bill

My main workers from the hostel were Bill, Lester and Bob, simple in their ways but loveable. I had some great times with them trying to increase their understanding of God's love and believe I will meet them one day in God's Kingdom.

I was taking the chapel service one Sunday when I noticed Lester was asleep with his mouth open and my senior officer looked sleepy as well. I leaned over the pulpit and in a stern voice said, 'Lester, don't you dare go to sleep while I am preaching'. The whole meeting was shocked into attention and my senior officer didn't look the least impressed. I didn't mind because I now had their undivided attention and was enjoying myself.

Overall I think of my time here with a smile and enjoy my memories of those I worked with.

He hated my guts

One resident hated my guts. He was a young Maori with a cast in his eye. He was vicious, and one day I found myself facing him in the early morning after he tried to steal some food. He threatened to kill me and for a while it was quite a dangerous confrontation. He went away muttering threats about my future. I wouldn't have liked to meet him in a dark alley.

Two months later I was visiting the prison when he came up to me but you wouldn't have known him for the same person. His face was transformed, the hate had gone and he radiated love. He had come to prison and found Jesus. There was a strong move of God at the prison at that time. I had never seen such a transformation and I praised God for what He had done. This was the power of God at work and here was living proof of what the Scriptures mean when they refer to being a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). I was filled with awe. I hope to meet him again someday, but not in prison. I can imagine nothing more depressing than to be incarcerated in a cell in a New Zealand prison.

Rolleston was another prison I visited and from there came a young man who had a tragic story. He had been a driver and was backing his truck with the guidance of a lady. She got caught behind the truck, out of his sight and was crushed against the loading ramp. He was sent to prison and now was eligible for work parole. He came to the industry for his final few months but seemed embittered by his experience. I don't think I was able to help him very much.

Evangelism Explosion

Being deprived of a pulpit I turned to my next love – visitation evangelism. I found an Anglican minister who was training people in the "Evangelism Explosion" system from America. Under his guidance I learned the system and went with him to visit houses. I enjoyed this but found it very stressful, my nervous system didn't seem to be able to handle the stress of going week after week and visiting strangers. After finishing with him I trained two others from the local Corp but found the stress hard to manage. This was what I felt called to do but for some I reason wasn't able to relax and enjoy it.

I decided to write a visitation system more suitable for a New Zealand society. I spent weeks on it and eventually I had one hundred copies printed a few weeks before we resigned. For years I tried to interest churches in my system but eventually put them in the rubbish because no one wanted to do visitation evangelism. I still believe one day I will return to this area of ministry.

Redundancy

I had succeeded in my plan to make myself redundant and the day came when I was no longer needed to run the industry. I found myself out of a job and my position now worsened because I had nothing to do.

Added to this was the frustration of attending Army services. I was drying up under the preaching of Army officers so I started going to Pentecostal services. Here I found people who enjoyed church and the sermons fed my parched spirit. It was the beginning of the end because in Pentecostal services I was getting all I lacked in the Army.

I finally ended up at the Elim church and started to seriously consider ministering in another church. Before taking this final step we decided to ask the Army to return us to Corp work. I needed to preach again and to try to win souls for Jesus. We wrote our request and waited, and waited, and waited.

God's blessing or my nervous system?

Waiting has never been my strong point but at this time I was rising at six am for prayer, reading through the Psalms and found great comfort in them – they were alive to me. I needed this comfort because my nervous system was finding it difficult to deal with the people around me. It was at this time I experienced my first attack of mania (I think). I had been on my rounds in the Rest home and suddenly felt euphoric. I thought God had done something at that moment and I could expect to hear from Headquarters very soon. I was wrong. It was not God giving me a blessing but my nervous system. I was to experience this more and more as I waited. The effect of this was that during these attacks I would offend whoever was troubling me at the time. This increased the pressure upon me and so I insulted more people and generally made life difficult for myself. I don't remember the depression then but that was just around the corner.

The Army responds

We threatened to resign and this brought a reaction finally from the Army. They offered to fly us to Wellington for discussion but as we were passing through on our holidays a few weeks later, we declined. It was with eager anticipation we left Addington for Wellington. Arriving, we had what we felt was a sensitive interview with the Territorial Commander. We informed him we did not want to leave the Army but wanted only to return to Corp work. We left, greatly encouraged by his attitude, with the promise he would write to us before we finished our holiday.

Through my contact with the Elim church in Christchurch we had an introduction to the Elim pastor in Hamilton – the only other Elim church at that time. We called in on him and had a good reception. He invited me to give my testimony on the way back after our holiday.

The decision is made

Our holiday was ruined by the stress of waiting for the letter from the Army. It did not arrive before we left and so we arrived in Hamilton without knowing the Army's decision.

I gave my testimony, basing it on a Psalm. I felt good delivering it and afterwards an old lady came and said she had a Bible verse for me – Jeremiah 29:11-13. I looked it up when I returned to the Motel and it seemed to hit me right between the eyes. ***"I alone know the plans I have for you,***

plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for. Then you will call to me. You will come and pray to me, and I will answer you. You will seek me, and you will find me because you will seek me with all your heart” (Good News Bible).

I knew then what I was to do. I was to resign from the Army and trust God to fulfil this promise. It was like at the time of my conversion when I went from not believing to believing, I knew this was from God.

That night we went to Elim again and I went forward for prayer for a growth on my head. It didn't get removed but the pastor said, as he prayed, ***“If you abide by the decision you have made I will go with you and bring you into the place I have for you”***. This really impressed me because I had told no one, except my wife, of the decision I had made that afternoon.

I phone the Territorial Commander

We reached Wellington and I phoned the Territorial Commander who told me he had a letter for me on his desk. Did I want him to read it or would I come and see him. I knew I was going to resign and so went to see him. He read me the letter when I arrived and it said the Army would do with us as they liked and would not, at that stage, return us to Corp work.

This was just another confirmation I was to resign and he didn't show great grief at my decision. I think he was glad to have a tidy solution to his problem. It was decided I would return to Addington to manage the paper industry until the Social Service Secretary returned from overseas and then our position would be re-examined. This was to give us time to adjust to our new status and I appreciated this offer. I walked into the meeting an officer of the Salvation Army and walked out a civilian. It was quick and painless. My wife says she never resigned but it is one of the anomalies of the Army that though the wife is an officer in her own right, when the husband goes, so does she. (This has changed now).

Trusting God is not as easy as it sounds

We were now free to follow God in a way we had never done before. We needed him to supply our needs and in confidence he would guide us we crossed to the South Island and travelled to Christchurch. Little did we know God had a shock waiting for us, and we were beginning on the roadway into the “desert training school of God” and not the fertile land we expected.

We arrived at Addington not knowing what my reception would be like. The officer in command was not the regular one as he was on sick leave and the man I dealt with was a retired colonel who had been relieving for only a few weeks. He met me as I came through the door and called me into his office. He seemed agitated as he questioned me about my decision, saying I should resign and when I explained what had been arranged, expressed ignorance and suggested I leave. I said he couldn't fire me but he said he could because I was no longer an officer, only an employee, and he had the authority to hire or fire employees.

Flabbergasted I walked out of his office. It is probably the only job in the world where you can lawfully resign and be fired from. I walked in and told Linda to start packing as we had to leave. I rang the Elim pastor but he could give me no suggestion except to go to Hamilton. I rang the pastor and he offered to arrange accommodation – at least our destination was decided.

The Colonel came to see us. He said we could stay for a few days but the die was now cast and we only wanted to get away. I have believed for many years he was acting on instructions from Headquarters. If he was acting on his own initiative then I find his actions very hard to understand. I may never know the truth.

Final departures

Linda and the boys caught the plane the next day to Auckland where her parents were. I really sent her into the lion's den as she had to field all the accusations from her family about my actions.

I finished packing and with Pen's help took our boxes to Timaru until we had a place to stay. I packed odds and ends into our trailer, said goodbye to the industry and its workforce, shook Pen's hand again and I was off. The future was unknown and for the first time in my life I had to trust God for it. I headed for the inter-Island ferry singing songs of praise to God.

I think I had the easy part. It was my wife who had the unenviable task of sitting in the midst of her family with the unspoken accusation I was a villain.

The trip up the island was tremendous. I sang songs of praise, and praised God in tongues - a very joyful time.

Was I right?

Looking back I believe I was. My ability to handle stress was worsening and I would not have survived in the Army too much longer. Has my life turned out as I expected? No! My ability to handle stress has only worsened and everything I tried to do to fulfil my vision has been dashed. Still, I am in the will of God and I believe it is not important what I do for God but that I am faithful in relationship and in this God has never let me down. It took me 40 years to reach this state of peace. My ego went into the dust screaming and struggling but I would rather this than to miss all the lessons God has taught me. God loves me!

Hamilton

Arriving in Hamilton, Les took me to Cyril's home. He and his wife gave me free board for a week while I looked for a job and found a place to stay.

The job wasn't hard to find. I was taken on at the Towel Delivery Company in Frankton where I started with another driver while I learnt what I had to do. It was a bit disconcerting to see the way customers treated the driver but it was a job and I should have stayed with them but of course I knew better.

While waiting to hear if I had the job I had been to an employment agency that sent me to an insurance Company. I could see it all: sell insurance and still have plenty of time to do God's will. I was convinced this was God's will for me because I felt so good sitting there. Unfortunately, it was not the Spirit of God telling me this but my emotional system although I didn't realise it then. I resigned from the Towel Company leaving a regular income behind and stepped out into the world of commission selling.

Rescuing my beloved

While this was taking place my wife had been waiting in the midst of silent accusation looking forward to the day when I would arrive to rescue her. It finally came when, after finding a flat I arrived to get her and the boys.

I can still see the "Inquisition" gathered to put me to the torture. By the time they finished I was slightly irritated but it must have been hard for them to accept what I had done. I was the villain

who had ruined the future of their lovely daughter and was to be properly put in my place. It was with a sense of relief we scuttled to the car and drove back to Hamilton. It was my wife's birthday.

We had no beds, table or chairs – our clothing was from the Thrift shop and we had foam mattresses to sleep on. The Elim pastor turned up the next day with a table but for a while we existed on the bare minimum. We didn't mind because God was very real and it was exciting to trust him. We were young and believed God's next step for us would soon be revealed. What did we care that we had next to nothing? This was the great adventure! But, like all good adventures trouble was just around the corner.

Commission selling and stress

What I didn't realise was I could not handle stress and I had my feet planted on roadways that were stressful. Commission selling without a good bank balance to buffer the bad times is very stressful. I did the training, learnt the system and began finding prospects to sell to. This was the hardest part because the only people I knew in Hamilton attended the Elim Church. If you have ever tried to sell insurance to Pentecostals you will realise the mountain I tried to climb. Eventually I fell off the cliff and plummeted to my end when I tried to sell to the manager of a book shop. I did all the right things and used all the tricks of the trade but he didn't sign. As I drove away, tears ran down my cheeks and I faced the truth – I was selling because I needed money, not because I wanted to help the client. My family were depending on me to support them and I was failing. Arriving home I went into the boy's bedroom where they slept without a care in the world, trusting in me to provide for them. The writing was on the wall and I knew I had to get another job.

Bon Brushes

This was the only job I could find. I enjoyed going door to door but I made a fundamental mistake that was to have far reaching consequences – we moved to Tahuna, a few kilometres from Morrinsville. The board was cheap at a farm cottage and I sold enough to survive on but the mistake I made was moving away from the Elim church, thinking I could still be involved while living so far away. I couldn't and it reduced our involvement to Sundays only.

Tahuna was a pleasant place to live but it didn't help my isolationist tendencies. I never felt I belonged and was bewildered about the next step in God's plan. It wasn't working out as I had expected.

I had my trailer, on which was written, "Jesus Cares" and with it I would roll up to a customer's door to sell a brush. I wanted to be a witness more than I wanted to make money but I don't think I went about it in the wisest way.

It was while I was selling Bon Brushes I met a young lady who peered at the badge on my coat and seeing it was a Christian one, asked me about it. I led her in a prayer to accept Christ and she is the only person I am aware of whose life was dramatically changed because I was willing to witness. I hear of her occasionally and it thrills me to hear how well she is doing. She had the advantage of being shepherded by local Christian farmers and it is probably their help that was most influential in her early days. Nether-the-less this episode was very encouraging.

I enjoyed selling door to door but the stress of going out each day to sell became increasingly harder as my nervous system slowly collapsed as I tried to grapple with my new lifestyle. My wife was a real strength at this time and without her I don't think I would have survived as long as I did. Her parents also were supportive, putting aside their disappointment and helping us in many ways.

The van

I started off with a van, purchased from the previous agent, who was now my boss. I didn't have it long before the engine blew apart and over the period I had it the local garage got to know me quite well. Eventually I handed it back as I could not afford to keep it. I consider this to be another mistake made because of the stress I was under. I should have kept it but my anxiety states were increasing and I was finding it increasingly difficult to see light at the end of the tunnel. In giving it back I got rid of one stress but we lost money on the deal.

It was this though that saved my wife and the boys from serious injury. We were going to a bonfire in the Viva but it had a flat tire so we went in the van. The bonfire was a time of loneliness and stress for me because I felt estranged from the people there so we left early. Coming down the country road we came to a crossroads. I saw another car coming on my left but figured he would give way to me. He didn't. A scream and the squealing of tyres resulted in a crash but as my wife was high in the van she and the boys were not injured. If we had been in the Viva they would have been badly injured, if not killed. I believe satan had a go at getting rid of us and but for the flat tyre would have succeeded. You, the reader may say it was coincidence but we believe God has a plan for our life and it will greatly affect satan's kingdom. At the time of writing this we are both involved in intercessory prayer cells, in Spiritual warfare and experiencing victory over the demonic world, beginning, we hope in the work God had been preparing us for, for 20 years. (I was wrong, again).

Morrinsville Hospital

Christmas was approaching and as it was a bad time for commission selling, in my viewpoint, I applied for a temporary job at the Morrinsville hospital. The Friday before I was due to start I woke up with agonising pain in my back. I thought it was broken and it was a few hours before I could get out of bed. What was I to do? On Monday I was to start hefting bodies around at the hospital and here I was hardly able to stand. After a few hours the pain diminished and after wrapping an elastic bandage around my middle I thought I could manage.

I had had back pain ever since my muscles lost their tone after my Army service. In the different beds we slept in while in the Salvation Army I experienced different levels of discomfort but the pain I felt at this time was excruciating.

Monday came and I struggled to the hospital. I managed the first day by using my stomach muscles when I stood and did any lifting. As each day passed the pain lessened and I was able to carry on. I went to the Dr. to find it was collapse in the Lumbar area. I received heat therapy and was given exercises.

Morrinsville hospital was a well-run place, giving what I thought to be a high level of care to people who suffered strokes. Many would never leave it. It seemed to me the hospital had become their life and within these walls they were happy.

It was an illuminating period of my life as I shared in ministering to these people: some without limbs and others unable to even turn themselves let alone find the urine bottle when needed. I was sorry to leave, especially as I now had to return to commission selling again.

Farmers Trading Co.

Money was needed because we had bought a fridge from Farmers. This may not seem that important to have in this book but it illustrates the difficulty some people had to get credit in those days. When we came to Hamilton we went to Smith and Brown to buy a bed. We signed for it, paid

our deposit and waited for delivery. Instead, we received a phone call telling us that as we had not had credit in the last five years they would not sell us the bed. In the Army we always paid cash. As a result of this I never bought anything else off this company.

When we arrived in Tahuna I went to the Manager of Farmers in Morrinsville and explained our situation, that we had been refused credit. He was pleasant, helpful and arranged credit for us. Over the years we have purchased many items from Farmers and they have profited from this man's good sense whereas the other company went broke a few years ago.

The leather worker

It was at Tahuna I started to learn to work with leather. My friend in Auckland Robert Pene and his wife Ailex had a craft shop and they gave me stock to sell along with Bon brushes. I never sold much and I think they lost money but they wanted to help me and for that I will always be grateful. Robert is now dead after giving most of his life to the welfare of his people. I was able to visit with him while he was ill, hearing of his faith in Jesus. I look forward to seeing my brother in God's Kingdom after I die.

I try to return to the Army

I made Bible covers and while I was carving the resurrection one day the thought struck me, what was I doing carving the resurrection when I was called to preach the resurrection?

I thought what a fool I was and wrote to the Salvation Army to query whether I might return to the fold. I felt a peace about this but did not hear for a while from them. I finally received word that the Divisional Commander would be in Hamilton and would phone me. While we were waiting we had been experiencing spiritual highs at Elim so when he did phone me I wasn't too interested in agreeing to his conditions. One of which was I would be at the Army service that day but when I said we had to go somewhere else he told me it was not much use us meeting. I didn't blame him but if we had met we may have been able to discuss a way in which we could have fitted back into the Army system.

A turning point

This was the turning point for us because we knew that door was now shut. We didn't mind because the services at Elim at that time were exciting. These exciting times didn't last but we knew our pathway would not lead back to the Army. I believe I had to try to return before I could let it go and it was about this time I asked the elders of the Church for prayer – I felt I needed deliverance from the "Army Spirit".

We met on a Saturday morning and as we prayed pictures floated into my mind. One of these was of an altar, on it I laid a body in a Salvation Army uniform and in my mind I saw it burn up and disappear. I left the meeting a lot freer than before but at later times I had more deliverance from what I call the "Army Spirit".

We return to Hamilton

The farmer, Mr. Bax was a nice man and he took us and our luggage into town on his truck and wouldn't accept payment. He was an example of how kind many farming people are.

The house we rented was large, a mansion in our eyes, with a tennis court at the back and a large orchard with beautiful plums. Here we settled for a period. Our eldest son started school and the youngest kindergarten. My wife joined ladies' groups and I tried selling brushes in the city.

I was heading downhill but didn't realise it. The stress involved was too much for me and I was reluctant to sell in the evening when more people would be home because it separated me from my support group – my family. I went back to selling insurance and did sell one policy while canvassing door to door. He kept his policy and I eventually received full commission some years later. The trouble was I now had to find another customer and as I still knew very few people it became increasingly harder to motivate myself each day.

I failed as a commission salesman. Could I have succeeded if I didn't have the handicap of Vietnam after effects? I don't know. I was trying to do a stressful job while suffering cycles of lethargy and anxiety. My feelings of alienation from society were increasing and I was feeling more and more isolated in the community. Nothing was going right for me. I was not providing for my family, I was not fitting into the church and I was not fitting into society.

This period of my life was not a happy time. I was not sleeping well and always seemed to be tired. I tried to join in activities related to the school but felt uncomfortable around authority figures and in crowds. The only ones who loved me were my family. I felt alone and spiritually depleted. Nothing was turning out as I had expected.

The will of God?

I believed when we left the Salvation Army it was in the will of God and he would open a doorway that would lead on to further service as a minister of God. What I found was a closed shop. There always seemed to be someone else in front of me. In Elim were people better qualified to be Pentecostal Pastors and I found this very hard to accept. As an ex-Salvation Army officer I seemed to be too orthodox for a Pentecostal church just as I was too pentecostal for the Army. My training and experiences had produced a belief system that always disagreed with some aspect of other church's practices and, as I was still looking for perfection in organisations, these disappointments prevented me from becoming one with the churches I tried to join.

The Elim pastor told me I needed to be able to sit in the congregation and find peace but the only thing I found was frustration and anger. This anger was aimed at the system which did not seem to be listening to God about what a catch I was – so I left. In retrospect I have come to realise my anger was against God for not doing what I thought he should do.

The problems were in me

I began searching in other churches for the will of God but in each one I found the same problems and it took some years before I realised these were not in the church but in me.

I could no longer trust

I discovered one of these problems in Elim when I was sitting in the seat and the word "trust" floated into my mind. I realised I didn't trust people anymore; I was suspicious of authority figures and anyone who had any control over my life. This revelation helped me to understand why I had problems but I had no answer for it and when I shared it with others they made comforting noises, said a quick prayer and said goodbye. I was left with a problem I was no longer expected to have. A Pentecostal church is the last place a Vietnam veteran should be, if he was like me.

I tried Baptist, Assembly of God, New Life, Apostolic, Reformed Baptist, Brethren and Anglican. In each of these I found the same problems and the same blockages and gradually I came to realise the problem was me and if I was to find God's will, it would not be within a Church.

Photocopy servicing to PDL Industries

I finally got out of selling and joined Thompson and Ward as a photocopy serviceman. They needed someone who could work on the electronic side and seeing I was a registered serviceman, they took me on. It was run by a man whose favourite expression was, "Jesus wept" so you can imagine how much future I had with him.

I found it very hard to work in the system again, to spend my time fixing machines when I felt such a strong call upon my life to be full time in the service of Jesus Christ. I believed I was biding my time and soon a door would open I could walk through to find myself once more preaching and teaching the Good News of Jesus. Instead I found myself in a position I was not good at and becoming increasingly resentful against my boss. I finally left and went selling for PDL industries.

I had been to night school to study the art of selling and by default landed this job when another applicant failed to turn up. A car came with it and we were mobile again because we had sold our car to clear ourselves of debt.

Life was better for a period. We had a home, the boy's lives were more settled and I had a job I enjoyed but didn't really want. I wanted to be a minister of Christ and not selling fuses and plugs. I tried to do all the things I had learnt but there was lacking within me the single-minded commitment a successful salesman needs. My boss had it and belonged to the old school that lived for selling and the success it brought. I was not motivated by money and found it difficult to translate reward into dollars and cents as a goal to work for.

The stress of having to fulfil my bosses' expectations became more and more difficult and once again my mind was turning to escape the stress rather than overcoming it. My mind was increasingly becoming fogged and I was inclined to be rude to customers at times. Once, during a promotion of heaters I went with my boss to make a presentation. When we finished I felt they had been playing games with us and before my boss could open his mouth I told them what I thought of them. We lost that sale and my boss was not impressed.

Inability to control myself

I had been aware of my inability to control my reactions for some time but it was during this time of my life I did most harm to my relations with others. I would constantly offend people when I was struggling with lethargy and came under too much stress. I also had developed the habit of looking for greener pastures when things went wrong. I was running away but didn't realise it. I was looking for a miracle; instead I found closed doors and frustration. I had not yet learnt I was in God's training school and I was a stubborn pupil.

I lived with a Saint

My wife at this time was a saint. Without her I would not have survived but she proved to be the rock I needed, gently encouraging and strong under pressure. Would that all Vets had wives like her. I was under stress, behaving strangely and up every hour at night to go to the toilet. I was embarrassing her in social situations and many times she must have wondered if it was all worth it. I was fortunate when she took her marriage vows it was for better or for worse and though it was not very good at this time she put her trust in Jesus for the future.

God owed me a house?

We sold our house in Mangere believing we would not leave the Army. This was not an easy step because we had purchased it with a Rehabilitation loan at 2%. We sold it for \$14,000 and received a profit of \$7,000. The next year was when property prices exploded so the buyers really got a bargain. We believed it was of God for us to sell it because it sold so quickly and since we also believed it was God who brought us out of the Army I felt God owed us a house.

It seemed like an impossible task as I went from one building firm to another but the rejections were always for the same reasons – we had no money. The day came when I was settling into my job with Thompson and Ward when I saw an advert from a firm who built houses. By this time I had had enough of rejection so I rang up and explained our situation before I wasted money in going to see them. The man on the other end of the phone explained it was not impossible for us to have a house if we were prepared to do some of the work ourselves. I decided to see him and when I asked directions found I was looking at him, he was across the road from me.

This became quite a saga. He sent me to a lawyer, who proved to be a tower of strength as the weeks rolled by because our application was rejected time and again by Housing Corporation. Eventually it was accepted but not before six months had passed and the house had increased in price by \$1000. This created a problem for us but with the lawyer's help we had the man in and he signed there would be no more price increases. He eventually lost his job because of us but we will always be grateful for what he did and especially grateful to the lawyer who fought the building company, saving us hundreds of dollars.

For us to have our own house again was a miracle, in my viewpoint, because I had given up all hope of owning another home. The way it came about and the way the money was gathered together all suggest to us the loving hand of a loving God. One of these was obtaining my position with PDL at the time of building the house. I arrange for an electrician to work for labour only and I supplied the material he needed at a healthy discount. The result of this was the amount allowed for was met, even though we put many electrical extras in to make it a far more comfortable house than we used to own. We ended up with a home we believed was a gift from God.

Life had not been easy since we arrived in Hamilton but when I look back and think it was only two years since we arrived with a trailer full of knick-knacks and nothing else but trust we were in the will of God, to now be in our own house again was a miracle.

Failing again

Again I was failing! PDL was a difficult place for me. I seemed to have this gift of finding jobs I could do but did not have the background to enable me to do it well. The stress of travelling to see people who did not want to see me and the expectations of my boss who, I think, believed in me yet was a difficult man to work for, was taking its toll. I was living off my reserves and they were quickly running out. I felt persecuted, my cycles of lethargy were increasing and I was finding it difficult to control my temper. Finding the stress of having to meet targets became more difficult each day. The conflict of working as a salesman when I desperately wanted to be out preaching and witnessing was increasing and soon I fell into the old trap of looking for a way out.

Dri-Copy

I found it when Dri-Copy advertised for a photocopy serviceman. I applied for the position and became the service manager. I managed myself and one other, who knew more than me anyway.

My boss at PDL was not impressed but I chose to resign when he was away so I avoided most of the unpleasantness. In looking back at my life I see a pattern of avoidance of unpleasant situations. I dread the thought of offending people who I still had to deal with, such as neighbours and workmates. This is a weakness and one I am still having difficulty in coping with but I am changing and find it easier to say what I think and still be with people who disagree with me. This increased my conflict because my desires were to minister to people yet my symptoms made it increasingly impossible to do so.

Photocopy servicing was the closest I came to satisfaction in the work-force. I enjoyed taking a machine that was printing shoddy copies and turning it into producing lovely black and white copies. It was like a religious conversion and I received pleasure in looking at beautiful black printing on white paper.

The problem I had was the salesman. He would make all sorts of claims for the copier and then expect me to do miracles to prove him right.

It was in these situations I became aware I did not have much loyalty towards my employer and used to go the extra mile for the customer, looking after his benefit more than my employers. I believe this is associated with my lack of patriotism, my trust in those in authority who betrayed me after Vietnam. I was not loyal to those in authority over me. Looking back I can see this problem and it is not surprising I had problems in my work situations. I had great difficulty when loyalty was expected of me. I was a rebel and rebels are hard to live with.

Open-Air Campaigners

It was about this time I found the place where I felt I belonged - Open Air Campaigners - and for a period this met my needs to preach the good news about Jesus.

William Booth, Salvation Army founder, came home from an open-air meeting and said to his wife, "I have found my destiny". This was how I felt after being out with them. This was where I belonged, on the streets, trying to reach the lost. I felt comfortable and in control, doing what I believed to be God's destiny for me. I was wrong but it took a few years before I realised my increasing symptoms would frustrate my ambitions.

The evangelist in control of the Waikato was talented and experienced but was the last person I needed to be associated with because he belonged to the RFA brigade (Ready for anything). The RFA brigade did their job without much planning because they were good at what they did, but I needed to think and plan about what I did.

The things important to me such as being on time, planning in advance and communicating with others, were not important to the RFA brigade, so there was plenty of room for frustration, which was the last thing I needed.

It was here I learned to become a ventriloquist and so fulfil a boyhood dream. When I was young I used to read on the backs of comic books about this marvellous device that fitted inside your mouth and enabled you to throw your voice. Without the device it was harder but before long Donald came to reside in my subconscious, along with Flumpy the elephant and other friends I created as the years passed. Together we attracted the young and not so young to hear our message.

I learned how to give sketch board talks using paints, puzzles and gimmicks to attract people. It wasn't hard to attract them, the problem was to hold them long enough to hear our message about Jesus. Often when I turned to face the audience, after other acts had finished, they had all vanished and I would preach to empty streets. Even so I enjoyed it and we had some interesting experiences.

Together we went to Garden Place in Hamilton, Paeroa, Frankton, Otorahanga and Cambridge, mostly preaching to people who did not want to hear.

Sweetwaters

Sweetwaters Music Festival in Ngaruawahia was memorable as we went as part of a coffee bar ministry. We put a sign outside that said "Come in for a cup of coffee and a chat about Christ". Many came in and said, "I've had my coffee, when do I get my chat about Jesus?"

One day I took my sketch board and set up outside the Bible Society tent. I prepared my sketch then stepped into the flow of people and preached. The flow stopped and for ten minutes I had the biggest audience I had ever had. I finished, prepared another sketch and preached again. I enjoyed myself.

I was only challenged once when I referred to my step-father. He had died not long before of stomach cancer. My mum tended him at home until he died. He starved to death. He died as he had lived, without God. I said he would now be in Hell and was challenged by a man who thought it was very harsh of me to say this. I replied that he died as he had lived, an honourable man. A man I greatly respected and cared about who had died rejecting Jesus and no matter which way I looked at it he could not be with God so the only other place is the one we call Hell. I do not mean the place of suffering that others mean. I mean the place where people go who don't accept Christ. The Bible refers it as Hades or Sheol. These terms do not have the meaning that many interpret Hell to have.

I don't profess to understand everything but the Christian message is, "God loved us so much that he gave his only son so we need not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16), and that "Jesus is the only way to God" (John 14:6), so my step-father can't be with God and must be in Hell. My challenger seemed to accept my explanation and went away.

I also met many Hindu sects. One used a book to determine what he did each day. He tried to show me how it worked but in the end we agreed to disagree. Most who came in were well behaved and came for coffee but many were open to talking and some made decisions but, if I knew then what I know now about the demonic world, I would have had a field day.

It was an interesting learning experience but I found it difficult whereas others seemed to thrive. My isolationist tendencies were well developed and I felt alone and not part of the group. I was under stress, managing, but not enjoying the experience. I felt the way I had when I was at Boy Scout camps. I wanted to belong but for some reason didn't fit in. These feelings had increased since Vietnam and were making it very difficult for me to fit into groups of any kind – especially when I had to come under the authority of others.

The OAC leader, I had difficulty with because he had his fingers in so many different ventures at the same time and he made many promises he found difficult to keep. Many times I put my trust in his promises to find he had forgotten or was just unable to match his deeds with his words. This made it difficult for me because I had this tendency to think other people could solve my problems and became critical if they couldn't.

As you can see, the same attitudes were developing that ruined my involvement in other groups and it was only a matter of time before I made it impossible for me to continue.

Children's missions were another area of conflict. The first was when I went as team leader to Mount Maunganui, near Tauranga. We were successful in getting decisions because we had a good programme. What eventually bothered me was the ease of getting decisions and the lack of life-changing attitudes in the children. Eventually I could not go on because the stress was on decisions

only. This was not surprising as many in OAC came from Brethren or Baptist backgrounds who believe once a person made a decision for Jesus, he or she was saved for eternity, regardless of what they did afterwards. I do not believe this, so the numbers game was not one I played with enthusiasm.

Rotorua mission was a success and a failure for me. I led this mission but was filled with anxiety the whole time and though we were successful in decisions I was glad when it was over. It was becoming obvious to me that though I desired to be an evangelist for OAC I was not able to handle the stress. When we arrived back I received an offer to become an evangelist. I had achieved my goal but knew I could not work their way and, like my experiences in the army and the Salvation Army, I had become disillusioned with the people and the systems. I accepted the appointment but two days later resigned.

One of the stresses with OAC was the disregard for the family. The work came before family needs and during vital years of our boys' growth I was away at important times leaving my wife to raise our children.

One night I returned from preaching in Frankton to find her and our oldest son in tears because while they were at the supermarket, she looked up to see a lady marching him to the office. He had decided to try shoplifting. The store decided not to press charges but for her it was a frightening experience. I was convicted of how I should have been there but was not. My son at that time was still open to God and after confessing his action, prayed for forgiveness. Together, as a family, we prayed and this made me think again of my responsibilities as a father.

Roadway to breakdown

It was while I was with OAC I was made redundant from Armstrong and Springhall (A & S). I had gone there after Dri-Copy was taken over. I was a misfit but we didn't realise I was heading for a breakdown of physical as well as mental health.

It was while I was working on a printing machine I became aware of a compulsion to work faster and faster. I couldn't slow down and sweat was pouring off me. After, I had to rest because I was exhausted. I didn't sense anything wrong because tiredness had been part of my life for a long time, but increasingly I was finding it more and more difficult to concentrate and my energy levels were decreasing.

Another compulsion led to me giving up my right to have a work vehicle. I didn't want to be obligated to A & S and the vehicle I had free use of became a burden to me. I needed to be free of any obligation so I gave them back their vehicle and any rights I had to it. It was actions like this that probably made me a candidate for redundancy. I was not loyal to the firm. I was an independent rebel who did not want to be obligated them. What I am saying here is not new because I have repeated this action ever since Vietnam. I don't remember having a problem with it before Vietnam.

Redundant

It is a shock to the nervous system to be made redundant. You are invited into the office thinking you are going to be told something important, to be told you are no longer needed. Your whole life falls apart and disaster seems to face you on every side. It was only six weeks before we had gone into debt to buy a car. We did this because my wife had obtained a job with a Christian school and for a while we had visions of being rich. Here I was about to lose my job and her pay was poor for, like many Christian agencies money was secondary to the will of God.

Nothing was going right for us and although we believed God was in control it was still very hard to come to terms with. We did so eventually and a position was found for me with Anchorage drug and rehabilitation Centre in Frankton, which was about the worst thing that could have happened to me.

Anchorage was a place I should have steered clear of. Anchorage was stress, not only from the people seeking help but especially from the two in charge. It was not a happy place and the only way to survive was to shut up and stay out of the way. Eventually I became the night watchman, working two shifts – 11 pm to 7 am and 1 pm to 11 pm. Most of the night I was the only one in charge and this produced its own kind of stress. Disrupted sleep patterns were a factor, I believe, in my eventual breakdown.

Some of the residents were alcoholics, others had drug problems but it is not my opinion that many were helped to a better way of life. I was abused, threatened and attacked at times but on the whole we got on well with each other. I would not like to have been a resident in Anchorage, as it was then. (It has since closed).

Voodoo and other poo

It was a fine evening in 1982 I arrived to begin my first shift. I was asked to help collect a young man who had been found practicing voodoo at another home for girls, run by the Anchorage Trust. We picked him up without any trouble and when we arrived back took him to a front room and commenced to cast an evil spirit out of him. The senior started to pray. The young man became violent. I grabbed his head, forcing it down so I couldn't look into his eyes. I had taken off my glasses and put them on a small table so they wouldn't get broken. The man suddenly went stiff as a board and his feet knocked my glasses to the floor. I hung on tighter and within a few minutes the demon left him and we all relaxed.

One of the first things he did was to shave off his beard as it had significance in the voodoo religion. The change in him was dramatic. His face changed from a scowl to a smile and in the following months it wasn't often I saw him without it. I went home rejoicing at the power available to us as Christians to deliver people from possession by evil spirits. It was arranged for him to go for a holiday to his Marae where there was a Maori evangelist who could look after him. When he came back it was to be arranged for him to return, which I thought was a great idea. The Anchorage authorities, for some reason, said he not ready to go and prevented this from taking place. He went downhill and eventually ran off with a girl from Anchorage.

The Maori influence was strong. The influential people were Maori or connected to the Maori work and as a Pakeha I watched what I said and did. The residents had to attend the Maori church, as did many of the staff. In many ways it was a centre of Maoridom in the area – in my opinion. I grew to like and respect some of the Maori staff but not others.

Night shift blessings

Night shift had some blessings. I could raid the refrigerator in the early morning but the biggest blessing was the time available to work on my Bible college of NZ study course. It changed my way of looking at the Bible and enabled me to walk in the steps of Bible characters; Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph etc. I started to see things through their eyes and many came alive for me as I worked my way through the course. It took me seven years to finish but in those years the Bible became a living book to me. In it I found the strength I needed to endure the tough years that were coming.

I also practiced my singing and guitar playing during the early hours of the morning but this was not appreciated by one resident who became quite agitated.

No Longer could I trust

We had returned to the Elim church after trying various others. In them all I found the same problems and in the end had to leave. I was the problem but had not then realised it. I was sitting in Elim one Sunday morning asking myself why I don't fit in when the word "trust" floated into my mind. I realised I did not trust any more; my trust in man and his organisations had been beaten down till I felt insecure when under the control of others. This revelation was to be a turning point in understanding myself and my relationship to society.

Sickness

Shift work was slowly destroying me and the nights were becoming stressful. I was growing increasingly tired and one night could hardly pull myself up the stairs to do my rounds. My physical state was worsening and the stress was growing as friction between staff increased. I finally realised I needed to see the doctor when I noticed large brown circles around my ankles.

The next ten days were spent in bed. I felt sick and seemed to be getting sicker – no energy and the areas around my ankles were painful. I also had a rash over much of my torso. Sarcoidosis was the verdict, but turned out to be hard to prove. In the end they could find no diagnosis that fitted my symptoms but Sarcoidosis.

When the doctor told me it was Sarcoidosis I felt a shock course through my system. It was 1983 and I was 38 – too young to die. I left his office and went to Anchorage where I told them the verdict. I broke down in the office as the shock hit me again. It was like a sentence of death- a cancer-like illness according to the doctor (which goes to show he didn't know very much because sarcoidosis is an inflammatory illness and few die of it but I did not know that then). I could no longer do the night shift and had to leave. They did what they could for me and gave me a study book of the Bible to remember them by.

An uncertain future

My future was uncertain as we came to grips with what had happened to me. I went on the sickness benefit and for the next year struggled with having nothing to do, feeling too weak to even do the lawns.

The doctor had many tests done to confirm his diagnosis. I had a rash and small hard lumps appearing around my body. He cut one out of my thigh hoping to find confirmation of his diagnosis but it proved to have no sarcoidosis nodules on it. The specialist at Waikato Hospital stuck a tube down my nose and took a sample from my lungs but still no proof of Sarcoidosis. I had the thrill of seeing my lungs in action. So what was wrong with me? Today they still don't know. All that is known is that it cleared up as time went by.

We adjusted to a different lifestyle and medical science forgot about me and went on to some other poor bugger to experiment with. I think it was probably a stress related illness. The mind and body had had enough of the stress I was under and decided to break down. Who knows? It was significant to me that after the bible study group prayed for me I did improve so I give the glory to God I am still alive to write this. Today I know a lot more about Sarcoidosis and my symptoms do fit this diagnosis even if it wasn't proved. A veteran in America has had a claim for Sarcoidosis accepted as being caused by Agent Orange. (I applied to have the rejection of Sarcoidosis reopened in 2008

but was told by the NRO the doctors at the appeal board had said it was not Sarcoidosis so I am left with a mystery illness with no diagnosis. What was wrong with me at this time is of no concern to Veteran's Affairs.)

One incident comes to mind just before I went sick. I had a dream Satan was attacking me and trying to put a pill into my body. I woke up in fear, praying against him. It was a lucid dream (one where you are not sure if it is real or not) and it left me shaken and fearful. It was shortly after this I became ill.

What happened to my faith in God during this time?

I had received encouragement through prophetic words given by the Elim pastor. I found the faith of this man a help in my time of trial even though I disagreed with him on other matters. It was tough though, as all my ambitions were being destroyed as sickness, both physical and mental, plagued my life. God seemed far away and I had to remind myself of my conversion experience and the times he had helped in the past to get through each day. I reasoned he was with me in the past so he must be with me in the present, even though I could not sense his presence in any way.

The church could have been a great help at this time but they treated me like a leper. The Elim pastor came to see me occasionally but the love and support of Elim people was marked by their absence. This was the hardest to come to terms with and I have had to have deliverance for the resentment I collected during this period.

Dear old Charley

It was my cat, Charley, who taught me a lesson. One day he jumped on my lap, settled down and began to wash himself. The thought came to me that this is all God wants me to do; sit on his lap, trust in him and enjoy my life. If God wanted to restore to me a ministry or to do a work of any kind for him he would call me. I didn't have to seek it, just relax in his love and let him be boss in my life. I still struggle with this concept but it became easier to trust God as each difficulty and trial came along. It was a great lesson to learn because the future held deep, dark valleys for us to walk in but in them we learnt to trust God. It is easier now to find strength in difficult times than it used to be. The training school of God is tough but I want to graduate from it, not be a drop-out because the roadway became too hard.

I decide to survive (1981)

I realised I would not work again so resolved to turn my back on the past and establish a new lifestyle. If I hadn't, I would not have been able to accept a different lifestyle because the pressure from society to return to the work-force would have been too strong. I accepted my illness and slowly found ways to live a quality lifestyle within the limits I could handle.

The first year was the hardest. I sat in my chair and twiddled my thumbs, did housework and the cooking while Linda continued teaching. I faced the same battle retired people face and found it difficult – there was very little to do. I knew I had to make the transition from going to work each day, to using the time I had available in activities I wanted to do. I started to develop disciplines that have sustained me since. As my health improved I was able to do more but as the physical side decreased the psychiatric problems increased. Physically I pictured myself as a tree planted by a river full of nutrients but something was in the way of them reaching me. The result was I was lethargic and always felt like I was climbing a hill but could not reach the top.

It was years before this abated and my energy levels rose but it was not through the medical system I found the health I have today but through revelation from God and psychological theories that slowly released me from the rejection of my past.

Psychologically I was a mess. I felt no one loved me, except my wife. No one cared if I lived or died. I felt rejected by the church, society and my country, abandoned to live the rest of my life as a lonely, bitter recluse. I was in a bad way for over a year and then I discovered something to do – I became a knit wit.

I start to live again

I needed something to do so why not sewing? My wife didn't like sewing and for some reason it attracted me so off I trotted to the Knit-wit sewing course. I was the only man.

I found knit sowing easy but expensive so turned to non-stretch fabric which I found more challenging. Over the next few years I made most of my wife's clothing and even some for myself. The boys were not so appreciative of my efforts.

I ruined some attempts because of my compulsion to carry on when I should have stopped and thought about what I was doing. When this happened while I had a pair of scissors in my hand it was disastrous. This compulsion to work faster and faster took years to control but now I force myself to stop and do something else before I do too much damage.

Sewing filled an important blank in my life. It gave me something to do, instead of feeling sorry for myself. Later I added Chinese cooking to my skills. I went to night-school and studied English and Mathematics, passed School Certificate maths and University Entrance English.

Slowly my life was regaining a sense of purpose, my routines were being established and I was working harder than ever I did when employed. I dug up more ground for gardens and experimented with different crops only to prove I didn't really have an interest in gardening but it helped to pass the time and we did eat what the slugs and snails left. It took at least two years before my new lifestyle developed.

The Avon and Rawleigh man

At one time I was the Avon lady and the Rawleigh's man. I had gone to the agent for Rawleigh, explained the difficulties I was having and asked for a trial. He agreed and with his wife was an important part of my recovery. I worked part time and enjoyed it but found it very stressful at times.

One day I started out, full of confidence. It was raining when I came to a house where a dog surveyed me through half closed eyes. He responded to my friendly greeting and let me pass. I had just reached the door when he attacked and used my ankle for his breakfast. The owners seemed to think it was funny but the humour of the situation escaped me. I carried on selling then went back to stock up. The agent's house had a very steep stairway leading to the stockroom. I took one step then slid down the rest on my backside. I picked myself up and figured I had had enough for one day and went home. Such is the life of the door to door salesman.

I enjoyed door to door selling but as the best time for selling was in the evening I was unwilling to work very late. I tried different ways of doing things. At one stage I had a small power –cycle with a wooden box on the back; another time I had a 125 cc motor bike with a box on the side but it was not sprung properly and used to ruin the labels. It was a period of my life that I enjoyed and came to

an end when I went on the War Service Pension because I could no longer earn money as my wife's wages took us over the limit allowed.

My creative phase

I now entered what I call the creative phase of my life. I built and rebuilt my trailer into a holiday camper. The Grifmobile mark 1 was born, it was not a great success and mark 2, 3 and 4 were better. With little money and much loss of temper and sweat I rearranged the materials I had and used them to build a holiday camper I was very proud of. The family were highly embarrassed and our holidays were not greatly successful.

I call it my creative phase because as I was building I found I no longer saw just a piece of metal but shapes and angles. It was intensely enjoyable to create my vision and my self esteem increased as each model took shape. I eventually pulled it to bits and sold the trailer but I remember the Grifmobile with affection.

One holiday we went to KatiKati near Tauranga, to a Royal Ranger campsite. (Royal Rangers is a youth organisation that came out of the Pentecostal churches in America). I mention this holiday because it illustrates again the difficulty I had to just relax and enjoy myself.

It was a beautiful campsite with many bush walks not far away. If the family did not want to do what I thought we should do I would get highly frustrated. I found it difficult to relax and our sons responded to my frustration with their own. A time that should have been restful as a family usually became a time of unhappiness.

It is only this last Christmas, at age 47 after 24 years that I enjoyed my first holiday since leaving Vietnam. This was because I had worked through many areas of my life and had spiritual healing of memories and deep hurts. Without these changes I would still be caught in the "time warp" of Vietnam, still being vigilant and looking for my enemy, never able to relax and still looking in trees for a sniper. Praise God I am delivered from this. (I am 62 now and this working through of deep hurts and memories has been ongoing and healing is still taking place).

Concept of Agent Orange appears

I had written to the Labour MP Geoff Braybrooke about my problems. He gave my letter to a Sunday paper who printed my story under the heading "Bitter Vietnam Veteran etc". I was taken aback but as a result of it I was sent a letter from the Vietnam Veteran's Association (VVA) with a list of the symptoms many veterans had experienced. I felt a surge of relief as I read because I now had a reason for all my symptoms – I wasn't just going crazy. I stress the importance of his letter as it gave me a reason for my problems and freed me from many fears.

I decided to send him a contribution even if it was only a token offering as finance was tight. I decided to join him in the "class action" against the chemical companies.

The Returned Services Association (RSA) advised all contemplating this move to consult a solicitor. I did this because if we lost the case I faced heavy court costs. Another result from it was, I joined the RSA and they advised me to apply for the War Service Pension and the War Disability Pension.

In 1987 the Class Action was settled out of court and I had visions of being rich for at least four hours until I did the calculations.

The Appeal Board

The National government asked us to go to Vietnam but when it came to helping people like me they proved to be fair-weather friends. It was not until Labour became government I received the War Pension. The Disability pension was refused so I decided to go to the Appeal board which took another two years.

In the meantime the RSA welfare officer advised me to get doctor's reports and testimony from people who knew me, to help my case.

Doctor's reports were not hard to get. The Pensions Board in their wisdom sent me to see a surgeon when I should have been seen by a psychiatrist. This surgeon told me to go to a psychiatrist so before too long I ended up at Waikato Hospital to see one. This was in 1985. I was a nut case and not too keen on seeing a psychiatrist but he turned out to be a likeable man and quickly put me at ease.

One decision from talking with him was to withdraw from all responsibilities until I found the level I could operate comfortably in. I did this, ending up with a limited lifestyle but one I could live with. It revolved around my family and my personal disciplines but meant a lifestyle isolated from society. I found I could not operate in society, especially where there was conflict.

Am I my Mother's son?

One of my fears was that I was following in my Mother's footsteps and was relieved when he didn't agree with me. He sent me to see a psychologist who, for the first time since I went sick gave me something I could do to help myself – he taught me to relax.

For years I had struggled with my symptoms with only ridicule from doctors and for the first time I could do something to help myself. The relief was tremendous. Whenever I felt stressed I put myself into a relaxed state, reducing the tension and pressure. It didn't solve all my problems but became a weapon in my struggle for health again.

He surprised me by telling me I had facial depression. My facial muscles had lost their elasticity during the times of stress and no longer responded to happy feelings. I wondered why people would come to me and commiserate when I felt happy. This was facial depression. The happy feelings were not able to relax my facial muscles. They were depressed even though I wasn't.

He had me smile twenty times a day. I found if I smiled, I felt happy and to stretch my mouth in a smile made me happier even when I felt miserable. I still remind myself of this when I feel tense and it is remarkable the difference it makes.

My family still suffered

What about my family during this time? They suffered. One Christmas I had to leave the table or I would have killed my older son. Another time I walked out of the house intending to not come back – they came in the car and picked me up. Later I broke down and went to my room where I sobbed and sobbed – I felt better afterwards. This period of my life was when I was closest to suicide. Without my wife I don't think I would have survived.

We did though, and I came through it convinced my wife loved me. I look back on this time as the time when she proved her love and commitment to me.

The boys must have been affected by it all and this period probably contributed to their rebellion later. I sometimes think we paid too big a price for me going to Vietnam.

I decided I needed more help and through the War Pensions Dept. went to see a private psychologist –a practicing Catholic. The other psychologist I saw had no faith at all and I found it very difficult to share my thoughts and experiences with him. This one was a man I could relate to on this important subject and he helped me face a few of my deep feelings, especially over my father's death. It was while I was with him that our eldest son became sick with glandular fever.

The nightmare begins

It began simply. He was invited to a Christian camp run by Youth with a Mission (YWAM) as companion for a boy whose mother was on the staff. They were unsupervised while she was on duty and stayed up late, sleeping little over the weekend. He came home tired and grumpy.

It was the next week he complained about a sore neck. I took him to the doctor who put it down to studying at school. If he had diagnosed it correctly then, we may have avoided what followed.

Finance was a problem and I was reluctant to waste money on the doctor so when his complaints continued we did not take him back. This was my fault but government policy was putting the doctor out of reach for people on our income.

His neck pain increased until one morning his neck was twisted over to one side. I knew this was not normal but was reluctant to face the doctor again. I knew I had to do something so decided to use the assertive training I had just completed through Waikato Hospital.

You may wonder why I was so reluctant to return to the doctor. Over the years I had developed distaste for doctors' and especially their receptionists who tended to treat you as a nuisance trying to harm their precious doctor. There was something in their attitude that used to arouse intense anger in me and I found contact with them very stressful.

This time I marched in to the office and insisted the doctor see him. The receptionist's arguments were cut short when she saw him with his head bent to one side. The Dr examined him and put him straight into hospital.

He stayed for one week where he was diagnosed as having severe glandular fever. He was a good patient and enjoyed visits from his friends in the Elim church. It was shortly before this illness he had chosen to be baptised as a believer in Jesus Christ. It was a disappointment I was not allowed in the baptistery with him but I was not very acceptable in Elim at that time. It was a moving experience and though he will deny it now it seemed real for him.

In the hospital we were able to pray with him and overall it was enjoyable for him. He came home and for one week all went well.

It was on the morning of May 26, 1986 our nightmare began. He had been getting worse over the week with head pains. I spent some nights in his room tending to him and this night I had him in the double bed so my wife could get a good nights sleep. At six am I woke to hear a gurgling sound. It took a few moments before I realised it was coming from beside me. He was having a seizure. I leapt out of bed and called my wife. She came in and we turned him on to his side and tried to get something between his teeth. I know now that was a foolish move but then I thought it was what you did. I couldn't succeed and soon the seizure stopped. We had just started to relax when another seizure hit him. I knew then we were in trouble and told my wife to watch him while I called an ambulance.

We spent the next ten minutes watching him have seizure after seizure, feeling helpless and praying for guidance. (I found this to be one of the most helpless feelings to experience; when you pray for your children's healing and nothing happens. At these times your theology goes out the window and you become like Abraham, who had to put his son on the altar himself and trust God for deliverance. It is at times like these you find out whether you really believe in God).

The ambulance arrived. The medic was from Elim and for this we praised God. It was like God was reassuring us of his love through this man. He took charge and decided to take him to hospital. I went with him in the ambulance. It was distressing to see him still having seizures while we travelled. All I could do was to reach out to God for strength. Tears fill my eyes as I relive this moment but I hope that this will bring release from the horror of that time.

We arrived and were taken to a bay. He continued to have seizures until they gave him valium. This calmed him down but it didn't help my emotional state. The Elim pastor arrived and I am grateful for the love of this man and his caring but, at the time, all I could see was the failure of the healing ministry. He went through what he believed in and prayed for healing but, although my heart was full of gratitude for his presence I could not join him because I no longer believed in the healing ministry as practiced by him.

Healing and me

It has been a hard road for me. I trust in God yet I do not believe I am spared suffering because of my faith. Rather, I believe that through my suffering I will find a new relationship with God and my faith as a Christian will grow stronger. That is what happened but it was hard, then. I felt so helpless, and emotional tears kept coming as I waited and watched while others ministered to Nick. The pastor left after a while and I am still grateful for his love and care at that time and later, as the nightmare continued.

Encephalitis

The doctors were at a loss as to what to do but eventually he was taken to a private room and they started to stuff him full of antibiotics. He was delirious and all we could do was wait while the illness took its course. The next week was stressful for us all. We took turns sitting by his bed. He had a nurse or attendant with him all the time and I had some meaningful conversations with them. He kept trying to get out of bed and constantly called for "Mum". To him we were all "Mum" and it was heartbreaking to hear him call out in his delusion, thinking we were all "Mum" and would not hurt him. Unfortunately he had to be hurt to be cured and medication had to be given through his anus which caused him great distress. He used to scream he was being hurt and there was nothing I could do. I had to sit there and listen to his cries. It was heartbreaking and something I hope never to experience again.

Adopted pain?

It is possible it was at this time he developed the anger against my wife which caused us great distress later. One time when she was sitting by his bed he sat up and tried to reach her, shouting, "I want to kill you. You tried to murder me". He was restrained but she came home in tears and together we prayed for wisdom and strength before I dashed off. He had calmed down by the time I reached him.

We thought it had some connection with his birth mother but we have seen her now and she does not remember a time when she thought of aborting him. It was probably him connecting pain with the delusion it was my wife who caused it.

Five days later, after being stuffed full of antibiotics he returned to sanity, recognising us again. His brain was damaged, much of the left hemisphere had died but we still had a son we could recognise. For this we praise God as well as the care of those in Ward 52 at Waikato hospital.

Was my faith damaged?

What happened to my faith in God at this time? It was tested. I was studying the book of Hebrews, doing my course while sitting beside his bed. It spoke to my suffering so clearly that I was strengthened, knowing I was not the first to suffer while trusting in God. I had a choice then: to trust in God, even if Nick died, or to curse God for allowing this to happen to us. I survived, sometimes by the skin of my teeth but knowing that despite what happened to me, I could not deny the fact that God was real. I didn't understand why we were passing through the trial but I knew then my faith was not imaginary. It had passed through the fire and I found Jesus in the fire with me. I was committed to God no matter what happened in my life.

St. David's

The other good thing was I met Nurse Judy who was with him a lot. Together we talked about our faith and it was through her I came one night to St. David's. Elim had become too tough for me to handle and I felt torn apart through battling with fundamentalist viewpoints.

An experience of fundamentalist viewpoints devastated me one night. Friends from Elim came to visit. It was while they were talking I suddenly realised, rightly or wrongly, they believed it was my fault Nick was in this state – it was because of my lack of faith he was not healed. This hit me like a thunderbolt and I could hardly contain my anger. They left and after saying good night to Nick I went home. I was rabid. How could they? I could not settle and only found relief through watching, what was to me, a pornographic movie on television. The next morning I felt better but it was a long time before I was able to mention it to this couple. They denied thinking this. They may not have thought it but at that time I picked up something from their body language. I was devastated and it illustrates some of the hardness that can result from some beliefs.

I went to St. David's, a charismatic church in Dinsdale and felt healing of my hurts as I sat there. I knew I had to leave Elim so it was here I came, to rest and be healed but our pathway here was not to be an easy one either.

Home again

Our son came home and we pondered his future. He could no longer read and found it difficult to follow a story on television. His ability to hold more than one idea in his mind at a time was gone and he could not remember what he had seen before. The doctors told us he was still young enough for his brain to reroute and we were hopeful he would have a full recovery. Unfortunately our trial was not over because he deteriorated again and within a week was back in hospital. They couldn't find anything but he was due for an EEG test on the Monday so we all suffered over the weekend. He was often sick and his head pains grew worse. On the Monday he was tested and admitted again into hospital for a CAT scan. This time it showed a shadow at the rear of his left hemisphere. It was an abscess pushing his brain apart.

It was about this time he and I, one night, had faced the question of him dying. Together we affirmed his faith in Jesus but it was in the ambulance that my faith was really tested. He was a good

patient with a lovely disposition but it was very hard for me not to break down when he looked at me and asked if he was going to die.

Auckland Hospital

We arrived at Auckland hospital where he was taken to the Neurological ward. He was put into a bed and together we waited. His head pains seemed to increase and he was crying out for relief. I could do nothing and finally broke down and wept. The head nurse was very sympathetic but I could do nothing else and over the next hour had to fight tears constantly. They took him away and I waited in a very dreary place for him to return. I rang my wife, who had arrived at her mother's house with our youngest son. It was an hour later they brought him back and I can still see the bandage around his head as he went past. The operation was a success, the abscess drained and it was with relief I stood outside the hospital waiting for her to pick me up.

The love between a man and a woman is a wonderful thing and without her support I would not have managed very well. I was heading for a breakdown but for the moment the stress had diminished and with her love I could manage.

The forgotten son

Our youngest son was the forgotten one during this time. He had to endure the illness of his brother very much by himself and how much this affected his future behaviour can only be guessed at.

He deteriorates

The next morning we were relieved to find him okay and we looked forward to returning home but later that night he deteriorated again. I noticed, before we left, that he kept trying to bite my wrist. I didn't think much of it but the next day, when I came through the door, my eyes fell upon a pitiful sight.

He was tied to a chair, his feet pulled up and head sunk down on his chest. His hair had been shaved off half his head, adding to the pitiful sight. He didn't seem to know me and only wanted to bite me. It was heartbreaking to see him like this. The staff didn't seem to know what had happened and we could only wait. I went home in tears.

The next day I was with him while he had another CAT scan. It was difficult to stand and watch. They could not find anything and returned him to the ward. That night we went together to see him. His temperature was high and rising. We stayed with him but he did not know us and for the first time since he became sick I saw the faith of my wife begin to crumble as the realisation he might die, entered her mind. We drove slowly back to her mom's place and got ready for bed.

God acts

It was at 10 pm I felt a strong impulse we were to pray for him. We were to ask God for two requests only. The first was for his temperature to go down; the second for him to be able to recognise us the next day. When we had done this we felt at peace and went to sleep. In Philippians 4:6, 7 Paul talks about, '*the peace that passes all understanding*' and that was what we experienced. It came from outside ourselves because we had no reason for hope – except in God.

The next day I rang up to be told his temperature had gone down and he was sitting up in bed eating an iceblock. We were overjoyed and thanked Jesus for this answer to prayer. Rushing in we turned

the corner and he looked up and yelled, "That's my Dad!" It was one of the wonderful moments of my life.

I quickly went to the temperature chart at the foot of the bed and saw his temperature started to reduce at 10 pm the previous night and within an hour had returned to normal. Are you surprised I give the glory to God for the healing of our son as well as our thanks to the hospital staff? To go through what we experienced without a relationship with God must be a dark and terrible journey.

The rest of our stay was uneventful and within a few days we returned to Hamilton, he followed in the ambulance. For the next six weeks he enjoyed his stay in hospital and we readjusted our lives now the crisis was over.

A major mistake is made

He quickly regained weight and in many ways returned to full health. I can still see him pushing his drip bottle down to the bath. He came home for nights, then weekends and finally was discharged.

It was now I believe a major mistake was made. The doctors were quite pushy about him returning to school whereas I felt he could not handle it. At that time I was still grateful to the doctors and so after some discussion it was decided he should return to Fraser High School. None of us knew how he would manage, neither the school nor us. It was a mistake and one we have paid dearly for allowing. He should have been tutored at home until he could at least keep up with his peer group instead of being thrust back into the dangers of being different, in the midst of his peer group.

He couldn't manage. He couldn't read very well nor comprehend what was being taught. We picked this up quickly but when discussing it with the counsellor found ourselves against a system that didn't care what we thought, only what our son wanted. We said often that he was not normal and could not make the right decisions about what he should do but we were humoured only.

The end result was he was put into the Alternative room with boys and girls who had problems. He was sitting with a boy whose father was in the Mongrel Mob at a time when his healing brain was very susceptible to influence.

Anarchy was the first hurdle. We argued for hours on the benefits of anarchy. This was soon followed by associations with boys who were in rebellion and we soon found ourselves grappling with the sex, alcohol and drug scenes. It was at this point we lost control. I was grappling with discipline problems I had no idea how to handle nor was my nervous system capable of handling it.

He would get an idea in his mind and it would stay there no matter what we did. He wanted his way and would stand in the room repeating over and over again his defiance of our wishes. Reasoning didn't help nor did standing over him; he just stood there repeating his demands like a record whose needle had stuck. This used to drive me up the wall. I soon erupted into using force and often we reached a stage of physical fighting before he would leave us alone.

We discussed his behaviour with the hospital doctors but all they were interested in was the level of Tegretol in his blood. This had developed because he started having seizures. They did suggest we tried the school psychology department but all they suggested was a plan that required him to make judgements about his progress and his teachers. It was a plan that showed no understanding of his ability or illness. This was not surprising since the psychologist did not want to see him, only seeming keen to have him try this newly developed experiment. We agreed with the school Nick could not handle it and it was dropped. This was the only attempt at psychological help we ever received from the system.

The downward path begins

It began here but the process was speeded up by other events. One of these was when he was refused communion at St. David's. He had come along with me and was willing to go forward for prayer even though it was explained to him he could not be given communion because of the rules at that time in St. David's. I can understand the Vicar abiding by what he believed to be right but I have often wondered how this rejection affected him. It was a rejection even though a kindly one. Another time he submitted to prayer for healing of his brain but nothing happened. It is possible he felt rejected by the church and eventually, rejected by God. I don't really know but it was from this time his rejection of Jesus and Christianity began.

My attitude towards the church at that time was probably not very helpful. I was grappling with rejection as well as dealing with deep hurts over all that had happened since leaving the Salvation Army. Life would have been much simpler if I had remained a bigoted fundamentalist, seeing all things in black and white instead of shades of grey. I had to admit that neither my wife nor I would have grown spiritually in the way we have if we had not been through the pain and suffering we experienced.

The downward path quickens

Our son identified with the rebellious element in society; boys and girls who were rejecting the authority of their parents – often solo parents. He quickly put pressure on us to accept this rebellious lifestyle.

We found ourselves in a situation we had no answer for. We were Christian parents seeking to follow Jesus and bring our children up in what we believed was a healthy lifestyle. We found ourselves living with a teenager who rejected all we believed in. Instead of a healthy, clean looking youth, we had a dirty, long haired, black clothed monster from the miry pit, living with us.

He wanted heavy metal rock music; we offered Christian heavy metal. This didn't work because it wasn't just the beat he wanted but the words, which were very negative and self defeating. We had a son who was brain injured listening to words very damaging to self esteem. We lost that battle and finally compromised by having him use earphones – we couldn't see why we had to be polluted as well.

We also lost the battle for a clean mind as he moved through the depraved world of sexual experiment. Drunkenness led to glue sniffing and marijuana. It was a nightmare. Of course this didn't all happen overnight but over a period of six months. We ended up with an alien living amongst us and it nearly put me in the grave.

One of the unsolvable problems was his choice of friends. He seemed to have lost his ability to make value judgments and chose a friend who was in rebellion. We found it impossible to combat the parents of these yobbos's who would support our son against us. Their own child was making their life a misery yet they were active in supporting our child in making our life a misery. When our younger son later rebelled we found this factor to be the one we could not defeat. It would be different now because of our growth in Jesus but then, we were under attack from all directions and I was moving in panic, rather than trusting that God's hand was in it all.

Could I kill again?

I was a softy when it came to Nick. I suffered with him as he went through his illness and for many years found it difficult to be strong when he defied me. I kept making excuses for him because of what he had been through. What he needed was a swift kick up the backside but I couldn't handle that, then.

My stress levels were rising rapidly and many times I reacted out of instinct rather than reason. I just couldn't take any more. We had three episode of physical violence when my self control was only just within control. I only just held on because I knew if I didn't I would kill my son. I confess this but only Vietnam vets would be able to understand this extreme loss of self control. Society today would condemn me because it has allowed the wimps in our society to take control and all violence is condemned. If they could see into my mind at times they would have reason to be afraid. It has taken me many years to sort through my feelings on killing and but I know now that, if necessary, I would kill again. As I go on you will see why Social workers could be high on my list.

Strange thoughts for a Christian?

These are strange thoughts for a Christian to have but I am acknowledging what I experienced and know if I was pushed too far I am capable of killing again. I received a good measure of peace once I had decided this issue and dealt with the guilt of having killed in Vietnam. It is debatable whether I actually killed anyone personally but together we killed 52 people and we were all responsible. I am not ashamed and because I have dealt with this it is unlikely I will kill again. I am saying though that if necessary, I am capable of it and am not ashamed of this knowledge. You may now all put down this book and rush to your keyboards to condemn me.

Weasel Paul

It was through Paul we lost our son. He was, in my opinion, a weasel. He wanted followers and in our son he found a willing disciple. We tried to accept him as his friend but he betrayed our trust. His was the influence that led to glue and solvent sniffing and it was a long time before we got rid of him. He turned up often, standing on the road and calling for his disciple and our son went back into glue sniffing again. We knew we could not win this battle unless he wanted to win it and would be willing to turn away from people like Paul.

It came to a head one day when I knew I could take no more. I gave him the choice of having a bath or leaving home. He left home and who can adequately describe the feelings of a father when he sees his son, whom he loves, walk away into the night with his friends for the first time. I cried and cried but I could do nothing else because I could no longer handle the stress I was under.

For a week I sat on our porch looking into the winter's night – thinking and praying for our son who was lost to us. We didn't know where he was but he survived better than me and even seemed to enjoy himself while I suffered the pangs of guilt and misery- it wasn't fair.

We are charged

The police had become constant callers at our door as they came into contact with him. But the reals stress came when he and Paul were arrested for stealing milk money after sleeping under a church. We were the ones charged and had to appear in court to face the charge of him not being under proper care and attention. It was devastating. The Judge was quite kind and we were given

the choice of admitting the charge or defending it. We admitted the charge – it was true. Our son, along with his partner in crime was given the choice of returning home or going to the Boy’s Home. I could have kicked him for even considering this choice. He finally decided to return home. I should have refused to have him and let him go to the Boy’s Home. He wasn’t repentant and only seemed more determined to do his own thing.

I couldn’t control my son

I am at a loss for the right words to express my sense of desolation at the attitudes of Nick. I found it humbling to know I couldn’t control my son, especially being a Christian and having looked down on other families who had rebellious children. Nick, being brain-injured, was not much consolation in relieving my guilt. God was continuing the humbling process that so far had taken six years and may continue all my life because I die hard to pride and envy and the idea of not being in control, but I praise God I am learning.

Bloody Social Workers

We also had to face having a social worker come to our home and interview us so a report could be prepared for the court. We appeared in court and he was going to be admonished and discharged so I stood to my feet and in fear and trembling, mixed with shame, told the court that without help I could not control him. The social worker then rose to her feet and said they could give six months supervision. (I had him, I thought. I had a sword to hold over his head if he rebelled again). It was with a more cheerful heart I left the court but it was a fool’s paradise I was living in and within the next week I found my belief in the system was misplaced.

Nick defied us again and after much anguish I rang Social Welfare. A voice on the phone informed me they had more important things to do then deal with a rebellious 14-year-old. I was powerless and felt it. I had an official paper saying he was under supervision for six months that was worthless. The voice suggested I go to Tough-Love, an organisation dealing with troubled teenagers. I had not heard of them but decided to go, because at the least they offered hope of a solution.

Tough- Love

I came home from the meeting and said these words, “I will no longer tolerate..... behaviour”. For some reason it seemed to work as the boys knew I had been to Tough-Love and were afraid of this organisation. In this way I started to regain control of the family which had been taken away from me by my sons. They were the authority figures in the house and I was determined this would not continue.

We were now in open confrontation which was made worse by his brain injury. One time I chased him out to the room in the garage where he barricaded the door for hours until he calmed down. Another time I called the police because he threw a piece of wood through our window but the worst time was when I broke down again and took him to the YMCA because I could no longer stand it. When he got out of the car he spat full in my face and I drove home heart-broken. It was not to be the only time I was to receive a face full of spittle. It was through experiences like these I learnt about forgiveness.

Trevor and the occult

Paul was the doorway into drugs and glue sniffing but it was Trevor who was the doorway into the Occult. Our son came into contact with him while living away from us and was a willing seeker after occultist practices such as Ouija boards and satanist (I refuse to use a capital) worship. One time they went to the cemetery to sacrifice a cat – it got away at the last minute. According to our son, Trevor appeared to be taken over by a “cat spirit” and started to hiss and spit. It must have been frightening but he seemed to be attracted to it. When he returned home we took a stand against the satanist signs and forbid them to be put on his walls or to be around us.

God used even this to teach us how to move in spiritual warfare against the kingdom of satan for without the experiences of our son we would have been as ignorant as most Christians in this area. We have learnt of our authority in Jesus and have used it many times to cleanse our property and to bind the demonic activity in him.

Trevor was a likable lad with deep hurts in his past and it is our hope when our son returns to Jesus he may be able to help people like Trevor and Paul.

He improves

It was Christmas, one year after his illness that his brain seemed to have rerouted enough to bring about a change in his personality and he returned home to live. Life has been very difficult at times over the years but we slowly saw him change back into a similar lad to what he was before his illness. But not before he went psychotic and paranoid but that is for another chapter.

(Nich is now with Jesus and what I write cannot harm him. Our other son is in Australia and we have decided to delete the pain and suffering he caused us. He is doing well.)

At the beginning of 1989, before this started, I decided to keep a diary. In it I recorded my daily emotional state as well as events concerning him. My record of this period will enable you to put many of my actions into context. I made mistakes but I believe I was lucky to survive.

| January | February | March |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 4. Suddenly very tired | 4. Anxiety level rose quickly and quite distressed | 5. Anxiety symptoms |
| 7. Depressed. Thoughts of dying | 9. Felt sick | 6. Weeping |
| 8. Felt estranged from people | 14. Autonomic nervous system under strain | 8 – 11. Fatigued |
| 17. Hypnosis to relieve depression | 16. Suddenly very tired | 12. Depressed |
| 23. Violence against Don | 18. Tired. Panic attack at night | 18 – 23. Fatigued and insomnia at night |
| | 22. Fatigued | 24. Depression symptoms |
| | 23. Fatigued | 25. Very tired and sore eyes |
| | 25. Fatigued | 27. Tired |
| | 26. Irritable at night | |

| April | May | June |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 6. Fatigue | 3. Fatigue | 3. Breakdown for a few hours |
| 10. Stressed | 5. A bad day | 7. Breakdown |
| 11. Brain sore and difficult to think | 8. Central nervous system packed in | 11. Emotions out of control in evening |
| 15. Depressed. Aware I upset people | 9. Felt queer | 13. Tired and depressed |
| 17. Depression | 15. Stress level rising. Emotional | 15. Panic attacks at night |
| 19. tired and depressed | 18. My wife's anxiety affecting me | 17. Sad and panic attacks |
| 21 – 22. Unable to enjoy holiday | 21. Confused and upset | 18. Angry and stressed |
| 27. Moments of sadness | 29. Troubled by death thoughts | 19. Stressed and panic attacks |
| 28. Uptight | 30. Death thoughts but not upset | 20. Fatigue |
| 30. Felt lonely and sad | 31. Fatigue | 22. Very tired |
| | | 25. Stressed |
| | | 2. Reactive depression |
| | | |

| August | September | October |
|--|---|---|
| 3. Tired and frustrated | 3. Stressed | 2. Stressed, particularly in stomach |
| 6. Anger | 4. Felt near a complete breakdown. Weepy | 4. CNS nearly out of control |
| 16. Depressed | 5. Breaking down. We take him to Auckland | 9. Unable to sleep |
| 17. Very upset | 6. Breakdown | 14. Anxiety |
| 19. Tired | 8. Still stressed | 19. Reactive stress |
| 20. Tension | 12 – 13. Extreme stress | 23. Sudden change from mania to depression |
| 22. A difficult day. Stress increasing | 15. Sad and angry | 29. Unwell. Pains in chest and difficulty breathing |
| 23. Obsessive/Compulsive | 17. Helpless and strong desire to curl up | November |
| 27. Auckland for a break | 18. Very tired | 3. Stressed |
| 30. Sad | 23. Restless. Felt under extreme pressure | 5. Angry and stressed |
| | 24. Upset. Panic attack at night | 12. Little sleep. In morning I cried and cursed |
| | | 18. He became Social Welfare responsibility |
| | | 22. CNS system playing up |
| | | 26. Intense anger |

Final comments

Our son's rebellion was a time of stress we could have done without but now, as I look back on it, I can see God's hand guiding and helping us. For six months we were a married couple without children. At times I wish it had remained that way and others had to face the problems we had to live with but in God's training school it is not so easy to escape responsibility. Through these experiences our relationship with our children changed into, we hope, a more mature one. One that enabled us to forge a closer relationship as the years passed.

When I wrote this, four years had passed and the road with our son was still rocky because he was still running from his problems but we do have a good relationship with him. He admitted he was wrong and we have forgiven him but I needed deliverance ministry before I was able to feel free from the hurts. I have a strong distaste still for social workers and little sympathy for the present day molly-coddling of rebellious youth.

It was during this period I was studying Psychology with International Correspondence School and I was able to understand many of the attitudes I was seeing in him and those helping him. It also helped me understand the police when they arrested me.

Activities that helped me to survive this painful period

It may seem we are moving from gloom to gloom but the gloom was soon to fade and happier times were ahead – this was because we changed.

One of the changes was being without children. It was hard at first but as time passed we realised the blessing that was ours – freedom to live the way we wanted. Our oldest son was away for much of this time and we found we liked not having responsibilities. When they returned to us our relationship had changed, they had won their freedom and we had no wish to return to the parent/child relationship. We wanted to keep our freedom yet have a friendly relationship that would enable us to assist them if they would let us. We would no longer put them before our desires and were determined to live the lifestyle we had chosen – to glorify Jesus in our lives. We grieved over our lost children and looked forward to the day they would return to us as our spiritual, as well as adopted, children.

Another choice we made was to not sit around feeling sorry for ourselves but would get involved in square dancing. Many times we went, feeling miserable, but by the end of the night felt cheerful. It was hard at times but as the weeks went by, square dancing became a vital part of our recovery. It gave us back control of our lives; we were making positive choices instead of being swept to and fro by our children. This gave balance to our situation and helped us climb out of the morass we were in.

I also joined the Brass band. They only accepted me because I said I wanted to play the deeper sounding instruments and they had no one to play the Bb bass. I couldn't play it either but with plenty of practice I held my end up – but only just. They must have been desperate to take me to Dunedin to compete in the national Band Competitions. We lost, but for me it was thrilling, especially to march down the main street trying to play my Bb bass.

My wife had the hard time while I was away. I rang up the night before I came home to find her in tears over the persecution she was experiencing from the boys. I could do nothing but pray for her but I did not leave her alone again.

We went to the regional competitions in Gisborne the next year and the band won most of the trophies so I shared in the winning as well as the losing while I was with them.

The Christmas parade down the main street in Hamilton was going well until we reached Hamilton East where I put my foot on the curbing in the middle of the road and went sprawling among the spectators. I frightened one little boy but didn't take time to comfort him, I leapt to my feet and ran back to my place but, when I put my instrument to my lips I found it facing the wrong way – fortunately we finished soon after. Incidences like that made life interesting as a Bb bass player.

Practice took quite a large slice of my day and this helped me during the stress times because my mind had to concentrate on something else besides the misery of our situation. Eventually the expertise required was beyond me, the stress was building and as it was taking up too much time, I resigned. They were able to get far better players to replace me but for the period I was in it, it fulfilled a very important need in my life.

Nick turns to glue and petrol sniffing

Our oldest son's brain had rerouted enough for him to return home but he was still involved in the drug scene and glue sniffing. He wanted to do it on our property and many of our arguments were over this issue. We still seemed to be going down the high stress road and it increased when he got involved with a young thug up the road. It was through him he took some black mushrooms which snapped his brain and he went psychotic and paranoid.

One morning he woke me at two am and attacked me with his fist, wrapped in a studded belt. I held him off but he damaged my throat before I could control him; he was apologetic the next day and fortunately, I was still able to play at the Beer Festival. The band members were very helpful when I brought him along in the afternoon. We lived under extreme stress again until we were able to get him treatment. Life became easier when his tablets for psychosis and paranoia as well as epilepsy, which had resurfaced, took effect. Life was not dull but we could have done without this extra stress.

Arrested

It was shortly after this I was arrested for assault. Our youngest son had returned and was not settling very well. The eldest was involved with a neighbour who was leading him further into the drug world, a sad boy whose mother had earned his hatred as he grew up. This only created more problems for us because our eldest seemed to attract the unlovely and unhappy types as friends. By this time he had rejected all association with Jesus and only wanted to serve satan. His friends did too and together they were involved in occultism activity. We ended up as two opposite lifestyles trying to live on the same property and it was not pleasant for any of us. We had all sorts of strange and weird people coming on to our property at 2 am to get them out of bed. It got so that you slept with one eye open and the baseball bat beside the bed ready to repel boarders at odd hours of the night. Living like this was very unhelpful to my nervous system.

The neighbour plus our two sons got drunk one night and made a disgusting tape about my wife, leaving it on our front porch. I found it and was disgusted with what I heard so I had very strong feelings towards the boy up the street. I challenged our two and talked it out but whether they were repentant is doubtful as they used drunkenness as an excuse.

True pleasure

The neighbour was an arrogant seventeen-year-old who treated me with contempt which was not surprising as our sons did the same. He came to our driveway as I came out the door and arrogantly

commanded me to get my sons. I told him to go away. It was full moon so my nervous system was on edge and here was the one I had a grudge against, slinging abuse at me. At the time the only thought in my mind was to take revenge for all the hurt he had caused us.

He challenged me to come off the property – I did. He then told me to take off my glasses which I did and put them safely out of harms way. I think I pushed him and he then hit me on the side of the head. I put him on the ground, picked him up and put him down again. I felt a thrill run through me as my fist connected with him. It was like he represented all the yobbos who had come to our door and brought pain to us. I enjoyed those brief moments – the thrill of personal combat and the release of all the frustration and pain in two lovely punches. It might have gotten out of hand but for our youngest son who stepped between us.

The rat called the police and it was not long before I had a knock on my door and two men in blue stepped into our house. I was still angry and unrepentant; I refused to cooperate with them as they seemed to have put me in the role of the villain – which I was, and unrepentant at that. They asked me to accompany them down to the station. This I agreed to do and as I went out the door one laid his hand on me and arrested me.

Poor Linda, she had to see me arrested and taken away. I was stupid but my nervous system was out of control and I suppose the police had no choice. It was now that my studies in psychology were of benefit to me. I accepted my situation and while on the way to the station quickly used the techniques I had learned to go into damage control and calm myself down. By the time we arrived I was in control and determined to learn as much as I could from the experience.

The station

We arrived at the station where they took me to a holding place while they discussed what to do with me. Eventually a Sgt. talked with me and persuaded me to talk about what had happened. I did this to the one who had arrested me but he was unsympathetic and I might as well have kept my mouth shut.

They left me in the holding area for some time and I had a chance to look around. It was a depressing place and psychologically poor if they wanted to calm someone down because the colour scheme was wrong and the paint was peeling off. I looked at the officers on the other side of the bars and wondered who was really behind bars – them or me. It depends upon what side of the fence you are on. They did not look happy and many of the younger ones looked like they had already begun the brutalising process that front line police work often results in. I was the guilty - no longer a human being but a problem for them to deal with. I found it interesting to have this real-life experience of the theories I had studied.

Authorities and such

For a long time I have had a problem with authority and my experiences here taught me much about the way I really felt about authorities and their organisations, like the police. I realised that no matter how friendly they were on the outside their function was to arrest people who broke the law whether they thought they were guilty or not. Police advertising tries to change the way the public view the police but you can't get away from the realisation they are there to arrest you if you break the law, even if the law is wrong. They do not make the law, it is their function to enforce the law just as it a soldier's job to kill his country's enemies.

I accept that police are necessary to society for we are an evil generation but I don't like what they represent. It only needs a change in law to make being a Christian outside the law, and then the

friendly neighbourhood officer who gives lollies to children will be the one who takes us away to pay the price for our faith.

They finally took my photograph and said I could go home once I signed a bail form. I did this and reminded them they had agreed to take me home if I came with them to the station. I had to wait a while but they eventually took me home (a small victory). On the way they told me I had to appear in court on the Monday where they would probably deal with me under the "Diversion program". This was a new idea that enabled people like me, who had little contact with the law, to not have a conviction on file

I face my wife

My trials were not over – I had to face her. It was on the rock of her tears that my pride started to crumble. I didn't feel I had done anything morally wrong and thought they should have given me a medal for crunching a piece of dirt back into the dirt but, when faced with the anguish that defending my case would cause her, I decided to plead guilty. I was guilty under the law of the land but not, I felt, under God's law though I may be wrong about that.

Positive results

As it turned out my actions were positive. The local roughs and sluts got the message they were not welcome and steered clear of our property. I informed the boys that if they did not keep their yobbo mates away then I would end up in jail because I would not be able to stand the pressure from them. They still cared for me and for a long period they met their friends elsewhere, so we had peace.

I also went on anti-anxiety tablets to help prevent this occurrence happening again. I knew I was capable of killing if I got out of control. This is the difference between me and others. I have taken part in killing and they haven't, so in any fight I have the advantage because I am prepared to kill, if necessary. I think this is very unlikely now but I also realise I can be pushed past the threshold of control.

Court

On the Monday morning I appeared at the court, having decided what action to take and having made peace with my wife. I waited to see the duty solicitor but just as it was my turn I heard my name called. I rushed into court and stood before the judge. I told him I was going to plead guilty and before he could reply the police prosecutor interrupted saying they would deal with me under the diversion scheme and everyone was happy. I left the court and made an appointment with the Sgt. who was in charge of the scheme.

Diversion

The next day I went to see him and found him very pleasant, he listened to my story and I think was not unsympathetic. I admitted my guilt at breaking the law of the land but assured him I did not regret my action. This did not seem to worry him and I was given a choice of paying \$200 to a charity or thirty hours of community work. I chose community work because I wasn't going to let the yobbo cost me money. I also had to write a letter of apology to the yobbo and to the officer who arrested me. I agreed to this but assured him I wouldn't mean a word of it.

I went home and wrote my letters, asked my wife to come with me and marched up to the yobbo and put my letter in his hand. I also posted a letter to the arresting officer. I don't understand why

he had to have a letter of apology but if it had to be done it had to be done. I hope they all knew by the tone of the letter I didn't mean a word of it.

I had to go to the Salvation Army to ask for community work, which embarrassed us both, but by humbling myself I restored a contact I had lost. I was also able to have the youth leader visit and talk with the boys. They went to his activities for a while but like most organisations I have asked for help, when the boys did not respond quickly they lost interest and we don't see them anymore.

I also had to attend an anger management course. It was a bit of a laugh as I knew more from my psychology course than the instructors. The course was okay but I disagree with the emphasis that all violence is wrong. I knew that if I had to defend myself or my wife I would go as far as killing. Need I say this viewpoint was not met with favour? I was a good boy and attended all meetings and at the end went my merry way. I enjoyed the Maori bread they supplied for supper and the meeting of people I would normally not have associated with.

A turning point is reached

The benefits of being charged with assault were: I no longer was under stress from black clothed weirdoes and I was able to help some lovely old ladies with their gardens. At the end of it all the charges were dropped and the episode came to an end. Some time later I found out I could ask the minister of Justice to have my photo and record destroyed - I did this and received a letter from him saying this had been done. The other benefit was that I got in touch with the Vietnam Vets group in Hamilton which was beneficial until I could no longer handle the anger in this group. Life settled on to a more even keel. Our youngest son eventually went to Australia to further his music career with his partner and daughter. This was a decision we regretted because it meant we would have little input into their life and particularly in the life of our granddaughter but it has been a good move for them and they are doing well.

It looks like we may have our eldest living with us until we die but this is okay as we get on well. God is working in our life and it looks like our time in the desert had ended.

A new spiritual journey

This began when we returned to St. David's, a charismatic church I had gone to during our eldest son's illness. We left because I could not stand the authoritative stance of the new vicar but the church we went to was worse so, in desperation, we decided to return as it was within walking distance of our home.

We were welcomed back and it was here, the next Christmas I found pictures forming in my mind I knew were from God and I was to speak them out. I gathered my courage and did so with the result that more and more came as God started me on the roadway to where I am today. Why, then, after all the years of struggle to hold onto my faith did God decide it was time to do this? I don't know but found I couldn't care less because God was real again, like he was at my conversion and with this knowledge came the revitalisation of my Christian faith.

Prayer groups

The next year began with a conviction I should join a prayer group. I discussed this with a lady who knew far more about prayer than I did. I knew I would have trouble with some of her fundamentalist views but she had the knowledge I needed so I joined her prayer training class. I suffered for a while as I listened to her teaching but when we started to pray together I suffered in a different way – God started to deal with me.

If you have been dealt with by God you will know what I mean when I say it was not pleasant at times. Slowly, I was peeled apart like an onion as the layers were stripped off week by week and God became more real to me. It was painful but I had a strong desire to know God in a new way and I knew it was his will for me to be in prayer training.

Our stress from our eldest son was increasing at this time because he was psychotic and often caused trouble on prayer group mornings. I would stagger into the group full of despair and the group would pray for me before we could continue. Some in the group became upset at us praying for my family so often but through it all God was teaching me of his love and power as he helped me carry on.

I was praying one morning as I had been taught, when I saw in my mind a large sword; I felt to pray against the forces of darkness and with sweeping motions as if I had a physical sword, I cut through the dark beings that were in the picture in my mind. I saw a channel appear in the darkness and through it these words appeared, "I am the LORD, the one who loves you. I died for you. Glorify me, Glorify my name and I will glorify you". After this I felt freer to bind the spiritual beings oppressing the boys.

The next year Alma (80) came to teach and pray for us if we desired it. I sat, listening to her teaching and knew I was to be prayed for by her. At the finish I volunteered and she began. She cast out a spirit of witchcraft I believe was associated with my grandfather being a member of the Masonic Lodge. You may ask how I know they were cast out. As she prayed I shuddered in my chest as something came up my gullet and out through my mouth. It impressed me and has happened often since as more demonic beings have been forced to leave me. I was amazed. I had been a Christian for 24 years yet these beings were in me making my life the living hell it was. **Stuff the theology I was glad to be free.** The next one to go was the spirit of rejection and I found myself able to cry out against my country for rejecting me. I wrote in my diary I believed a great healing had taken place within me and I felt at peace with a sense of being in a beautiful garden. This was not to be my last encounter with this remarkable lady but it was the beginning of healing that has changed me greatly. (This has been an ongoing work in my life).

One morning I received a picture of a small ship in the midst of a terrible storm. It was protected by the hand of God and I believed God was saying I can expect the storms of satan's attack. I will be buffeted and ridiculed but God will be with me and bring me through.

Another time I saw a stony heart suspended in space. Lightning struck off the hardness, revealing a new heart, tender to the words of God.

This was happening to me as God stripped me layer by layer until he had exposed the core of my being. It was embarrassing at times for those watching but I only wanted to be free and allow God to have all of me, on his terms.

God was showing me he was real and as my faith changed to “experience”, it became easier to believe God could be trusted with the problems we faced with our sons. I recorded one morning that if it required God’s son to go through the agonies of the cross to enable me to be free then I must be prepared to let God do whatever needs to be done to set our sons free. If we do this then whatever happens to our sons we will see as the loving hand of God, to bring them back to him. At the time of writing this they have not returned to God but we have seen remarkable changes because we prayed. God has used the stress from the boys to draw my wife and me together as a united Christian couple who have learnt how to pray as the Holy Spirit desires and this has enriched our relationship.

It was about this time I saw a mind picture where I was ascending through dark clouds. I was praising God while keeping my thoughts upon Jesus. I broke through the clouds into a beautiful light. All was peace as I communed with Jesus – it was wonderful. I believe it meant that though the storm clouds of life would still be with us, if I kept my eyes on Jesus and not on the circumstances then all would be well and eventually I would rise above the circumstances and live as Jesus wanted me to, even though the trials of my life had not changed. This was what happened because as we learnt to know God more it became easier to praise him in the midst of the stress and strain of living with our sons.

Another time I saw a picture of Jesus breaking through a barrier and beckoning me to follow him – to not worry about what others do but to follow him. He is my Lord, he leads others in their way but I am not to be concerned about others but to relax and follow him. This kind of message has been repeated a few times to me. I am to follow Jesus – not the church or a man – but Jesus.

This was important because the stress from our son was increasing. I wrote on June 16th 1992, “*I feel good; God has his hand in it all. Even if he does commit suicide I believe God will turn it to good. I feel free –purified of anger against the church and the hospital. I am thankful these feelings were able to surface. I commit myself afresh to God and affirm my resolution for the salvation of our sons. Though all I love fall around me let me go on and tear down satan’s strongholds and his powers and principalities. To this end I commit myself in the name of Jesus and the love of God*”. I was learning to trust God no matter what happened.

Inner healing

The next phase in God’s training school was for me to submit myself to the inner healing ministry of a couple from St. David’s. I did this and together we met three times. It was here I was led by the Holy Spirit back in time to my father’s death and how I felt about my mother. By an act of will I forgave all associated with the pain of that time and after, felt quite different.

Another time we dealt with the Vietnam experience and many demons were cast out – Hinduism, Buddhism and the spirit of murder, also demonic beings associated with a temple I went into in Vietnam, when I looked into the god room. It was an odd experience but I wanted to be rid of them all and as each session passed I felt freer. I wrote, “*Praise God, I feel free. I slept well last night and though I woke three times I didn’t have to go to the toilet. I don’t feel stressed out by our youngest son. I pray that God will bring good out of it all. Praise God for the faithful in the prayer group.*” I still had my problems fitting into society but slowly I was being freed from the control of demonic beings associated with the East and my past.

I clarify an issue

It was after this I was able to clarify an area of confusion that had crept into my life – if God is a God of love then how can there only be one way to God? For me it now solidified. There is only one God, not many gods and only one way to him – through Jesus Christ. God is love but there is still only one way into the Kingdom of God. I had believed this for years but doubt had crept in because of the church I was in at the time but it was now resolved in my mind and it was with a firmer step I moved into the future.

The next Saturday I wrote, *“God is real or he is not. If real, what can be more important than following him? Get my priorities right. If God is not real then carry on lusting after the things that satisfy you. But, if God is real then he must come first in our lives. Turn away from all things that are not of God, that do not bring honour and glory to him - and follow him. If God is real then Isaiah 1: 24-26 reveals the attitude of God to the people who call themselves God’s people”*. As you can see, my viewpoints were being narrowed and God was becoming vitally important to me.

The next Tuesday I wrote, *“Walk in the pathways of the Lord –not the pathways of the church!”* The conviction was growing that I was to follow Jesus alone and not man.

Agent Orange Trust betrayal

Vietnam was a main source of trial for me but I was managing well until I saw my War Pension file and found a letter on it from a person associated with the Agent Orange Trust Board that rubbished me as a person. This was the final betrayal and I was set back in my progress for some weeks until I came to terms with it and was able to forgive and so restart the healing process. (It was not all bad news, because of it being on my file for the Pensions Panel to be influenced by, I eventually gained the reopening of my back claim which was backdated ten years when it was granted).

My theology was changing

It is difficult to put into words the difference in my life at this point of time. God was real again and I was experiencing different facets of his dealing with me and life was exciting. One night I woke and asked Jesus if he had anything for me. A picture came; I was standing on a rock in the midst of stormy seas. It was deep, powerful and dangerous. In it I would be lost! I was safe while my feet were planted on the rock. My hands were raised but I didn’t know whether I was interceding or praising. **“I have a conviction that the difference between the church and me is that my God is a God of judgment as well as grace. The church only wants to accept a god of grace”**.

I believe my picture of God is a true one and I am indeed only safe while my feet are planted firmly on the rock, who is Jesus the Christ. Any other platform is quicksand.

On the Sunday, in church, I saw the picture of me standing on a rock again. I noticed the sea level was lower and as I watched, the water level dropped until all the sea had disappeared, leaving only dry, rocky ground. The stress I had been experiencing disappeared. I went home rejoicing.

The next phase was back with Alma, my 80-year-old trial. She was a trial and when the prayer groups were called to meet with her again I was most reluctant to attend. This was because I thought I was going to be exposed to fundamentalist teaching and put in a position I would be unable to handle. I was wrong but at the time I was being troubled again with thoughts and feelings that were making life difficult. My wife dragged me along.

The meeting was held in a private house and as I looked around at the people, I felt alone, and estranged from them. This was strange and I knew it but didn't seem able to change the way I felt. I hated being there.

We started with prayer and as I bowed my head a picture of a grave appeared in my mind. As I watched I saw not only a grave but me coming out of it. I knew Alma wanted to pray for those who desired to die to self so I knew this was what I was to do. The rest of the meeting was a struggle for me; at times I wanted to get up and run out but I knew I had to stay. I believed if I left the house I would walk away from Christ and the church and never return. Imagination or truth, I didn't know but I wasn't going to take the risk – I stayed. Finally I could stand the suspense no more and spoke up. I shared what I was feeling and that I was to be prayed for - for the death experience. I knew the only way out of the dilemma I was in was to die to self and become a slave of Jesus. (I thought I had done this before but what I was about to go through was to be the reality whereas before it was only a belief).

It was no use me attacking individual problems, mine were suddenly too many and the only way was to obey the picture I had seen. I was determined to go all the way and die to self.

I stood in front of Alma and she prayed. I felt myself falling and when I reached the floor, prayed, renouncing all my rights and submitting everything to Jesus. It was great. I felt at peace and just wanted to lie where I was. No great emotional experience but I knew I had been obedient to the known will of God and what I had asked for, was done.

A veil between my problems and me

The next few days it was as if there was a veil between me and all my problems – as if I was dead and looking at life from the other side. The boys didn't bother me. It was like I was dead therefore what they did was no longer of any interest to me. A dead man loses all contact with life, therefore all he cared about when alive he could no longer influence.

It was the morning of the third day I awoke with a picture of me standing before Jesus who was wearing a blood-red robe. I felt this was wrong; his robe should have been white. I turned away but then changed my mind and went towards him – I walked into him and disappeared. While praying about it, I saw the picture return and as I watched I walked out of Jesus with a white robe on. I said, "I am a resurrected man", and instantly had the manifestation of demons leaving me. I said it again and more left. The third time nothing happened and I was free. Satan can't harm a dead man and now, like Paul the Apostle I could say, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*". Galatians 2:20

My life since has been quite different. I slept better and my bowels worked better than ever. For years I suffered from constipation, constantly wanting to evacuate my bowels but unable to. Now I go to the toilet each morning and evacuate with pleasure. This was a major change in my life and a sign that emotional healing had taken place.

I saw myself as no longer a servant of Jesus but his slave and as a slave I had no rights at all – I was here to do my Master's will.

Alma again

My wife went through the death experience as well and our prayer life changed. We seemed to complement each other when we prayed but the greatest benefit was we were on the same wavelength and God was taking us both on a spiritual journey. She has grown more beautiful; with

her and Jesus I am blessed. The next week we returned for more. Linda was delivered of more demonic spirits from her childhood and looked lovely lying on the floor.

I found myself starting to cry as Alma prayed for me, eventually sobbing on Linda's neck as I relived the emotions of my father's death. Alma prayed for a separation from this experience and the filling of the Holy Spirit for this area. By the time we were finished I felt cleaned out and my life has been different since.

I still had problems but they seemed to be being dealt with and I was becoming freer than I had ever been.

I was yet to leave Vietnam

Vietnam had been a problem for years. A young man from church asked to interview me for a school assignment. I agreed and he came after school, spending an hour with me while I relived many of my experiences. I enjoyed this but emotions were aroused and it was three days before I returned to a level state again. The next week I was outside the CORSO shop when I felt a nudge to enter. There I found eleven "Nam" magazines. I took them home and as I read them I found myself back there and realised I had never left. This was a shock. I realised I did not exist in the present; I existed in Vietnam and seemed frozen in that time span.

It took a few days but this was a healing experience and I believe Vietnam is now in its right place in my life and I now existed in 1993 (when I wrote this) and not 1968. I was free.

God continued to free me from my past but he kept me in the grave. Ministry has not been returned to me but my prayer life increased, also moving in the gifts of the Spirit. I learned to speak when He spoke and to shut up when He didn't. The problems I have now only come because I step out of the grave and try to go ahead of God. It is becoming easier to learn not to, but I still made mistakes and ended up frustrated because old desires would arise, and I would battle to try to fulfil them. It never worked and I only found peace when I returned to the feet of Jesus and accepted his will as mine. I was learning to remain dead.

Looking back and writing about my life has been a releasing experience and one I would recommend to any Vietnam Veteran. It has not been easy but the rewards have been there – release from the past with the result I can face the future with confidence. In a sense I have been born again and able to look with confidence into the future.

What do I do with my life now? I looked at the way my symptoms frustrated relationships with society and my chances of material wealth. I saw I was to follow Jesus alone and not seek ministries in the church. I thought about all this and came to the conclusion it was time I got off the treadmill, do what I could do and ignore the rest.

In June 1993 I decide to tell the world to stop, I was getting off. I did and life has been a lot better since. Linda gave me a piece of card after our death experiences which said:

The man who has died to self

Has no ambitions and has nothing to be jealous about.

Has no reputation

So has nothing to fight about.

Has no possessions

Therefore, nothing to worry about.

Has no rights

Therefore he cannot suffer any wrongs.

Is already dead

So no one can kill him.

By Leonard Ravenhill

I live each day now, letting the Holy Spirit bring this about in my life. I could do this because one of the healings I experienced was to be able to live only one day at a time. I no longer care about tomorrow and only live for today. This has been the greatest blessing for my mental health.

The knight with rusty armour and bent lance has finally had his armour cleaned and his lance replaced with a sharp javelin. It has been a long journey but as I look back I see the hand of God and I give thanks to God, my warrior wife and a clean slate.



Epilogue

It is now 2008 and 15 years after I finished writing my autobiography. What has changed? Am I well or am I still plagued by stress-related symptoms? We still have our son living with us but he is doing well and he and I go to Brazilian Jujitsu together. My wife has me singing in a choir though I don't know if I will last. Our youngest son went to Australia and is doing well with his job and his music. We are proud of our boys who have struggled with great difficulty to become the fine men they now are. I am on no medication and enjoy the best health of my life since Vietnam. I look forward to enjoying the rest of my life with Linda.

The past 15 years have been like being on a yo-yo, up and down as I came under stress. It took me 14 years to finally reach acceptance of a lifestyle that participated only briefly in contact with people. My emotional state that determined how I reacted to people was such I could never rely on my being able to handle situations that involved people. I did not go backwards but as I was released from one problem others arose.

Think of an onion. As you peel one layer it exposes other layers to the air. As I overcame a memory from the past another, after a week or two would arise and I would have trouble handling life again. I began to wonder if this process would ever end.

Emotional Freedom Technique

Discovery of this came through my studies for the Advanced Certificate of Herbal Medicine. I decided not to do the Diploma year so I could practice as a Medical Herbalist because I could not handle the stress of working with people. Some days I would be more likely to boot a client out of the room than deal sympathetically with them. I could never be sure how my nervous system would be on any day so I decided not to do the third year.

I downloaded the free manual from emofree.com and started to practice the technique. It was easy to learn and with it I was able to deal with the emotion attached to memories and to find the problem-memories hidden in my past under the layers of the onion. Within 12 months I was able to deal with emotions that were disabling me.

This changed my life. Did it solve all my problems? No! What it did was to enable me to deal with hurts and rejections as they arose so they did not disable me. Still, although I was freer it was a limited freedom and I was still not free to extend the restricted circle of my life into society.

Disability Pension

For years I fought to raise my disability pension. I fought for ten years to have my back claim accepted and this was only achieved by taking them to a judicial review. They surrendered the week before court and agreed to reopen my case. The system was now obeying the law to give me the benefit of the doubt, so I won. Foolishly I agreed to pay my expenses so I have a \$10,000 debt to the Legal Aid department on the house. If I didn't have assets I would not have had this. I still think it is morally wrong for this to be done because the problem only came about because those involved were not obeying the law they were appointed to uphold – to give me the benefit of the doubt. However, I agreed to this so I have no legal claim and moral claim doesn't seem to matter.

I reached 115 % and decided to try for a bit more. It was very stressful to do this but I was compelled to do this and so asked for reassessment. Eventually the two assessors came and sat down with us. Because I knew I would be under stress and likely to not put my case clearly I wrote down what I wanted to say.

The Descent into Isolation as I see it

1. I went overseas with a romantic idea of war. I would raise my sword above my head, scream and yell then waving my sword run towards the enemy. Foolish, I know but this was the ideal I had in my mind when I volunteered for Vietnam. I did not have a problem with submitting to authorities at that time. I did not have a problem in submitting to authority.
2. At a gun-base I saw a young lieutenant get off a helicopter and suddenly I knew I would not submit to him. I no longer trusted the ideal I had set up of the army and its leadership. Something fundamental changed within me. I had filled out papers to sign up for 12 years but now I knew I had to get out or I would end up in prison for disobeying orders
3. As a Salvation Army Officer I again had an ideal but found that when I acted according to what I believed was right the Salvation Army leadership did not back me up. Again I felt betrayal and this deepened until we left the Army because I could no longer accept that the Army was not able to live up to my ideal of what I believed the Army should be. Chronic stress was becoming a bigger problem now.
4. While sitting in the Doctor's waiting room I saw a picture of a plane retuning to NZ but NZ had a sign saying "rejection" on it. To be rejected by your country is a major betrayal of trust and only deepened my growing alienation in society. I had left one country where I was an alien to return to my own country to find I was still an alien in their eyes.
5. War Pension panels and appeals. For ten years I struggled to get them to obey the law and give me the benefit of the doubt. The authorities and the panels consistently denied me justice until on the point of being taken to court they agreed to a review. I won but it cost us \$10,000. My ideal of justice from the system was seriously damaged. I felt betrayed by the system. I once trusted Veteran's Affairs but case managers changed and the new ones acted like WINZ.
6. The medical system betrayed me and those who didn't only had drugs to offer me. These only worked for a short time and rather than continue increasing the dosage I withdrew into a lifestyle I hoped I could handle. I used to believe doctors were next to God but found they were not to be trusted. I felt betrayed by the medical system.

7. After years of trying to fit into society I gradually came to accept that I was still an alien in my own country and everyone except my wife was a danger to me. Just like being back in Vietnam. I could not fit into any group where there was a hint of control over me. I could not handle chronic stress.
8. I have gone from being a young man eager to taste adventure and serve my country in Vietnam to a 62 year-old man who knows he cannot take part in society except as forays into enemy territory and then return to my safe world.
9. I have two who have not betrayed my trust: - my wife and my God. If one of these betrayed me I might survive but if I lost trust in both, my world would crumble and I would truly be a man without hope.

I am writing this because I cannot guarantee my emotional state at any time and if I am in an emotional state, through stress, when the panel is here then my mind will go blank. I will not be able to think or reason and I will not say all I need to say.

I am compensated for "Loss of ability to take part in social life" resulting from service in Vietnam. The question is: How has my inability to take part in social activities worsened since my last application when I was given 15 % disability. When this 15% was granted I still had hope I would be able to find a doorway into society. I could be involved in helping people and to find satisfaction in relating with people. I still had hope that my isolation from society could be remedied.

Now I have no hope.

How did this come about?

In 2006 I finished a two-year course on Herbal Medicine that gave me the Advanced Certificate of Herbal Medicine. My hope was to be able to practice as a Medical Herbalist but at the end of two years I knew I could not handle the stress involved in the third year.

The first year was one day a week in class with other students. I found this very difficult due to my inability to handle chronic stress. I switched to correspondence and finished the second year. I could not face the stress of the third year, which required dealing with the public.

I declined to do the final year because it was not just learning, which I can manage by correspondence, but required 100 hours of clinical practice. The problems created by my inability to handle stress associated with people were too much for me to cope with. I could not face the stress of dealing with people as a Medical Herbalist.

- I could not rely on my emotional state at any time
- When under prolonged medium to low stress, I became agitated, made decisions without thought, became angry and impatient, insensitive and blunt
- If I was emotionally okay, I could function with the public but if I was emotionally dead then I was more likely to cause offence through my lack of feeling at these times
- I discovered I did not like people
- I could not handle the chronic stress caused by the thought of dealing with people and being responsible for helping them back to health

After struggling with this a growing realisation came that I was unable to function in society in any situation where I had to deal with people in anything more than a superficial way. I reduced my involvement with Medical Herbalism to hobby status.

My world was shrinking and to survive I knew I had to withdraw from society to a place with limited contact with people. I had to create a world that I could live in without being drugged by medicine or herbs.

My wife and I went to learn ballroom dancing. I enjoyed it but by the time the course finished I was getting twitchy about going. The thought of going to dances amongst people we did not know was too much for me. The dances we had while doing the course were times of stress for me and usually we left early because I could not stand being amongst people.

I tried to be involved in a Full Gospel Businessman's group but only lasted two times when I realised I could not handle being with men in the group. The problem was within me so I stopped going. This happened many times in my life. I became involved with groups but had to pull out because of my stress symptoms.

I was running out of groups to try.

My next shock was to realise I was no longer managing within the church world that has been a very important part of my life since 1968. I found I could not cope in small groups or any group that threatened any control over what I thought or did. It had become increasingly difficult to attend church and I found myself increasingly feeling alienated.

Finally, in March 2007 I told my wife I had to withdraw from the church and worship God at home. I could no longer handle the stress of attending church. I felt alienated, alone and irritated by what was going on. I knew the problems were within me and wherever I went I would carry these problems with me.

We decided for my wife, Linda, to find a church where she could find friendship and fellowship and I would come with her, as I felt able to do so.

My world has shrunk again because I cannot handle the stress of being with people on a regular basis.

I became aware I was becoming more isolated and heading for a lonely life but I could see no answer.

I am not unhappy and consider I live a good life so long as I can control what I do and when I do it and I do not have to deal with anyone who might have control over me. I have increasing difficulty dealing with officialdom, including Veteran's Affairs.

I can make short sorties out into society but I have to retreat to my fortified camp where I feel safe. This has worsened this year as I realised I could not do what I wanted to do – take an active part in helping people in society.

It occurs to me that I am now living like I did in Vietnam. I live in a place of relative safety in the midst of a hostile environment where the only people I can trust are those who live with me. **This is not the way I want to live.**

My life is not one of doom and gloom but one of coming to terms with my situation and moving on, from what I can't do to things I can do. Within my world I have gardens I can work in, and a house to maintain. I paint pictures by numbers, assist my son, as he will let me and enjoy a good relationship

with my wife. I love God and I know He loves me. Within my world I am learning to accept what I can't change, change the things I can and pray for wisdom to know the difference.

I am presently doing a correspondence course on Writing for the Web and Web Design. I can hide behind my computer and hope to put up a web page next year where I can make contact with the world on my terms.

I consider my situation has deteriorated since my last evaluation. I am becoming more isolated from society and my world has shrunk to my wife, my son and my hobbies.

The other factor beginning to affect my involvement in society is my disability of Degenerative Spinal Disease. I can walk, and work in the garden for short periods but eventually the back aches to where I have to rest. This affects my ability to be involved in groups where prolonged physical activity is required.

I believe myself to be more socially disabled than 15 percent.

The assessor apparently agreed with me and raised my Disability pension to the maximum of 160 percent.

This shocked me. I had not considered myself to be this disabled. I was only hoping for another 15 percent at most. It took me a few weeks to adjust to this and then I decided if the system considered me to be this disabled I would accept this, take the money and enjoy the rest of my life.

We had just received money from my mother-law's estate and cleared the house mortgage. The extra money from the pension meant we were financially well off. We cleared all our debts and for the first time in our life are able to save money.

Four weeks later I experienced the beginning of the change that dramatically improved my health.

The real change came in 2007 when, as a result of the Year of the Vietnam I was contacted about being part of the oral recording of Vietnam experiences. I received a survey to fill out and I was able to say how I felt about the way NZ treated me when I returned. I was honest in writing how I felt and I knew my survey would be stored in the archives for anyone to read. It was this point that was important. I wasn't just filling in a survey but this would be an official document for future generations to read.

I sealed the letter, stood up and suddenly tears came to my eyes and for about 10 seconds I cried. It was a very short period but when I finished I realised I was no longer an alien in my own country. I was a Kiwi again. From that point I was better. For 40 years I had felt like an alien in New Zealand and now I didn't. My health changed and I am at present in very good health.

Two weeks later I felt a dark oppression coming upon me and I knew what it was about. Deep within me I blamed God for everything that had happened to me. This is a result of accepting the teaching of many in the church, of God being in control of everything that happened-good or bad. I knew this was not true but had to acknowledge that a part of me believed this. I decided that if I felt this way then I would be honest before God (He knew how I felt anyway) and tell him it was not fair. So I did.

I told God how I felt and when I had got it all off my chest I asked forgiveness for feeling this way and suddenly the darkness lifted and I was free.

The third episode happened about two weeks later when I was watching a video while riding my exercise bike. I suddenly started to cry and sob. This went on for about five minutes. I sobbed and sobbed and again I suddenly knew why. I was releasing all the grief pushed deep down inside me over our sons. Again I was released and felt free from this grief.

A sign of improved health

For years I have had white spots on my fingernails. While doing the herbal course I was treated by an herbalist and she prescribed zinc for this problem. One result of chronic stress is the loss of zinc and this has detrimental effects on many body systems. I dutifully took zinc supplements for two years but although my general health improved the white spots remained. It was only after the above experiences, when my ability to handle stress improved, that these spots have disappeared. It reinforces my belief that when you add spiritual and emotional health to a whole food diet (especially cutting out sugar) the body will find its own way to health and vitality. Herbal medicine has its place in restoring bodily health but if you do not deal with the hurts and rejections of the past, benefits will be temporary.

I am still of the opinion if I want to retain good health I need to stay out of the hands of the medical system. All they have to offer are drugs that will stop or increase actions in my body. They will never heal; only disguise symptoms until healing is too late. This is for chronic ill health. If I have an acute health problem that is life threatening then I need the medical system but once the crisis is over the medical system has nothing to offer. If the medical system can't cut out, poison, or radiate then they have nothing to offer except palliative measures to reduce discomfort while I wait to die.

Our health is in our hands and what goes into our bodies is our decision. No professional, whether a smooth talking expert in the medical system or an herbalist has the right to take this away from us. Ultimately we live with our decisions and we must retain the right to decide for ourselves the treatment for our problems. This is difficult under the current system where doctors are the only authorities accepted by Veteran's Affairs and the Pension boards. My advice is to use the system to get the maximum pension, then look at all their pills and potions and decide for ourselves whether we will continue to take them.

Write the past down

It has been healing for me to retype this into my computer. We all have a history that needs to be told. As I went through events I was challenged often with emotions attached to the memories. As I felt each emotion I used the techniques from "Emotional Freedom" and freed myself from the emotion, not the memory. Afterwards I was able to read what I had written without the destructive emotion. I kept writing and I was freed from any residual emotion that was controlling my thoughts and actions. I think it has been a major move towards health.

Since these episodes my life has continued to improve. It is April 2008 now and last night when surfing channels I came across Maori TV where a programme on Vietnam vets was on. I had seen it before but this time it was like watching something from history. I felt sorry for those who showed such grief still but realised I no longer felt the way they did. I think I am free from Vietnam at last.

Does this mean I am free from all problems? No. The day after writing this I felt grief growing within me and I became tearful. I went by myself and for about two minutes intensely cried. I knew what it was about. I was grieving over the wasted years. This experience may happen again in the future as

hidden deposits of grief come to consciousness but I think there will come a time when this will be finished.

After I had the above experience I saw a mind picture of a road stretching before me. I realised there was a road for me to travel and though it did not go too far into the distance I realised that possibly the knight in shining armour may ride again.

06/05/08

Soon after I finished the above I gradually slipped into a depression. I didn't realise what was happening to me but life was getting increasingly hard. It was a time when I managed but life had lost its joy.

After about three weeks I realised I shouldn't be this way, not after all I had been through so I started to search for the solution. I did my trick with Emotional Freedom Technique as well as asked Jesus to guide me and a picture formed in my mind. I could see a small man crouched in a corner with a rebellious scowl on his face.

I knew what the picture meant. I don't know how I know but I did. This part of me blamed God for my inability to accept the church. It always comes back to this. A part of me blames God.

It took a battle to win this one. This part of me did not want to forgive. I eventually won the battle and asked Jesus to rid me of this. When I had I found, like my experience with being an alien in my own country, that my anti feelings for the church just went.

Since this time I have been able to think of the church and to attend church without the negative feelings that have savaged me for some years. I feel happier than ever. It also seems to have passed over to my feelings about groups and fitting in. Time will tell.

Veteran's Affairs

Overall I think I have been treated well but to me the weakness is that they, like the medical system, are only prepared to deal with symptoms of a problem and not the problem.

I have been affected by my time in Vietnam, my whole body. My whole mental, physical and spiritual being cannot be separated into parts and treated separately. All that I am is affected by the Vietnam experience and the whole person must be treated if health is to be attained.

Veteran's Affairs only deal with what is accepted as being related to Vietnam and will not fund treatment for problems that have not been accepted. I say the whole person must be treated **now**, if they are serious about helping us to health. I should be accepted as a disability from Vietnam and when health is restored then it can be decided what was really from Vietnam and what was not.

They have been good to me and I appreciate the case workers I have had but there is a sense of frustration that they are not interested in me but only symptoms already accepted. To me this neutralises any good they do.

In my case I put in to have soft tissue sarcoma considered for the lump sum payment to find the Drs. said I did not have this problem. I then tried to have reopened Sarcoidosis, to be told I did not have this problem either. So what was the illness I had in the 1980's that destroyed my working life? The answer to this question is of no interest to Veteran's Affairs yet I believe it should be. I am left with no diagnosis of an illness that has disrupted my life.

After receiving the letter which said I did not have Sarcoidosis I realised I had to choose between continuing to fight for claims all my life or to take what I had and begin to build a new life. I have withdrawn all my claims because of the above frustration and because of the time delay in dealing with them. If I need them I will return otherwise I will move on in my life.

Tribute 08

I remember aching feet and lower backs while we waited for things to take place but I think those who planned this could not have done a better job. The Government apologies were sincere but I was left with mixed feelings. The RSA apology was sincere but again left me with mixed feelings. The apology that meant something was the Army one. I had not realised how distanced I felt from the Army. By the time the General had finished I was deeply moved and something fell away. Added to this was the drumhead ceremony where Victor 1 and 2 were added to the flag. I had not realised they weren't. This was deeply moving and by the time it was finished I again felt part of the Army family.

Other moving moments:

Seeing those I served with and being able recognise some of them though some I had to think about before I could see them as they were. Before Tribute 08 I would not attend reunions because I felt no bonding to those I served with but now I will be part of V2 reunions in the future.

When we marched on the Saturday I passed a lady who said to me, "Welcome home". This brought tears to my eyes. It seemed like I spent most of the weekend fighting back tears.

I also had the thrill of seeing my first objector. She was a large lady holding a sign and staring at me with a belligerent stare. I felt a thrill run through me. This was the first one I had experienced and made me feel at home amongst those I marched with. I held her stare and gave her a big smile while we passed her position.

After the morning at Parliament we went to lunch and I noticed a couple of my vintage staring at us. When they left the wife came to me and said, 'I noticed your medals and want to say thank you.'

At the concert, near the end, I felt a subtle feeling creep over me and realised it was pride. I was proud to be a Vietnam veteran.

I enjoyed hearing that a comrade still had a photo I had taken of him and it was valued by the family. I had forgotten this. It was little things like this I remember and value of Tribute 08 and also that my wife could share this experience with me.

I swapped my video for Pringles one and watched his when we arrived home. He has done a superb job though the chap he said was Griffin was a young man I found hard to recognise. I learnt more of what I was a part of than I remember. It is a wonderful legacy of our time in Vietnam and properly finished off Tribute 08. I am glad I went.

Nick

Nicholas James Griffin, born the 7th day of August 1972 was a man who had to handle disappointments and failures in his life that few of us have to contend with. He would be happy, I think, to see both sides of his birth family present today. To Vicki and Karl, Linda and I say thank you for bringing into the world a son like Nick.

We thank the Central Baptist church, its pastors and members who have given of their time and expense to help us today. We also thank the Richmond fellowship workers who have taken part in making Nick's life more enjoyable over the last two years. In particular we thank Barbara Walters from Disability Support who enabled the funding that made it all possible. Others I thank are those who were involved with Nick in trying to help him, those from the Epilepsy society and Stewart Centre. We also thank the police involved, the St. John's workers who tried so hard to bring him back and the Funeral Directors from Seddon Park who made this so much easier for us.

We come to this day with mixed feelings-grief yet relief because the battle is over. The many unanswerable questions we had about his future no longer need to be answered and Linda and I are free to live the remainder of our lives without the fear of what will happen to him after we die.

The last day of his life was a happy one. He had been to a second hand clothing shop and found clothes he wanted. I asked him what colour they were and of course he said they were black. I protested, "Why black, it is the colour of depression, misery and death". I said that when you think of happiness you think of colours like red, green, blue and white - happy colours. We went and he found not only the clothes he desired but others and I was pleased to see he had chosen some red shirts and a hoody with at least some colour in it. We had him dressed in these clothes - clothes he was proud and happy to have.

My last happy memory of him was when I saw him on his bed smoking and dressed in light-coloured trousers and his red sweat shirt. I asked him had he showered because he ponged quite badly and he laughed. I believe he was happy as he entered his shower; his clothes had been put on the washing machine ready to dress in again. He was not thinking of dying and it is a lesson to us all to live our lives as if it is the last day because for Nick it was.

We love our sons and in many ways Tim suffered because of all the energy we put into Nick after his illness. Nick's life and mine have been intertwined for 23 years as we fought the system to find a better life for him.

He wanted to be a cook and for a period he did work in Memory Lane restaurant but in the end his disabilities discouraged him and he stopped going. His life gradually narrowed until it revolved around his bed and his smokes. His brain was damaged in the area that enables us to motivate ourselves to take the first step to do something so even though he wanted to do many things he could not take the first step to do so. Despite this he seemed to be mostly content and happy.

We established a lifestyle that gave Linda and me as much freedom as possible while still maintaining a protective shield around Nick. This is the fate of many parents with children with disabilities and our situation was mild compared to others. It was his epilepsy that frightened most and the first time you see one is frightening but Nick had no memory of having them and he seemed little worse for the experiences.

Did God take him for some better purpose? Many Christians believe in phrases like this but Linda and I believe tragedy and hardship fall upon every one and Christians are no exception. We believe God did not promise to spare us from pain but he did promise to walk with us through it, to hold us up when we could not manage ourselves. This he has done and we are grateful.

Without our relationship with Jesus, Linda and I would not have managed and it was our desire to see him return to Jesus. When he was ten he chose to be baptised and it was one of my biggest disappointments that I could not be in the baptistery with him but I had my own disabilities from fighting in Vietnam and I was not flavour of the month at that time. This was a blessing and a curse. Nick and Tim grew up while I struggled with the aftermath of Vietnam and a blessing because I ended up on a pension and so was home to help Nick.

In the ambulance to Auckland hospital for his brain abscess to be treated in 1986, he asked me if he was going to die. We talked honestly about the subject and his relationship with Jesus, prayed together and he was happy to trust Jesus for the outcome.

After he recovered and found he could no longer keep up with his peers he came under the influence of other young men and so began the descent into hell for us all.

Linda and I struggled with him and once gave him the choice to have a bath or leave with his mates so of course he left with his mates. As a father it was hard to let him go and it is devastating to look at the moon and know that one of the sons you love was out there without protection. We eventually found him and Linda and I knew he could not manage and agreed that whatever he did we could no longer put him out.

Eventually his brain healed enough that his personality changed and we settled into a life together. Nick eventually accepted that we loved him and also accepted he had disabilities that prevented him from achieving his dreams.

For years I tried to find an activity that He and I could do together - an activity that could give him at least a hobby with the possibility of earning money. We found this in making stone jewellery. Working together over the last two months enabled us to develop a closeness we had not achieved before. He only refused twice to come and work with me and he would apply himself as best he could until his brain became tired and he went to have a smoke. I have three objects that Nick mostly made. These are for Mary, Vicki and Karl and we hope they will bring comfort to you.

Had God finished with Nick? For years he would laugh when I said he needed to return to Jesus. I was surprised this year when he agreed to go to an Alpha course run here at Central Baptist. Here, he listened to a well presented discussion of what Christianity is really about and though he did not seem to understand a great deal he was coming into contact with Christians who accepted him as he was.

About two months after this course he surprised me by saying, "I have asked God to help me in my life". This was a major turnaround for him and it is the basis of my belief that he is now at the side of Jesus and is happy. All my Christian life I have at times experienced mind pictures when I pray and when I was in the garden on Saturday I looked at where he had recently begun to sit to smoke and I saw two people. Both were in white robes. One I knew was Jesus and the other was Nick and Nick had a great big grin on his face. I do not know if this was wishful thinking on my part or not but I believe I was seeing what is reality. Nick is happy in God's kingdom and I would not want him to return. He cannot come to us but we will one day go to him and it is our hope that our whole family will one day be reunited with Nick.

We went to the gardens on Sunday and a picture intruded into my consciousness. It was of Nick working at the grinder. What caught my notice was the work coat he was wearing. We never used one like this. While I was watching, he turned, looked at me and gave me a big smile then the picture went. I take it Nick is now making jewellery in God's kingdom without the difficulties he had here.

Linda and I will miss Nick but we would not want him back. We still have Tim, his partner Coralee and our only granddaughter Monet to love so we are blessed.

We thank all here for sharing the life of Nick with us and hope his life will inspire us all into the future - a future that will be enriched by the memories of a son who will always be entwined in the life of our family and the hope of one day being reunited with him.

Glimpses beyond the veil

The day after Nick's death I was in the garden looking at where he used to sit when I saw two figures dressed in white robes. One I knew was Jesus and the other was Nick. His hair was different and he had a great big smile on his face. The image stayed for about 30 seconds and then faded. I was greatly encouraged by this.

This next day we went to the Hamilton gardens and while sitting listening to entertainment a picture intruded into my mind. It was of Nick and he was in our workshop working at the grinder. He wore a grey work coat, one we did not have and he was grinding with expertise. As I watched he turned his head, looked directly at me and gave me a big smile. The picture then faded.

The next I saw was of him climbing a small hill. At the top was Jesus, waiting for him. To his left was the shadowy outline of buildings and from these a large group of people came and Nick was directed towards them. I understood these were his relatives who gathered around him.

On the way back from picking up Tim in Auckland I had an intrusive thought? It was the words, "Poor Nick, Poor Nick" over and over again. It puzzled me for some days as to why I was hearing this because Nick was not poor but rich in God's kingdom.

The next week, after the funeral and things were quieter I realised these were the words Nick said to himself as he died. As I thought on this another picture came. I was standing looking at his body in the shower, just as I found him. As I watched, Nick rose out of his body looking confused and apprehensive when he looked up and saw Jesus standing in front of him. He straightened and on his face came a huge smile. It was as if he said, "The old man was right!"

This glimpse was very moving to me. It encouraged me because if Jesus was waiting for Nick after he died to welcome him so he would be there for me or Linda when we die. Suddenly I lost any fear of dying. What I had believed for years but with a small niggle of unbelief was true.

On the Monday of the third week another picture came. This time it was of a veil across two cliff faces. I knew then the veil had been replaced and I would receive no more glimpses of Nick. He had gone into his new life and we were on the other side. I was to get on with my life. He could not come to me but I could go to him. This taught me that those who die with Jesus do not come back to haunt us. The veil separates them from us as it separates us from them.

This began a period of grief as the realisation of him being gone sunk home.

The fourth week began better and I was okay until Wednesday. On the Thursday I had to get out and so walked into town. On the way I was often emotional but knew I had to continue. I could see a picture within me of a swirling mass of grief that had to be released. As I walked and sometimes prayed in tongues I saw this cloud slowly rise up towards my mouth and underneath was a rich-blue lake surrounded by cliffs. It was lovely and peaceful and deep. It had a ripple in it like a stone had been dropped. (I don't know the meaning of the ripple.) By the time I arrived home I was at peace.

That night I had an experience that will upset a lot of people who read this. An intrusive picture floated into my mind. It was more shadowy than the others and appeared to show me Nick suffering in the 'lake of fire' in Hell. This disturbed and horrified me. I realised this could not be true and the suggestion that accompanied this, "Jesus has deceived you and Nick is now in Hell" had to be resisted. I came against this in the name of Jesus and it went away.

It was like being hit with a log of wood. I realised I had changed. If what I saw was true and God did have a place called hell where people were tortured, as many in the Church have taught (and I once believed) then I knew I could not love such a God and I would oppose his followers for the rest of my life. (I am okay with people who do believe in hell but if I received proof that God had a place such as represented in the doctrines of many churches- this is what I could not accept).

As odd as this knowledge is I was changed by it. I felt at peace and all stress left me. That night I slept well and I feel well the next morning as I write this. Where do I go from here with this knowledge, I do not know. It can only lead me into trouble but I am changed forever. Just as I know Jesus will be there for me when I die so I know the concept of Hell (as taught by the church) associated with God is not a viewpoint I support.

I do not deny the justice of God but I reject utterly the concept of a hell where people are tortured. I knew that if this was true and Nick was in hell I wanted to be there with him, to comfort and love him. This is the problem with the doctrine of hell. Once someone we love dies outside of Christ Jesus then a hell-believing Christian has nothing further to say to the bereaved because over all the love and compassion shown is the thought that they believe my loved one is in hell.

What happens to those who die outside of Jesus? I leave that in the hands of God. I am not God but humanly speaking I cannot love a God who has a hell. It is too horrifying and too much for my mind to cope with and I would go mad. I would want to seek revenge on God and his church.

I feel at peace with this knowledge and secure in God's love. For a long time I have had a problem with the doctrine of hell and now I don't have to have it anymore. At this point in time I feel at peace and life is enjoyable.

I was okay Christmas Eve and did not think I would have a problem the next day. I was surprised to lose emotional control in the morning but was okay by the afternoon.

The next day I was okay but in the afternoon I was compelled to get out the photo album for a period I cried but this process had to be endured but with joy.

I had two nights with what I call violent dreams where the eyeballs must have been working hard. The next day I was troubled by my unbelief. Nick was with Jesus and happy in the Kingdom and I knew that, then why was I troubled? Something changed within me at this point and I seemed to move over a bridge. I know Nick is safe. I know where he is. I know he is happy. Suddenly I knew this was so in a different way. I no longer believed but I knew. I can still grieve but I cannot despair and I can be happy and live again.

Grief triggers come and go and if I get emotional I don't care. I remind myself I know where he is and that one day I will join him and he can show me around.

I also don't want to be the brave Christian who is an example to others. I just want to be me and to experience all that is ahead of me. If I need to be emotional I want to be free to be so. I am sleeping better and seeing myself as a beautiful garden full of light and hope and living in the sunlight of God's love. (29/12/08)

20/01/09 – This type of grief experience is not a pathway we have walked before and we will have to go through it to the end. The last few weeks have been hard as grief strikes when we least expect it. We will survive and pick up the pieces of our lives and we face the future with optimism that our lives will be good. We know where Nick is and this helps us so much when we are down. We still go down at times but this will lessen as time passes.

26/02/09 – At church two weeks ago I was hit with grief again and it took till Wednesday to recover. I could see myself climb out of the shadow into the light on the slope. I was not at the top of the hill but just below the summit. Here I felt good. I don't know where I am now but I am experiencing a sense of contentment I have never felt before. I am enjoying life and the activities I am involved in. I may go down again but the future looks good.

Jesus & Vietnam Rejoined

At the beginning of 2010 a number of events happened that have resulted in the freedom I experience now.

The first was the joining again of what should never have been separated. During the bad years as I struggled with my problems I became aware that my experience with Jesus and Vietnam were entwined in my life. I could not have one without the other. I thought I needed to separate these two dramatic experiences if I was to become well. I succeeded to some extent over the next few months and in some areas it helped but in others it did not.

In 2010 I read a book, "Why men don't go to church". I discovered that the church has been taken over by feminine values and as a man who had been to war I would find it very difficult to be accepted in a church with feminine rather than masculine values. By feminine values I mean the nurturing values such as love, forgiveness, caring, etc. All nurturing values a woman is comfortable with but the masculine values of challenge, risk and danger are not appreciated.

I realised I had been wrong and I had to accept that there was nothing wrong with being a Christian as well as being a Vietnam Veteran. I solved my problem by making a cross out of stone to remind me I am a Christian. I used Tiger Eye to remind me I am a man with a tiger within. I glued a lapel badge the government sent to honour me as a veteran to stick on the front, to remind me I went to war. (I used this cross in my models.)

Now, when I wear it I walk with pride as a Christian Vietnam Veteran who still has a bit of tiger in him. I found this to be a major stepping stone to health.

A baby killer reborn

My next revelation was to see a mind-picture of me returning from Vietnam in 1968. I walked with honour from the plane into a country that called me a baby-killer. To my knowledge I never killed any babies or children but my subconscious had accepted the accusation and this had burdened me for 40 years. New Zealand took away my honour. I saw myself as rejected and dishonoured.

I next saw myself walking along life's road and the church to my right had a large padlock on the door and the large sign above said, "Thou shalt not kill!" I have been in churches where the leader believes this instead of interpreting the old King James words as, "thou shalt not murder".

I realised that being not only a baby-killer but a combat soldier, didn't give me much chance of success in the church.

I struggled for a few days when a word floated into my mind, 'Forgive'. God did not want me to excuse my country and the church for rejecting me but to forgive them. This was not easy to do but the next picture I saw was the cross with two arms reaching out to me. If God can forgive me then I can forgive others. I realised it was within my authority and power to choose to forgive.

After the word "forgive" came three times over three days I knew I had to do this. I did so. I did not excuse my country or the church, I forgave them and in doing so a great burden lifted off me. My honour is restored and from that day I have walked with pride to be what I am – a man who answered his country's call and went to war.

In 2011 I sent the PDF file of my "Journey to Health" to the RSA. I received a good reply and with it came the realisation I was no longer a victim of the Vietnam War. The next day I seemed to go back in time to the episode where we had to walk straight into an enemy bunker system, just like our ancestors did WW1. Fortunately the enemy had gone during the night but we didn't know that. I stayed in this period of my history for about 10 hours and as I analysed this I realised that this was when I became a man. I faced death and went forward to fight or die. I was, and still am, a warrior.

My Spiritual Beliefs

I believe in Two Kingdoms



The Kingdom of this World

Christianity
 Faith Ambition Law
 Justice  Belief's
 Beauty Religion
 Goodness Family
 Environment Pride Love
 Hobbies Hate Work
 Hope

An average life lived by most people



The Kingdom of God



Our original parents
 refused God's love
 and passed from the
 Kingdom of God to
 be slaves to the king
 of this world

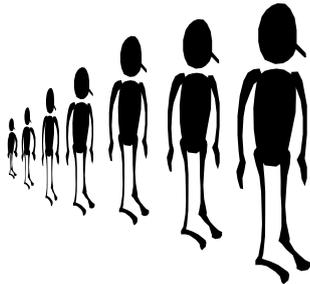


God chose a man

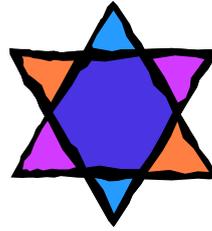


Abraham

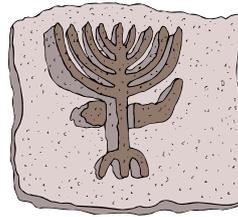
Who became a nation



Israel



Israel was meant to be a witness to the love of God for man



Instead of being the light of God's love to man Israel decided the love of God was only for them



Israel failed but was still to be the mother who would birth the one who would open the way, for all who desired it, to a relationship with God

The birth of Jesus is historical fact



His death is historical fact!



His body disappeared is historical fact!



Jesus met me two weeks before I went to Vietnam



I was no longer afraid of death. I could concentrate on my trade which was to kill the enemy. I consider myself a better soldier because of my relationship with Jesus.

God's Love reaches out to anyone who desires to know Him and to enter His Kingdom.



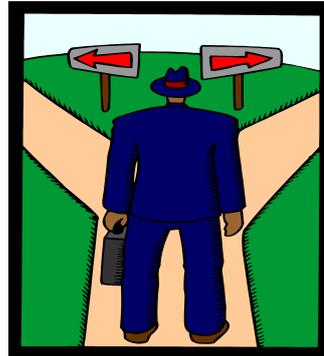
God does have a standard for entering His Kingdom.



I have never, and will never, be good enough to meet God's standards.



This is God's Standard.



I can choose to accept God's price.

The decision to leave the kingdom of the world and to be a member of God's Kingdom is the beginning of a journey.



Bad things do happen to God's people!



Relationship with God is similar to a loving relationship. The one who loves us is always present to support us, no matter what happens to us.

I have been a Christian for 40 years. Because I could not handle stress from people I have not achieved my life desires. I have failed at most of what I attempted. I have known grief over children, suffered from depression and hopelessness.

My Christian life has not been easy. I am unable to fit into a church and depend upon God and my wife for my sense of purpose in life.

I have become disillusioned at the teaching of the church, especially over the healing ministry.

Despite all this I cannot turn away from the experience I had with Jesus and because I know He is alive then I know that when I die I will enter finally into the Kingdom of God.

As I age and death is on the horizon a sense of futility rises within me but combating this is the relationship I have with Jesus.

My trust in God is not dependant upon the teaching of man or even living by the rules and regulations in the Bible. My trust is in the living God whom I know loves me.

God offers us a relationship with Him. A love relationship that looks at my failures and still says, "Welcome into my Kingdom. I forgive you." If you take everything I depend on away from me I still have my love relationship with God.

I hope you too, one day will join me in God's Kingdom.