

THE CIRCLE OF GRACE

From Local to Global to Local

**Memoirs of
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SYNOPSIS

These Memoirs tell the story of a girl born in Sydney in 1936, after the Great Depression and just before the terrible Second World War was looming onto the world's horizon.

I have written them to describe my life, and how a shy insecure girl grew to become a passionate advocate for justice.

I went from life in suburban Gladesville and Hunter's Hill, to a black community in Cleveland OH. Next, there was a year in an inner-city Glasgow Parish. Then 11 years in Paddington, followed by thirteen years in a Religious Order, living in the ghettos of Chicago, and many villages around the world. Two years in Toronto, travelling all around Canada during this time, gave me a real sense of partnership with the Canadians in the Order.

My life was in the mid-way between ups and downs - in some ways happy and with a stable routine; in other ways I felt very uncertain and even anxious. I would describe it as mostly a feeling of low-key anxiety pervading me.

What follows is the lows and highs of a life away from my children and my family life. There are aspects of deep emotional wrenching, and yet times of learning and how to be independent and develop resilience.

I led a transitory life (my home was wherever my head was on the pillow) - first as a Local Church Consultant across the USA. Then my work took me to the poorest of the poor villages across many countries, as a Teacher and Village Development Consultant.

Other transitions describe my Ordination into the Uniting Church as a Minister, leading to Multicultural ministry. There have been many wonderful moments in my life. It is not helpful to say which has been the most fulfilling. The journey has been awesome and sometimes very painful. I have seen many wonders of creation and have also seen extraordinary local people across the globe embrace a new way to see life. My family have loved me and often laughed at me, which has kept me grounded. I will say this about my life- reflecting back on it- I would not try and change any of it, because it has brought me to this point. As a young Mum and Minister's wife in Cleveland, Glasgow and 'Paddo', to a Minister in some tough places, and yet places with good and gracious people. It has been one long journey of self-discovery and mistakes, and adding self-growth to the mix, I hope. Now that it nears its end, I am content to be a co-creative partner with Jim, a loving Mum to my three adult family, and their fine partners, and a Granny to my adorable five grandchildren. What is left is to embrace the days as they come with hope, grace and gratitude.

PROLOGUE

I am describing my journey from a conservative background into a radical Religious community. This separated me for ten years from my three children.

It caused severe emotional hardship to all of us, especially I focus on my children and myself. It caused a total denial of our feelings and severe emotional trauma.

Was it worth it? How would family life have been if I had married someone else? Am I a better person or how would I have been different and perhaps a better person without the life I had?

Questions without answers. Did we bet on the wrong horse....?

My response is in my story as it unfolds.

Chapter 1

My Childhood

The year 1936 began with the Nation still reeling from the effects of the Great Depression. There was a certain numbness pervading the community. People were beginning to recover financially, by picking themselves up, and beginning again.

At the beginning of the year King George V died, and was succeeded by his son, King Edward VIII. People began to sense a preparation for War once more, when German troops reoccupied the Rhineland, in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and the Treaties of Locarno.

Some notable other global events were of the Summer Olympics in Berlin- marking the first live Television coverage of a sports event in world history. These were the same Olympics when Jesse Owens, an African American, upset Hitler, when Jesse won the 100-meter dash. Beryl Markham, an English Aviator, became the first woman to make the East West Solo Transatlantic flight from England to Nova Scotia.

In Australia, two very notable indigenous men were born. Both these men grew up to become passionate advocates for their people. In the early 60's Charles Perkins became an Aboriginal activist, and led a Freedom Ride from Sydney to Moree. Many students from Sydney University joined this bus ride. The aim was to remove the colour bar preventing the local indigenous community from swimming in the swimming pool.

Eddie Kiki Mabo was born on Murray Island, and became an indigenous Land Rights campaigner, and was responsible for declaring the fact that Indigenous people had been in Australia for forty to sixty thousand years, and it was not 'terra nullius' or 'the land belongs to nobody', as it was commonly termed and believed. This extraordinary effort by Eddie Mabo led to the High Court of Australia making a ruling called the Mabo Decision, 3 June 1992. This Act stated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have rights to the land, and recognized their unique connection with the land. On September 7th 1936, the last known Thylacine named Benjamin, died in Hobart Zoo.

Into this world I was born at 14 Hillcrest Avenue, Gladesville, in the morning (while my Dad was having breakfast), on March 10th, 1936. I was the third daughter of Violet and Jack Milne- my older sister Theodora, and my middle sister Marilyn. The house is still there, and in 2006, my sisters and I made a return visit. When my parents owned it, it was named "Green Isle"- my Mother had Irish roots. It is still a very pleasant house, built about 1920.

My childhood was a busy one. Plenty of cut and thrust. I learned very early on that values are important, and that "character" is very important, too. My earliest memory of living at Gladesville focuses on an accident with a ball through a glass window. Marilyn had a golf ball in her hand, and was throwing it to Theodora, and somehow it smashed through the back veranda window, much to the chagrin of our Dad! My very earliest memory of pain was when a small piece of the glass from the window went into the ball of my foot. My Mother asked her chiropodist, a Mr Hand! to dig it out. I still remember the pain of this. I was about two and a half or three.

At the Gladesville house we had a path in the centre of the back yard, which led up to the chooks at the very back of the block. There was a lovely trellis with grapes growing all over it in the middle of the pathway, and we girls loved to nibble at the delicious Isabella grapes!

My sister Marilyn reminds me now and then of the time I left our house and walked up to the nearest shops- aged no more than three. It was a distance of at least 600 metres - a long way for a small child to go - I was found in the delicatessen- my Mother was asking everyone she met "have you seen a little girl?" (This must be in the genes- as our son Peter, at Paddington, at an even younger age, walked out of a supposedly locked gate, and walked about 200 metres while pushing a teddy bear in a stroller~ escaping from the supervision of the Church Kindergarten staff.)

When I was four years and three months old, our family moved to a newly built house in Hunter's Hill. This house was named "Elsinora" after one of my Mother's Father's sheep properties in far western N.S.W. Both my grandfathers and my maternal grandmother were dead by the time I was born, but my Mother saw to it that her family history was well respected and well known by her children. So, from a very early age, I remember what seemed like myriads of cousins from the country coming to spend their weekend leave with us from their boarding school. Aunty Vi and Uncle Jack were known and loved by many. My Mother had two brothers who were country men, so not only all their children, but also Mum's country cousins' children would be regular guests (more like children really), around our family table. We were a very close family.

During the War, many of my male cousins would come and see us before they went off into combat, and then return to see us when they came back from the "front." There was a photo of Dick Killen, who was seconded (like a number of other young Australian Pilots,) into the RAF in Britain, and who was killed flying over the English Channel, travelling back from a raid on Germany. His body floated over to Scotland, and he is buried in the Kiltarns Parish Church graveyard, in the Highlands of Ross and Cromarty, alongside other Airmen from Allied countries. This was a constant reminder to me. His face was always there, looking at me.

I learnt to recite off the various cousins' family trees, and who was married to who etc., I think this is part and parcel of the way Celtic people think, as I have come to understand my Celtic thought patterns.

My maternal Grandmother was one of eleven children, nine of whom married. My great Grandparents had come from Ireland in 1856, and brought three small children with them, and gone to the goldfields, where they met with no success! In that matrilineal family two Young sisters (my Granny Annie Young and her sister Marion, married two Killen brothers - my Grandfather Eddie Killen, and Uncle Willie Killen) and my Mum had forty-six first cousins.!. Even now, when I meet my first cousin once removed, I see extraordinary likenesses- a small likeness to this one, a facial resemblance to that one, and so on. Back in Ireland, the Killen's and Young's had intermarried more than once, in earlier generations, so that facial characteristics were likely to pop up, lo here, lo there! Other family members intermarried with other Irish families on the Tree, so we are a composite of very interconnected families on Mum's side. Many family connections came to Australia and became pastoralists, while some remained in 'the old country' as my Mum always called Ireland.

A story about my Granny Annie and then my Mum. My Mum told me that Granny had a suitor who came out from Ireland who was her first cousin on the Lyle side of her family. He was very keen to marry Granny, but she said no, because they were so closely related. He returned to Ireland single. Then because in Melbourne, in the suburb of Windsor, my Killen great grandparents and my Young Great grandparents lived 3 houses from each other in the same street called The Avenue, they were not only relatives they frequently helped each other through various small crises. So Granny met Grandfather Eddie when a young woman, and although she was 5 years older, she fell deeply in love with Eddie. My Aunt Barbara told me the story of how Granny as a young Mum with her 5 children would wait at the Manly ferry wharf for Grandfather to come home from a visit to the city. She would say, "Here comes the boat crossing the water with its precious cargo on board." I think Granny was quite a poet, and I noticed many of the Youngs through the generations following have a very literary gene, and wrote good poems and short stories.

The House at 21 Joubert Street

Hunter's Hill was a quiet village in those days. It had been settled mostly by French wool-classers, in the 1850's so many of the streets were named after French settlers. A near neighbour and a very grand house to us, was the French colonial house named St Malo. An elderly gentleman, a widower, named Mr Du Boise lived alone in this house. I remember skipping amongst his tall vases and polished furniture and feeling the rugs under my feet as I danced around. I think now that Mr Du Boise was very generous in allowing me to play in his beautiful house. In the grounds of St Malo stood a small stone cottage in which Mary Reibey, the first woman emancipated convict had lived. It was one room, with all the pots and pans hanging above the fireplace. I used to play make believe games by myself in this cottage.

The house at 21 Joubert Street, on the corner of The Avenue, was a marvellous place for a child to grow. When we first moved there, I remember playing amongst the wooden shavings on the stairs – probably being a huge annoyance to everybody! I was fascinated by the round shavings, as they came off the plane!! I know we moved in when the house was not yet finished, as already with the War in progress, building materials and all resources were being rationed. There was an acre of land with the two-storey house on one side of the land. Mum had her chook house, up the back of the block, against one of the boundaries. My job often was to feed the chooks- mostly just scraps left from the fruit and vegie peelings. They were also given wheat at least weekly, and then sometimes a white powder which a poultry farmer recommended. This was sprinkled in with their food. They were never given any meat bones, or onions or citrus fruit peelings. These chooks were Mum's pride and joy.

There was a "hard court" (loam, I expect) tennis court on which our family had hours and hours of enjoyment- with many good friends of my parents coming every Saturday afternoon, to play. We girls also played with these folks, and thereby improved our own game. I became a champion tennis player, locally at the Hunter's Hill Club where every Saturday afternoon I played competitive inter district Club tennis, from about fifteen, till my vocation took me elsewhere at weekends. In High School at PLC Pymble, I also competed in the team between other schools, in the Tildesley Shield. We had some wins as I recall. The Tildesley Shield was a big silver cup, and very coveted, and the girls of the Tennis Team were very proud if we won it for our School. The house had some other great features- at the entrance on the corner of The Avenue and Joubert St- there were two iron gates, painted black, and set in stone pillars- we used to regularly walk down the red gravel path in bare feet--- The front bush was quite wild- mostly gum trees and Dad called this "The Black Forest" in German, Schwarz Wald.

Our cubby house was erected in this part of the garden- I remember sleeping out in a sort of tent thing strung across the branches- and sleeping on ground sheets. We were all Girl Guides, so I suppose we wanted to "rough it."

My best friend all these early childhood years was June Lawrence. She was only a few months younger than me, and had moved to a very nearby street, Avenue Road. We were always to be found playing together, like inseparable twins. I used to say, "Can I go round to June's place please?" I know that the most naughty thing that June and I used to do was to sit in the middle of Joubert Street, waiting for a car to come. Sometimes we would sit there for five minutes; and then we would quickly run from the middle of the street to safety. This was quite silly. Our parents never knew what we were doing! Later June went to SCEGGS, an Anglican school, but on and off, depending on where we have lived, we have remained good friends all these years. Mrs Lawrence looked after Mum as a good neighbour, when Mum had her first heart attack, and when Mum was recovering, Mrs Lawrence would visit Mum and perm her hair.

From the corner of Joubert St and The Avenue the Air Force men walked down the hill to the Air Force Base Camp at the bottom, right on the Lane Cove River. The men with their blue caps and blue uniform used to walk past our House frequently. They always called to me "Hello Curly" because of my tight curly hair. I was very happy to see them. They always smiled and waved as they walked right down the hill to their base.

There were some lovely terraced gardens where Dad grew his beautiful roses- this area looked out down to The Avenue side of the block- we had a fish pond, and grew lots of shrubs, as well as many rather unusual shrubs, scattered throughout the garden. I remember the fight we always had with the birds, when the figs were ripe. When we had milk delivered in bottles, after the War, Mum tied the silver milk bottle tops to the fig leaves to frighten away the birds, but this was only partially successful. There was a steep drive up to the garage, which was directly underneath the living room. Dad kept all his tools in the garage, too. We had a wonderful long work-bench, with a vice, which Dad let me play with and use, sometimes. In the garage there were two dark passages to get right under the house to its foundations- this was a great place to play hide and seek. Leaving the garage there was a set of stairs which took one up to the ground floor level of the house. I always thought how lucky we were to be able to come up these stairs and not get wet when it was pouring with rain.

At the back section of the house there were steps leading down to the clothesline, and to the "Forest of Fontainebleau" -- Dad's name again. At the bottom of a small gully here, there were the remains of an Aboriginal "midden" – pieces of oyster shell, and the like – left on the flat stones, where the earlier people had eaten some delicious Sydney rock oysters, no doubt. I clearly remember many native shrubs in our bushy wild gardens, especially Hardenbergia, and various kinds of Ti tree, and white orchid-like flowers, as well as flannel flowers. Water tanks were a part of family life back then, so ours was just outside our back door. It was used to water the garden.

On the pathway up to the chooks at the far end of the block, Dad created a small area where about twice a year he would do his own form of fire hazard reduction. I remember helping him find sticks to start the fire and watching with glee as he did his burn off. This was the same place where Dad used to bring the chooks now and then, when they got too old to lay eggs, and chop off their heads, and then we ate them!

One story about me and my early understanding of God bears mention. When I was still four years old, one day my Mum was hanging out the washing on her line with two wooden uprights, at either end for support. I was playing with a stick, standing close to her. I remember saying to her "I want to break this stick, but God will not let me break the stick". Mum was standing there, I think wondering what I would do next!

There was a turning circle for cars after they had left the gravel path, and driven around to the back of the house. When I bought a Morris Minor car, in my Nursing training days, I could just manage to turn the car around, so only a small car could negotiate the turn. There were steps which led up to the back gate, which went out on to the part of Joubert Street opposite the Hunter's Hill Hotel. The path here was right beside the tennis court. The fence along the Joubert St side was of wood, about one and a half metres high, and Dad always painted it over with a black tar, to preserve it from borers. The fence was bordered by Oleander trees, which actually are still there, though the house was demolished in 1960, to make way for the freeway down to the new Figtree Bridge.

The house had four bedrooms, and a sunroom, upstairs, as well as two bathrooms upstairs. So there was plenty of room to spread ourselves out! Theodora had a bedroom which looked out over the tennis court, and onto a small round balcony. Marilyn had a bedroom which also had a small balcony which looked out over the back of the house, and the clothesline/ Forest and gully area. I had a room which had been the sewing room- with blue feltex carpet on it- which also looked out to the tennis court ... all of our bedrooms had built in wardrobes- Mum and Dad each had their own furniture wardrobes, though not built in, and Dad had his own dressing room as well. When we first moved to Elsinora in June 1940, Marilyn and I slept in the large airy sunroom, which had a wooden floor with a rug or two. When we were being bold, we would climb out through the windows on to the tiny balcony which was the copper roof of the round end of the living room underneath us. It was quite scary to do this, but gave one a fantastic view of the Lane Cove River, and Riverview College.

I remember a certain Saturday morning, when Mum came in to this bedroom and told us that Uncle Alfred Rofe had just died- I was seven, and Mum, who did not like driving the car all that much, got straight in to the car and drove herself over to Killara, to see her sister, my Aunty Barbara, just widowed.

Uncle Alfred is one of the people I remember very well. He had a quiet approach to life, and was the opposite of his wife, Aunty Barb. He used to say, "Here is Cinderella coming to visit me, and she does not have two ugly sisters", which was his tactful way of saying that Theodora and Marilyn were sisters and not the ones in the folk tale... I clearly remember playing Ride a Cock Horse on his knee, as he jiggled me up and down- I think that he was his own man- he had been wounded on the Somme, and years after, I found out his health had suffered from this, like thousands of other Australian men. His games with me were always kind and great fun.

On the ground floor of the house there was a living room, sunroom, study, dining room, telephone room, linen room, housekeeper's suite, kitchen, pantry, and laundry. Then there was an outside toilet attached to the house, as well. I think my favourite room downstairs was the study in winter – we

sometimes had open fires, with wood and coke, and sometimes coal, which was scarce. There was a good table to use for homework, and an old couch to lie on.

During the war all houses were camouflaged - all the windows were covered over with black paper, glued to the window, with a very smelly glue made from calves' hooves! Dad was a Warden- his job was to go around and check that all the houses in his designated area were completely in the dark- not a whisker of light to be seen- so that the Japanese, the enemy, could not figure out the geography as/if they flew overhead. The War hung heavily over all our heads. When I reflect on the tennis parties that occurred most Saturdays on our Court, I think that this was one really good way for our parents to chat amongst their friends, and keep their own strength and confidence intact. A great deal of talking with one another went on at the afternoon tea times, and the conversations were always back and forth and plenty of discussion about the War, and events happening around us. Every family had someone from their circle involved in the War effort.

Family Life

My mother was engaged in many different kinds of voluntary work. The most memorable work she did that I recall from a very early age - say three years- was when I went with her once a week to Air Force House. This was an R and R place for Air Force Men (I don't know if there were any women at this distance of time), in Goulburn Street, in the city. Here Mum would spend the entire day washing the dishes, while I was entertained by the men, and I entertained them back. Of course, I loved all these days, as I could puddle around in the water, because the commercial dishwashing machine used to leak all over the floor, and Mum would be busy with the mop and bucket as I played in bare feet. I suppose many of the men there were later killed in combat, but such horrors were not a part of my consciousness then.

Mum had a large number of other voluntary activities- there was the Red Cross- the women made nets for camouflage purposes- I remember seeing Mum and her sisters using a big needle to weave the nets. Then there was the Dorcas Society, which was the group for women in her Church- lots of sewing and fundraising was done in this group- all the proceeds went to the less fortunate and the poor- so I learnt very early about care and why people care for others. There were many other 'good causes,' from the Red Cross, to the local Play Reading and Dramatic Society, the CWA (Harbourside Branch,) and Hunter's Hill Music Society. Until I went to school, I went with Mum to all these meetings. I watched Mum and her Play Reading group in many Plays. Mum not only wrote Plays, she produced them and acted in them as well! Out of all Mum's external activities, the Air Force Club was my favourite!

A story my Mum told me about her very early life at Wanaaring, where she lived until the family came to the city. My Granny Annie Lyle (Young) Killen was rearing her five children. Mum said that Granny came to live in the far outback not knowing much about what it was like and the hazards of living so far away from any family or any familiar surroundings. Granny Annie Young was born in a cottage in Malmsbury, near Kyneton, Victoria, and delivered by a midwife, as was the norm in those days. The Aboriginal women who lived on the banks of the Paroo River would come and sit with her, with their own children. Gradually each gained confidence in the other, and the Aboriginal women showed Granny how to grind the oats with two very flat ochre coloured stones. I have seen similar stones in various Museums out west, and they are the size of bread and butter plates. Back in Ireland (which was Granny's heritage, although she was born here,) this was called Groats, and I have often thought but for the Aboriginal women teaching Granny how to care for her own children, it might have meant that I would not have been born.

A very early memory of my Father is at the time of his appendectomy. This surgery took place at Lewisham Hospital. The significance for me now is that Lewisham was managed and owned by an Order of Nuns- the Sisters of Charity. My family was ardently Protestant- Catholics were over there, and not "with us." My Dad was quite anti Catholic, as were most of his peers. Mum was different- she knew some Catholics, and indeed some of her cousins were married to Catholics, so she was not fazed when Dad had his surgery in Lewisham. She used to say to us, "All people are to be respected no matter what their religion." Respect for differences was one of her values, under all circumstances. I remember going to visit Dad; I was four, and seeing nuns with their huge habits like bird's wings, or

sails on a boat ... and even then, feeling a sort of specialness or graceful awe surrounding the women, and the serenity of the hospital.

My Dad played a very important part in my life as a child. He was the epitome of the local Solicitor. He went every Wednesday afternoon and Friday evening to his office in Gladesville. His city office was at 350 George Street. Our phone would ring frequently when we had just sat down at the dinner table, and one of us would answer it, only to find it was one of Dad's clients, needing his help. He would grumble a bit, and then speak so kindly to the person. Dad's work was a bread and butter sort of practice - including "matrimonial causes" as divorce was then called. I still know people in Gladesville who had their conveyancing done for their house by Dad. What remains with me from this kind of family life is Dad's care for people - constantly putting himself out for clients who could not afford to pay him- so he was quite often paid "in kind" with eggs, or chickens, or fruit, or vegetables- whatever his client grew. He was particular about honesty, and had an aversion to "bent cops" which he said he used to encounter in his work at various Police Stations as he worked with his clients. I now think that I respected Dad so much, with all the constant interruptions at the door and on the phone; and added to that, the incessant voluntary work which Mum did. . . . that I found a life partner with a similar care for people.

I recall my own two visits to Hospital- the first one was for the removal of my tonsils and adenoids- Mum had a friend she had known at University, who had become an Ear Nose and Throat Specialist. We went to Macquarie Street, and I remember Mum asking the Dr "should her tonsils come out, Arthur" and his one-word answer, "Violet, the answer is yes ". I was a patient in Wade House, part of the Children's Hospital, at Camperdown. I was five at the time.

Then, when I was seven, the local Doctor, Dr Bulteau, removed my appendix at Seacombe Private Hospital, in Drummoyne. I clearly remember walking up the stairs to the second floor of the house, and lying myself down on to the Operating Theatre table, and then the Nurse putting the mask with the gas over my nose and mouth. I was convalescing in a room known as "The Black Hole of Calcutta," older women and girls all in the room together. Later on Theodora also had her appendix out, and was also a patient in this room. Marilyn only had her tonsils and adenoids removed, and she also was a patient here.

I remember so well all the deliveries which came to the house- in the early years of the War- there was the ice man with the ice, and his huge tongs to put the blocks of ice in the ice box.... the baker, the fish man, the fruiterer, and the milko- even the rabbit man came with fresh rabbits. Now and then the Fuller Brush Man would come and try and persuade Mum to buy some new broom, or long handled duster for the cobwebs. All of this would give us girls an opportunity to see how business transactions were conducted- good grounding for later. Mum always gave the men a good hearing, and sometimes she had our knives sharpened, and occasionally bought other products.

We girls use to laugh at the way our Mother fed us the same meal, according to the night of the week.... Monday was roast Lamb and Lemon Delicious Pudding, Tuesday lamb fritters, Wednesday, Shepherds Pie, Thursday, chops, Friday, sausages, Saturday frankfurts and crumpets, Sunday chops, and for pudding: Junket and fruit. Most of the time while we were growing up, we had housekeepers to help Mum with the day to day living. She was out of the house so much on all her causes, that she would not have had time to keep house as well. In many ways, she was well ahead of her time as a liberated woman. Mum had been to Sydney University, and was the first woman to win the Philosophy prize and also the first woman to win the Logic Prize. I look back on this now and say that Mum's extraordinary intellect did not come into my personality and intellect, although she gave me heaps of other gifts of herself. She used to spend considerable time working at the University Settlement - a centre for the financially stretched residents of Redfern. She was great at scrubbing floors. This was during World War One. While at University Mum was a bricklayer in Daceyville. This suburb has the distinction of being the first Social Housing project in Australia. The residents were all returned WW1 service men. Years later, when I was Minister at Mascot Botany Eastlakes, I used to do the rounds with Meals on Wheels in Daceyville. What goes around comes around perhaps...

During the second war, Mum was very frugal, and even the eggs were preserved with a substance called Kepeg. This was a yellow ointment, based on sulphur, and it was rubbed carefully all over the eggshell. It had a slight sulphur smell, and we were very careful not to crack the egg. We almost always had our own eggs from our chooks, so quite often we gave eggs away, already preserved. She always made sure that the house was in order, and we kept our rooms tidy, and there were flowers in the float bowl on the dining room table. Her slogan for a smooth-running household was: see that the washing up is done; the beds are made; and there is fruit-cake in the house. This rule of thumb has made my life a lot easier over the years.

My most unforgettable moments as a child were two. One was when I was about four or five. I remember that all three of us girls had velvet dresses. Mum always dressed us in green, blue, and pink. Theodora was always in green, her favourite colour, Marilyn in blue, and I was in pink, or sometimes red. In the sunroom where Marilyn and I slept at first, there was a large yellow painted wardrobe. Our beautiful velvet dresses were kept in this wardrobe. One day, I climbed inside the wardrobe so I could get one of the dresses down for myself. The whole wardrobe came apart from the bottom part - which was a large drawer for shoes- and I fell inside the wardrobe as it toppled over. I can still feel the effect of the clothes swirling around me, as Theodora rushed in from her bedroom next door, shouting, "oh my darling sister, she'll be killed, she'll be killed." There certainly was a great thud, as the wardrobe, with me inside, came crashing to the floor.

The second incident concerned me riding on a horse. I was staying at Garah, not far from Moree, with the Hickson's (cousins), and the horse I was riding was old and frightened easily. One of the dogs barked loudly at the horse, and it reared, and threw me. I suffered a very sore back, which resulted in a scoliosis, and later came against me in my Nursing training.

One of my happiest memories of Theodora was when she turned twenty-one; and our parents gave her a spectacular party. I still remember the beautiful satin dress she wore on the night. As she came down the stairs from her bedroom, her face was glowing- the dress was a lovely pale blue with paler blue stripes on it. The design was made with a halter neck, which set off her shoulders well. She looked especially pretty, and although she still wore her glasses (no contact lenses back then), the whole effect was overwhelming! I remember that one of Dad's friends (we called him Uncle Pick) played the Piano (which Theodora and I both learnt,) so that was the kind of music we had - and there was dancing too.! The food was very simple- cocktail frankfurts on toothpicks with tomato sauce, and sandwiches, and pineapple pieces on toothpicks. There was some talk of giving Theodora the key to the house, I can't remember precisely. (Theodora had chosen this beautiful dress, and it was the first not-green dress which Theodora ever wore: a real coming-of-age decision)!

Marilyn and I were very proud of Theodora - she became Dux of the School, Presbyterian Ladies' College, at Pymble; and somewhat to my annoyance, the Teachers often said to me, "Your sister did so well at French (or whatever subject was under discussion), I expect you to do very well also". This I felt was unfair, as I was good at a number of subjects, and very good at Sport, and felt I did as well as I could in all subjects. Marilyn was not very fond of Sport, like Theodora, and she also was not a brilliant student like Theodora. She and I brought credit to the School in our own way. We were more even-tempered and were not in the limelight like Theodora. When Theodora went to Sydney University, she talked me into making beautiful coffee cream biscuits. The recipe was in the CWA Recipe book, and I became a favourite, making these yummy biscuits, which were sold to make money for the Student Christian Movement. Most of the SCMerS ate them, or used them to supplement their Stalls. I can still remember the coffee flavor and the coffee cream inside them.

Dad went on his first overseas trip in 1950, and took Marilyn away with him for the whole year. I was quite lonely, as I was only in third year at School, and I missed Marilyn. Theodora was at University. I used to relieve my loneliness playing tennis with myself, improving my skills in strokes by playing against a wooden board Dad made for me at one end of the tennis court. I remember meeting Theodora's friends, Shirley Bowmer (later Maddox) and Jean Stock (Gledhill) there, whom I knew later in life in other circles.

Marilyn did not have a twenty-first birthday party as I recall, as she was well into her Nursing training, and having time off was always an issue. Her nickname was "Happy" as her friends always

said she had a happy face.

My Schooling

I began my formal education at the age of four- when I went to the Misses Ada and Winifred Budden's cottage school in Ambrose Street, Hunter's Hill. It seems quaint now, but Ada Budden was referred to as Miss Budden, and her younger sister was known as Miss Winifred.

The name of the School was "Girraween." This was a Kindergarten to year 3 school. I learnt arithmetic, spelling, French, Latin and English. I do not think either of the women were trained teachers as such, although they gave me an excellent grounding in spelling, parsing, and rhythm through dancing; and began my intense love of music.

The property ran down to a gully at the bottom- and we children used to hide in the trees, and play lots of happy games down there. "Sheep, sheep come home", was a favourite. I met Rosaleen Fitzgerald there, and the Windeyer girls and Sue Ranken and her brother, Bobby, and the Pender children- John, Judy and Alison. (Bill was not born then.) They were very happy times. We had a hot lunch every day, cooked by a cook. Girraween in many ways was ahead of its time- because, when I went to Pymble, and repeated year 3; I already knew quite a lot of English-and when I reached year 6 and we took Latin and French, I knew all the Latin and French, because we had used the same text books at Girraween in year 3!

I did enjoy my school days at PLC Pymble. Every day for nine years I went on the bus at the bottom of Joubert Street, at Figtree Bridge. The bus went at 7.24 am, and we girls and the FitzGerald girls quite often were noticed running down the hill, as the last ones to get on the bus. The bus took us up to Chatswood, the destination, where we took the 7.53 train to Pymble. We arrived at Pymble station at 8.08, and then walked the half mile to the school. My reflection now is that this was my first deep and meaningful experience of 'community'. Ricky Lennon boarded the bus with us sisters and the FitzGerald's, and Carol Simpson had first boarded at Boronia Park. Jill Solomon entered the bus at Linley Pt., the Ludowici brothers, Walter and Jim at Burns Bay Road. Ricky and the Ludowici's exited at Lane Cove and caught a tram to the city.

We always got to school just before the 8.40 am bell rang, and were getting ready then for Assembly, held in the Assembly Hall. There was a Hymn, a Psalm, a Gospel reading, and always the Prayer of St. Augustine. Miss Knox, our Principal, was the main leader of these Assemblies. Fridays were always the day when visitors came to address us. The British and Foreign Bible Society was the most memorable. We girls used to mimic the BFB Representative, the Rev Alan Stuart, as he came year after year, to tell us how he had used the money we gave him for his work. We used to drone his voice- exactly as he spoke "The British and Foreign Bible Society works....."

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia also paid us an annual visit, his gear always caused a small giggly sensation- what with his gaiters and white lace cuffs - in the 1950's this dress was most inappropriate.

An important part of our schooling during the War was the frequent and regular air raid drills. When the siren rang, we used to walk briskly down the stairs into the air raid shelters, which were dug out under the colonnade. These shelters did not have much air, and were damp and dark and large enough to accommodate about thirty girls at once. There were about 6 of them in total, underneath the colonnade. From a casual look on the outside, the air raid shelters were completely camouflaged. The War effort at School was taken very seriously. We knitted 8-inch squares which were sewn together into rugs, and taken to a large depot run by the Red Cross Comforts Fund. Then we brought tins of food, fruit cake, and Anzac biscuits to the School, so that as a community, all the goods were given to the Red Cross to be packaged up and sent to "the front."

When the Japanese invaded Singapore in February 1942, and took control of it, a few fortunate people escaped. One such family of Chinese came to Australia, and Miss Knox invited two girls to come to PLC. These two twelve-year-old girls were the first Chinese people I had ever come to know.

The subjects I most enjoyed were History, French, Geography, Geology, Music Appreciation, Ancient History, and Chemistry. I did like English, especially going to the Shakespeare Plays- I was not good at Maths, which I dropped as a subject after Intermediate level. For the Leaving Certificate I did English, Geography, Geology, French, History, Ancient History. I often thought that the Misses Budden were strong on French and Latin and spelling, which I loved, and weak on arithmetic and algebra.

I feel sure that my love of music was strongly encouraged through the class I took on Tuesday afternoon, which was our Hobbies time.

I learnt the piano from a very early age- I did not like my teacher in Hunter's Hill- she used to hit my hands with a ruler when I played a wrong note- Mum used to say she was always cross, really I think grieving, because her husband had been killed in action in the War. I enjoyed piano lessons at Pymble much more.

An unforgettable time was the occasion that my friend Carol Simpson and I decided to do a little sun baking on our legs. We thought that no one would see us, so went and hid behind the Science block. However, someone did see us, the gardener. He reported us to Miss Knox, and we were sent for, to report to her Office. We stood on the carpet in her Office and were frankly, terrified. I remember her as she stood there with her Corgi dog beside her, and in her Academic gown, wings flapping, and read us a lecture. "You two girls are pathological cases of exhibitionism," she said, "and you will have a detention for a week." We were mortified, and tried to keep it a secret from our classmates, although it did leak out.

I loved playing Hockey, we used to hit each other's ankles more than the ball when we first began playing- Basketball was OK. Sports were a very important part of the PLC curriculum and four times running around the Oval was a mile. Halcyon days at PLC. I made some lifelong friends there- Marguerite Shirley was one, and Carol Simpson. There is no doubt in my mind that the School played an enormous influence on my life. I won several prizes at the school, and came within the first few in the class a number of times. I have no idea where the prizes are now! Our trips to the Town Hall for Concerts were a much loved time - again my early encounters with an Orchestra subsequently gave me my profound love of orchestral music.

While at school in 1951, I vividly remember a news item which was broadcast widely on the radio and in the papers. I learnt then the fact that the trend for Aboriginal babies to die at birth had been reversed. This meant that for the first time in our white consciousness and record taking, the decline in infant mortality had ceased. As a fifteen year old this fact lodged deep inside me.

Holidays in the Country

We used to go by train in the school holidays to visit various cousins. Train to Moree and then by car to Garah was one of our favourite places to go- to stay with the Hickson's- because all these cousins stayed with us during term time, we would go to their places in the holidays in return. I remember a time when we were all sitting at the Sunday lunch table and Lil (Mum's cousin,) brought in the leg of lamb. Maurice took one look at it and said "I have lived in the bush all these years, and one thing I will never come to terms with is maggots in my food." We used to go with the Will and Nancy Killen girls as far as Moree, and often leaning our heads out the train window, we would get smuts from the coal in our eyes, and our eyes would be sore for a while.

Other holidays were very memorable. We went every year to stay with Mum's cousin Amy McColl (Young). Amy lived with her husband Norman, and 2 daughters, Catherine and Madoline at "Curriba", Yelarbon on a property, running sheep. The nearest bigger town was Goondiwindi.

We three girls had a wonderful country holiday here, for many years- Norman showed us everything that his own girls were learning, so there was no discrimination that we were girls. I especially remember feeding the poddy lambs by hand with a bottle of milk in my hand – those lambs who were orphaned by the drought – we lived through many droughts. My first understanding of the power of lightning occurred here- one day I was out riding on my horse, with Norman, and we came across a

tree which had been struck by lightning, and which was completely bare- no leaves at all- there was only a small part of the tree left- enough to see how damaged it was. I learnt a lot from looking at this tree. Mum was extremely fond of her cousin Amy. Amy was profoundly deaf and had a hearing aid, which was a black box, the size of a book. We all used to shout into the box, and Amy could usually hear us. Despite this disability Amy ran the household, and could be heard saying "Madoline can you go and find your Father before he goes to town, we need some more flour" or such.

Other Family Visits

Another very special visit Mum took us on regularly was to visit her Aunt Jane Ekin (Killen.) She was a widow, with a Housekeeper named Mrs Orr. They lived in a very grand house in Trafalgar St Stanmore, named "Woodside." It has been recently demolished (2017.)

Aunt Jane and her husband Jack Ekin, had been very committed members of St Enoch's Presbyterian Church in Newtown. We always loved our visit to her house- we went by train from Central, and although the two women of the house were very old to me, I always felt happy there. I especially remember Mrs Orr pouring the tea out of a silver teapot. Quite a ceremony. Today, I still remember what seemed to be a very-long-hot walk in summer to Aunt Jane's house from the station, but always the lovely tasty treats were a sort of reward for going to visit.

Our Sunday afternoon visits to our Grandmother's house in Henley were a weekly ritual. Here we would have a scrumptious "High Tea," always the same food, and beautifully cooked by our Nana. The most memorable food was a beautiful sweet fruit loaf, a Tea-cake. The other delicious treat was Gingerbread - moist and straight from the oven, so that the square marks from the wire cake cooler were marked on Gingerbread and, not to forget- "Welsh Rarebit" cake, made with cayenne, I think-good and spicy! Our Uncle Alan in his dark green sports coat with leather buttons, sat at one end of the large table, and our Dad sat at the other- after our Uncle Willie died- Dad's older brother. I remember Nana pouring the tea from her silver teapot, and then when her hands got too shaky, she had Dad do it for her. There were eight of us every Sunday at the table – Dad and Uncle Alan at each end, Nana on Dad's left, then Mum and Marilyn, then Uncle Alan, me on his left, Theodora, and Uncle Ken at Dad's immediate right. At this weekly teatime event, Theodora would always be found sitting at the table with a book on her lap, and reading even as she ate, and intermittently made conversation when she was asked a question! We all knew that she was reading a book, and she enjoyed being in her own world, so we did not interrupt her, most of the time.

One feature I remember so well at my Nana's house was her scrubbing board – this was a wooden and glass board - with serrated edges on the glass - so that clothes could be rubbed very hard on it, to make them come clean. Mum had one too, but Nana's was more interesting to see! Every Sunday we girls would walk down from St Andrew's Sunday School in the afternoon, and come down Victoria Road to Nana's house, by ourselves. There was a covered walk-way, a tunnel under Victoria Road, for the patients to walk from the Tarban Creek side to the Parramatta River side of the Mental Hospital buildings. There were two places where we could look down, on Victoria Rd, through the covered wire roof, and notice patients walking from one side to the other. It was quite scary seeing the patients crossing over – as we walked above them, we used to think they could jump up and touch us, which was silly, as the roof, though open wire (I expect for ventilation for the people) was very secure.

On occasions, I would be selected to sing at the Mental Hospital, as part of a visit from the Sunday School- I remember the women always dressed in white- some of the young women used to dance when I sang. I was a bit scared inside the Hospital, but was happy to sing, and see that some of the women were smiling. Now we would acknowledge many of these women as suffering from Post Natal depression, and able to fully recover. The Song I remember so well singing was by Mendelssohn- "Oh for the wings, for the wings of a dove, far away far away would I rove." On reflection, I wonder whether these words made it worse for the patients.

We loved our Nana's house- there was a big cellar underneath- we used to hide down there. There was the Parramatta River to admire, lots of great memories from this. I especially remember seeing a snake swimming across the River, and being very scared, as I stood on the river-bank. There was a

boat shed, where various Great Uncles had kept their yachts. At this lovely place I learnt how to skim a smooth stone across the water – great fun, and taught by Uncle Alan!

Uncle Alan.... he had the most glorious roses. He grew them on a trellis over the pathway down to the River. We were all very fond of him, and that is why, until his death, we still visited him in his Nursing Home, because he took an interest in us as children. He married when he was fifty. Mum said what a good "catch" he was!

The Sunday rituals were more than just good fun. During the War, Mum would study our Nana's Rations books, and work out what she could buy for the coming week. I remember big discussions about flour, tea, sugar. Milk and meat did not seem to be rationed as far as I recall. Then there was the Clothing Ration book. That too, was worked out very carefully. Of course, all the Rations books applied to our household too. Our Mother actually kept two households running smoothly during the War. It did not seem to be a trouble to her. Mum would say "now Mrs. Milne, this week you can use more coupons from your tea ration, (for example,) because you did not use so many last week." On and on, all during the War, each week. When Uncle Alan was away at the War, and in New Guinea, Mum and he invented a code which only they knew between themselves. Mum used to receive letters in code, and because of their arrangement, she often knew exactly where he was stationed, and indeed where the Japanese were, although she and Uncle Alan never revealed their secret code to anyone but themselves. As a child I found this highly intriguing!

Other visits were important, too. Frequent trips down to "Parni" at Dee Why. This is the house that Mum's sister Isobel and her husband Jim Marr lived in later, after they left their property "Eumalga" near Dubbo. At "Parni" we used to stay there in the long summer holidays, with many other cousins in their houses close by. Our house was at the top of the Reserve, and so close to the beach, and the pool. Many happy years we spent there, learning to cope with the surf, and improving our swimming, and playing amongst the many rock pools. We were fortunate to learn about the currents in the surf, and the dangerous rips. I remember being dumped by heavy powerful waves and ending up with a mouthful of sand. However, the water became a companion, not an enemy, which it seems to be for many migrants to this country, who don't understand its power and deadly strength. The house is still there, though hardly recognisable! In the years of our own children growing up we went many blissful times to "Parni" and one memory I have is of one time as I was parking in the garage, and stopping the car, (our green Holden DGF 044) Pete let off the hand brake, and we began to go through the back of the garage, through to the Laundry and very close to the pit toilet next door! Mum had evacuated us three to "Eumalga", during the War. We lived there for some months, when the enemy were at their most likely to bomb Sydney. Of course, we loved life in the bush. The nights in winter were spent around the log fire, in the sitting room; and Isobel and Jim's children were often there, too. Bill went off to the War, and then Ted, so mostly it was just Jim, the youngest. As a pre-bedtime ritual, my Aunt always put her back to the fire, and lifted up her skirt, so that she could warm her back and bottom! This was quite strange for me, because Uncle Jim always chided her for doing it, but it made a lot of sense to me.... he used to say "Isobel, not in front of the children," and she ignored him every time!

My earliest encounter with death was at aged about seven years. My parents had some very good friends, named Stamm. We used to go down to Burradoo, near Bowral and visit them quite frequently. We girls called the Stamm's, Auntie Flo and Uncle Edmund. They had 2 children, Walter and Mary. Later, Mary worked for many years as an excellent Secretary for Dad at both his Gladesville office and his 350 George Street office. Auntie Flo became very ill, and then died. I clearly remember the coffin being lowered in to the earth at a cemetery in Burradoo, and the sadness all around me. This event was a very helpful one for me to learn to understand the finality of death.

The other people we used to visit often were my Nana's two sisters- Aunt Mag and Aunt Fan. Margaret and Frances Pickering were their proper names. They lived at Lovett Bay, which is a part of Pittwater. We used to go to Church Point in our car, and then take a small launch with an outboard motor across the Bay. I remember a number of times the motor broke down, and we had to get rowed across the Bay to their jetty. Our Dad kept us calm, as it was a bit scary, to a child. We would disembark, and then go up the winding path to their house, which had big windows enclosing the veranda. The house is still there, and still called "Blue Haven".

Once again, food was such an important part of our visit. Aunt Mag made a salmon pie like I have never tasted anywhere else. Aunt Fan made a sponge cake so light, it was heavenly! We used to find mud crabs on the sandy beach, and watch them scuttle away when we frightened them.

Other relatives were Aunt Isabel and Uncle Fred Pickering, who lived at Huntley's Point, very near Henley. Uncle Fred was one of Nana's three brothers - Uncle Bill had lived in the boatshed at Lovett Bay. Uncle Harry had a boat too.

All these three uncles had died before I was born. Aunt Isabel still lived at Huntley's Point with some of her children. I remember her pretty red hair, and slightly haughty style. Mum made it a practice to "get on" with everyone, no matter what quirks they had- so I learnt this manner also. Mum was a great teacher.

My Christian Journey as a Child

I was baptized in St. Stephen's Church, Macquarie St, Sydney. The Church is still there, opposite State Parliament House. Mum used to say that I hummed the Hymn at my Baptism. It was a favourite of parents for the Baptism of their child. "When Mothers of Salem their children brought to Jesus." I always thought Mum was being a little fanciful with her comment, although singing is one of my passions in life... My early years were spent at St Andrew's Gladesville Sunday School, and we continued there until I was about eight. After this we often went to St Stephen's on the Sunday ferry. When we were early teenagers, we three girls all began to attend the Woolwich Presbyterian Church's youth group, known as the P.F.A. (Presbyterian Fellowship Association.) This meant that there were Fellowship Camps, held in various campsites around the bushy parts of Sydney. These were great fun, we got to know the boys a bit, and always it was good. Plenty of devotional life: Bible studies, songs, hymns, and the like. I met Jenny McLachlan at the Hunter's Hill Youth Fellowship- her father Duncan was an Elder at Woolwich Presbyterian Church, as well as Headmaster of Hunter's Hill Primary School. I was confirmed into Membership of the church when I was fifteen. The Rev. Alexander Tulloh, one of the Ministers at St. Stephen's Church, conducted Confirmation classes, and there were about eight of us confirmed in one session.

Girl Guides

I belonged to the 1st Hunter's Hill Company of Guides. Our Captain was Miss Greta Savage. We met in the Congregational Church Hall, on Friday nights. I remember gaining my Tenderfoot Badge. There were other Badges also. The one I most remember was the Campfire Badge- this was to do with cooking over an open fire, which I had to start- with kindling wood etc., I can still remember the smell of the burnt toast! I did receive my First Aid Badge, too. All in all, Guiding was fun, and a break from all my tennis playing, and Church and School activities.

After graduating from Pymble with my Leaving Certificate, I decided against going to University, although with my marks I could have gone. I went to work in Dad's Law office in the city for about a year, because I was still too young to go Nursing, which was my chosen career. It was a good experience to learn how the city works- and deliver documents to various Law offices around Sydney, etc. I remember saying in a shy voice, "I have brought these papers from Mr. Milne's office." I began my Nursing Training on Jan 4th, 1954 at RAHC, just before my eighteenth Birthday. I learnt so much- including how to give injections by first practising on an orange; how to lay out dead babies, and many other complex tasks. I made good friends, here. A back injury forced me to discontinue my training, and I was very sad. After some surgery on my back, I was sent over to England to be a bridesmaid to Theodora, in June 1956.

In 1957, aged twenty-one, I began my Deaconess Training, which took the next three years.

A Turning Point

A most profound event for me occurred when I was sixteen: Mum had her first heart attack, the very day Theodora left on a ship to live in Paris, and study at the Sorbonne. She had won a Scholarship to

study there. Mum was lying on the couch in our lounge room and as she described it to me, the pain felt like a knife in her chest. I remember saying to her “don’t die now Mum, I’m only sixteen.” I was alone in the house with her at the time, as we had come back from saying goodbye to Theodora - Marilyn was at Royal North Shore Hospital, in her second year of her Nursing Training, and I was preparing for my Leaving Certificate. It was a Saturday afternoon. My whole world changed that day, and I became a much more caring person- as I watched my Mother struggle with ill health. I have always been concerned about my own heart as a result of watching Mum that day.

In many ways, as I was growing up and compared myself with other children; I think that both my parents were leaning towards being eccentric - especially my Mother with all her good causes, and constantly being out of the house – not at all like other Mothers amongst my peers – and my Father, because he was in a job which was very demanding, and was centred on the needs of local people. However, I can say that I always felt well loved and cared for. I grew up knowing that my needs were important, and that other people were also important, too.

Chapter 2

Joy

This is entitled Joy, mainly because of my marriage and the birth of our children. There were so many good things that happened early in this time frame.

Deaconess Training

I had returned from my trip to England as “second bridesmaid” to Theodora, and was in some small way taking care of Mum, after her third heart attack. Life at the house at Hunter’s Hill was spent looking after Mum, who had lived in the downstairs part of the house for a while. Then she became well enough to go back upstairs again. Marilyn was still in her Nursing Training at Royal North Shore Hospital, and then on to Crown Street for Midwifery. Theodora and her new husband Michael began their married life at 38 Boolarong Road, St. Ives.

One of the things I was able to do for Mum was to take her to various Church events. It was at one of these that I heard about the Deaconess Order. The Presbyterian Church of Australia had organised itself to give women a position as a Deaconess. This happened in about 1905 or so. Deaconesses were responsible for women and children’s work, Hospital visiting, teaching scripture in Schools, welfare work, preaching on Sundays and the like. In addition there were five mornings of lectures, and then some evening lectures at the Sydney Teachers College. For a while I lived at home, with my cousin Sally Killen, who was a student at Sydney University. I had a small green car, a Morris Minor, and Sally and I and Jim Bruce, also a Theological student, used to travel together to the University of Sydney. The only time I have ever had an accident my Mum was teaching me to drive, and we were on Centennial Ave and turning into Mowbray Rd at Chatswood. There was a small van parked too close to the corner of Mowbray Rd and I took the corner without changing gear- and my Mum called to me to “change down, change down Isobel,” and I did not, so consequently ran into the van and made a medium sized binge on the front headlight area of the Ford Pilot I was driving. It was my Dad’s new car, and he was very forgiving....

Time came when I moved over to the Deaconess House in Newtown. Here I lived with 4 other Trainees, and one ‘senior’ Deaconess, Mavis Wallis. Life was very busy.

At the College the other students were mostly men, and so Alison Todd and I had a bit of a field day with all the male students! I became engaged to one of the students, a bloke named John Elston. After about six months I could see that this was not going to work, so I called it all off...I know that his parents were upset, as they thought I was a good catch! I have felt a bit sad for John all these years, as he has never married and has now died (2017)

The other trainee Deaconesses and myself all used to meet each other, and learn from one another. There were five Churches in which we swapped around from time to time. St Enoch’s Newtown (next to our Deaconess House); St. Luke’s Redfern; Ultimo Presbyterian; Palmer St, Woolloomooloo; and Crown Street Surry Hills Presbyterian. The Rev Jim Bishop was the Minister of all of these five Churches. Our boss was the Rev. Doug Cole, of the Glebe Presbyterian Church. As a trainee Nurse I was paid four pounds a week, and as a trainee Deaconess, I was given board and lodging, and also paid four pounds a week...

The experience of being at Palmer Street Church was life-changing. Monday afternoon was a free one, but all the other afternoons I was very occupied. I visited the sick and house-bound, I gave out food and clothing to the needy, I organised a children's club, and a Mothers' Club. Every day was taken up with some activity. Sundays was busy with Morning Church, where I played the Organ. I also taught Scripture at Darlinghurst and Plunkett St Woolloomooloo Schools. There were lighter sides to working in Woolloomooloo too. Chapel St which was a street running from the city and intersecting with Palmer St – was the brothel or 'red light' district. Tilly Devine was the 'Madam' who ran most of the brothels in this street. She used to regularly chat with me, and always began the conversation by saying, "ullo luv, 'ow are you today?" Another colourful character was Bea (Beatrice) Miles- her story was rather sad. She had been a scholarly student at Sydney University, and had endured a nervous breakdown and was now mentally unwell. Her mode of living meant that she rode around Sydney for most of the day in a taxi and when she disembarked, she refused to pay for her ride. Taxis drivers tried to avoid her. She always wore a dark long raincoat, and generally speaking did not engage with other people she met. Quite often she would disembark from a taxi outside the Church and there would be an encounter about the fare. I always felt sorry for Bea.

The life around the Parish taught me many things- especially the hardships that some people endure. I especially remember my first contact with a single Mother from Samoa- she lived very close to the Palmer St Church, and my memory of her is of a stable and happy woman with about 6 children. Poverty was always close to her, and yet she rose above it. As I reflect on the style of our work and ministry with the people in those inner-city Churches; there was no thought of empowering them. It was all us, "doing good" to them, and no sense of collaboration or equality between us and our friends the parishioners.

It is clear to me that the reason why I fell in love with Jim was because of the way he related to his parishioners, not just at Palmer Street, but across his whole parish. There was never a hint of a gap in education between them, and never a hint of talking down to them. While most of his parishioners were financially poor women, it was true about the men as well. When he was praying, I experienced it as though he was talking, in a plain voice, to a friend, rather than a remote reality.

After a while, Jim Bishop began to invite me to come to a staff meeting at his Flat in Waterloo. This was always on a Monday, his day off (supposedly). We would discuss events coming up, and other matters. I had nearly finished my training, it was June of my third year.

One of the things which always intrigued me about Jim was the way he prepared our lunch. We would each eat two frankfurts, with sliced tomatoes, and a piece of bread. I think that Jim's way of slicing up tomatoes was what hooked me! A reader of this may be surprised, but his way was somehow quite different from how it was done in my family. One could say it was a look at a different culture, and I would agree with this.

I decided to ask him to marry me. He was very surprised, and agreed immediately! We became engaged to be married on June 25th, and married on September 1st, which was my parents wedding day 31years before. I met Jim's parents again in this time, having known them briefly through Theodora's University days, and the SCM (Student Christian Movement,) and his sister Sheila, and her husband Keith, and their 3 children (at that time.)

Jim and I had a great Wedding- some of our Parishioners came to look on at the Wedding, which was held in St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church, in Macquarie Street, at 5.30pm.

I remember so well how my Mum enjoyed working things through with my future Mother in law, Catherine Bishop. I also remember that we ate Chicken, and had Mushroom soup to begin the meal. Then there was Peach Melba for dessert, with a choice of Pavlova. Later it became clear that Mum would only be present at my Wedding, as Marilyn did not marry until after she had died, and Mum had been too ill to attend Theodora's Wedding in England. There are some good photos of all our parents at our Wedding. My friend Jean Stanfield, and sister Marilyn were my Bridesmaids. Jim's Boss, the Rev. Doug Cole was Best Man, and brother in law Keith Walkerden was groomsman.

Jim and I had our Honeymoon at Sussex Inlet, and then we went to the Snowy Mountains for the second week. At Sussex Inlet I remember we dropped the Typewriter out of the back of the old blue Morris utility which Jim drove! As it clattered to the ground, there was the opportunity lost. I looked at all the mess of letters and cards lying on the ground, all of which would require a "thankyou" letter from us for the presents we had received! We just had to start all over again, and re-create a list of people we needed to thank!

I kept working at Palmer St Church after we returned from our Honeymoon. I soon became pregnant, but sadly had a miscarriage. I recall the Dr saying to me "in three months you will start to have another baby," and sure enough, I did conceive again soon.

Living in Another Country and Culture

Then came the first of the big overseas adventures. We left Sydney in August of 1960, and travelled on the ship Himalaya. This was to be the beginning of a huge maturing experience for me. I loved the life on board, relaxing and doing nothing much- except that I was sea-sick quite often. It was the same on the return ship two years later. I won't know now if it was because I was pregnant both times, or because I am not a good seaworthy sailor!

We berthed at Hong Kong. Here we saw the poorest of the poor- living in cardboard boxes, about the size of a dog kennel. This was a very confronting experience. While we were at this port, we took a ride into the New Territories, which was part of Mainland China, and we went as far as we could go- to a long wire fence. On the other side of the fence was the People's Republic of China. Mum and Dad were with us, and we sat down in a beautiful little café, where a very elderly Chinese man was sitting with his family. It was the first time I had ever seen an elderly man with a beard, which reached down to the ground! I remember the graciousness of the serving of the tea, and the delicacies of food we ate, there. The boat also berthed at Kobe and Yokohama in Japan. Jim took a bullet train ride through Japan from south to north, and met us at Yokohama.

We disembarked from the Himalaya at Vancouver, and then travelled over the Rocky Mountains by train, for a look at the scenery, which was very beautiful. At Edmonton we disembarked, with Mum and Dad, and stayed with one of Mum's Killen relatives, a woman called Beth Killen. Her brother Alan Killen was Minister in a very conservative Presbyterian Church, where we worshipped on the following Sunday. Here people stood up for the Prayers, and sat down for the Hymns. I was reminded of this years later, when I attended a Church Service on the Isle of Skye one Sunday night, in 1996. It was a "Wee Free"

service, and the same conservative style- where we sat down for the Hymns and stood for the Prayers. (In the Church on Skye, all the women wore black, and wore gloves and hats, even though it was spring, and long daylight saving hours.) We flew from Edmonton to Cleveland, Ohio USA, where we would spend the first of our two years overseas. On reflection, life on the ship was very pleasant, except for the class and rules of status. This is the only time as a young woman I remember being served by a waiter with his white towel over his shoulder!

We arrived in Cleveland on Labor Day, at the end of September, and noticed the falling leaves, turning red and brown. Our apartment was at 3360 Scovill Avenue, on the near east side of the city. All our neighbours were black, or as they were called then, Negro. We literally were the only white people for miles, and miles. I used to think that I could be living in Africa. The bus driver could never understand me, when I asked to be let off at Scovill - he thought I was saying Skyview - finally I learnt how to say the street name to be understood. Lily Douglas was the Director of Christian Education. She was a fine black woman. She and Jim worked as a team.

The parish was called St Philip the Evangelist, and was a simple storefront, an old shop. Across the street was the Church hall, also a storefront. Charlie Glassner, the Janitor, was usually drunk on Sunday mornings, and always sang an old Hymn "Jesus Saviour, pilot me, over life's tempestuous sea." I learnt so much from Charlie, and all the wonderful people in that little Church. I used to play the organ, and I would put Rebecca in her borrowed bassinet in the vestry. When she cried, one of the black "Mammies" would go out and pick her up and cradle her, and say "Ain't she the sweetest thing...look at her sexy eyes..." Of course a blue eyed baby was rather unusual for them. All in all, the year in Cleveland provided a huge leap forward in my own understanding of racism- I began to think of our own Indigenous community back home in Australia. It was a huge wake up call, we would now say. This was such an important part of my maturity. I know now that the burden for the indigenous community in this land has been with me since my year in Cleveland, and I thank the black community in Cleveland and in Chicago for waking me up to my own Australian context.

There were so many different words to learn - pacifier was the American word for a dummy; a diaper was the word for a nappy; a pitcher for a jug - to name a few. There were many things to learn in that year. When I used to take Rebecca out in her stroller in winter, I would dress her in all her Australian Merino wool clothes, which her family sent over to her. Older women would often come up to me and say "your baby does not look warmly enough dressed, it is so cold, she should be far more warmly dressed for this cold winter's day". I would reply in my Aussie accent, "she is very warm thank you, she is wearing all woollen clothes from my home country, Australia." That would quieten them down, and we would go on our separate ways. I remember finding this a bit tiresome!

Jim had been given the use of an old rusty Cadillac car to use for his Parish work. Just after Rebecca was born, when Jim and one of the interns, Preston Kavanagh, were coming home from leading a sing-along in one of the local Nursing Homes- the car caught fire- an electrical fire. Jim escaped from the fire, but all the Hymnbooks he had been using at the Home were completely destroyed. I took this fairly calmly, because Jim was calm, at the time. After that we had no car, and I was not too sad, as I did not like driving around on the icy roads, with salt on them to keep a car from skidding. We did lots of skidding on the ice, until Jim learnt how to drive into a skid, and not to try and drive out of it.

The black family who lived underneath us had four children, with the parents. The father used to be away all week on work. When he came home at the weekend I heard the same litany of words every weekend. “ I said sit down and shut up, I said sit down and shut up...” Then I used to hear whacks on the children and then crying. It was the same pattern each weekend and I finally got used to it. I don’t know if the man hit his wife or not. When I would meet them on the staircase it was always very pleasant. Our apartment was centrally heated, as that was the form of heating everywhere in the US, even back then. Sometimes if we went to the homes of our friends, they would have the heat up at 80 degrees Fahrenheit, which was stiflingly hot to us. So I always wore cotton dresses in the houses, and when we went out, of course we all had to put so many extra layers of warm clothes on- boots, hats, gloves, scarves, and very thick coats.

In our Church community we had plenty of good times. This is where I first learnt about the Potluck Supper. These would be held in the back of the Church, or in the Hall, and I came to love the Chicken dishes, which were cooked differently from what I knew, and were always delightful! This is where I first saw Aluminium Foil being used to cover and bake food.

One of the families we came to know through the Church was Lois and Harry Peat. Lois managed an after school Girls Club at St Philip’s on a Tuesday afternoon. Harry was a General Practitioner. Lois and Harry had three adult children of their own, who had married and lived interstate. So we became a family whom the Peats decided to “adopt” while we lived in Cleveland. I stayed with Harry and Lois while Jim took six-month-old Rebecca to meet his Hopkins family cousins, in Greenville, Alabama. All Rebecca’s clothes were lost on the plane ride down to Greenville, so the Hopkins family lent her some clothes belonging to their older daughter! I had an early miscarriage at this time, so that is why I did not go on that trip. However, later, when we lived in Chicago, in our Order living, I did make a visit to the Hopkins, and found all the old fashioned Southern way of life in place. A black Maid served me the most delicious Grits I had ever eaten! Nothing like I was used to having for Breakfast in my Order life, which came later on. I vividly remember how, sometimes on the Sunday afternoons, we attended the Pentecostal Church. This is where the real “soul music” of the black community occurred. Women were always dressed in White, and sang like I’ve never heard since. The men would also sing fervently, and the whole Worship was interspersed with loud Amens.... It was really an inspiring time, and gave me some inkling into what it had been like to be Slaves of the white people, and how the Black community relied on their God to bring them through the hard times. Singing seemed to give them hope and courage.

Lots of things became clear to me that year, through a range of small and large differences in the two cultures. I refer to Racism again. It was hard for me to grasp the dichotomy between genteel white people I met and saw on my visits to the city, and to the Gynaecologist I was visiting for my coming baby’s birth- and the downtrodden Negroes. I had never experienced the breadth and depth of this before. On a Thursday night each week all the Inner City Protestant Parish staff and their wives were invited to go to Shaker Heights to the home of a Psychiatrist, Dr Jerry Strate. Jerry used to give the staff free and informal advice if one of them brought to the group a difficulty they were experiencing in personal counselling with a parishioner. This is where I first heard the term “put into the doghouse.” Jerry had a small brown painted wooden doghouse in which a figure could swivel around and be put inside, or if all was well could be outside! This intrigued me, and I could see the use in having something like this, when argument was very heated!

Then there were eye opening times in the local Supermarket, as I observed the packaging of grocery items, for a start. The first time I had seen grocery items in “King size” packets in the local supermarket...not to mention the myriads of choices of items. The early sixties were the beginning of a new era- with The Beatles, the invention of plastic, (note the first few scenes of the movie, *The Graduate*), sexual freedom with the aid of the contraceptive Pill, more cars owned by ordinary working people, the race to put humans on the Moon... to name some.

The other incident is worth recalling here- Jim was coming home one night from a visit to the Church Treasurer; I was 8 and a half months pregnant- and Jim was mugged. He was taken down a back alley, and punched, and had his wallet, fountain pen (a gift from the Redfern parish, when he left them,) and a few other minor items stolen. The big white burly policemen wanted to have us move from the neighbourhood, immediately- “you can’t live in this neighbourhood you must move to a white community immediately.” However we said “this community on the near east side is where we work and where we intend to live.”

I grew up rapidly that year. My parents were in Cleveland at the time of Rebecca’s birth. Rebecca arrived very quickly- in fact she was born in a snowstorm; and I know that the cab driver thought she would be born in his cab! I can still see his eyes as they filled with a fear at this thought! In those days the Negro community had almost no connection with white people, unless they were in domestic employment. After Rebecca was born- with just three hours total of labour, Jim came home, and I rang my Mum at 7am, at the Hotel where my parents were staying in the local black neighbourhood, and said “Mum, I’ve had the baby, a little girl and she is called Rebecca.”

My parents were delighted to meet Rebecca and left soon afterwards for their holiday in the UK. Marilyn also came to Cleveland and was a great support to me as a new Mum. Marilyn and I made a bus trip over to Washington, DC. This was immediately after President Kennedy’s Inauguration, and that was a very momentous time in our lives. I breast fed Rebecca on the bus, and no one seemed to care. When Rebecca was born, she had a small growth of slightly red hair it reminded me of Theodora a little. She looked like Grandma Bishop I thought. Her hair soon fell out and changed, and then she grew dark hair. As she grew she began to remind me of my Mum, and later in life she looked very like Mum, and often had her head on one side, in a photo, just like Mum! After Rebecca’s birth, I was ready to breast-feed her. The Nurses really frowned on this idea of mine, and said to me “we will bind your breasts so that your milk will dry up.” They also said “we can give you black coffee to dry up your milk.” I was very displeased with this idea, and said to them in no uncertain terms “ I will feed this baby myself, as is the custom in Australia.” I was told that American women in the 60’s were concerned about their figure, so that breast-feeding was not an option for them. Another one of the differences in culture I learnt that year.

It would seem that I have relatives through the Killen and Young families, (my Mum’s parents,) in so many parts of the world- mention has been made of Killens in Canada- and when we were living in Cleveland, we met some of Mum’s second cousins- on the Lyle/ Young side of her family. These folk lived in Canton, OH, about 2 hours drive from Cleveland. So we had various family events with the Corbett and Evans families- Cook-outs etc. These times gave me various reflections on how the white people lived their middle class lives, so they were always in contrast to my life in the Ghetto where I spent my daily living. That year was a stand alone year in my social development as a young white

woman, and truly did cause me to reflect on the horrendous struggle of the indigenous people of Australia.

Living in Scotland.

After a year in Cleveland, Jim and I and Rebecca moved on to Glasgow, where Jim had a job as Parish assistant in St Francis in the East Church of Scotland. Here for a while we lived with the Minister, Bill Shackleton, in his Manse, until we found a place for ourselves, in Dennistoun. Once again, I was taken care of by the parishioners, and here it was I learnt the art of Scottish dancing- every Thursday afternoon, at the Young Mum's club in the Church Hall, I was instructed into the grace of this dance! Rebecca had plenty of playmates, on this afternoon and on the whole, the time was one I always looked forward to, and enjoyed very much. One thing stands out here- on many a Sunday some of the women would come to me after the Morning Service and say "I have no money to offer God today, as Willie (or whoever) drank all his wages this weekend." As in Cleveland, so in Glasgow- I was living amongst and learning from those who were really poor in material goods; but who had hearts of gold and love, for the most part. I don't think in the western world we shall ever see such poverty again. People in Glasgow, including us, had to make a fire to have any hot water, and no one had a 'frig'. Most people did not have a bath, (although we had one), and certainly not their own toilet. Ours was located on the stair- we had a huge old-fashioned key; as the toilet was kept locked, and was between the second and third floor. We lived on the top or third floor. There was a ' midden' at the back of the tenement, where the ashes from the coal fires were put. This place was also the play space for the local children, so it was a common sight to see the children playing and covering themselves with the grey ashes. The mothers had to work hard to clean their clothes and life was tough for them with the housework. In order to keep the milk fresh, I used to put the bottles on the window ledge outside the window facing to the train line, and apart from it getting some smuts on it from the trains, it always stayed fresh.

The smog in Glasgow was often so thick that when we were coming back to Dennistoun from Bridgeton, I would get out of our small Morris van and leave Rebecca beside her Dad in the car. Then I would tell Jim where the road was, as I walked along in the gutter. It was so difficult to navigate through the dense smog; this was the safest way to 'see' where we were going.

People went once a week to the "steamies" for their bath, and put a shilling in the slot. I went sometimes to these, to have the experience, and also when we had no hot water ourselves.

Glasgow was the place where I first became aware of dementia: old women especially used to lock themselves into their rooms, and forget where they had put their door key. They would call out from way up high, and a passer by would hear them, and call the firemen to bring their long ladder up to their window, three storeys up, and get in to their room and unlock the door. They would sometimes remember that the key was behind the clock, when the firey had climbed up the ladder. I used to enjoy the company of the three other families on our close, even though sometimes I could not understand fully their strong accents!

The tenement we lived in had been a major development in the 1880's in inner city architecture in Amsterdam. In some ways as the photos show, the buildings were quite gracious in style. On return visits in the 90's I saw all these buildings had been demolished, and oil heating became the latest method for keeping houses warm in Scotland.

When it was time to buy another bag of coal to use for our fire, I would put my head out the window facing Harcourt Drive and wave to the man in his coal buggy. He would be calling out

“coal” in an indecipherable language, but I came to know his sound, and he would carry up a bag three flights of stone stairs; on his bent back. He had a dray with two horses to pull his coal in bags along the streets.

Jim, baby Rebecca and I made a visit to the island of Iona. We stayed in a guesthouse which looked over the water, back to the Island of Mull. We attended Services in the Abbey, which was a long way from being rebuilt. There was a temporary roof on the Abbey, I recall. One Sunday, Rebecca was squawking a bit, so I took her out of the Service, and found myself sitting with Rebecca amongst a mob of sheep who were grazing in the Abbey grounds! I became pregnant with Peter in Glasgow, and have always been so happy about this. While in Scotland we took the advantage to meet and get to know some of my Killen and Young cousins, which was a great delight. Some four and a half months pregnant I drove Rebecca and myself up through Stirling and Perth, into the Highlands. Jim was Chief Speaker at an Easter Camp, south of Glasgow, and he followed us later on the train. When Rebecca and I arrived at “Calrossie” I opened the door of the dark blue Morris Minor van we had and Di said to me “Isobel how amazing you are to drive yourself and Rebecca all this way just following the map, and by yourself.” We stayed with my cousin Diana MacGillivray and her family, and three-year old Malcolm was the older child who encouraged Rebecca to start walking. Of course as I later thought, Di herself was an extraordinary woman, and for all of the births of her children except the first child, she had driven herself in labour, to the Hospital!

As I reflect on this now, I think that I did have quite an adventurous streak, to drive up into the Highlands, just following the map, by myself, and pregnant, and with a sixteen month old child! Rebecca was strapped in to the stroller as she rode beside me. Jim had secured the stroller very thoroughly, so she was very safe. No seat belts back then!

In Glasgow Rebecca had no real incentive to walk, as most days she was just with me, and saw no other children. So Malcolm was the one who helped Rebecca get on her feet! The Christmas of 1961 we spent in Glasgow, and I remember one of Mum’s Young cousins, Margaret Hudson, sent us a chook through the post, for our Christmas dinner. We only had to take out its inside bits; because leaving them in meant that the chicken travelled up to us from Kent and stayed fresh!

While we were living in the small flat in Dennistoun, I decided to take Rebecca to London, and stay with another Killen cousin. Maureen Killen lived in Shepherd’s Bush, a bus ride from the city. It was a “bachelor pad” but Rebecca and I managed to share a bed. The memorable bus ride to arrive at Maureen’s place is still with me. Rebecca and I had come by overnight train from Glasgow. She had vomited on the journey, as she did not like the constant motion of the train. So one of the other three women in the cabin had moved to allow me to sleep on the bottom bunk. We were both tired when the train reached Paddington. I boarded the bus with only Scottish money, and when I offered my Scottish pound note to the bus conductor, he said “only English money accepted on this bus, I don’t take Scottish pounds.” I felt lost and hopeless, with a baby in a foreign city. A very kind older woman saw my plight, and she offered to pay my fare. So, once more I was rescued from a very difficult situation!

Again, we stayed in Glasgow about a year, and then set off for the trip home through Germany, and down through Switzerland to Rome. We travelled by train, and it was a great way to go with a toddler. We saw many wonderful historic sights, and even now I remember the train trip through the Alps, in all their majesty.

Returning to Australia

We embarked on the Willem Ruys, a Dutch migrant ship in Rotterdam, in about June, and the ship took about a month to reach Melbourne. Rebecca during this time learnt many Dutch words, from her days of being with so many migrant children in the 'Kinderkammer.' We disembarked at Melbourne, and visited with Jim's family in Ballarat, and also in Melbourne. We arrived in Sydney by plane, and Grandpa Bishop was there to meet us! Such fun for the Bishops to meet Rebecca! We stayed at Northwood, because the house that my parents lived in, "Elsinora," was about to be demolished, to make way for a new expressway down to the Figtree Bridge. To my mind, this emotional trauma of having to leave her chook yard, and all the lovely things Mum knew and loved about "Elsinora" greatly hastened her approaching death.

Peter was born well after his due date! And he also arrived in a huge rush! I had contractions at our Northwood temporary home, my waters broke going over the Harbour Bridge, (I recall this all so vividly even now!), and Peter was born just after we arrived in the Labour Ward, at King George V, and well before the Doctor arrived. We drove well over the speed limit as we crossed the Harbour Bridge! When Pete was born, he was quite bald, and to me he looked very like his Grandpa Bishop. His hair was very blond, and after it had fallen out, and he was about eighteen months, it began to grow dark, like Rebecca. Later Pete's hair was very curly and while he lived in the US he grew it long and it stayed curly, more like Jim's then. Later still, he seemed to grow more like my Dad in looks, with the same smile, and then I thought that his eyes were very like his Grandma Bishop.

Jim had kept himself busy helping my parents prepare for their move to the new house being built at 17 Ferry Street Hunters Hill. He bought himself an old green Ute, and carried junk from the grounds of the property at Ferry Street, up to the Ryde tip. He took many Ute loads up there.

Jim was inducted into the Parish of St John's Paddington Presbyterian Church, on October 26th, the very same day that our Mother died on the local bus, as it made its way over to Gladesville. Her end was very quick and painless, I hope. The morning of her death remains a firm memory. Jim and I and the two children were still living at Northwood. Early that morning my Mum rang me and said "I am going to town today Isobel, to change the pair of swimming trunks I bought Peter, as I think they will be too small" I asked her how she was feeling and she spoke so quietly, as though she did not have much energy or breath. She replied, "Oh I'll be alright when I get up." When her body had been taken from the bus to Ryde Hospital, two policemen came to the door of 17 Ferry St, and by this time I had taken Peter with me, for me to be with my Dad, and left Rebecca at Northwood. The Police gave me Mum's purse and her string bag with the swimming trunks inside, just such a poignant reminder for me of what act she was preparing to do for me and Peter, as she died. I still often think of that time at the front door, and sigh and am sad. A light went out in my life when my Mum died. I entered into a state of grieving, which has never really left me. I was her daughter who was with her when she suffered her first heart attack, when I was sixteen, so it was all very real to me.

At the Funeral, with Peter just six weeks old, and as I was breastfeeding him I kept him close to me. I feel very strongly that Peter instinctively knew of my intense grief at the Service. He stayed very quiet and did not cry or demand to be fed. At least for those few days we were very bonded over my grief, and I have always thought how caring he was of me, as a six-week old baby. I did ask a woman at the back of the Church to take care of him during the actual Service, and he stayed very quiet for her.

Life in the Paddington Manse

We spent eleven happy years at Paddington. Cathy was born in 1964, so our little family was complete. Cathy again was very overdue, and the day before she was born, Jim and I went to have a Chinese meal, to try and hurry her up- only to find that while we were out of the house, for less than three hours, a thief had forced open the front door, and had stolen the Sunday School money and a precious pearl ring, which Mum had given me- from her Uncle James Young, who had dived for the pearl in Tahiti himself. The ring was never found.

Peter and Cathy were both baptized by Jim's friend Jim Croft, in St John's Church. One memorable occasion for me amongst so many, was when I had Pete in my arms in Church one Sunday morning, and he was about one year old. He began to pull my necklace of beads, and lo, it was broken, and most of the beads rolled down from the front of the Church to the back! The Church had a sloping floor, so it made rolling very easy! I was embarrassed, and this taught me never to wear a necklace with exploring babies! Later after Cathy was born I sometimes played the organ at the morning service, now I don't know who took care of the children, probably Mrs McGregor. Later on, Mrs McGregor taught their Sunday School class, I remember.

When Peter was about 8 months old we were given a bouncer for him. This was suspended from a hook in the ceiling just near the kitchen door, and close to the 'under the stairs' cupboard. There was a long spring of wire or very strong elastic rope, strongly attached to the hook, and a harness. He used to spend what seemed like hours amusing himself jumping up and down on the floor and springing up happily.

When Pete was about 6 we gave him a punching bag to exercise his punching skills. We thought that this was a deterrent to punching his sisters! So we used the same hook and had the punching bag attached firmly. I could clearly see from the kitchen what was happening...

I know that my reflection about our three children and their emotional needs was quite clear by the time they were in Primary School. It was Peter, when a baby, who was the one of the three who always wanted a small piece of the baby blanket to touch and stroke. This gave him such comfort, as he quietly touched the blanket and soothed himself.

Rebecca would talk her way out of things which upset her, or she would ask lots of questions. Cathy would quietly solve things herself. I suppose she watched the older two and then made up her own mind. To me, they were all very good and played with themselves. My deep regret is that I did not follow through on what I instinctively knew about their individual and unique needs when the Order entered our lives. Our three never wanted dummies to suck, so that made life a bit easier for them and for me. As they cut their teeth, it was Pete who produced the molars and then they subsided into his gums again!

Pete used to spend literally an hour at a time, playing his favourite game, in the saucepan cupboard attached to the under section of the stove. He simply loved to spin the lids, and have several going at

once! I would always be washing or cooking, and would need to remember he was close under my feet! It used to keep him happily amused during this time. He did not speak during this time; he was in a special world of his own creation and living. He was just so content. Cathy would be sitting in her high chair, Pete spinning the lids, and Rebecca quietly keeping an eye on her own world. As their Mum, they rarely got under my skin. My happy years, my extremely busy years as the Minister's wife, what an idyllic life! Very often I remember when Peter and Cathy were babies in arms, I would be cooking with one hand, such as putting on the vegies, while nursing the baby with the other. Now I can see that could have been dangerous, but there was never any accident. I would not advise other Mums to do this, though. I remember the first day Rebecca came home from Paddington Primary, she said to me "Mum I want Salami sandwiches for lunch like Gino, not peanut butter." This was because her next-door neighbour young Gino, took Salami sandwiches to School! I changed the menu for her, and not long after, she was back to peanut butter or vegemite...! Gino's mother and Grandmother used to make wonderful rich Tomato sauce. I knew it was illegal to burn an open wood fire in her garage despite the fact that she kept the garage door open. When the sauce was cooked, about three days later, Maria would call out at the open side window, in Renny lane, and hand me a couple of reused brown beer bottles of the finest Tomato Sauce .A treat!

A very significant event occurred when I was pregnant with Cathy. It was in November 1963. I was ironing in the play-room, with the dark pink corded carpet, next door to the kitchen. We had a small black and white Television there, and I was watching the footage of the assassination of JFK. As I had been in Washington D C in 1961, somehow his death struck me very hard. Some things remain in our hearts forever, I think.

I remember a Doctor saying to me that the medical reason that babies dribble when they are teething is because there is an enzyme called ptyalin which helps to digest food as soon as it enters the mouth- and because the teeth are coming through the gums, the enzyme does not work properly, so the food is not digested well and thus the baby may develop diarrhoea with the undigested food. This has made sense to me as I watched our grandchildren cutting their teeth! One comment that one of the women from the Church made to me when our three were all small I have always remembered. "Make sure you enjoy your children Mrs Bishop, as they will grow up so quickly." I regret that this did not work out well for our three or for me. I missed out on so much that I could have learnt from them.

As I look backwards to this eleven years of my life, it is without doubt when I was a really happy soul. I know that I began to feel liberated, and not just a Minister's wife. The 60's were a time of awakenment for the whole world, and me included. I remember throwing off my bra for a couple of days, and walking down shopping in Oxford St - both with no bra and no shoes on my feet. I was secretly hoping that someone would notice me, and comment, but no one did! I wanted to feel free and not always be shackled as a Minister's wife. I remember quite often in the early 60's seeing Patrick White doing his own shopping, and observing what a taciturn man he looked. No smile or happy face.

In Cleveland I had noticed the 60's as a time for the invention of plastic as already mentioned, and 'free love'. We were all changed.

The children enjoyed their Peter Pan Kindergarten, where they made some very good friends, and then when they went on to Paddington Primary School, they already had a ready-made group of friends. The children were very fortunate with this informal network of friends, among them the Lucas and Tooth families. There were play dates most afternoons. On Mondays the Lucas family always came to our house. They did not have Television, so it was a novelty to come up and watch with our family. So other days our three were at the Lucas's house and Fridays was up to the Tooth household. Cathy made great friends with Sarah Tooth and Christine Lucas. They were all born within six days of each other. They were like The Three Amigos! Peter particularly seemed to have a sensitivity towards those feeling left out, or with no friends. He became friends with Robert Otelli, whose family ran the Milk Bar on Oxford St. He and Robert used to walk to School together often, or they all walked in a larger group. Robert was rather plump, whereas most of the children were quite lean, so he did stand out more than the other children in his class. I often thought about this over the years, how Pete went out of his way to befriend Robert. Learning to swim was not part of the curriculum of Primary Schools back in those years, so I took the children to Sep Prosser's swimming lessons in Woollahra. All of their friends attended lessons there too; it was close by and an indoor pool. Other times we went as a family to Redleaf Pool, and as an ocean pool it gave us a sense of salt water and the real thing!

Next door to the Church was the Old Manse, a solid stone house built in 1856. When we arrived in 1962 an old man lived in it as a caretaker; his name was Mr Mortimer. He was a widower; his wife had died when her nightie caught fire on an electric radiator. When the children were going to school, all three of them used to visit him. Cathy often used to put his socks on his feet, while the other two watched. Sometimes Rebecca and Peter took a turn at this, too.

One stand out for Peter was the fact that I, as his Mum, knew that he was a left-handed boy. I had my own theories when he was about one year old, and then I applied the 'test' which my Mum had told me – always throw the ball to the centre of the child, and then see which hand the child wants to pick up the ball. So, I did this action with Pete and he persistently turned his body each time, and received the ball in his left hand. When he first began at Paddington Primary, I was determined to have this fact acknowledged. His Kindy teacher, Mrs Symonds refused point blank to allow him to use his left hand. She said to me, "Mrs Bishop for one week I will make him use his right hand when he is using the pencil, and then I will see what he does." So a week later, I went to her and she said to me "you were right, each time I gave him the pencil to use, he changed hands and used his left hand to write and draw." I felt vindicated, as I just knew he was left-handed.

My observation of our three children in hindsight is that all three of them displayed very caring tendencies towards other children. It maybe that this is a characteristic of all children, or perhaps it is my own bias. However, I have noticed in their behaviour towards others, that each of them in their own way gave their care to others - those smaller or needier than themselves. I have mentioned Pete and his care for Robert Otelli. There is a photo of Cathy at aged about eight, in a family photo, holding her cousin Dorothea's arm, in care. When Cathy was about five, and just started at Primary School, Rebecca organised a Birthday party for her - complete with balloons and food and fun- in the Church Hall! Sandwiches of hundreds-and-thousands were part of the menu. All the Invitations and preparation were done by Rebecca at about eight years old. It was a weekday, as I remember all the guests were in their school uniforms! It was such a help to me not to have any organising of this party, as I was busy with other things. I wonder if I thanked Rebecca enough for helping out like this.

We have a photo now, of Tom when he is about two and a half- it is Louisa's first day at preschool - and Louisa is holding Tom's arm in support of him. Like Mother like daughter, I reflect, as above. When Cathy was born she had absolutely masses of black hair, so much that I thought the Nurse had given me the wrong baby. Then I looked at her features, and I saw a likeness to both Rebecca and Pete and the Nurse said "this is the only baby born just now, Mrs Bishop, and she is yours." So I was very content, as I admired her masses of hair! Cathy was a lovely plump baby, and like children who are younger family members, was not interested in hurrying to crawl or walk, because she had older siblings to wait on her. Pete walked at thirteen months, and Cathy at fourteen months, while Rebecca was the latest, because there was little incentive and space where we lived, in Glasgow. Cathy was rarely any bother, mostly just fitting in with the bustle of family life, and observing. She reminded me of myself, always 'hanging around' my Mum, while the older children were away at School.

Jim made a wonderful sand pit for the children and painted it various colours. It was in the back yard and I could see it clearly from the kitchen window. It was entirely made from wood recycled from our demolished house at Hunter's Hill, and was part of the stairs going up to the second storey of our home. The children played in it for hours on end- I don't think they wore hats- at least not in the photos I have. Rebecca and Pete would play in it for hours it seemed, and Cathy would take her cue from watching them.

Our Peter used to get into various scrapes, so that trips to St Vincent's Hospital Emergency were fairly frequent. The Hospital made a card for him, which they added to on each visit. His worst accident was a severe cut on his knee, caused by falling on a big Church Hall door key- this required stitches. On another occasion Pete drank some kerosene out of a lamp at a Carnival organised by Bill Lucas and other Dads – down a side street, Bennett's Grove, in Paddington. There was a big tent, and lots of fun! Pete was curious, aged about three, and after he had drunk the kerosene, he was quite sick, and that time we just kept him at home until he recovered.

Letter from Susan Tooth

Dear Isobel,

I never knew Peter drank kerosene... the boys must have been there with Richard Lucas. Bill should have got the ambulance! The Gurigunya children (the school Bill and Ruth started and which sent them bankrupt) used to make small bombs with the science equipment!! Patrick used to go there after Paddington school and play with Richard... Heavens!

The site for the Festival was in Bennetts Grove Ave a small street off Underwood near the kinder. It was Owen's idea - he wanted to start a Community art centre. Bill did a fabulous design of gallery, bookshop, cafe, art school, and Marion Best shop - all with flats upstairs to pay for itself. It was about three years of financial worry (Owen mortgaged the house) and so much hard work ... I think from 1961-1965 or more. Everyone said Paddington was not the place for an art centre!

Owen had bought two old tennis courts with lovely harbour views there and that's where the Festival was - to raise awareness.... It was to be a great festival - maybe had a baby. I recall the opening night where they had a Samuel Becket play with Alexander Archdale - my taxi did not come so I ran up Underwood St and hid my running shoes in the hedge before putting on the high heels!!! Those were the days. I could find the dates for you if needed.

That night there was a huge rainstorm with wind and the huge tent blew down (there was a little children's tent with paintings from the local schools). That was the end of all that - luckily there was insurance which paid for all the loss. The Arts Centre was to be called The Orange Tree Centre and there is still a block of flats there which Bill built on the site... bedsits which are said to be lovely. Owen was devastated.

Rebecca swallowed a medium-sized open safety pin, when she was three and a half. I was about to get a taxi with all three children in tow, when Jim returned from his Lecture at UNSW, so he drove her down to St Vincent's Emergency. Rebecca promptly vomited up the pin, with assistance from the Hospital staff, so all was well.

In 1964 Jim and I decided to offer our home and family life to a young Aboriginal School student from Alice Springs. Her name was Eunice.... Eunice went to a High School in Dover Heights. She stayed with us for two years. I remember her saying to me when she came down from upstairs, and Cathy was in her cot in the tiny room next door to our bedroom, in between our bedroom and Eunice's; "the baby's crying, Mrs Bishop". Sometimes Eunice used to carry Cathy downstairs and give her a cuddle on the way.

Cathy did not engage in any risk-taking behaviour which required St Vincent's care. I think that she observed the behaviour of the older two and decided not for her was that silliness! She and Pete both had their tonsils and adenoids removed at St Margaret's Hospital in Darlinghurst. I remember lots of ice cream and jelly! When I took Pete to the Specialist, Dr Arthur Tonkin (who had been at the University with my Mother, and was highly recommended,) I recall him saying when he looked at Pete's throat,

responding to my question “ are his tonsils very infected and do they need to be removed? ” he said simply “the answer is yes.” (This was the same response he had given about my own tonsils.) When Cathy had persistent sore throats and colds for a couple of winters, back I went with her, and so she was in the same Children’s Ward at St Margaret’s Hospital, and was such a good patient.

In the first School term of 1968 before the Americans came to live with us, a family of Aboriginal school children came to live with us from Mowanjum. This was a community near Derby in north-west W.A.; it was a Presbyterian Mission and had been very well organised. We were so pleased to offer our home to some of the younger Umbagai children, at least Arthur and Myrtle and Karen. They all went to Paddington Primary with our three, and we had a great year learning from them, and having their company. We have a lovely photo of Cathy aged four, with two of the girls and herself in the front garden of the Manse.

The children continued their Schooling at Paddington. I joined the Parents and Citizens, and we did all the usual fundraising activities. Rebecca and Pete both were selected to attend the Opportunity Class in Year five at Woollahra Opportunity School. Cathy moved to Prahran before the Selective Test was applicable. I remember feeling a very competitive push by the parents at Woollahra, which I did not like.

Our home and Church life continued on in an uneventful yet busy fashion - with Sunday Services, Jim busy during the week with Scripture classes, home visits, the occasional Wedding and Baptism, and the monthly Street Stall at the front of the Church on Oxford Street. At our Wedding, we had been given about twenty Casserole dishes - so gradually I gave all but two or three away at these Stalls, and so made some money for the Church. I used to give food to the people who came knocking at our door- mostly men and an occasional family. First of all I gave them tinned goods, only to discover that the tins were pawned at the local Wine bar, across the street- and thus the person had money to buy alcohol. This practice was stopped when I found this out, so then I would offer the people food - sandwiches and a cup of tea, which they ate, on an old pew, outside the study window, often with the children sitting with them. We had a small window on a hinge, like a porthole, which I could open and see who was there, so that I had some control over who I spoke to and what I gave to them.

When the doorbell rang, the older two would run to the front door. Pete would be very protective and put up his fists to fight off the intruder. Rebecca would engage the person in conversation, and Cathy would toddle along, bringing up the rear!

One memory which remains strong from life in the Kindergarten phase, is of the time a Dad of two of the children we knew well, committed suicide. Rebecca and Pete had been on play dates quite often in the family home at Boundary St Paddington. All the families at the Kindergarten were saddened and shocked by this event. The mother of the children bravely picked herself up and resumed her job as a Nurse at St Vincent’s Hospital, while the children continued their kindergarten life.

At the Paddington School I joined a night class to learn sewing with a machine. I decided I wanted to make the children a set of clothes each. So I made a green corduroy dress and matching panties for Rebecca, a blue corduroy dress and matching panties for Cathy and a pale blue shirt and grey short pants for Pete. It was quite an achievement as I was not a sewer. However I accomplished the task in one term, and that was it!

One day, I remember, the State MLA, Tom Morey, rang the doorbell, and was very surprised when I opened the porthole window to view the caller! He wanted to make an appointment to see Jim to ask Jim to stand as a State member for the Labor Party...Jim declined!

Jim and I both joined The Paddington Society. This was a community activist group of like-minded people, many of them parents with children at the Kindergarten or Primary School.

We heard that the State Government was preparing to divide the suburb of Paddington into two halves. Oxford St was the dividing line, so that the northern side of Oxford St would be a part of Woollahra Council and the southern side (where we lived,) part of South Sydney Council. Owen Tooth drew a wonderful flyer, which was pink, and drawn in the shape of a female body, following the contour of Oxford St in its design. We did lots of letter-box drops and called community meetings, and worked enthusiastically and eventually stopped the Government's proposal. Jim was asked to chair a large community meeting held in the Town Hall, which although at times, it became very rowdy, he managed to keep control and the consensus was to stop the process, and it was achieved! The Paddington Society was the first local community Association in Sydney, and paved the way for the Glebe Society and the Balmain Association and all the others which followed. There were numerous Saturday night parties in our Manse when the Society and its members came and socialised, as well as plotting and planning. We fed the guests rye bread and salami and cheese and olives, with wine or beer. Our house was offered for these parties because it was so much bigger than the Terrace houses of most of our friends. We could accommodate at least 40 or 50 people with no trouble. They were great times, and gave me a feeling of being amongst real people other than Church people all the time. Rebecca used to creep down and sit on the stairs and watch what was going on, sometimes Pete did too, in his pyjamas mostly; Cathy was asleep. Paddington had many 'firsts'. There was a Delicatessen, the first in Sydney, owned by a Hungarian family. This is where we bought our bread and party food for the Manse parties. The first Siamese Café was in Oxford St, not far from our Manse.

One day when Cathy was a toddler, and she and I were crossing Renny Lane, and walking towards Renny Street, a man ran over her toe (she was not wearing shoes). I ran after the car and shouted at him, "you ran over my little girl's toe," and he was mortified, and apologised profusely. One of the happiest times I saw our children enjoy was in the bath. We had a very unusual bathroom; there were two doors, one of which led out onto the verandah. There was a manhole, where once I think it had given access to a bell? Jim and I once or twice went up through the manhole, and the view of the water and roof tops, down as far as Double Bay, was amazing. The bathroom had a toilet at one end, nearer to Oxford Street, and the bath had a very large flat surface just as you entered the room, so they used to delight in sliding down the flat surface and into the bath, like a sort of slippery dip!

One event stands out in my mind- Jim had been building a covenantal relationship with the local Methodist Minister, Harry Roberts. So, in 1965 the Methodists and Presbyterian Churches of Paddington came together into our own organic Union. The ABC Television filmed it, with a great procession of committed people, including me walking down Oxford Street pushing Cathy in her stroller! The Preacher in the Methodist Church was John Garrett, from the Congregational Church- and, as we passed St Francis Catholic Church, Father Patrick gave us a blessing, as did the Anglican Minister at St Matthias's Church at the edge of Centennial Park. So local history was made, some twelve years before the official Church

Union. We became very fond of going to Redleaf Pool for swimming- and always had fun in Centennial Park, playing various games.... feeding the ducks was a great favourite. It all seems so idyllic now.

My Dad would come over for meals now and then, and it was very noticeable how lonely he was. Marilyn married in 1963, and gradually had five children. She and Michael lived in Dad's house at 17 Ferry St Hunter's Hill. This was very helpful for our Dad.

My own life was made so much more manageable owing to the fact that most Sundays we went out to Northwood for lunch with Grandma and Grandpa Bishop. My Mother in law became my surrogate Mother, as I sorely missed my Mum, and so I transferred most of my love over to Grandma. She was always so kind, and only about once in her life did she ever criticise me about the way I was handling the children. When I said to them, "we are now going to Grandma and Grandpa's for lunch, they would all say, "Oh goody, we can all have apple pie and ice-cream for pudding." I found in her such an oasis of care and support.

I reflect on my years of life in the Order Ecumenical, and have come to realise that the two reasons I remained in that body were A) because I wanted my children to have a Father, even though most of the time in their formative years he was absent, or occupied with something or somebody. He was still there, on and off. So I stuck with him, and did not leave him. B) I genuinely felt that I was making a difference- the 60's 70's were full of empowerment, such as the 'win' the Paddington Society had, and standing up against conscription for the Vietnam War, and the beginnings of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. People felt a sense of purpose and fulfilment, and that hard work actually produced significant results.

My regret is that the outfit we were a part of in many ways was so extreme, and yet was in common with many other radical and unrealistic, idealistic movements of the time. Yes, we were silly; it was far too risky, and yet we were at the same time, brave. We wanted to make a difference with the one life we had, and so to that end, our own needs and our family's needs were grossly overlooked.

I think back now, to the day it became clear that the Americans who were visiting us as our house guests were never going away, but now had become a very permanent fixture in our family life. Yes, when this penny dropped in all its awful reality - that day of consciousness removed all sense of what a normal family life was about. My life, our life, changed forever. Family life was gone, I could no longer just be with my children and enjoy them, and watch them growing, and feel myself growing with them. All of that was suddenly ripped away and denied. I was a young naïve obedient wife, and knew my place as a Minister's wife!

Oh how hard an adjustment for our three small children this was. Now I reflect that this life change greatly contributed to their resilience and strength of purpose and character, as they developed into their young adult life. So I have decided on reflection there is always a gift in every dark aspect of our lives.

Footnote:

In 2016 I drove Susan Tooth and myself around to Bennett's Grove. This was the space of a disused tennis court where Owen Tooth and a group of artists had plans to build a Paddington Arts Centre. The aim was to provide a space where all the local Artists could come and have their studio in the building, as a Cooperative. Sadly the State Government withdrew the funding so the building was never built. It was

a huge blow to all the Artists, especially Owen, and to us who had caught their dream. The history of Paddington would have been a bit different had this Centre been built. Now it is an attractive block of units designed by Bill Lucas, a Kindergarten Dad, and a friend.

Chapter 3

Pain and Hope: The Ecumenical Institute

In January 1967, Jim went to a Church Conference which was to radically change the course of our lives. At the end of this year some Americans came from Chicago, including Joe Mathews, and we held a Conference at Otford. We all went as a family, along with about sixty others. After this event, in January 1968, three Americans came to live in Sydney. A group of us, including Harry Roberts (Methodist minister in Paddington) and all our family, went to South Sydney church on week-day mornings at 7.30 for worship and then a discussion. I then drove our children back in time for school in Paddington, and then I came back and spent the morning with the group. This was the beginning of life with The Ecumenical Institute. It became clear that all of us were to be trained as teachers of a course designed to take 44 hours on a weekend. This meant teaching ourselves some papers written by leading theologians of the day. The topics were God, Christ, The Holy Spirit, and the Church.

Joe Mathews had been a Chaplain in the Pacific during WW2. He had buried many soldiers during this time, and found himself very affected by the violence, and the death of so many young men. Previously as an academic at the University of Austin, TX, he had taught Systematic Theology. Now he found that abstract theory about God no longer made any sense to him. So with Practical Theology as his new subject he spent hours working with his students to devise a comprehensive and current course to teach a new way of doing Theology. For laypeople it was the 44 hour weekend (RS-1 or “Religious Studies 1”), and for Clergy a weekday course of 4 days, with some practical actions for their own local congregations over 2 days at the end. So later on these 2 courses were taught all over Australia. Jim was often away teaching during the week, and sometimes I was away teaching over a weekend. This became our life after the Religious House was established in our Manse in 1969.

In July 1968, we went to Chicago as a family, and the children wore red clothes, and were part of the Children’s Programme. For this month we lived in a disused Brethren Seminary, in a black ghetto, on the west side of Chicago. Earlier that year Martin Luther King had been assassinated, and there were riots in many parts of the US. Robert Kennedy had also been murdered, so there was great unrest in many communities. The Civil Rights Marches across many places in the South were happening. We lived in one room on the fourth floor of the building, and put a small Australian flag outside our door. The children went to their programme every day, and there was a rocket in their playground, for all the children to use as an imaginary space ship. They learnt two songs which in my view could still be useful.

“Voom, Voom Astronaut, are you having fun,
With the moon, and stars and the very large sun?
Do you like it being alone
Or would you rather be back home?
Voom, Voom Astronaut, are you having fun,
With the moon, and the stars and a very large sun?”

“I am always falling down,
But I know what I can do,
I can pick myself up, and say to myself,

I'm the greatest too.
It doesn't matter if I'm big or small,
I live now if I live at all.
I am always falling down,
But I know what I can do."

My main memories are about standing in a queue for lunch each day in the yard, in the very hot summer sun. We ate stale rye bread, and 'Baloney' - Bologna, like our sliced Devon. There were also Dill cucumbers and Mayonnaise to put on the bread. All day we were in various Courses, and at the dinner meal we ate in "College B", in the basement of the building, studying a book 'Saviours of God' by Nikos Kazantzakis, a Greek Orthodox Priest who had been excommunicated from his Church. Gene Marshall and Kaye Hayes were our "Leaders" in College B.

In January '69 there was a "Summer Programme" in Adelaide, which we all attended. After that two American couples came to live with us, in the Manse. Rebecca, who was 8, calmly asked one day "How long will the guests be staying with us?" It became clear that they were permanent guests. Other Americans joined them- some had children, and friendships were formed- often for solidarity and support and School.

This was the beginning of a very hard time for our children, and for us, which lasted until they and we finally all returned to Australia and each found their own way outside Religious House structures. This period of time is still very painful for me to write about, as it did untold emotional damage to our children, which I have often regretted.

Another watershed event occurred in 1969. I was a delegate from Australia to the first and signal International Training Institute, held in August in Singapore. It was a six-week training course, for leadership across the Churches, in the South East Asia region. So there was a wide diversity of participants- twenty three from Australia, including three Aboriginals- Silas Roberts from Darwin, George Winungudj from Elcho Island, and Eileen Lester from Leonora, a town in central West Australia. There were over one hundred participants from places as far as the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, The Philippines, India, Malaysia, and Singapore. After a few days the people from Taiwan left, as they did not want to be near the people from communist China. There were many strange new cultural experiences in Singapore. I learnt to eat with my hands. All food was eaten at lunch and dinner with our hands. The 'plate' was a palm leaf, on which was always some spicy Indian food. This did not suit the Chinese and other Asian students. Eventually some concessions were made for the Asian students, and the rest of us had to fit in. Breakfast was some delicious white bread with jams or honey and mango and paw paw.

I roomed with a young Filipino woman named Juliana. She was always washing our small bath area, and sluicing it copiously with lots of water. It seemed wasteful of water to me, but I just lived with it!

Our curriculum was centred on the Cultural Revolution, as it was evident in the new thinking about the urban way of life. There were also courses in natural history, the philosophy of religion, world religions, to name some.

During this time there were some moments of great awakenment for me. One occasion was when the Leader of the Ecumenical Institute, Joe Mathews, took me to a sophisticated Hotel, the Raffles Hotel, for

dinner and a night of dancing. I danced first western style dancing with Joe, and then he organised for me to learn the Bamboo Dance- quite a complicated series of steps where I had to jump in between the four metre long bamboo sticks as they clacked back and forth. The art was not to get hit by the sticks, as they came towards my legs- timing was the key to the dance!

Two other occasions were 'stand outs' for me. One was when I was leading the singing at the beginning of a Lecture, and I mumbled the name of the song we were to sing. I suppose I was very nervous, standing in front of a large group of unfamiliar people- Joe took me aside after, and glared at me, and said "Why did you mumble like that, as in doing so, you gave every Indian in the room permission to do the same." I never ever led singing again in a public place, without projecting my voice.

Living in Trinity College, Singapore for six weeks is the place where I was bitten badly by some mosquitoes infected with filariasis- this was later to cause me the problem I have had with my right leg. Singapore was very unsanitary at that time, with open drains, and all waste flowing freely in them. I was very unlucky to be bitten, and then to have the parasite invade my leg, and cause such damage to my lymphatic vessels. Such is life.

The other event was equally as painful, but in quite a different way. Towards the end of the Six-week training, each national group was invited to show something of their unique history and national identity. We twenty-three Australians chose to act out the drama of the invasion of the Australian continent by white people. Our three Aboriginal colleagues were part of the choreography, and we rehearsed until we felt right about our presentation. Some of us had a few lines to say, and then at the conclusion, our Aboriginal colleagues all lay down, as we killed them. We managed to have some red cloth lying on the ground, to symbolise spilt blood. It was very meaningful for both us and all the actors, and quite overwhelming for the rest of the participants.

As I reflect now on these two events, they both exposed a certain lack of confidence I had lived with since my childhood. I think I had concealed this insecurity and lack of confidence because of my skill at sport, namely tennis and to a lesser degree, swimming.

In 1971 I was part of the Faculty of the Ecumenical Institute at Thornleigh - here we ran the Academy for World Churchmen, as it was called. A six-week training event, it went well. Something like 60 participants if I recall.

After the 'success' of having three Aboriginals at the Singapore ITI, it was decided to invite some Aboriginals to the Academy. To recruit people to come to this, I went with Rod Andrews, a member of the Sydney House, over some of the Northern Territory. We went to Yirrkala Mission and I met Galawuy Yunupingu, and many of the Marika family. When it came time to enter the Mission the Superintendent, a fierce looking burly man, refused to let us enter. We had come all the way from Sydney to recruit some Aboriginals to come to the Academy. I suddenly remembered as we stood on the Mission house front verandah, that Jim had spoken to the CEO of the Methodist Mission, Cecil Gribble, who lived in Canberra. Mr Gribble had given Jim verbal permission for us to enter Yirrkala, and when I said this to the Superintendent, it was as if a door opened, and we walked through! Soon we were on the Yirrkala beach, meeting with the community, and being welcomed, and given all sort of gifts and smiles. In no time the leaders were calling me 'Aunty' and we felt very warmly received. I will always remember I was wearing an Indonesian batik dress, with a dark cardigan, (there was a stiff breeze), and I remember

enjoying the feel of the sand on my bare feet. Jim had brought me back some very pretty black patterned batik, with a deep rich dark red pattern through it, and it had made a lovely dress! The legacy of our visit gave us two Aboriginals to the Academy Training, one man was from Darwin, and one from Yirrkala. After this visit, in which we visited Darwin, and also made a day trip to Katherine and to Kakadu, our Ecumenical Institute established a very small base in Darwin. The two staff made excellent connections, as they began to learn about our Aboriginal culture and stories, songs, and symbols.

A footnote to our receiving permission to enter Yirrkala: When Jim wrote to Mr Gribble, he had mentioned in his letter that he was the son of Ray Bishop. Both Ray Bishop and Cecil Gribble had grown up in Ballarat, where Cecil's Father had owned and run a tailor shop, while Ray Bishop's Father had owned and run the Grocery store. I think that personal note really worked the oracle for us, as we nervously waited while the Superintendent made up his mind!

In 1971 I had surgery on a gynaecological problem, and had complications during the surgery. While in the Women's' Hospital at Paddington, Rebecca came to see me, looking very forlorn in an aqua jumper that her Grandma had knitted her. The Dr said to me when I woke up and he was visiting me "we almost lost you". I was very surprised by his comment. As this comment took root in my consciousness I began to think of ways to be grateful that I was still alive. This led to me giving myself even more intensely to the work/Church... as a thankyou to God for everything in my life.

The last Ecumenical Institute overseas conference I attended was the International Training Institute, in 1971, in Ootacamund, up in the Hills of Southern India, among the Tea Plantations. 'Ooty' is inland from Madras, now called Chennai. This was geared to Church people, so there were participants from YW and the YMCA Associations. I clearly remember a 'servant' bringing me some scalding water to have a wash each morning, at 5 am in a basin. It was extremely cold at this hour, too! It was a six-week course, and some of the time I was a Teacher of the courses. Jim was at this one, so it was good to be with him. I remember arriving by myself, travelling from Bangalore, through Coimbatore, until I reached the Hill Station in a black London Taxi! I had come all the way up a very winding narrow road, to the Conference - meeting at Ootacamund – known by the locals as 'Ooty.' There were native Australian gum trees growing everywhere, known as Nilgiri, and the locals used the oil from the Eucalypts to make Eucalypt Oil, for sale, and to make some money for their own community. I remember at the close of the Conference, Jim had gone on before me, as he had to attend to his Presbytery, over the matter of his relationship with the Ecumenical Institute. (This all turned out OK in the end, and he was not declared a Heretic by his Church.)

It was almost time for Peter's seventh Birthday- and I was somehow stranded in Darwin. I remember pleading with the Qantas staff in Darwin – "Please can you get me onto a plane for Sydney as my little boy is having his Birthday, and I don't want to be late for it". I did arrive home in time on that occasion. I did consider divorce a number of times, as I was not very content in the Ecumenical Institute, and my own family and Sheila were not impressed with the way the children were treated. I feel as if I never had the opportunity to be their Mother, and that they suffered at the hands of people who did not love them as a Mother does. The guardians who we asked to look after them, were for the most part, without their own children, or had no children of their own, and did not take the emotional and practical needs of children and teenagers into account.

I lament over this. I have asked my children to forgive me for my lack of respect and care for them. In their very vulnerable teenage years they were bereft of real familial support, and with little responsible role models to follow from Jim and me, in the raising of their own children. Tremendous credit goes to the parents of our grandchildren, in the wonderful children they have all raised. My profound thanks are offered to the partners of our three adult family; my observation is that they have deeply enriched the lives of their partners and of course have given their own inestimable gifts to their children.

I realized that at least the children had a Father, and that was probably better than if I had divorced him. Jim used to be rough on me, and often I was the brunt of his own insecurities, and impatience. I was probably very frightened and now I realise that I was very insecure myself, so it must have been a difficult mix.

A Life Lived Outside Australia Again

We finally left the Parish of Paddington in March 1973, to go and live in Chicago.

The children were sent to different places. Rebecca started High School at the Adelaide Girls' High. Peter and Cathy went to Prahran Primary School, and lived in the Melbourne Religious House, in South Yarra, under the care of the Robins family.

Rebecca lived in the Adelaide Religious House, in the care of the Oakleys. Bronwyn Rees became her good friend, as she also attended Adelaide Girl's High, a few years ahead of Rebecca.

I remember enrolling Rebecca in her new School, and sitting in the Principal's Office. What emotional toll this must have been taking on a twelve-year old girl.

I remember visiting Pete and Cathy in their classroom at the Prahran School, just before Jim and I finally left. Many years and much hard work from our three remarkable children have guided them all to become wonderful caring good people, compassionate and with high values and solid ethics.

At the end of this year of separation, we arranged for Steve Allen, one of the Order colleagues who had spent his year in Australia, to bring our children over to live with us in Chicago.

As Jim and I prepared to leave Australia ourselves, and we had put our children in different places, we prepared to leave the happy life in Paddington, busy and often unpredictable as it was.

We must have had a hunch that we were going to be away from Australia for a long time. We decided to touch base with the Red Centre, somehow to ground us in our identity.

We decided to go to Alice Springs, and pay our respects to the Aboriginal people, and visit Ayers Rock, as it was then called, (now Uluru). We left Alice Springs, and passing through Darwin we went to Calcutta for a few days. We were absorbed by the poverty, the cows roaming the streets, and the throngs of curious people everywhere we walked. We flew on to Tashkent, which reminded us of the forces of nature. There had been a horrific earthquake in the 60's. The city had decided to leave the enormous hole in the ground where many buildings once stood, as a symbol of loss. We continued our journey westwards, and stayed first in Bokhara, and then on to the magic of Samarkand. A beautiful blue Mosque had pride of place in the city centre. This was where we visited the only Muslim Seminary in the USSR.

Here we were shown a map of the World, and were given a Lecture on the vision of expansion of the Muslim religion southwards. We were asked where we lived, and then given their plan. This was to come south through Afghanistan, towards Malaysia then Indonesia, into Darwin, and then be in Australia. What struck me about that Seminary was that the small cell like room which each student had -although they were celibate- in most rooms there were pictures on the walls of naked women! All of these places remain with me now, as places of mystery and hardship, and great extremes. I recall especially in Bokhara going off the beaten track somehow, and being in a very poor house, with a dirt floor, and having some mince to eat- after which Jim and I both had a gastric attack. There was the story told to us by the taxi driver from Moscow Airport- as to the spot on the road in to Moscow where the Russians had stopped the Germans from advancing in WW2, just thirteen kilometres from Moscow. The food, the markets, the very early morning pre- schools for the tiny children, so that the workers could spend 12 hours at their workplace... all these are indelible in my memory. The Soviet Union was still very much a dominant factor in the way of life, with very heavy-handed Police, as we found out, once trying to cross a street illegally. They kept saying to us “Nyet, Nyet” !

The strongest tight moment in Moscow was when we were at the Airport, ready to leave for Chicago. The Customs Officials found that the Australian Embassy stamp over Jim’s Passport photo was very poorly stamped- in fact not stamped at all. Mine was not much better, as only half of my face was stamped, but I was not in such dire straits. Fortunately Jim had declared himself in his Occupation in his Passport as a Research Worker, not as a Minister of Religion! The Officials refused to let us travel, as they said they would need to telex Canberra, to see if we were bona fide travellers.

So we were sent back to our Hotel, into the very same room, for an extra night while Canberra was notified. The experience was very scary, as we were interrogated by the KGB for about 4 hours, in a very small room, about ten feet square, and there was a lot of pressure on us to say who we really were. In 1973 the Soviet Union (as it was then called), was a Communist country under Stalin, therefore Christianity was officially banned, although for some reason there was a Baptist Church in the centre of Moscow which was functional as a place of Worship. All the Orthodox Churches though, had been converted into historical and patriotic Museums. I loved looking at the gilded horse drawn carriages, the jewellery, and the crowns of the Tsarinas and Tsars. Overshoes were mandatory to wear over our shoes, so that we did not scratch the beautiful polished parquet floors of the once magnificent buildings of the elite.

When we finally arrived at Chicago, and had found our feet somewhat, we went in to our Consul, and showed them the ineffective way Jim’s Passport had been stamped. A very difficult time, and one in which Jim kept remarkably cool, and I tried to follow suit.

The children arrived in Chicago in the depths of a snowstorm, and so their life with snow boots, fur lined clothes, and snowballs began.

The next few years, Rebecca lived in the Student House while the other two lived on the same floor of the Kemper Building as we did. The Kemper Building was an eight-storey building, donated to our Family Order by an Insurance Company. Cathy kept a small Gerbil in a cage in our room, I forget its name, she will know- after a while it died, I think through lack of company.

Later Peter and Cathy joined Rebecca in the Student House. This was not a good experiment- as drugs were used, and discipline was slack. The food was poor, and the Student House all had to work to make money. After School was completed for the day and at least three times a week, the students went to work in a place where there were show dogs, and their job was to clean up all the poo from the dogs. This naturally was described by them as horrible. I don't like to think about this period. A Mother's grief.

Rebecca was at a prestigious High School, and Peter was at Middle School at first. Cathy was in Elementary. They all progressed through the American system, and obtained good grades. Cathy shone at Japanese, and Rebecca won an Honours Award in Biology, in her Senior year, and was widely praised for this. Peter also excelled in School, and began his love for the drums in Chicago. I reflect that the children were all very academic, but what a strange life they led... As a family, Jim and I have discussed this many times, and although we have both been forgiven and forgiven ourselves, it is still a deep regret.

There were some happier times, and here are a few. Rebecca began to show an interest in the Cello. She had excellent teachers and one was Shirley Miller. Shirley's husband Frank was the Principal Cellist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Rebecca used to travel out to their home at Evanston. First the train then a bus, and then a walk for a few blocks to the house. This went on in all weather, including in the snow, trudging along with her 'Cello on her back. I had a real privilege one afternoon when I was invited to go with Rebecca to her weekly lesson. I sat in on the hour, and at the end Shirley remarked to me "Rebecca is such a good student and in the years to come, her 'Cello will give her so much pleasure." Pete and his introduction to the drums is mentioned elsewhere, and yet here I want to say that he has said to me that there were a few good things in his life in the Order years. He used to sneak down from the fourth floor where he lived with the students in the Student House, and have happy times playing the drums used for our Daily Office. In Montreal Cathy was very fortunate to begin her journey with a respect and love of many forms of musical expression. She learnt the Piano from an elderly Nun, while at the Rosemount School in Montreal. She (like Rebecca at her Schools), joined the School Orchestra, and learnt to play the Clarinet.

During the time Rebecca lived in the Student House, she found herself a part time job. She and her friend Shelley Hahn were still only 14 (under age.) They worked at Burger King, which we know as Hungry Jacks.

During this time Jim and I and all our colleagues rose early. A knock on our door said "Praise the Lord, Christ is Risen" and our reply from bed was "He is Risen indeed." Sometimes it was my turn to knock on doors to do this job, on the 3 floors where the adults lived. If I had been on all night Security this was the last job to do before I could go to bed, or if I wanted to, I could stay up for the Daily Office at 6 am, and then go to bed for a while. The daily routine after Daily Office was Breakfast in our groups with a Bible reading and a News Conversation discussed thoroughly. Then we all went to our various assignments for the day.

In 1974 Jim and I and the children were together for part of the late summer holidays. We bought a car, a second hand Opel. We both learnt to drive on the left-hand side of the road, and travelled from Chicago east to Pennsylvania. It was several days' drive. We lived in a cabin in Lancaster, PA, which was a predominantly Mennonite community in all the surrounding farms. On our small black and white TV one late afternoon, we watched President Richard Nixon resign before the Nation, over the Watergate affair. This was gripping television!

All of the years that we lived in Chicago we experienced many different spirit methods, read many books on spirit life, and were guinea pigs, on ourselves; for many new kinds of spirit and practical methods. I remember the Psalm conversations, the New Religious Mode, the Canonical Hours, and most of all, The Other World in the Midst of This World. We borrowed the Greek word 'Ecclesiola' (College, Seminary and Sodality); in English this word means 'little Church,' and a number of other spirit tools. We explored the Fast, The Watch and The Wake. These still stand the test of time, and are one of the real legacies from the Order Ecumenical days. Here I make a reflection on a creative time we experienced when we studied many books, both religious and secular, which were edge books of their day, and still today are very relevant to the needs of a global society. I refer to how much exploratory study our group accomplished in entering into real dialogue with the other great spiritual traditions. We read widely on Hinduism, Sufism, Islam, and Judaism. In the early 70's our group read a book called "The Way Of All the Earth" by a Jesuit Priest, John Donne. In it he discusses the process of 'crossing over' and 'coming back.' This book in my view paved the way for real respectful dialogue, but even went much further. His premise is to engage with the other traditions, then bring back gifts into one's own and go further, and appreciate more the depths of one's own. The benefit of the riches and insights gained creates a tapestry of multi essences at the core of one's being, and a deep understanding of profound humanness. This results in bringing a deep respect for the literature of other spiritual literary works, both written and visual, and a deepening sense of joy and fulfilment and oneness. The Churches picked up on the idea of dialogue in the 80's and have made steady attempts to listen to the other traditions, with great benefits, even in a small way at this time. Many of these methods were adapted from ancient and medieval spirit methods. I remember the time very clearly in about 1975 when I was on a trip to Detroit, I came down the stairs from the plane- and walked across the tarmac (that is how we did it then, to disembark!) and a young woman greeted me, dressed in a loose, flowing flowery dress, and barefoot, and said to me as she handed me a frangipani flower for my hair, "peace and love to you, love conquers all." These were the days of 'flower power.'

The three strategies which the Order Ecumenical and Ecumenical Institute used as their mandate were: Contextual Re-education, Structural Reformulation, and Spirit Remotivation. These three strategies are probably the three points that I would say are still needed for a peaceful and hope-filled world. They are the most long lasting and long range hopes, still relevant, in my view.

During my years of living in the Kemper building, from 1972-1975, I had some interesting assignments, or at least times when my life was entirely occupied, I had little or no time to ever think of myself, and my own needs. In fact my own needs were never given a thought, as I was living entirely for the sake of 'the Mission,' to change the world. I was first assigned to the Research Centrum, as part of the Local Church Experiment, which meant that often at weekends I was sent to various places across the U.S. to meet with Churches and congregations, who were looking at new and creative ways to be Church. The team would be a colleague from Chicago, and someone from a local Religious House, and the local congregation representatives, and we would work together. I really enjoyed these times relating to just ordinary people, who were eager to workshop their hopes and dreams, and problems, and find new ways forward. Later I became part of a push the Order made to local communities, across North America. These we called Local Community Convocations. I went to Atlanta one weekend, with one of my black colleagues, and we met in a school class room, where the local black community from a very poor neighbourhood had gathered to workshop their own hopes, dreams, contradictions, and ways to create a

new and different future, in an all day event. I remember that the people almost came to blows and even a fistfight, as they wrestled with what were their REAL problems.

Another time at a Town Meeting, as these one-day events came to be called, in Marquette, Michigan, a “Town and Gown” community, we struggled with their issues, and discovered how much this University town was aware of the need to conserve their water. That was in 1975, and another “ping” in my awareness about the need to care for our environment. The first awareness had been back in 1960, in Cleveland, looking at the dead fish on the Cuyahoga River, when Jim and I one Sunday afternoon, with Rebecca in her stroller, had taken a boat ride on the Cuyahoga River, and noted all the bloated fish. I kept asking “why are all the fish lying at the edge of the water dead?” We were told the fish were dead because of the industrial pollutants from the heavy industry and in particular the Republic Steel and Bethlehem Steel Factories, whose waste ran down into the River.

One very memorable time for Jim and me was our trip down the Mississippi River, in one of the summers while we lived in Chicago. The children were all away at various “camps”, so we had a little time to ourselves. We sailed on a Paddle Boat, embarking at St Louis, and travelling right down to New Orleans. Our time in that gracious old city I will always remember, especially the night we went to the Preservation Hall, to hear a black band playing. There is something unforgettable about black soul music, if you ever hear it. We sat on old hard Church pews, but I could have sat there all night listening to the expressive music from the heart and soul. Another memorable moment on this holiday was when Jeanie Baringer’s Dad took me as a pillion passenger on his Harley Davidson motorbike around the suburbs of New Orleans, it felt so liberating!

In my Kemper living days, another wake up event occurred when I invited Lyn Mathews, Joe’s wife, to a very expensive Restaurant in downtown Chicago. It was a Birthday celebration for Lyn. There were about three other women present. It was the first time I had ever used my Amex card, to pay for the dinner. I recall fumbling about with the new card, and wondering how I actually paid the money—no one had given me any advice on how to use it beforehand- or the need to put the card on the small plate when the waiter brought both the bill and the plate to the table! I watched some of the other guests and finally got the message, and paid the bill, with no tip- I think to the annoyance of the waiter! This seems so silly now, and yet I reflect another small sign of my sheltered childhood, and lack of confidence. It was a part of the journey to maturation and twentieth century living! Looking back years later, I know that there was some good fallout from our life in North America, as I became a stronger person, through all the struggles and hard separations from our children. In 1977 I was selected to be part of the Panchayat, a five-member body which had the oversight of the Order. This was considered to be a very significant role in the Order, and I was an Australian woman, to boot! I can only presume that Joe thought I had ‘grown’ into a mature wise person, so named me as one of the special five decision makers from across the whole Global Order for that year. I don’t remember who else was on it at that time. I used to rise very early and attend a meeting with Joe Mathews in his tiny office referred to as ‘the Cubicle.’ One of the women from an outer wealthy middle class suburb in Chicago, a group known as the Guardians group, would be present too. (Their main role seemed to be raising money through introducing our work to influential people they knew.) Often one of my other male colleagues was selected to be there. Joe would often talk to me while there was no one else present in the Cubicle. He would say... “I simply can’t understand why x or y does not pick himself up, and start to make something real and worthwhile in his life. He has all the gifts needed to shine a lot more than he does.” Joe chose this early morning time to bring us an idea he had

thought up and we would discuss it. When I left for India and the Human Development Training School there, I was still a part of the Panchayat, and although there was no internet then, mostly I received news from those coming from Chicago to India. So when Joe was dying and he knew he was, when we went to India in the first week of August, I was prepared to return to Chicago for his Funeral. He died towards the end of October 1977, and his Funeral was held at a Crematorium in Chicago late that month. I then returned to India before going on to my next assignment, which was in Venezuela. An important event happened when I returned to Maliwada after Joe's death. I was assigned to take the Order of Service around the village to all those villagers who had known Joe. So I rode my bike, and handed out the sheets of paper. I was embarrassed to do this, as I felt that the sheet, which had a large black Congolese cross on it was disrespectful to the locals, who were all Hindus. I remember what one of the young men said to me "don't hide your cross from us: you be a good Christian, and we'll be good Hindus." It occurred to me later, that these words made sense to me. That is, if people would be who they are and be respectful of all the other religious traditions, then the world would be a more peaceful place to live.

When their American visas ended in 1976, all three children went to Canada for their Schooling. At this time Jim and I began living in the Toronto Religious House. Peter was in Ottawa, Rebecca in Winnipeg, and Cathy in Montreal. The life that Jim and I were leading made it impossible to see them more than on occasions, say, every 3 months. Rebecca eventually graduated from another excellent High School back in Chicago, Whitney Young, and Peter graduated from a very good High School, Jesse H Jones, in Houston, TX. When I was talking with Peter's English teacher, she said, "Peter has been very kind to some of the girls in his class, and has helped them with their English." Cathy chose to come home to Australia. She attended Fort Street High, while living in the Sydney Religious House, at Summer Hill, and graduated at the end of 1980. I enjoyed meeting the Principal of Fort Street, who said to me, "She is such a good student."

The first Consult I worked in was held in October of 1976. The Consult was in a village in New Brunswick in Canada, called Lorne de L'Acadie. This was a very poor community where most of the villagers were illiterate. We found that three quarters of the families had the same last name, which was O' Brien. The people had originally come from Ireland during the potato famine there. Although they spoke French, they had Irish surnames. When it was time to sign their names to register to come to the 4 day Consult, the easiest way for them to do this was to place an 'x' in the box. The Catholic Parish had an important role in the village, and the Priest was very well respected by the people.

Just prior to this Consult there was a fire in the Parish Hall, and so one of the things we organised was to rebuild the Hall. As there had been no Fire Truck when the fire occurred, we managed to find a second hand truck for the village to buy. After it was all over, there was just rubble and some blackened bricks. The children loved to ride around in the fire truck! This Consult was to prepare us for the next year when the Human Development Training Schools commenced. We were always learning and refining the curriculum and how we presented our modules. I remember working with Rhonda and Brian Robins in this Consult. Later they were Priors of the Montreal House.

For one year, 1980, Peter was living with Jim and me while we established the Singapore Religious House. Peter's schoolwork was all accomplished through the Correspondence School run by the Department of Education, in Sydney. This was a better time for Pete perhaps, as he was living with us. He excelled at his school-work. He was a student of a good Teacher whom we met in Sydney before he

came up to Singapore. The Teacher was a woman who had a disability, I think she was both deaf and also had a leg problem. She wrote complimentary notes on his work in a red pencil, I remember. Before that, in 1979, he had been at Sydney Boys High School while he was living in the Sydney Religious House, then based in Redfern, where Jay Zahrt was his very good friend. Pete did not enjoy his time at Sydney Boys' High School, he had no real friends, mainly because he suddenly appeared as a 'foreign' student from Houston TX in Year 10, and so found it very challenging to make friends, who did not help his daily life at all. (Note here that his Uncle Keith, an ex-student of Sydney Boys' High, made a tremendous effort in using his own references and credentials to have Pete accepted at the prestigious School. We were so grateful to Keith for helping us out, and Pete owes Keith some deep thanks, as it was Keith again who enabled Pete to obtain his first job, after his Graduation, to an excellent job at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. As I look back to that time, I often reflect on Keith's support of Pete, as Pete was then set on the pathway of his career in the Bank, where he later met and married Michelle, for me, the best thing for Pete in his life, along with his wonderful sons. From then on, Pete has been indebted to Keith for establishing Pete in his career with the Bank and all its changes over the next twenty years and onwards. Some good things do come to us in our lives!)

My reflection on this part of my life is important to me to state. This is my best understanding of my experience, my story. Painful much of it is, and for years I was never able to state it to myself or anyone. I can only now write what I felt all those years. It is a bitter/sweet experience.

1. I felt powerless most of the time. It was all 'to help others', all for 'the mission.'
2. I now see after all these years, what the word 'brainwash' really means. For me, it was as if the person that I had been was lost, and I became someone entirely different. I felt for years that the way I was programmed to think was completely different from the 'real me'.
3. I did gain my power later. At 48 I became an ordained Minister.
4. However I was totally feeling less than a Mother to my three children. My children were wrenched away for me, and my relationship was distant and in discussions with them later, it became very clear how much they had all suffered. I can only imagine their hidden feelings of loss and pain and torment as we were distant in their lives.
5. I only ever gave few feelings to these three children because of the fact that I did not experience many feelings at all from Jim. He too was so caught up in the life of 'the mission' there was no time for anything else.
6. Without any doubt, I believe that the fundamental flaw Joe Mathews the Leader of the Ecumenical Institute, forced upon us and especially other non-American Order colleagues, is that he created a pattern for family life which was not at all the same context out of which Australian families were shaped and lived, after the War, and into the 60's. We were not living in a perversion of turned-in family life, in my opinion. It was not a case of 'one size family life fits all'. This is my main and lasting reflection on why our own family life was almost destroyed by a powerful man who had his own deep shadow side.
7. My reflection, with hindsight, on this bitter/ sweet experience of my life for 14 years, is that Joe used the resources at hand - University students, Parish Ministers, & socially aware people, many of whom had been part of the momentous Civil Rights movement which focussed in the late 50's and all through the 60's in the U S. The Order was made up of families with young children, some Nuns and Priests, ecumenical through & through. Most of all, I believe there were four primary passions driving Joe strongly in his life at this time. One was his love of the Church. He was an ordained Minister of the Methodist Church. He both loved the Church and despaired at its slowness to change. The second passion was the black community: he walked the walk of the poor black community in the west side of Chicago. He knew their history and wanted to make a difference in this sad and

painful history of enslavement by the white people. Thirdly, Joe was passionate about Education: Theological education and its relevance. He had wide eclectic knowledge of what books to study. We read 'edge' books written by eminent scholars who wrote about their experience of engaging with God in the 20th Century. Then he believed that education by images was the key to all people living lives of empowerment and moving themselves from poverty into self-reliance, self-sustenance, and self-confidence. Finally for me, Joe was passionate about people and how they lived, whether it be in suburbs, in tiny communities, in ghettos, or in the poorest of the poor rural villages. I think now we would call this social cohesion.

8. The 'however' is that I became a strong woman, widely educated in sociology, spirituality and strategic thinking. This was all put to excellent use as I journeyed on to become a Minister of the Word, and to relate to the cares and needs of local people. That is my lasting message to myself. I gave everything that I had in my life, at that time. Later, and in return, I received from my children and my grandchildren untold and unearned love and grace and good energy, as I witnessed them grow in grace and love and respect for others, and themselves. What more could I ever ask?

Chapter 4

To the Villages ... the poorest of the poor

In 1972, the Order and the Ecumenical Institute began to look at different ways to make a difference. Essentially the work for the Church was completed, with some positive residue both in North America, and across the English-speaking world. There are many ways the story could be told about the renewal of the Church.

Our Leader, Joe Mathews, had been visiting villages in the poorest of the poor places. He sat down with the Village Leadership, and spoke of a method which drew out from the villagers themselves what they hoped and dreamt for to make their own village a better place to live. He demonstrated from all the Workshops we had led in small towns across North America, and other English speaking places like Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Joe did all the hard work of finding permission to be invited into a village, and when the name of our group was changed to The Institute of Cultural Affairs, there was then a way for us to go into a village as consultants, and not patronise or offer Religion. This was strictly by invitation, and always with the permission of the village Leadership.

India: Maliwada.

So a Curriculum was devised. I was at the first Human Development Training School with an 8 week Curriculum. It was held in the village of Maliwada, 12 hours train ride north of Bombay. The village was next to a former Mogul fort, built about the fifteenth century. There were some extraordinary caves very close by, the Ajanta caves, where we went as an excursion during the School.

This was another sentinel event, with about one hundred and thirty students, including a handful of girls, aged about eighteen. Most of the students were young men, between about eighteen and thirty years of age. The aim was to give the students a well rounded curriculum, and then after the eight weeks, send them back to another village, (not their own, so that they would have some “authority”) and have them use the new methods to transform that village. The curriculum was carefully designed, through nine different modules, to impart self-confidence, self-sustenance, and self-reliance. On the Urban excursion, I was part of the staff to take the students down to Bombay, now called Mumbai. Here we all had mind-blowing experiences- doing things none of the students had ever done before! We visited the Hangar of one of the Air India planes, and saw food being prepared for a flight; we went in a lift, and up and down an escalator, we walked all around Bombay, and generally let our hair down! Two or three of the girls got very courageous, and bought some Jeans, and wore them, with a frangipani in their hair! While in Bombay we all stayed at the Methodist central headquarters, where water was rationed, and a water cart brought some water around in the morning and afternoon, which was a luxury, and was paid for. The water was poured into a huge ceramic urn, and each of us was allowed to take out just enough for a small body wash. Often the plumbing did not work, so sometimes it was very unsanitary. At Maliwada water was brought in on a water cart, most days, and there was just half a bucket per day for each person. We rose early each day, and said our Daily Office, adapted to suit the multi-religious context which was ours, at that time.

I used to go for bike rides to other villages, and listen to the local musicians, as they played their instruments. Jim was at this time not a part of the teaching faculty, which he will explain, but he was in other villages, Poona for one. I met him when I came on the Urban trip to Bombay, and he was extremely ill, from dysentery. The first time I had ever heard him say to me, “ I think I am dying, the Dr just gave me some pills to take.” He just said “take these pills and lie down.” Donna McCleskey helped him get to a more competent good doctor, and he received some different medication, and recovered.

I went to a village with Kamala Parekh called Shivni. We had to cross a flooded river, and one of the young Indians carried me, partly because I was wearing my stocking on my bad leg. Shivni was a Muslim majority village, which was unusual, so we conducted the Consult in two separate rooms, with the male staff with the young men and boys in one room, and the women staff with the young women and girls in the other. The women (some of them were no more than fifteen and already had babies on their hips), spoke up during our Consult. Their hopes and dreams seemed so basic to me. “We want to be able to count money, we want to have a bus stop, we want to have electricity in our village.” They also spoke delicately about wanting contraceptive methods. Some of us staff went out the back of the village and met the Hindu women, who told us that the Muslims had all the power and charged them far too much to buy their rice. There was a lot to learn there.

Pandit, the local Silversmith in Maliwada, decided that he had a “cure” for my leg. So, every day he would go into the bush, and bring back some Gum leaves, and then smoke them over the fire, and then bandage them with cloth all over my leg. The smoking ceremony involved also smoking marijuana, in a “peace pipe,” which was passed around the room full of men, and always given to me to smoke, too! A drink of very fresh milk from Pandit’s cow completed the daily “cure.” I will always be grateful to Pandit and his mates.

The old women in Maliwada used to rise very early, and take their thatch broom and sweep their dung footpath. This sounds horrible, but the dung was very dried, and had been flattened out to make a good strong footpath, outside their tiny home. All the different religious groups had their own well - there was the Buddhist, the Hindu, and behind all the others, and out of sight, the Harijans (the untouchables) had their well. The Harijans were kept away from the rest of the villagers, and they appeared to have no windows at all in their dried mud houses. If we tried to chat with the Harijans it was difficult, as they had never spoken to any white people before, and we could see they felt nervous and unsure of what to do.

Maliwada began a small industry while we were there- it was making Sukri, a sort of roast Muesli- made from burnt oats, and molasses, and probably coconut. There were three shifts in the Factory. Each shift would have a different task, so that the finished product was put into small cellophane bags ready for a “little lunch” as we would call it. Maliwada village had the contract to supply this playlunch snack for a large number of Schools surrounding it, and they were pleased, so much so that the Bank which had been closed, was re-opened, and the people banked their money, instead of keeping it under their bed. I remember a few Church dignitaries coming to Maliwada while the School was going on, and being displeased at the idea of the villagers growing tobacco- not because it would be harmful to their health, but because smoking was a sin! Have you ever eaten garlic porridge? We ate garlic porridge every morning for our breakfast, and it was either that or going hungry. I did notice that many of the students would take a loaf of the very nice tasting bread, and smuggle it to their room, too. In Maliwada we were able to convince the Civil Authorities in Aurangabad (the city of about 90,000 people, responsible for

Maliwada,) to dig some really deep wells, so that the villagers would have pure water. As we would wait at the bus stop to go into Aurangabad on our time off, Jim and I found that the local Chai was really delicious! The woman heated up her small fire, and then boiled buffalo milk, and at the last moment, threw in a good-sized handful of tea-leaves. This made excellent Chai! As I was one of the very few white women about, everywhere I went eyes would watch me- even going to the toilet I was watched. It was only out of curiosity, but it became tedious at times. I remember being in Bombay before the School began, and I was with Bob Fishel, a colleague, we were at the Bombay Market, and it was so overwhelming, I felt quite shut in, and panicky.

At night-time in downtown Bombay, the electricity had so much less voltage, it was hard to see. Everyone was used to it, and nowadays it would be a good way to look after the environment.

In all the Schools where I was part of the staff, I was assigned to be the Nurse, as it was known that I had done some Nursing Training. So I remember in both Cano Negro and in Maliwada, and in the Philippines, at the same place in the Curriculum, when we came to the Cultural Studies 1 Course, and the enormous and wrenching shift from the rural to the urban, I would take some of the young women to the local Hospital, with racing pulses, and anxiety attacks. We would stay overnight, and then, when they had calmed down, go back to the School again. I remember when we were in the Hospital, and the young woman was resting in the bed, under the bed, and surrounding it, there was always a large collection of other young women, as a support base. I found it quite a very meaningful experience noting what effect the awakening of their consciousness this Course always had on the students, especially the young women. I don't know what effect the Course had on the young men, because I was looking after the women.

The Philippines: Sudtonggan

From Maliwada I went to the Philippines, and Sudtonggan, which was called the Village of Rocks. There were two industries in which the villagers worked. One was the Buri industry, which meant that many of the fit men went off on Sunday night in a large truck, to a place where they wove the raffia into seats for chairs, tables, waste paper baskets and the like. I was told that they earned the equivalent of two dollars Australian a week for their very hard work.

The other industry was more physical work and took place in Sudtonggan. It consisted of chopping the rock, and then taking it into Manila. This became the basis for retaining walls for the mansions of the rich. Many of the men in the village suffered with TB, and I actually contracted it, after I had drunk out of a glass which had Kava in it- (this was noticed back in Sydney later on in an X-ray).

It was my job before we began the School to go and visit the oldest person in the village and ask her what time of day we should begin the School. So I walked over endless rocks and bumpy dirt- until I came to her tiny thatched hut. She was 96, and very bright. She said to me, after some refreshments, "start the School before the sun rises in the sky, then have a rest after lunch, before you begin again, later in the day." So, we followed her advice, and rose very early.

On the way down to Sudtonggan, our Ferry ran into the edge of a Typhoon, and many people on board were sea sick, and all the furniture moved about, and the cutlery flew off the tables. We sat upright in our small cabin, with a number of other travellers. Eventually we arrived at Cebu City. We then travelled on a

kind of motorbike, (called a “put-put”) as pillion passengers, and arrived at Mactan Island, and then travelled on the bike again to Sudtonggan.

I remember meeting some lovely young women, Purita for one, and seeing how much pride the villagers had in their village. The name of each family member was listed on a piece of board- and everyone was in a Purok- like a very small district.

One day we had organised for the TB Screening Van to come and screen every villager. We organised all the family members, even the very oldest, and most remote people. To our dismay, the Van just did not turn up, and so we then had to set another date, which was hard for the people to do, as they did not have time to keep waiting for the Van to come. I noticed how much life the people had- they seemed to often laugh, and smile a lot. When it was almost Christmas we foreigners were asked if we would like to join in Christmas carolling all around the village. We sang all the familiar tunes and sang in Spanish! (This reminded me of being in Cano Negro at Easter, and walking with the villagers into Caucagua, with some Statues of the Virgin Mary, and then joining in a huge procession in the city).

The women used to invite me to go and watch them fish sometimes, and the most remarkable sunsets I have ever seen were those at Sudtonggan. (Land’s End at Cornwall would be a close second). When we were leaving Sudtonggan, the women all came to me crying- and I was given so many shell necklaces, that I could never wear them all! I too was very sad to leave that place.

Japan: Oyubari.

After this, I went to Japan, to Oyubari, a disused coal-mining village, where the men had contracted the terrible miner’s disease, from the coal dust. Oyubari is on the island of Sapporo, and seemed to be very remote, with very few services. When we first arrived, we visited the old women who were widows, and took part in the gracious tea ceremony in their tiny houses. Oyubari had been a Mitsubishi coal-mine, and the men had died very early from the disease. I remember sitting in the houses of the women, and looking at their worn and lined faces, faces of very poor women who had become widows far too early in their lives.

This was a week long Consult, and the YMCA were our Sponsors. Oyubari had become a ghost village; there was no Doctor, or Dentist, or Ambulance, or Fire Brigade. Some actions from the Consult resulted in all these services being re-instated. We also assisted the community to begin a Tourism industry, as they had a beautiful Lake. So, a Marina was established, and large Boats came to berth there. (As I understand, this Tourism industry is still going on, even in 2009.) I remember the local Oyubari Lions group (all men), coming and offering us breakfast every morning; it consisted of what today we call Sushi in tiny plastic containers, mostly fish and rice!

South Korea: Kwangyung Il Ri

Jim and I were part of the first Human Development School in South Korea, at a village called Kwangyung Il Ri, which was a village about 1 hour’s bus ride from Jeju city. The island was called Jeju Do, and was south of the mainland. It was the island where couples on their honeymoon would go. Our School students and the staff of the Human Development Training School all “put their hand to the plough,” in this small village, and we built a Bathhouse.

In order to recruit the participants I was part of a team who went around most of South Korea, meeting various University staff, to sound out which students from their University could attend the School. We went everywhere by bus, and they were always crowded, with people and their small livestock, and many bundles. In Taegu we arrived just as the University students were rioting over something, which was very important to them, although I have forgotten what it was, now. We visited Masan, Pusan, and other places, and rounded up enough students to make a worthwhile number for our School.

It was so cold, and the bedrooms were heated with warm water in pipes under the floor. I slept with the women in their bedrooms, as we travelled, recruiting students to come to our School. I noticed the way in which the women looked after their facial skin every night as we prepared for sleep. I asked them “ how do you keep your faces so soft and free from wrinkles because here you have such harsh winds? “ They would rub handfuls of palm oil into their cheeks, and all over their face. This kept their faces fairly soft, from all the conditions which living in such a windy place gave them and where most of their life was spent roughing it outdoors. We slept close to the floor with a very thin palliasse.

During this time there were two events which I remember vividly. One was at Christmas. As South Korea had a large contingent of the American Army it was decided that us Institute of Cultural Affairs staff would all spend the Day itself at the Headquarters of their Army base. It was a huge shock to me to meet the Army Officers, and see what large amounts of Americana they brought in from the US, for the troops. We ate Turkey with all the trimmings, drank beer and wine, and generally acted like expatriate Americans, not missing out on our Christmas traditions. We played pool and billiards, and lived it up. This experience made me aware for the first time of the huge wealth or armaments and enormous weapons that the US has ready for a strike.

The other event was when some of us travelled by train and then truck, up to the DMZ- the Demilitarised Zone. The UN had troops all along the border with North Korea, and it was VERY tense. Surveillance planes and Helicopters flew overhead the whole time we were there.

We heard the story told to us by one of the UN staff- as to how close North Korea had come to taking over Seoul and the South. The UN put charges down 45 times through rock, because they thought they could hear some rumblings and sounds, far beneath them, as they listened on the surface. As they lit their explosives, the 46th time they broke through the rock, to find rail lines, on which were guns and other ammunition, ready to invade the South. Only because of the patience and skill of the UN staff there, were Seoul and the South protected from invasion by the North, as there was only 13 kilometres between the North and South, at this point.

So many of the students at this School were part of the YMCA or the YWCA. There was a Chinese old man, Peter Hu, who had been part of Sun Yat Sen’s Army. He could understand Korean, so there was only English and Korean translation in this School. Kwangyung Il Ri village was noted for “its women, rocks and wind”. All these elements became very familiar to us in the six weeks of the School. The women worked so hard making dry stone walls out of the massive rocks, and working in the fields, as they picked radishes, parsnips and chillies. Mandarins and oranges grew profusely, and were taken to the mainland, to sell. Sometimes Jim and I would venture into Jeju City, and eat a bowl of delicious food, and also hot bean cakes. Then we would try and decipher the writing on the bus, to return us to our village. The bus was always crowded with people and their chickens, their huge bags of rice, and what ever else they were taking home.

I learnt how to make Kimchi while living here. This is fermented cabbage, chilli, garlic carrot, and parsnip. It is chopped very finely, and then left with the lid on in a stone jar, for up to six weeks. It is HOT!

Venezuela: Cano Negro

Each country had so much to teach me. My time in Venezuela was next. I had never ever thought of setting foot in Latin America. We went to a small village called Cano Negro. A black Spanish speaking community, some 4 hours bus ride out of Caracas. Here I met Innocenzia, who ran the local store, and who was teaching herself to read by looking at the packets of Fab and Omo in her store. Innocenzia amazed me by smoking the lit end of the cigarette in her mouth rather than the more normal way of the paper end! Cano Negro was a village which was part of the Van Houten cocoa empire. I went one early morning well before dawn, to work with the villagers to cut off the cocoa beans. We used machetes, and there was an expert skill in slashing the beans off the tree. There were vines all over the earth, so it was very important not to get caught in the vines, and trip. It was back-breaking work, and took us until mid morning, the sun was very hot. We used huge tin saucers on our heads, and walked back thru the jungle. Then we poured all our beans into a big wire cage, where they fermented. Later trucks came and took the fermented cocoa away to be processed. For years I could not have chocolate or cocoa. The wage the people were given was pitiful. Caucaagua, the nearest town, was about 10 kilometres away, with a population of about 80,000. We were there at Easter time, and so, with all the villagers, we made a procession into Caucaagua with candles, and singing songs in Spanish. Here we became part of a large Festival where statues of Jesus and our Lady were paraded around on horses, and on trucks. The School had over one hundred students from most of the Latin American countries, so there were three languages used: Spanish, Portuguese and English. The villagers were so poor. I remember watching them boil up dandelions leaves, to make a kind of soup. At lunch we always ate Arepas, which were baked and made of corn meal, and filled with cheese, a bit like a stuffed pancake, but baked in the oven. These are delicious!

I presume that the forebears of these villagers had been brought over as slaves from parts of east Africa, about the same time as those who were taken to the U S. The leader of the village was always ready to invite the “ Gringo”/ white person into his house, and take some Cerveza beer from his ‘frig and give it to us. It was extremely hot, so we all had a siesta in the afternoon. One late afternoon there was a great commotion. We all ran out and asked, “What are those three students doing at the top of the tree?” These students were from Brazil, and as we watched we saw that they had their eyes on a two toed Sloth, with its big round yellow and black eyes! It was an extraordinary experience to watch! The young women from Guatemala really impressed me. Their country had suffered a massive earthquake in the 60’s, and they were still living the terror of it, ten years later.

These villages where we worked were always off the end of the bitumen; and the people themselves were the poorest of the poor.

I learnt so much from being amongst villagers- their curiosity, their willingness to learn and try new things, their joy and fun with their families, and the deep respect that the elders in the village were given. If the Grandmother had been widowed, she always sat next to her son, at the head or side- head of the table. People were looked after.

In contrast to my life as a Deaconess with the Presbyterian Church, life amongst the villagers was all about empowerment towards them- we learned as much or more from the villagers than we ever taught them.

Death of my Dad

This peripatetic lifestyle went on for a number of years, with two trips back to Sydney- one was for me to have an abscess from a tooth removed, and also to have leg surgery. . The second trip I made was to farewell my dear Dad, as he prepared for his death in February 1976. My two sisters contacted me in Toronto, and said I should come home, if I wanted to say goodbye to Dad. I flew out for a month, and as Dad was already in the Page Chest Pavilion of RPA Hospital, I was able to visit him every day and read the *Herald* to him. I talked about all the gifts he had given me, and what a wonderful Dad he had been to me. We talked quite a lot, and sometimes he just wanted to stay in bed. One day I said to him, “Dad I can stay as long as you need me.” I had rung Jim in Toronto and he said to me “just stay there until you see how your Dad goes, please don’t come back until you have decided the time is right.”

One morning the Dr came in to visit with Dad, and then took me aside and said “ Mrs Bishop your Dad’s vital organs are failing, I think he will last just a little longer.”

I then asked Dad if I could go away for the weekend, to visit one of the Aboriginal community development projects my colleagues had been working in. Dad gladly said that I should go, as he knew how much interest I had in observing Aboriginal community development work. I flew up to Oombulgurri, a community on the Forrest River, a boat ride from Kununurra, in NW West Australia. A long way to go for a weekend. The mood in the community was high as a Wedding was to be held on the Saturday, preceded by a Smoking Ceremony to drive away any problems for the couple as they married. Just before the Service began, we all ran into the smoke and inhaled, and made a wish for the two people. I noticed vegetable gardens, a School, and fishing for Barramundi, and empowerment of the people. I returned to Sydney on the Monday morning, just in time to hear that Dad had discharged himself from RPA and gone into the cottage Hospital in Hunter’s Hill. This was his choice, I reflected, as he wanted to die in his own suburb, where he had raised his family, and been so happy and very well respected.

I was the last one of his family to be with him, just half an hour before he died. It was a very special and memorable time for me, and I hope for him. I asked him what he would like me to say, and so I recited Psalm 23, and the Lord’s Prayer, and read him some of John’s Gospel Ch. 14. I then left him as I said my goodbye, knowing that he was almost at the end, and drove over to Theodora’s house at Lavender Bay. As I came into the house, Christopher came to me and said “Grandpa has just died.” His funeral was held two days later, and I returned to Toronto.

I remember tasting Kava in Sudtonggan, Soju in Kwangyung Il Ri, and Sake in Oyubari. Some very strong Aniseed drink and goat to eat for the Common Meal in Maliwada on Sunday gave a finishing touch to my taste bud experiences! These moments will always stay with me. I believe that my competence at being a Minister of the Uniting Church largely came from learning from the villagers.

East Malaysia : Serusup

I am not sure where this fits in to the timeline, however I know that in 1979 I had leg surgery on my right leg back in Australia. I first had the surgery in February, and then I went to Serusup, a Muslim village in

Sabah, East Malaysia. Six weeks later I returned to Prince Alfred Hospital and had a second round of surgery on the same leg. Serusup in East Malaysia, sits close to the Malaysia/ Philippines border, and the closest city was Kota Kinabalu. It was a fishing village, set on the South China Sea, and many of the houses were built over the water. Many of the young men wore white caps on their heads to indicate that they had already been to Mecca. I thought many years afterwards that some of the young men could have become recruited to radical thinking, as they were just so poor and I could imagine could have become angry at how they suffered in poverty. Of course this is mere speculation, but it did make me reflect on how poverty could ignite young energetic people to search for a new way to live.

Canada: Lorne de L' Acadie

The last village Consult training I worked in was at Lorne de L' Acadie in New Brunswick, Canada. I have spoken about Lorne de L' Acadie in Chapter 3, and will just mention here that I travelled over most of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to engage community leaders, particularly Nuns and Priests. I vividly remember that all the Nuns we visited were now living out of Convents, and had begun to wear mufti clothing, as a residue of the 1961 Vatican 2 Council. Many of them were sharing a Unit, and it was noticeable that to acknowledge their Vocation, they now just wore a Cross or Crucifix in their lapel as their new style of dress. The Priests however were still living in Presbyteries, with the Housekeeper, and Vatican 2 had touched them in a different way

Chapter 5

Our Family Returns to Australia

When Rebecca first came home in 1979, she lived with her Grandma Catherine Bishop, in her Northwood house. She had a job in the city, and spent a good deal of time with her Grandma. This was a good arrangement for them both. As the year went on her Grandma said to me “I worry about Rebecca coming home at night, after the Northwood bus has stopped running.” Then Rebecca went to University, and she began to live independently.

Peter also lived with his Grandma for a while, after his return from the University of Texas, at Austin, where he had begun a Degree in Agricultural Engineering. At the University of New South Wales he changed course to the Faculty of Physics. He then moved into the family flat at Kirribilli. On and off all 3 of the children lived in this flat.

After Cathy had completed her HSC, in 1980, she spent one year (her Gap year,) travelling around Europe. Her time as an au pair in Lyon took up much of that year, but she managed to visit London, and stayed with Sheila in her house in Surrey. Sheila invited Cathy to go with Grandma Catherine and Sheila and Keith to Venice, which was a real highlight. The next year Cathy commenced her Arts Law degree at Sydney University. When Cathy returned from France she had stacked so many bottles of French wine and expensive champagne in her backpack and in her cargo pants, it was amusing to see her struggle to walk as we greeted her at Mascot Airport!

Our Return to Australia

When Jim and I finally came home, we were living in the Brisbane Religious House, where we stayed for 2 years. Our job here was to organise Community Forums across Queensland, which we quite enjoyed. I travelled with David Jago, who was at Queensland University, studying Architecture. We were often away for some weeks, in our VW Kombi Van, holding Forums in small communities. Jim and I also made some long trips to western Queensland- to Mt Isa, Longreach, St George, to name some towns. We visited some of my Queensland cousins in these remote out of the way places.

Jim’s Mother was considering a move from her lovely house at 50 Cliff Road, Northwood. She was 81, and decided that she had done enough housework and gardening for a lifetime!

We decided to leave the Institute of Cultural Affairs, under whose banner we had conducted the Community Forums. Jim found a job back inside the Church network, and so we left the Brisbane House, and came down to Sydney. We lived in the Kirribilli flat, and, about this time the colleagues in Chicago (after the death of Joe Mathews) began to struggle for power. This meant that the Order Ecumenical went out of existence. Although we and many others all felt that we have never left the Order, the hijacking that happened put the Order in the background.

After some good “locum” experiences, Jim began to find his feet once more, in the Church network.

Chapter 6

My Ordination

Meanwhile, I had heard a persistent “call” to become an ordained Minister. After the Union of the 3 denominations in 1977: Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, the new Uniting Church decided that all women who were trained in one of the former Churches could be ordained. I had first thought about this while still up in Queensland, when some friend I met asked if I would now seek Ordination. As I had not thought about it, I put it at the back of my mind and yet the “ voice” was still calling me. It took me about 2 years to decide. So, when we returned to settle in NSW, I chose to return to the Theological College, now the United Theological College, then at Enfield. Here I did a refresher course, for one year, while Jim was doing yet another locum, this time in the Northern Illawarra Parish, and we lived in the Manse at Thirroul. I travelled up by train to lectures each week, and thoroughly enjoyed my year.

Then in 1983 we were asked to return to the Paddington Parish while the Minister was on Long leave. This was my first in depth encounter with gays. It was a helpful time, where I began to grapple with the sexuality and identity question. I learnt so much here. One of the discoveries was to find out how painful it was for a young man to find himself as homosexual. One young man said to me over the supper one night after Church “I feel so confused, I don’t know who I am, and I am so scared to tell my parents.”

In 1984 I was ordained, at the Pitt St Uniting Church, March 11th. My dear Mother in law read one of the lessons, in her clear precise voice. There was a large congregation present, including a strong family and extended family group. Jim and I concelebrated the Communion, which was a bit special. Large numbers of my family were present, I particularly remember Doreen Marr, whose Funeral Service I was to take about three short years later. Our three children were all present, and each one took part in their own way. Rebecca and Cathy sang in the Student Choir, seated in the Gallery, while Pete helped with the serving of the Afternoon Tea. It was a wonderful afternoon for me.

Whyalla

Jim and I were called to be joint Ministers in the Whyalla Parish, in South Australia. A great learning time, and an experience in which my time in the villages was put to good use, I hope. I was Minister in 2 congregations, one in Whyalla township, and the other: 50 kilometres out of town, at Iron Knob. My parishioners became my friends. I had a weekly breakfast at the home of one of the women leadership team. She baked her own bread and it was delicious! I learnt many stories of lives well lived and lived simply. One elderly woman of Cornish stock, some time after her husband’s Funeral, said to me when I was visiting her “ I look at the clock at 4.15pm every week day, waiting to hear the click of the gate open and close, and then Ernie did not come in the front door, “ as he ended his work day at the BHP. Once again I found myself with some truly wonderful people: Lil and Harry Tondut at Iron Knob were quite remarkable. Harry Tondut had been in the Knob since he was a “Billy boy”- making the fire for the men to have their smokos- and he had progressed up the promotional ladder to become the Manager of the mine. Lil was a marvellous woman, and made the most mouth-watering scones! I used to watch the trains laden with the ore travel in to Whyalla, to the BHP plant, where it was crushed up - eventually to be made into steel for bridges and railway lines. On a Sunday evening, as I left Iron Knob, Harry Tondut would

always caution me “ look out for the roos,” as there were often huge Kangaroos about two and a half metres high, on the fifty kilometre drive back into Whyalla, at night!

A memorable occasion in Whyalla came about half way through my time living there. As I got used to the role of being a Minister, and as I had observed Jim for about fifteen years, I knew that most of what seemed right for me to do, had come from watching him in action. I felt most at home in the pastoral ministry, visiting parishioners in their home or in hospital or nursing home.

One day I was called to the Hospital where an elderly Scots woman was nearing her death. She had quarrelled with all her close family, most notably her daughter, so she had no one to be with her at this special time. I decided that it was important to journey with her to her passing, so I asked the Nurse for some pillows. I sat in the chair beside her as the night passed, and she lay still and calm. About fifteen minutes before she died in mid morning her daughter arrived. I don't know if the Hospital rang her to say death was imminent or not. The old lady opened her eyes as her daughter whispered some words into her ear. Unexpectedly the dying woman opened her eyes momentarily and said “I have overcome” as her daughter stood close, just as she breathed her last breath. I was tempted to ask what words were uttered, but realised that this was a personal moment between them. I reflected on this incident as time went by, and recognised that I was part of a triangle, in which deep healing between family members had taken place. After the funeral the daughter came to see me, and presented me with a hand made brooch she had made, out of bread, and painted pastel pink, as a token of gratitude. The story was widely circulated about a newly minted woman Minister praying alone and keeping vigil all night and day beside her parishioner. As I had witnessed so frequently in working in the villages, when a family member went to Hospital, that occasioned all the family members who lived close by to go and stay by the bed-side of the ill one. The villages taught me so much, which I then used in parish life and work.

Gilgandra

We left Whyalla after three years, and returned to NSW where we were offered another Locum, this time in country Gilgandra. Again, I learnt many things here. Gilgandra was in 1986 a town of 5,000 people with 12 Churches! It was a very tightly knit wheat-growing community with many family connections in the Church. The farmers dusted their crop with a poisonous pesticide called 24D, and I saw first hand evidence of how many of them developed cancers. At that time it was thought that inhaling the dust as they sprayed it onto their crop, or it lay as poisonous dust on their clothes, was the main cause of their cancer. This is still in conjecture as a possibility all these years later. Much more stringent regulations are in place now. I did enjoy teaching Scripture in the Gilgandra High School, as I had never done this before.

At Gilgandra I looked after two places of Worship. There was a small Anglican / Uniting Church at Eumungerie, a place of about 200 people. Worship was fortnightly, and I found the people resilient and practical. About 20 people would come to Worship, each fortnight. One day I noticed that the Lectern in the little Church was in a rather strange place, so I decided to move it a little. When I moved it underneath was a large hole! The people said they had covered it up because in winter it was freezing, and the winds roared up from the ground! That is what I mean by practical! While I served Eumungerie Jim served another small country farming community, at Curban. We both shared the main parish Church in Gilgandra, each fortnightly. It all worked well. At Curban when I occasionally went with Jim, a farmer

called Charlie Bunner used to look at the sky when we came out of Church at 12 noon, and say “it will rain by midnight tonight” or “no rain tonight.”

While we were living in Gilgandra we took the opportunity to head out west, and visit the home of my Mother at Wanaaring. There were just a few remains lying on the ground, as the original house had been burnt down, when the drovers had left a fire burning, and returned three days later to find the house completely burnt. We did find a small child’s grave, and wondered if it had been the grave of an Aboriginal child, as there was no record of a family member having died there.

On this trip we also visited many of my Killen and Young cousins. This was a special time for me. My Mother had raised me to know my extended family, so it was always a good time, with lots of laughs, lots of photos, and a good bed for the night, with great food! The bed in the Kombi was only passable, so being in a real bed did make a difference! We used our Kombi van all over Queensland, both in work and in family. It was such a valuable asset, and stood up well to many Caravan Parks.

Mascot Botany Eastlakes

In November 1986, we then came to Mascot, and after some months, I was inducted there in March 1987. I always felt that this was a bit hard on Jim, as I know the people would much rather have had a man as their Minister. As things turned out I don’t think that Jim would have been able to stand the people and their thought patterns; as it was, after some 6 years I began to see some change, and then some growth in their responses, and also in numbers of people associated with the Church. I was privileged to number many Tongans as my colleagues, and again I learnt so much from the Pacific Islanders. I visited Tonga in 1993, and went by plane up to Vava’u, the most northerly island. I was treated to so many feasts, and Ceremonial occasions, as a Minister (Fifikau).

I strongly believed in Education, so we went to many Youth conventions, theological studies Conferences, and the like. I was Chaplain at the War Memorial Hospital in Waverley- where the patients were in recovery from Strokes or Orthopaedic surgery. Then I became a reserve Chaplain at the Prince of Wales Hospital - I was on a list where I was called out when no one else could cover the need. As I lived close to the Hospital I had a number of occasions where I was alone at a death, with people who had no next of kin, or who had lived in the country.

I began a Tuesday breakfast in the Manse, for whosoever. There were some old-timers who came, as well as some of the Tongan leadership. This did prove to be a building block for the different way of doing things in a Congregation. It was very hard work, and Jim was very supportive of me. For much of the time I was there Jim was a very hard working Chaplain at one of the State’s most difficult prisons. During this time, there was a fire at the Parklea Prison, and it was in lock-down for six weeks, while everything calmed down. After the fire it was no longer a maximum-security prison, but became a young offenders correctional centre.

During this time I conducted so many Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals. I remember being at the Graveside of a young Tongan man who was unable to make the crossing to the ‘Aussie’ way of life, and who committed suicide. He lived with his girlfriend and two year old boy in a Department of Housing flat in Hillsdale. As the Tongan community became more able to accommodate to the Australian way of living, and a different culture, we had less extravagance at Weddings, where one roast pig cost two

hundred dollars, and so then at the change of style at the Baptism there were cakes and drink, rather than the lavish spread of pig, seafood and expensive Tongan delicacies. I took this to mean that the community was feeling confident enough to embrace a different style of living. It seemed to mean to me that the families were more able to spend money on shoes for their children, and their budget was spent on less of the old Pacific Island life style. Fanela, a very young bride, said to me at her pre wedding interview “can we have just us two and the one witness and you please, we want to save money?” This set a trend in most of the other Weddings to follow and made such good sense to me.

I was a Minister out and about in the community, and to this end, I was part of the first Botany Community Consultative Committee. The Mayor chaired the meeting and, way back then we had as a priority how much pollution ICI (now Orica) was sending up into the air over the residents of Botany and Banksmeadow. Ted Amor of ICI was always present, as were community leaders, the Police and other local officials.

Somehow the Nun at St Therese’s Catholic Church and I persuaded the old Irish Priest there to allow us to engage in joint Bible studies during Lent. So we met in the houses of both Catholic and Uniting families, and it was an enormous learning experience for both traditions. At the same time I approached my colleague in the St Bernard’s Catholic Church in Botany, Fr Frank Coorey, and the Nuns in that Parish, and soon we were up and running with the same kind of joint studies happening in these houses. Some of my parishioners said to me “we have known the faces of so many of our new friends here for years, but because we were such strict Catholics, and were told not to associate with any Protestants, we never knew their names, or talked to them.” On reflection, I think I was driven to this plan because my Mother had always taught us to respect Catholics as people -although different from us, worthy of our respect.

During this time I became Leader of the Wellspring Community- a Community inspired by the Iona Community in Scotland. This took me all over Australia, and was also the time when I made 2 more trips to the Island of Iona. We held some Retreats in Sydney and also held 2 National Gatherings. I don’t know how I managed this with being a full time Minister! I was Leader from 1996-1999, when Anne McPherson took on the role.

The Mayor and the Councillors gave me a big send off in the Mascot Town Hall, one Saturday in November, and with it a Certificate of Appreciation, for my ten years ministry. I made so many good friends in Mascot Botany Eastlakes, and yet it was always me receiving more than giving, always.

During my village life and my ministry I reflect now that I gave all I had; to first the villagers and then the parishioners. In return, I always received much more in reciprocal generosity. It was very touching and emotional for me. These experiences remind me of the gospel story of the loaves and fishes. When people give from their heart the recipients return the gift with overwhelming generosity, so that much more is given in return, for the original gift.

Cabramatta.

After 10 years at Mascot I decided to move to Cabramatta, a Parish of Lao, Cambodian, a few Vietnamese and some Anglo Celtic people. At Mascot when I began my ministry there, the Anglo Celts

outnumbered the Pacific Islanders and other ethnic groups. Gradually, in the 10 years the constituency changed, so that as the older people died, and the Tongans kept having children, the ratio shifted.

At Cabramatta I worked with a Minister born in Cambodia, who had suffered under Pol Pot and his regime. We worked well together, though were very different in style. I learnt so much from the East Asians, who had struggled with Communism, about which I knew very little. The Anglo Celtic people in the congregation were always very kind to me, and helped me learn about the drug problem, and many other differences from Mascot. Our Services were translated into Lao and Khmer.

One unforgettable occasion was learning from the Lao community what it had been like escaping from Laos and struggling by night through barbed wire fences to reach the safety of Thailand. Here the Laos were put in refugee camps, where they waited for years to find a safe place to live. In the camps, the refugees built Churches and community centres, and tried to make their lives as human as possible.

I well recall going to visit a parishioner one day at his home a little out of the town. He lived by a creek, (there are many undulating creeks and gullies in that area). Next door to his home there was a small house, and while we were sitting outside having a cool drink, an enormous van pulled up and then there was a lot of activity. We noticed about six young Asian women carrying out large bundles of clothes from the house, and putting them in the van. My friend said to me, "This is an example happening right next door to me- where young women are doing piece work and being paid a very meagre wage for all the work they do. I often hear them working all night long on the machines, and at least five times a week the van comes to collect the clothes that they make. They work very hard to keep up the supply for the van to collect." It was another wake up moment for me, to learn about injustice in the work place.

Another occasion which made me learn something new was when one day in our Church car park there were two men asleep in a beat up looking car. One of the men in the Church, Roy Small rang the local Police, as we could not rouse the men and thought they were drug takers. When the Police came, they looked up the car registration and discovered that the two men were Federal Police. The men were from Canberra and had come to Cabramatta to check up on the local Police to see if they were dealing in drugs, and were themselves corrupt! We witnessed so many young white adults on drugs, it was very disheartening. The Mums with babies really shocked me.

The Premier of the day Bob Carr, decided to have 'a war on drugs' so he established an office in Cabramatta with a very efficient staff. These people and some of us community volunteers organised a Community Forum, and brought together all the Drug and Alcohol workers. We worked in the RSL for a couple of days, and discovered how many of the clients were going to all the different Agencies and often playing one off against the other. This did threaten the Agency staff, as they thought it would mean they would lose their job. I don't think much was resolved from this Forum for the staff, but it was indeed the beginning of removing the main drug problem from Cabramatta.

We organised some marvellous Community Festivals in the Freedom Plaza. I have wonderful photos of the different National costumes of the Chinese, Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese communities, and they were all so beautiful and different in style. At one of these Festivals Phuong Ngo spoke to me and said "Hello Isobel, I have been wanting to meet you," as he shook my hand. I felt very nervous meeting him as he was alleged to have organised the assassination of the State MP for Cabramatta, John Newman. Later he was convicted of the murder, and jailed for life.

I became used to Liverpool Hospital and Bankstown Hospital as these Hospitals were the two places where most of my parishioners went when ill.

We were able to follow the example of Mascot and organised the Lenten studies in the joint Catholic and Uniting homes, much to my happiness, and people all seemed to enjoy and benefit from this. It helped that I knew the local Priest, Fr Kevin, as he was a brother of Kath with whom I had played tennis every Monday in Eastlakes!

I worked hard at Cabramatta, and stayed there for three years, and retired from active paid Ministry in 1999, to become a full-time grandmother.

Chapter 7

Life as a Granny

In 1996 Peter and Michelle sadly gave birth to a stillborn son, Joseph Raymond. This was such a great tragedy, and took us all a long time to recover. No doubt this still hangs heavily on the hearts of Michelle and Peter, and to their sons, Sam and Tom.

Over recent years I have enjoyed good health, apart from my leg problem. I have attended Concerts, at the Opera House, and the Theatre with Jim. We visited many Art Galleries, our favourite the MCA, at Circular Quay. I resumed playing tennis at Haberfield. I continued to play a small role as an Elder at the Pitt St Church, then the time came to let it all go. I have made some new friends through the local Historical Society, and continued deepening my relationships with long standing friends.

In 1999, when we moved to Unit 90, Milano building, The Italian Forum, we began to enjoy the times with our grandchildren. During the twelve years we lived in this townhouse, both Rebecca and Cathy lived with us, at different times, while their houses were being renovated. Cathy and Jon slept downstairs behind a Japanese screen, while each of the girls slept in one of the bedrooms upstairs, Selina on a mattress on the floor! It all worked out well, if a bit crowded! When Pete and Michelle renovated their house, they were very self-sufficient. They organised a portable kitchen, shower, and portaloos, in their backyard, while they slept in the bedrooms, and moved around inside the house, as each room was being renovated!

Jim and I felt the need to move into a one level unit in 2012/2013, and so found another home in Unit 154 in the Napoli building, which suits us very well. Here we continue to have access to everything we need, with shops and the dentist, doctor and the bus all so close. In order to help pay for the new unit we sold our lovely home at Wright's Creek, and yet no regrets on this.

From 2002- 2009 ten people from the Pitt St Church volunteered to visit people seeking asylum at the Villawood Detention Centre. This was a very busy time for us, and for six years we visited weekly, every Monday. . We heard so many stories of hardship, despair and deep sadness. Many of the detainees became our firm friends. We took food, clothing and ourselves with our listening ears. We played card games, especially a fun Hungarian game called the Slipper Game. There was such a rigmarole to the visiting... a strict security check, with a band with a number on our wrist; being frisked; going through an "x-ray" machine; and being checked over with a computer at each visit. We attended many Refugee Review Tribunals, and wrote literally hundreds of letters. About 6 times a few for us were allowed to take detainees out on a real outside day's outing. This entailed us having a Police Check, and signing an agreement that we would honour the agreement and take care of the detainee, on the day. We took some of them to a wildlife park, or to a beach, or to the home of one of the team members. So there were a few happy occasions, as well as the whole gambit of emotions of sadness, frustration, despair and longing. However, we persevered, and after the November 2007 Election, when the Liberal Government was removed, things at Villawood improved. Our visits became monthly. At the height of the worst of the Government's management of people seeking asylum, there were over four hundred detainees in Villawood, with some being held there for more than four years, and even a few up to six years. We felt that our visits did make a difference to the detainees. When children were in detention, the public made an outcry, and after they were released, there was slightly less punitive treatment. Our visiting did gradually

wind right down, but I became a member of the Grandmothers Against the Detention of Refugee Children, and that took its place.

In 1999 I started to become more interested in my family history. Peter gave me a book on the life of the Celts, and this got me started! I pursued my Huguenot background, and this is still work in progress. I visited my Dad's Milne family farm - Coalford Farm, a bus ride out of Aberdeen. I visited Dad's Mother's family; the Pickerings, in Wragby Lincolnshire. I have made several visits to Ireland, one with Jim, one with Cathy and Marilyn, and Dot, and one alone. All these have confirmed to me that I feel most Irish and French, through the matrilineal line, the Killen's and the Young's. In 2013 I made a visit to Hungary with Sarah, Rebecca and Paul. Then Rebecca and I went on to Ireland, and later on we met Cathy, Jon and the girls, and spent time in the Highlands of Scotland. We had a most memorable visit with Di and her family, the last time to see her. We stayed in London for a few days, and saw various relatives, and had a time of being a tourist. Rebecca and I went to the south of France to visit a cousin, and then had a few extra days in Paris before the others joined us. Paris was fun! Rebecca said to me one day as we were in a smart Department Store there, "All this fashionable women's wear can be found in our expensive boutique stores in Sydney."

We all went to Abbeville in France, the origin of the Le Jeune family, my Huguenot background. Sadly, all traces of the Huguenot tradition had been lost when the Catholics razed all evidences of the Huguenots from the landscape and from historical records, in that part of France, under Louis XIV.

I have greatly enjoyed our life at Hafan Hedd, (in the Welsh language- Abode of Peace) and some overseas trips, as above. Perhaps the most memorable was the visit in 2005 to Ireland - birthplace of my Grandfather Edward and Isabella Killen, and Annabella and Charles Young. Here we saw so much of our family history. This included graves of many of my Young family forebears as well as most of the Killen ancestors. We met many Irish cousins on all my trips to Ireland.

My love for God has grown over the years; and I hope that I have made a positive difference to situations, in some small way. I know that I have been blessed by encountering so many people, in my varied life journey. I suppose the greatest joy for me in the Church life has been the opportunity to sing once a month in the Pitt St singers group, under the direction of Cathy and her friend Lizzy. I have also been very happy the numerous times Rebecca has played her cello at a service, often as an accompaniment to the organ or the piano.

Some of My Learnings

I look back on my life and see that- from the moment I married Jim my life became completely different. I have had more than a fair share of life's unforgettable encounters with human beings from so many parts of the globe. I cannot name them all. It would be good to say though, as I mentioned earlier, that the year in Cleveland in 1960 woke me up to the suffering of our indigenous Australians. Until this time in my life the situation of the indigenous community in Australia was a fog- I had a light bulb wake up in Cleveland.

From my time in Cleveland I learnt so much more about the terrible struggles of the black people and their own history of slavery. A highlight always was when Jim and I used to take baby Rebecca to a Church service in a storefront Church on a Sunday afternoon, as already mentioned. Here the

congregation sang the most passionate songs or spirituals – about their suffering and joy and hope. These gatherings obviously sustained the people as they lived their life in the ghetto on the east side of Cleveland.

Indeed, the legacy of my years of living in the US has led me to a much deeper awareness of the pain and suffering of the people of non white skins all over the world, amongst whom I have lived. I realise that a large part of my heart will always be broken until lasting justice, respect and human dignity is restored to the Aboriginal people..

My partnership with Jim has changed me from being a quiet insecure young woman- to (I hope,) a Global citizen, alert and empathetic. I have spoken elsewhere of the residue of the Order Ecumenical. It is hard to say precisely what became useful tools of life to take forward. I am moulded by my life there, and that is how it has turned out! The fact that Jim and I were so often apart, did allow me to develop my own strengths, and leave behind some of my weaknesses. The whole process of growth and formation of my own selfhood was speeded up perhaps, as a result of pressure cooker methods of reflection and education by images.

I have reflected many times on my role as a Mother- pushed to be someone other than the authentic me- was it better or not? As the years of retirement rolled on, Jim and I had many happy and contented times. We travelled sometimes to the Blue Mountains, or to Canberra, especially to see Theodora while she was alive, and catch up with other family members. When Theodora was living in Canberra in the Nursing Home of St Andrew's Village on one visit to see her as she was deteriorating, I asked the Nursing Unit Manager "How will I know when Theodora is preparing to die?" She replied "Ms Bishop, you will know. When Theodora stops eating, drinking and moving, she will be very close." So this gave me some inkling of the journey ahead for Theodora, and though it gave me no solace, I had a guideline for my care of Theodora, my love for her, and for myself, in preparation.

As Grandparents, Jim and I count it a tremendous pleasure to have taken the Grandchildren to their School. Mondays for Sam and Tom to the Haberfield School and pick up often, too. Tom on a Monday afternoon from Concord High, after his HOTS programme at 4 pm! Many car trips to and from music lessons, singing lessons, dancing lessons in Newtown with 'Miss Jenny', tennis classes, soccer games, rowing times and swimming lessons at Ashfield Pool. Those were the days! I have had many deep conversations with Grandchildren to and from these events, and I have learnt so much from listening to them.

We kept a great interest in our adult children, their work and their care of their children. Many a time we attended a School Concert, or Play, or end of year Celebration. It was a lasting pleasure to see our children as parents, and enjoy their company, often with a mid week lunch, or other ways to see them. As time passed, we began attending Symphony Orchestra and Sydney University Musical Society and Sydney University Dramatic Society events too. All in all, we have had a cultural treat with all the various forms of sport and cultural activities.

I have struggled to become gentler on myself as the years have passed, and do feel within myself a sense of letting go, and a peace beyond words, at times. It is time for others to take up the baton of caring for the world. I care now for those close to me as my family and my loved friends.

Like all humans, I have had “good days and bad days”. I have found some formulas which have suited my personality and surroundings. A daily twenty-minute walk, a regular exercise class, a Tai Chi class, and other events with Jim have kept me on course, for the most part. My walk has given me the opportunity to admire the different style of houses, and the way people arrange their gardens, and bring beauty to their home.

A daily practice of Meditation, sometimes within a group and mostly at home on my own, has added to my good health and well-being, as has nutritious food. I learnt the Piano again after 70 years, and this proved both a challenge and a tremendous pleasure!

One added benefit of living in Leichhardt as a Granny has been living so close to our family. So many Grandparents are far away from their own family and grandchildren. Skype or Facetime does make a difference!

A good surprise for Jim and me as we have lived in The Italian Forum for almost twenty years has been the formation of a community of neighbours, and how much happiness that has brought us!

I have chosen for myself a Biblical name, Damaris. This is a woman only mentioned once in the New Testament. The name means goddess of the trees, and a lady. Mum often spoke of this woman, and I wonder if she also had the idea of being a woman like her – who knows now...

Chapter 8

Trips I Took 1995-2013

In 1995 for my study leave, I decided to venture out of Australia for the first time since we officially came 'home', in 1980.

I was in my ninth year as the Minister of the Mascot Botany Eastlakes Parish, and felt it was time to be refreshed. Many good things had happened in the Parish, and so I was able to go away for one month feeling that all would be well in my absence. I travelled with one of my women Elders, Helen Lofberg. We went up to see my cousin Di MacGillivray in the Highlands – and travelled around a bit. We met friends in Glasgow again, and then went to Iona for the Easter retreat. I was given the honour of carrying the Easter candle down the length of the Abbey at the stroke of midnight, as the Saturday Vigil was completed. I wore a red dress and still wear the black shoes...!

After this week on the Island, Helen and I returned to Glasgow, and then London, and at Heathrow we went our separate ways. I flew across the Atlantic to Boston, and there Marilyn Crocker met me and drove to her home where Joe was the Minister. It was a mixed neighbourhood, and I spent a day there catching up.

I then flew via Pittsburg to Chicago, and here I stayed in the Kemper Building for a couple of nights. Good to see colleagues again, and discover that the Kemper Building was now home to many justice oriented groups. Colleagues still lived on the upper floors, and worked at various jobs.

I then flew on to Seattle where I stayed a few nights with the Lachman family. I went by boat across to Vancouver Island, where I had a treat in visiting LiDona Wagner (formerly Donna McClesky). Here she took me to the wonderful Buchart Botanical Gardens, surely one of the best in the world. I did some brush painting, learning a new skill in how to make a paintbrush from a twig. Then a quick lesson in the art of calligraphy. I flew home from Vancouver, and back to work!

The next year 1996, I had accumulated 12 weeks long service leave. So Jim and I set off for about three months. Our aim was to discover our family roots in depth, if we could.

So we went to Nieder Weisel, in Germany and spent 6 days in the small village, acquainting ourselves with the Hauser family story. In the Lutheran Cemetery I pointed out to Jim that there were Hauser cousins lying in their graves, so that Gordon and Ray were fighting their own cousins in WW1. How tragic.

In that long holiday as well as parts of Europe, mainly Germany- we went to Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall and Wales. We hired a car, in Britain, and took our time. Out of Aberdeen we found the actual farm where my Great Grandfather William Milne had lived: a tiny farmlet, with enough land for maybe two cows. The Milnes were tenant farmers, and there were literally Milnes living in Peterculter still! Peterculter is about 13 miles from Aberdeen.

In Ireland we travelled over the whole island. We visited cousins in Belfast, and toured as much as we could over the whole land. I think my favourite spot was on the west coast, and taking a small boat over to the Skellig islands, where monks had lived in rock caves, on precipitous cliff faces....

We discovered so many symbols of the Celtic tradition, with standing stones, Celtic circles, and rocks placed close to each other in fields, and on the roadside.

I went one evening to a Wee Free Church Service on Skye, and found that we sat for all the Hymns, and stood for all the prayers... The other place where I felt deeply touched was in the Outer Hebrides, so remote and often very barren and cold.

That trip cemented our family roots: we spent a week on the Gower Peninsular in Wales, close to Jim's roots, and in Cornwall found ourselves almost at St Allen, very close to the home of the Bishop family. The sunset at Penzance was striking, as was St David's Cathedral in Wales, (in Pembrokeshire, towards the western end of Wales).

In 1998 Cathy and Jon and baby Selina went to the Somme. We stayed in Arras for some days, and I took care of Selina when her parents went up to the Menin Gate one whole day - they returned late on the same night. Selina was in a very small cot, and was such an easy baby to care for.

In Paris I remember we did some touring around mostly on the metro, and again Selina was given a tiny cot, which did not please her Mum much.

Our time on the Somme and surrounds was very sobering, Jon drove very capably, and we saw so many of the Cemeteries. In 1998 we also went over to Northern Ireland, and met cousins again, and had a very enjoyable time with them.

In 2005 I went to Ireland again for a Young and Killen Reunion, organized by Ted Marr. Marilyn and Dot came too, along with Cathy and me.

We did the bus tour around the troubled neighbourhoods, as the Referendum had been held in 1996 to bring peace to the warring parties. It still felt fragile in 1998 and yet was holding together. Ted had organised for us to meet many Young and Killen cousins, and so this was very interesting and so many resemblances appeared in faces! We did an amazing tour of family Cemeteries, and history came to be much more alive to me. Ballymena was a special place, as both the Youngs and the Killens had lived there and many buildings are still reflective of their name.

My last trip was in 2013, when I had decided to research the Young family in Abbeville, in north-west France, on the Somme. I was keen to understand the history of the Young family and their connection with the Huguenots. Not much evidence to find in the Abbeville Library, but still a connection was made. In the local Church the name Le Jeune is on the war Honour Roll, and the name is still very much in evidence. The Historian told us that all Huguenot Temples are ruined, and that there are no records to be found as they were all destroyed.

Once again with Jon, Cathy, Selina and Louisa and Rebecca, we were on the battlefields. Villers Bretonneux was a sentinel sacred site to walk around, and Rebecca noticed a Jewish headstone amongst all the others.

Jim managed well for the five and three quarter weeks we were away, as Pete and his family were keeping an eye on him.

This may well be my last trip out of Australia, although I am still hoping to go to Gallipoli, and pay my respects to my Mum's two first cousins, Charles Edmund Lyle Young, and Charles Lyle Young. Charles Edmund died on April 25th 1915, He enlisted in New Zealand. Charles Lyle lies in a marked grave, I have the place. Charles Edmund was never found, so he lies in a special place with other unknown soldiers.

Chapter 9

Notes on Our Family, 2018

Recovering from Hidden Pain, Focusing on Life in the Now

These addenda are written to try and extend a dialogue with my children. Since I wrote my memoirs all our three children have asked me questions, as to who I was, what I was doing, and what do I think happened to them. As a result I have begun again to try to state what happened to me.

This is my attempt to understand and explain the pains and troubles that our family has felt over the years. It is a story about me and then our three children, not primarily about JTB, though he had his own issues.

This is mostly about what happened while we were in Paddington. As I see it I am responsible for what happened to me: I took up with Jim, I made my own difficult choices. I am writing first about how I felt, and next about the children. I see that the effects were painful for all three in their life and their relationships, but I can only speak with any certainty about myself; I can only imagine how they must have felt. It was entirely separate, and different, for all three of them.

As I see it all three children were affected at once, and yet entirely separately. I was grieving for my Mum, & Peter was grieving for me, at six weeks, when she died suddenly. Rebecca still grieves, and sometimes reacts in an 'over the top' way. Peter sometimes reacts in brusqueness. Cathy is different again.

As I see it, looking back, it seems to me that the key to understanding how they felt is in the words "identity" and "integrity".

"Identity": Who am I? Everything was changing, they were being moved around. They had no self-story, they didn't know who they were.

"Integrity": What am I doing here? [What does that feel like? What am I being? What is my story?] They had a feeling of abandonment.

For many years I was in denial about all this, it was too painful. I was too raw, too ashamed, too exposed, and so I hid most of this in protection of myself.

Now it's like a "horrid light" for me, and a "healing light". A horrid light, as I remember what happened to me, and to them. A healing light, in the fact that we can talk about it.

However, I know that we can't turn back the clock. One can't avoid the painful real situation. [As Bultmann says, whatever is happening in life, there's always a squeeze; there are always going to be challenges, and hurdles, obstacles to be overcome, whatever parents you have.]

When my children were little I, as a minister's wife, did my husband's will entirely. I can see how neglected they must have felt. In a way I used the role model of my Mum – always doing good, perhaps too much empathy?

As Jim's wife, although I did not always feel driven, I rarely stepped out of line. The most I did was wear no bra and no sandals down Oxford Street, shopping. We were trailblazers, and I was caught up in the 60s of protest, the pill, the nuclear war prospects, Vietnam. It was all overwhelming; + the job, always on show, obedient, determined to please Jim, and do the job of a minister's wife; yet yearning for freedom, living in illusion-land, and pushed around by the situational context: hippies, 60's, the parish, Paddington friends. Jim was dominant: I was wanting to please Jim. I was trying to work out what role I was supposed to be playing, and what did it mean to be me. It was a feeble attempt at partnership over a common goal. Maybe every wife in a 60s family felt like this? I had a feeling of Jim always pushing me. Nowadays he says, "It is your life, you're free to live it as you choose." I am free to decide what I do, and how I do it. [I have "cosmic permission".]

In hindsight, on looking back, I made the choices. I asked Jim to marry me: I was just too naïve, I had come from a do-good household, I thought I could manage the role. I think I was totally unprepared for the enormous challenge my role was – as a minister's wife and as mother to three marvellous children. Perhaps this is the ultimate challenge in growing in humanness, which every family circle faces.

How did it come about that I fell in love with Jim? My Mum saw it as her job, part of being a mother, to invite eligible young men to the family holiday house at Dee Why. The other three or four young men were not a patch on Jim. It was most importantly because Jim cared, not about himself; he cared in a good way, not drawing attention to himself, more as a duty, and in a leg-up, "you can do it" way. I deeply admired him. I wanted somebody who had compassion, like my two wonderful parents whom I adored – intellectual yet socially aware as they were, well ahead of their time. As I worked closely with Jim, he was totally different from them, yet I could see and read how much he cared.

My aim was to be the best mother I could be. But I was pushed around by my sisters; Theodora, in particular, was always giving me advice. I lived in "blind obedience": what Jim said, went. I was about putting myself second, or last; I was only there to please Jim. An exception, something I really enjoyed, was having parties, or any time I was doing children things, or not working in the church.

Once again the basic life questions have been raised: for Peter and the girls back then, and indeed for me again, at this late stage in my life.

These three questions are:

- # Who am I?
- # What do I?
- # How be I?

I feel that the children were stolen from me. That's still my feeling, and so for me it is the truth, even now. ("A feeling is a fact.") My life, as their mother, was stolen from me. After Rebecca, Peter and Cathy were 8, 6 and 4, I could not be a real mother to them.

I have re-learnt the old song:

“I am always falling down, but I know what I can do,

“I can pick myself up, and say to myself,

“You’re the greatest, too!”

The sober reality confronts me, even now, but I will wear it.

My reason for writing this is because my emotional intelligence, (& also my intellectual and spiritual intelligence, I hope), has grown more aware in recent years, especially through conversations with Rebecca and Peter and Cathy.

In summary, I have tried to describe my feelings during these years of living in Paddington and the Order as paradoxical. On the one hand I felt betrayed in my role as a mother, and too ashamed and weak to try to buck the system. I felt on watch and on parade – not for Jim’s pride, but so he could do his best and perform his duty – *duty* is what it was all about.

On the other side of the paradox, I felt happier, even empowered. I learned so much in new methods and tools that have been useful to me. I modelled my ministry on Jim, after years of spiritual growth in the Order, which, in the good parts, was excellent for me. Eventually I developed my own skills and my own style.

We lived in Chicago and many new opportunities opened up for me. I went all over the U.S. and many parts of Canada, training others and being trained myself. My time in all the villages gave me a broader understanding of what it means to be non-white. I understand more fully that all humans have so much in common, whatever the colour of their skin or their language and customs.

My heartfelt thanks to our three children, who have loved me enough to scold me, chastise me, and humour and laugh with me. What a wonderful authentic three they are, and how thoroughly proud I am of their grace and beauty of spirit and all their long list of qualities.

EPILOGUE

Rose Kennedy, mother of a number of daughters and Joseph, JFK, Bobby, and Edward Kennedy, had a saying from the gospels, a saying of Jesus. Edward Kennedy said just before his death in 2009, that his Mother had reared him to live his life from the words Jesus spoke:

... "to whom much is given, from them much is required"...

My Mother Violet Mary Killen/Milne said, "Isobel, these words are important to me, they are words of Jesus." These words have been in my consciousness, from a very early age, and have been my hallmark... Mistakes I have made, but on the whole, I would live my life over again, as it has brought me to who I am, now. In hindsight, I would never have allowed my children to be removed from our care. Ineffective parents we may have been, yet surely better to have ineffective parents close by, than parents always absent, when they are needed. I suppose life is the final adjudicator on this difficult question. "Regrets I have a few." In the secular language of these times, the most accurate description of my life I would posit, is what I hear on the lips of many people. "It is what it is." This says to me that life is about reality, or what happened in any given life is just what it is, as it happened, both joys and the sorrows. In fact, in every moment there is both joy and sorrow, stillness and movement, darkness and light.

My Mum's last word, which has been sorely tested many times, and still holds me in being, as I now experience life differently as an elderly woman, "Isobel, no experience in life is ever wasted." Thank you Mum, you've been a wonderful mentor to me.

My favourite Prayer has been "Loving God, we thank you for your goodness to us, which we experience every day. Make us eager to give back to you ourselves, in the name of Jesus, who, through his poverty has made us rich."

I quote Soren Kierkegaard: "Life can be understood only by looking behind, but can only be lived looking ahead."

Another Kierkegaard quote - I have been learning about this one since I was in my early 30's! "The Self is a relation that relates itself to itself, and in willing to be itself, grounds itself transparently in the power that posits it."

From my friend Reinhold Niebuhr:

"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope.

Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love.

No virtuous act is as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint.

Therefore, we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness."

The final word goes to Nikos Kazantzakis, who wrote that "life is a circle of pain, joy and hope."

This has been true for me. The Circle of Grace.