

From Vanity to Sanity

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I was born in 1952 to a rather poor family in Switzerland. The first few years of my childhood were quite family oriented, even though we did not always have perfect harmony. My mother had to work just to help get a little bit of food on the table for our family, which consisted of my parents, two sisters and me. My dad was in his early 20s and full of adventurous desires which were

suppressed by the responsibility of having a wife and three children.



One of my earliest childhood memories goes way back to when I was between two and three years

old. We lived in a small suburb, nick-named 'Hell'. It was a hard time as we were renting a place where animals had previously been kept. My mother had to scrape the floors for days to get the smell and gunk out of the place. I can clearly remember playing in a small courtyard – in Hell. Funnily enough, the Salvation Army had a base there too. Eventually, we moved to another nearby village called Uster. The new place was not much better, but at least it wasn't Hell! When I was about four or five years old, I often asked my mother what happens when you die. She could never give me a satisfactory answer, but she told me what she herself had heard; that there was a loving God, the baby Jesus and the little angels. Because of my questions, I believe, my mother let me go to the Methodist Sunday school next door for a short while. There I learned that I was a little lost sheep and that there was a good Shepherd calling. I was also informed of what certain swear words meant. Because of my time

at Sunday school I avoided using certain self-condemning expressions and I also prayed daily to the so-called dear and loving God. Somehow it was instilled in me that the Catholic Church was wrong, especially the praying to Saints and idols. This caused me to perform a zealous 'religious' act. At five years of age, I sneaked around an old Catholic Church where I saw statues through a window down in a basement. Full of the desire to be righteous, I picked up rocks and stoned those 'idols'.



In those early childhood years, I spent many hours on my own, exploring the area and the nearby forests. One day my mother went out to see a neighbour. She told me to be a good boy and, as a reward, I received an apple in advance. Well, a whole, big apple for myself! I did not want to just eat such a special treat, so I decided to fry it. I had managed to light the gas stove and then I put the apple in a frying pan. It wasn't long before a great cloud of smoke appeared. Having recently seen a nearby garden centre burn down, from where I had 'rescued' a toilet brush and a pansy, I quickly reacted. Not knowing what was burning, I threw the apple and frying pan

out the upstairs window. Just at that moment my mother happened to look over to the house and a very short time later she was back home again.

The neighbourhood was very familiar to me and it became 'my world'. I got to know all the neighbours and even though there were many fusses and fights among them, if something serious

happened they stuck together. One of these times involved me. On another exploring expedition, I climbed onto some vertically stacked concrete pipes at a nearby depot. The pipes were about two meters long and about 30 centimetres in diameter and I wondered if I could fit into such a pipe. I climbed into it and tried to slide down inside. When I was in up to my arms, I lifted my arms and wriggled around until I finally slid right down inside the pipe. Of course, there was no way for me to get out of it again. Totally helpless, I had to rely on the Lord to send help. When it started to get dark and everyone realised that I was missing, the whole neighbourhood was mobilised to search for me. It was a miracle that I was found. The only thing I remember was that it was very tight in the pipe and that someone had to reach down a long way to pull me out again.

At that time, most of the boys in the neighbourhood were older than me and they were often up to mischief. One day, I watched them jumping over an iron picket fence. Being quite impressed by their bravery I decided that when everyone was gone, I would try this act myself. However, being shorter than the fence, I had to climb up onto a pile of wood and then jump. Just as I jumped, my ankles caught the spikes on the fence and I went over head first. Literally speared, I was hanging on the fence, upside down, not even being able to touch the ground. Well, did I scream! An Italian woman, who rented a room next to our house, came rushing out and saved me. As we had no money for the doctor, my parents poured some red antiseptic stuff into the holes on my ankles which burned terribly.

Sometimes, my mother sent me to a little shop to buy certain grocery items. On one of these occasions I was instructed to buy a piece of cheese as a treat for the family. On my way home, I could not resist the temptation and I started to pick and eat a bit of cheese. Soon I discovered I had made a big hole in the cheese, far too big to be classified as Swiss cheese. Fear came upon me and I decided to hide the cheese in some bushes. When I arrived home without the cheese and without the money I told my mother that a big bird came and ate the cheese. My

mother was most upset and didn't believe my story. She insisted that I tell her what I had done with the cheese. Finally, I had to take her to the place where I had hidden the cheese and we recovered what was left of it.

One of the neighbourhood boys had a bow and arrow. I was too small to use a bow and arrow so I became the target, and one day I was shot in my eye. As my mother heard my screams, she ran after the boy, who went upstairs into what he thought was the safety of his home. But my mother bolted through the door, past the old grandfather in his rocking chair, grabbed the boy and broke the bow and arrows before leaving to attend to me. Thank God, I did not lose my eye.

Another favourite pastime of mine was to stand near the railway barrier and feel the strong wind as the train went by. One day I decided to go inside the rail barriers so that I could feel the wind even more. Just before the train sped past, a neighbour, who was in a wheelchair, saw me from the other side. He screamed and shouted helplessly, believing that I had surely been swept away under the train. You can imagine his relief when he saw me still standing there after the train had gone! I often placed rocks or other items on the rails, just to observe what happens when the train runs over them. I witnessed various derailments in those few years, but I don't think that as a young child I had anything to do with this.

Christmas time was always a special time for me. In early December, it was common to see people dressed up as Santa Claus. Those dressed in red were usually Catholic and those dressed in black were the Protestants. I didn't really believe that they were real, however they still managed to conjure up feelings of fear in me. One night there was a knock on the door and, low and behold, there stood a black Santa. He then proceeded to pull out a book and read from it all the naughty things we had been doing. As he began to speak I burst out laughing, because a speech impediment identified him as the neighbour. That ended my fear of Santa Claus.

At Sunday school, I had to recite a poem, which was very well received by the congregation, mainly because I was so small and



cute and therefore appeared twice as clever. The same thing used to happen during gymnastic events I participated in. It was one advantage of being small for my age. It came in handy

another time when I walked with my younger sister, Beatrice, to town. There was a shoe shop that had a merry-go-round in it. We never went to that shop, because we could not afford the expensive shoes they sold. Nevertheless, my sister and I would have loved to go in and spin around on the little child's merry-go-round. After standing outside the shop for a while I told my sister that we should go in and have a ride on the merry-go-round. My sister was concerned and informed me that we needed to be customers and couldn't just go in. Then I told her that we were still little kids and that the adults would think that we didn't know. Off we went, and the plan worked – at least for a while.

When I was about five years old I was sent to a kindergarten. Walking about two kilometres to the kindergarten was hard for me, as I had very short legs. Trying to keep up with others, I had to run. Going for walks with the whole class was the worst activity for me. Therefore, when it was announced that we all would go for a walk, I used to hide in the toilet until everyone was gone. Then I was alone again in my own world of the familiar neighbourhood and the nearby forests.



One time a neighbour and I went to the forest together where we came across a great big hornets' nest. We thought that it might be a good idea to throw stones and rocks at these nasty creatures. It wasn't long at all until we got attacked by a swarm of hornets. We were literally running for our lives. I escaped being stung, but the other boy got stung on his neck. He had to be taken to the doctor after that encounter. Another time, I persuaded this same boy to ride a sheep. He climbed over the fence and managed to climb on the sheep's back. But not for very long, because the sheep ran under a shed that was built on piles, slamming the boy into the wall before landing him in the mud.

When I was six I started school. As I was already able to read, and most of the other children couldn't, I began to get the false impression that I was better than everyone else. This feeling began to form the way I viewed others in the future.

MOVING TO ANOTHER PLACE

As time went on and my parents were able to afford some better things, we moved to another neighbourhood. A better house and new friends – but these things never seemed to be as good as the lovely childhood memories I had of Bahnstrasse, in Uster.

Our new house was further away from the school, which meant I had to walk through a forest to get there. It was quite spooky, especially in the winter when it was still dark in the morning. However, there was lots of fun to be had, sliding down icy and snowy paths, which resulted in me needing new school bags more often than new socks, much to my parents' displeasure.

Having two sisters, Esther and Beatrice, was great, but I really would have liked a brother. Help came when we got new neighbours and they had a boy of my age. The day they moved in, I went to say hello to him and simply said, "My name is Albert, do you want to be my friend?" The boy agreed and now I had a substitute brother and friend, at least for a short time, because

they shifted away again after about a year. At school, I met another friend. He was often upset, especially when teased by other children. I explained to him that he did not need to get upset and fight, for there was an all-seeing God who would take care of us and that we had only to look up to Him. So that he would not forget this, I told him that I would give him a 'secret sign' every now and then to remind him. The secret sign was me pointing with my finger towards the sky. Often when I saw him, I gave him the secret sign, which always made him smile and happy. One day, another boy pulled this boy to the ground and then ran off. Of course, he was upset, but when he saw me showing him the secret sign he calmed down straight away. The boy, who had pulled him down was still running down a hill, but suddenly slipped and had a very bad fall, proving indeed that "the Lord will fight for you".

For about three months we had a relieving teacher – a lovely young woman with a serene appearance. She was so nice that I had a little conflict within myself about whether I liked her more than my mother. Today, I am sure that she was a real Christian. Also, around that time, a tradesman came to fix our fire place. He was a very nice old man and, years later, my mother told me that he took her aside and told her that I was a special child and that she needed to take good care of me.

As time went on and the economic boom started in the 60s, we bought a television, scooter and then even a car. Of course, family life was not as important any more – television and money substituted for the missing harmony. The thing I hated most was when sport was on television. There was no time to talk or ask questions. I was simply a nuisance and had to go away or keep quiet.

My grandmother came to visit most weekends and she too liked television. Not sport but Western movies. On one of those weekends she wanted to watch a Western movie, but my Dad wanted to watch sports. To solve the problem, we put Grandma in an upstairs bedroom where we had an old black and white

television in storage. It was an inbuilt model with radio and record player – quite a piece of furniture. Grandma and the television were all set up and the Western was playing. Finally, everyone was happy. After a while my mother went to check on Grandma. With amazement, Grandma said, “Isn’t this modern technology wonderful. I can even smell the guns when the cowboys are shooting!” It wasn’t smoking guns, but the old television was on fire!

When I was about nine years old, we used to build tree huts and play ‘Cowboys and Indians’. These childish games changed somewhat when an older school boy started to tell us about what adults do as he tried to enlighten us in sexual things. That was



the time when my innocent mind was opened to the filthy things of this world. Before long, my whole mind was full of horrendous, dirty imaginations which would have even shocked adults.

School was something I did not like very much. The physical punishment was something I did not handle too well – I once even ended up at the doctors after an over-done discipline session in which the teacher swung me around on my ears, ripping one of them in the process. During one ‘happy singing lesson’, not being able to reach certain high notes, I ended up with a hard slap on the face. The teacher used to come very close to listen, so out of fear of singing off-key I just didn’t sing the very high notes, which ended up with another whack. It took years to rediscover the joys of singing.

One of my birthdays that I remember well was my eleventh. For quite some time I had pestered my mother to allow me to have pet rabbits. Finally, I was allowed and picked them up on my

birthday. The joy of having rabbits as pets did not last too long, and it soon fell to my mother to make sure they were being fed. To be fair, one of them was sick and the other blind. They both ended up in the pot before they had a chance to be fully grown.

There were a couple of school friends who weren't too happy about having to share my friendship. Each one of them wanted me to be their one and only best friend. To keep the peace, I took one of them aside and told him, "You are really my best friend, but to keep the other one happy, I will talk to him too and tell him the same thing, but really, you are my best friend". This made him very happy. Off I went to the other and told him word for word the same thing. I didn't lie and this little play with words made them both happy. I can't really remember if I preferred one over the other.

During those times, I spent a lot of time in the forest, often by myself. I built a tree hut very high up in a large pine tree. Nobody else could climb up there because there were no branches lower down on the tree. Somehow I managed to climb up like a monkey. Every now and then I was able to arrange a ladder which meant I could receive visitors. We had a fantastic view from up there.

Trying to get a bit of pocket money, I decided to put on a puppet show in the basement and I set up a little stage with curtains. For this occasion, I made a brochure and handed it out to the neighbouring children. Considering the entry fee of 50 cents, I really don't think my show was worth watching, however, they seemed to be happy with a change and I was happy with the money.

For a while I joined the scout group where my school friend Bruno was an active member. One day we had a competition to find as many different types of leaves as possible. Bruno was one of the officials in this activity and he awarded me so many different trees, I don't think they even existed in that forest. Needless to say, I 'won' the competition, thanks to Bruno! One summer I also

attended a scout camp. We had to cycle about 20 km to a place in the forest. It was a lot of fun sleeping in tents, playing games and the responsibility of being on guard duty for half a night. A lot of the other scout teams liked me and found me entertaining. Of course, I responded well to the applause that followed my success in competitions and winning wrestling matches with bigger boys.

Having been so little for my age, I was probably driven to excel because of a complex. My mother took me to specialists to find out why I didn't grow any taller. One day at a special hospital I had to undergo various tests and x-rays. Despite being small I was quite strong. One doctor asked me to pull him as hard as I could. I guess he wanted to test my strength. A bit unsure, I asked him how hard I was to pull. The doctor assured me that I could give it all that I had. And so, I did – he flew across the room and landed on the bed. The nurse could not help laughing and the doctor had no more doubts about my strength. The various tests showed that I was just a late starter, but that eventually I would grow to quite an acceptable height. Going through these tests made me feel quite abnormal. Later in life I made sure not to put my own children through these humiliating procedures, knowing that it would result in even greater complexes.

When I was 13 I was to go to a school camp for the first time. Our financial situation had previously meant I had been unable to go but now, with my parents having a bit more money, I was off to camp for three weeks, full of anticipation. A lot of things happened there, and they were not all good. One of the few good things was that I left the camp with more money than I had when I had arrived. One fellow gave me quite a bit of money, because I told him that I would tell a certain girl that he liked her. Nevertheless, I also spent some money. I paid a fellow for eating my soup. It was one of those 'end-of-the-week' soups, where all the leftovers were cooked up together. It looked like spew and tasted not much different. The down-side of the camp came in the form of one of the camp leaders. One evening we were singing a happy song and in my joy, I just happened to shout out

“ole”. Apparently, this wasn’t the right time for that and it resulted in me being sent to bed at six o’clock. Another night, this camp leader came into the dormitory to check if everyone was asleep. I couldn’t sleep well, especially not that early and without a pillow, so when he shined his torch into my face, I must have blinked a bit. For this I got severely whacked and was sent into the laundry. There in the laundry I felt that I had been treated unjustly. I had to stand there in my pyjamas feeling very cold. After several hours of listening to the camp leaders having a great time partying, I decided to pray. It was an unusual but desperate prayer that the Lord would let me get sick so that I would not need to participate in this ‘prison camp like holiday’. I was finally let out at about two o’clock in the morning. The next day, my prayer was answered. I had a high fever and was now moved to the sick room. This was very nice as I even had a pillow. I did have thoughts of revenge, thinking that when I grew up, I would punch that guy in the face. Those thoughts stayed with me for a long time.

Somehow, even as a child, I disliked being controlled by tradition and systems. Switzerland was a very bureaucratic type of police state. Once I went to see a Wild West movie with a couple of friends. It was an R14 and we were only 13. We had a consent note from our parents, but nevertheless, a plain clothes policeman stopped us after the movie and took us to the police station for interrogation. It was quite intimidating.

TEENAGE YEARS

During my teenage years I was always an active fellow. Often, I forced my way to get what I wanted. The relationship with my two sisters was good even though we didn’t have too much to do with each other. On New Year’s Eve 1965/66, my parents and older sister Esther went out partying. My younger sister Beatrice and I had permission to stay up late, watch television and have

a party by ourselves. What a treat! Chocolate drinks, oranges, nuts and much more. The moment my parents and my older sister left, I was in a happy party mood. Unfortunately, Beatrice messed up the party by going to bed at 7.30pm. Sister in bed or not, I decided to have my own party anyway. During the evening, trying to motivate myself to be in a party mood, I opened the cabinet where there were a few bottles of liqueur. Well, I tried some stuff that wasn't too strong to drink. By midnight, my party was at its peak and I had to welcome the New Year some way. Just then I had a grand idea. Why not start the New Year with a bang? I took down some of the gas-filled balloons and took them outside. Now, all I had to do was to flick the lighter and boom – what a boom! As the gas ignited, it got rather hot and my arm was a bit burned. Now it was time to nurse the burns, so I took some oil from the kitchen, stripped off my top and started to cover myself in oil. Just about this time, my parents came home to check up on us. They looked rather bewildered and noticed that I acted a bit strange: extremely jumpy, topless and very shiny with oil! Before they left again, the liqueur cabinet was locked, and the key taken with them.

Perhaps my 14th birthday was the mother of all birthdays for me. It was then that I was officially allowed to ride a small 50cc motorcycle. First, I rode my dad's motorbike into the ground, then my mother's and then my own, for which I had had to work and save up for during school holidays. The reason was that they were not made for motocross. Shortly after my 14th birthday I could go and visit my uncle Bruno, all by myself. He lived in St. Gallen which was about 50 kilometres away. It seemed to be a long way on such a little bike. Finally I arrived and stayed with my uncle at the Pub where he lived with his girlfriend. I soon realised I was a bit of a liability, so I decided to travel on. I went across the border to Germany. There I met a guy I was a bit wary of, but we went to a night club together. I still remember having heard that forbidden song *Je t'aime* in there. Of course, I did not understand at the time why this song was forbidden as it was just music with a couple singing, talking and groaning like something was wrong with them. Later that night, this German fellow

wanted to hide in the night club to be locked in at closing time, just so he could rob the place. It was then that I decided to leave. I slept under a tree that night. “Why under a tree?” I asked myself in the morning. There were so many roots which prevented a good sleep. The German fellow turned up again early in the morning asking me if I wanted some breakfast. “Yes please”, I replied. He then went to a rubbish bin and salvaged an old bag. As the shop owners put their stalls outside, he passed by and ‘collected’ our breakfast. I decided to leave and go back to Switzerland. After a few hours I arrived in Schaffhausen where I met a nice fellow in a coffee lounge who gave me money, so that I could get petrol to make it home, as I was completely broke.

I always liked a challenge and, of course, to be a winner, and always seemed to be attracted by the so-called big things. Riding big motorbikes in a quarry while under age was just one of these things and it occupied a lot of my spare time. I never forget the day I saw a motorbike at the wreckers that I could buy very cheaply. When I mentioned this to my older sister Esther, she simply gave me the money and told me to go and buy it. This was very exciting! As soon as I had pushed this heavy bike home, I began to dismantle it. Off came the lights and mudguards and out came the muffler. By that evening it was ready so I pushed it to the nearby forest and started to ride the bike through the forest and a paddock. It was a wonderful feeling, and I felt so cool and grown up. Now I could brag with my friends because I had a bike and rode it illegally through a paddock. Of course, the competing didn’t stop there – it continued with me bad-mouthing people and telling dirtier jokes than anyone else.

LEAVING SCHOOL

When it was time to look for work or an apprenticeship I was, like most young people, undecided. Not knowing what I should do, I asked my Dad for advice. His answer to me was, “I don’t

care! You are the one who's got to work!" I ended up doing an apprenticeship as a typewriter technician.

The first year of my apprenticeship felt like being a slave and I did not enjoy it at all. The workshop where I spent my days was situated upstairs in an old three-story building. Downstairs was a stationery shop and down in the basement was an old fireplace. It was my job to get the fire going in the winter. This was easier

said than done. One day when the fire was not going well, the boss had forced me to stay through the one and half hour lunch break to get it going. This made me very disheartened. As summer came, there was no need to heat the place and instead I was often sent down to the basement to rip up old boxes and to sort out rubbish. I will never forget the day that I decided to get rid of some polystyrene by burning it in the fireplace. The stuff soon turned into tar and developed into a thick black smoke. The smoke started to come out of the chimney, out of the walls, and soon the whole building was filled with thick, black smoke. Everyone, from the



workshop people, the salesman, the office staff, the stationery shop girls, the boss and his wife and even the cleaning lady were in the hallway, some half hysterical. Especially the boss's wife, who kept on shouting that she had been through two house fires already. As I was standing there, surrounded by these irate people, being accused and verbally abused, I could not help myself from laughing, as they all looked like wild animals with black smoke rings around their nostrils. Actually, they looked quite piggy.

My working hours were 7.30am until 6pm, and I really disliked getting up in the morning. My mother used to come into my room whispering, "Albi, it's time to get up". Then I groaned in my sleep

and kept on sleeping. Her call was repeated about five times until by then she lost her cool and screamed and shouted and sometimes threw something at me. This was usually the first time I really woke up. Of course, I wasn't happy. What a way to be woken up, I thought! One of those mornings I went to the Migros coffee lounge. Still half asleep I ordered a coffee with which the cream came in a small pyramid shaped cardboard container. There was standing room only at the bar and, still being half asleep, I peeled off the lid of the cream and squeezed. To my surprise, a jet of cream squirted out of the container, but in the opposite direction. Standing next to me was a tall man and as I looked up at him, I saw his glasses were dripping with the cream. He was speechless and in shock and all I could do was laugh.

As a first-year apprentice, I had to do all the bad jobs, even non-trade related ones. One job in particular was quite shocking! There was a box of old soap pieces in the attic and I was asked to cut them up into manageable pieces for use in the workshop. For some reason I had a bad feeling about this unusual soap which had no real scent. Years later I learnt that the Nazis used to make soap from human fat. Then I saw a picture of the Nazi soap in a newspaper and I recognised it to be the same as the one I had to cut up as an apprentice.

Despite being 16 years old, I was still very little, and looked more like an 11 year old! Therefore, it was very hard and tiring for me to unload the van when the technician arrived with a load of very heavy old typewriters which needed to be carried to the workshop on the third floor all by myself. The senior technician, a 28 year old Dutch man, was a Jehovah Witness. I had more respect for religious people because I thought that they were better than me. This soon changed when he got angry with me one day and in a fit of rage he threw me on the ground, jumped on top of me, grabbed me around my throat and shouted that as an apprentice I was worth the same as a piece of dirt. Despite his dedication to the religion, the life to match was missing and I found this disappointing.

As a little apprentice, I was in no way allowed to go to the offices of difficult customers, until one day my boss had finally had enough of one customer. She was a lady whose electric typewriter had chronic problems and, despite my boss visiting her office at least once or twice every week, she was never happy. Eventually, the workshop boss totally lost it and said he could not face that woman again. Still in a rage he decided to send me along to see that difficult woman instead. So off I went and even before I had a chance to enter the office she had started to tell me off, muttering something about the youth of today. Thankfully a bit of quick thinking and 'psychological assessment' of the office lady made me say just the right thing. I said, "Miss, you have to be careful complaining about the youth, because you could shoot yourself in the foot. You are actually still considered youth until you turn 30." She was so flattered, she visually melted away! She looked about 40, but this abstract compliment worked! I didn't do anything to the machine, just pretended to turn a screw inside of it and then – no more problems! Not only that, but she also gave me a very generous tip, worth one and a half days of my wages!

After work I often went to a nearby quarry where I had my old motocross bike stored. One of my riding buddies bought a real motocross bike, an English Greeves 250cc. I could hardly wait to try it out. Without a helmet and just wearing a t-shirt I took the



Greeves for a spin. On the long straight I tried to see how fast the bike could go. Coming up to a corner, I pushed down the foot brake, just to find

myself sliding sideways. This wasn't a problem, except that as I

pressed on the brake again, I hit the gear lever instead, as I was used to my CZ motorbike which had the gear lever and foot brake on the reverse sides. Like many other things in life, there is not always time to think about things. We either react correctly or incorrectly. Well, I didn't make the corner but instead jumped down a cliff, wedging the bike in some big rocks. I flew and then rolled on those rocks, protecting my head with my hands. With multiple fractures and bruises all over my body, plus a skinned and bleeding chest, I was off work for six weeks. After overcoming the initial pain, I really enjoyed that break. The only problem was the pay. I only got paid once a month, a very meagre amount. It lasted me about three or four days and then, I began to beg my mother for money until she would throw the money at me, just to get some peace. In my teenage years, I often frustrated my mother. She had quite a short temper and not always a lot of understanding. On one occasion, after we had had an argument, my mother started to cry. This was very unusual for her, because she was quite a hard woman. Her tears made me feel sorry for her and I started to apologise. As I said sorry, putting my arm around her, I started to cry myself, because I did not want to hurt my mother. After a while all was forgiven and forgotten – I thought. A few weeks later, we had another heated discussion and then my mother said the fateful words which changed a lot of things for me. She said, "Just carry on arguing and then you can come again and cry on my shoulder." This hurt me very much. I felt that my genuine feelings and repentance were being abused. Suddenly, I felt hardened towards my mother and though by now she often turned on the tears, I was as cold as ice. I used to tell her to spare her tears and cry later once I had gone back to work.

When I was 16, I had my first girlfriend. This removed some of the teasing and pressure from my mates as I now was no longer in the 'club of the un-kissed'. As she was taller than me, I had to resort to wearing high heel shoes and leaving her bare-foot or wearing ballerina shoes. After about three months I discovered that she was flirting with other boys. Immediately I quit the friendship. This breaking of trust and faithfulness caused me to

get quite a bad attitude towards girls in general. Nevertheless, I always felt attracted to the opposite sex and often preferred to talk to females rather than males.



In those days we had a neighbour who was about five years older than me. He was a bit eccentric at times, but soon became like a brother to me. He was not only five years older, but also two heads taller than me and seemed to have quite a lot of control over me, influencing me in some bad ways. Many a night I was at his place playing cards, gambling for big money and most of the time I won. One night after losing, he owed me a full month worth of his wages, so instead of the money, I walked away with two antique swords. Another time I left his house with a stereo and many other times with cash. He used to get extremely frustrated losing

to a young fellow like me. During one of those gambling sessions he got so frustrated with losing that he threw a pot plant at me. I ducked, and the pot plant shattered on the wall. The loud noise caused his mother to come and check up on the noise. He was still in a rage and threw his mother out of the room. Eventually, he came up with a new game plan. He went and got a bottle of whiskey and proceeded to give me one glass after the other. I started to get very drunk; surely, he would win now! It was my turn to shuffle the cards but all I could do was laugh and throw the cards into the air. Well, I could not play at all by now, so I left and went back home, crawling up the stairs in a seriously

drunken condition. This was the first time I had been really drunk and it took three days in bed to get over the alcohol poisoning.

Still hating my job as an apprentice, I always looked for an excuse to have a break apart from the usual three weeks per year. So, I decided to have my tonsils removed. The doctor agreed, and I was three weeks off work. The workshop boss came to visit me with a bottle of grape juice about two weeks after the operation. Of course, I wasn't home in bed, but rather in Zurich, drinking at a club. I had to drink very slowly because my throat was still very painful.

Still searching for big things, I progressed from gymnastics to judo and then started boxing. During that time, I had many good



fights in the boxing ring in Switzerland and Germany with various clubs and at training camps. Around that time, I also caught up with an old mate. He was quite strong, and a bit of a street fighter and he too joined the boxing club. He was so tough that one day at home I was on the balcony on the first floor and my mate was outside, downstairs. I had some very hard, heavy lawn balls. They were meant to be rolled on the grass, but instead, I threw them down from the balcony for my friend to catch. To my surprise, he caught each one of them with his head like they were footballs. He also got himself into trouble fighting and seriously injuring people by breaking

ribs and jaws, which was fine, as long as he was on my side, but when he wasn't, he threatened to give me a hiding in the boxing ring. I was sure glad that I quickly became successful and sparring with him in the boxing ring was no longer a threat. For me it was not so much about just bashing, but the technique. Besides being very fast and able to hit hard, I had all the makings

of a champion and my trainer had high hopes for me. One night I had a boxing meeting in Germany and while traveling there, some of the big boys said, "Just think that you are fighting Hitler and get real mad at them!" Well that wasn't me. I could not easily get mad at people, although on one occasion during a training camp, I was teased in a really mean way by a mate who ganged up against me with another tall fellow. The very next day I was selected to fight this tall guy in the ring. That was the first time I really wanted to hurt someone. So, I did. With one punch, I knocked his mouth guard out and the following punches made him cry and give up. Covered in blood, he ran away. I never had any more cheek from that fellow. Boxing was great for me, but I knew if I wanted to stay a winner, I could not afford to go out partying. My trainer promised me a national title and a great career within a very short time. I weighed it up; the training and disciplined living, all for a silver cup, against the social night life. Finally I decided to go for the boozing, dancing, gambling and striving after the so-called big things in life instead.

So I quit boxing, started smoking again and soon was well settled in the wild lifestyle. At the time, I lived under the illusion that I was cool and superior to the ordinary person, especially because I was more outgoing than some of the others and I had no problem to talk and flirt with girls. One of my mates always acted silly in front of girls and had problems getting a girlfriend. One afternoon in a restaurant he and I chatted to some girls. Same scenario; he acted up again and looked silly, but I got a date with one of the girls. Since I was not interested in her, I sent my mate along for the date. I told him to tell her that I disliked her. Success! He married her. To me, marriage was a very serious matter and I wanted the perfect wife and marriage that would last for a lifetime. The more girls I met, the further away this idea seemed to slip.

GETTING MY DRIVER'S LICENCE

At the age of 18, I got my learner's licence and could practise driving with my dad in his little BMW 700 car. I still remember

one time I was overtaking a car and stayed in the passing lane,



so I would not cut off the passed car. Of course, there was oncoming traffic and my dad was already hiding under the dash board out of fear that I would not make it back into my lane in time. I got my full driver's licence just at the beginning of winter, by which time I was a third-year apprentice. We now also had a new junior apprentice at work. Suddenly, I was a bit better off, especially when one other senior man resigned, leaving the company desperate for staff and drivers. Because I now had a licence, I became their man. I ended up having to fill the more senior position, just on an apprentice's wage. Legally, I had no obligation as an apprentice to drive for the

company. Still, this gave me quite a bit of freedom and I started to organise my day accordingly as I went out servicing and repairing machines. Then the day came when the big boss saw me driving and called me very abusive names. He was right about my silly driving, but he was wrong to give me abuse. I simply refused to drive for the company anymore. They did not quite believe it, so I made my point when I was sent to pick up a few typewriters from a customer. I returned to work about two hours later and was questioned about where I had been and what took so long. Well, I had walked for miles with a little hand trailer to pick up those machines. I told him that I was not driving anymore. At hearing this, the workshop manager, junior manager and the salesman all became very friendly, trying to persuade me to drive again. Eventually I gave in. Now I was calling the shots and I was driving the way I wanted, and no one complained. One day my own car broke down and the junior

boss was rejoicing saying, “Serves you right!” There was not too much wrong with my car and what had initially looked serious I managed to fix in about an hour. But occasionally, I had to drive the junior boss’s car, a six cylinder. I used to push it to its limits! Perhaps this prep work I had done on it previously was the reason the junior boss broke down on a French motorway during his holiday and had to get a new engine. Nothing more was said, but I felt I had the last laugh in this case.

Driving in the winter was great and sliding around in the new snow was good training. In those days, there was no speed limit out of town, so every time I left a town or village it was ‘legal’ racing. I tried not to drink and drive, but one night I was out and had a few too many drinks. I decided to leave the car there and walk home. It was on that night someone needed a ride to get to another place. Having had too much to drink I declined to take him so he offered to drive my car. I thought this would be all right, so I let him drive. After a few hours of boozing at the other place it was time to go home, but there was one big problem – my driver had disappeared. I was too far from home to consider walking. This was my first night of drunk driving. Once this initial conviction was broken, it was easier every time and driving while drunk then became common practice. One night I drove to a restaurant in a nearby town and was showing off to a friend who was with me. I slid around the corner before the pub and with great noise and squealing of tires, I slid sideways into the parking lot, coming to a perfect halt right in front of the pub, perfectly parked. It was then that an undercover policeman turned up. He shouted at me, to which I objected. Provocatively, I demanded that he show me his identification which I carefully inspected. In those days, there was no fine for dangerous or reckless driving, so the policeman tried to find something wrong with my car. The more he checked, without finding something to book me for, the angrier he got. I started to enjoy it by then, especially because the restaurant windows were open, and people were looking out and watching the whole commotion. Provoking the situation, I said to the policeman, “Can you please check the battery water

while you're at it?" Embarrassed and upset, he then left, shouting that he would get me some day – he never did.

Being 'grown up', I went for a holiday abroad with a mate in my car. Prior to that, I had installed a couple of folding seats for sleeping. It was great to drive on the German autobahn (motorway). I passed a lot of cars downhill, only to be passed again uphill. Suddenly there was a terrible sound from the engine and the car wouldn't go anymore. Finally, the police came as we were stranded on the side of the autobahn. They called for a tow truck. Not having much money, a tow truck was not on the cards. Therefore, I began to wave at the passing cars. Success! A fellow with a big BMW stopped. He only had a very short piece of rope with which to tow us but he took off like there was nothing behind him and sped up to way over 100 km/h. I was truly sweating, keeping my foot on the brake pedal. Eventually, we left the motorway and got into Karlsruhe. Just then, in the middle of an intersection, the tow rope broke so we pushed the car to the petrol station across the road. I parked it in an empty spot and asked the attendant if I could do a quick repair job. The people in the workshop were very helpful and lent me some tools. After about an hour the entire engine was on a trolley and my car was jacked up high on blocks. It was also on a steep angle and that was the way we had to sleep. Unfortunately, there was also a leak in the car and, as it was raining, the water now gathered up in the front, which meant we had to sleep with our feet in the water. In the morning, our feet were extremely sore, and we could hardly walk.

We were directed to a wrecker where we could buy the new piston, cylinder and valves for the repair job. The German guys in the workshop helped us to put it back together – all for free, which helped me change my opinion about Germans. They certainly had gone out of their way to be helpful! Off we went two days later via Belgium and Luxemburg to Holland. It was a great holiday. Most of the time was spent at a place in the south of Holland called Bergen op Zoom.

Just as I returned home, the engine blew up again. All this repair work and changing engines helped me to understand cars a lot better, but it also meant that most of my earnings were spent on repairs.

Driving was a lot of fun, but I ended up doing many stupid things which I now regret. One evening, when I was driving around with a school friend, we were heading downhill on a small side road. Further down we saw a woman walking on the side of the road with a teenage boy. Right then came an inspiration from the dark side. I decided to switch the lights off, then I turned the engine off and rolled quietly down the road. Of course, the pedestrians could not hear us coming. Just a few meters behind them I put on full brakes. There was an incredible squealing of tyres and instantly, the woman and the boy dived into the grass next to the road. To us it looked funny, as they jumped like one would dive into a swimming pool. I now realise that for them it wasn't funny at all; they feared for their lives.

At work, the other apprentice got more and more cheeky. One day I had a lot of work to do, but he kept on throwing things at me and spraying me with water. After the final warning, I ran after him. He went to his work bench and picked up a big knife and a hammer to defend himself. He hit me with the hammer, and that was the last straw. I punched him hard once and, before my second punch, he was lying flat on the workshop floor. Now I started to worry as he was unconscious and I thought perhaps I had killed him. Eventually he came to himself again and from then on was quite well behaved.

FINISHING MY APPRENTICESHIP

As part of my apprenticeship, I also went to classes at a technical college one day a week. During the last six months of my apprenticeship, everyone at school was studying for the final exams. Well, I was still playing the fool and teasing the teachers until one of my fellow students suggested that I had better study so I would pass the final exams. My reply was rather boastful,

informing him that “only idiots had to study”, because I thought I knew it all.

One day at tech, I locked a fellow student inside a wardrobe in the classroom. When the lesson started, there was suddenly a knocking sound. The teacher went and opened the classroom door but, lo and behold, no one was there. This happened several times and each time the teacher ran faster to the door and yanked it open, so he could catch the guy who was fooling around. Finally, the teacher found the place where the knocking came from, unlocked the wardrobe and opened the door. A very hot and embarrassed student emerged from the wardrobe, greeting the teacher with an outstretched hand and said awkwardly, “Hello”.

School went from early in the morning until seven at night. One late session, we had a relieving teacher and as he was writing on the white board I thought I would test him and try him out. I shouted something rude that I thought was funny. To my big surprise, this teacher was a very wild man! He turned around, furious and shouted, “You! Stand on your feet!” As nobody stood up he got even angrier. Everyone was a bit scared as he kept on pointing and screaming, “Get up!” Now he came to the back where I was sitting, but to my surprise, he shouted at the innocent fellow sitting next to me. The fellow tried to explain the mistake but was told to shut up. The teacher shouted, “What’s your name? Where do you work?” Now the poor fellow was thrown out of the class without being able to proclaim his innocence. I can honestly say that after this I kept quiet for the rest of the lesson. Other teachers didn’t always manage to get that much respect out of me. One teacher almost had a heart attack because of his frustration with me. Finally, he sent me home in the middle of a lesson. He reported me to my work place and arranged that I had to work overtime at my place of work, to make up for the school hours I missed on the day I was thrown out. My workshop boss told me about it, but I simply refused to comply. My boss did not insist, because he did not want to upset me, as the company depended on my cooperation immensely. Of

course, next time at school, the teacher laughed at me in front of the class, mentioning that I had to do overtime. I then informed him, also in front of the class, that my work place would not cooperate with such stupid demands. I won again, I thought.

As I had learnt how to box, I wanted to show off wherever I could. During one of those long tech days I started to pick on the biggest guy. He was enormous, but very nice – I'd say a gentle giant. After the break, just before the teacher came in, I threw a few punches at him. He wasn't too impressed, but I kept on going until he suddenly grabbed me by my shirt. He simply lifted me up with one arm until we were eye to eye. As I was dangling there, suspended in the air, he said, "Albert, please stop it, I may get angry". As I said, he was a nice fellow, and this was perhaps the reason I picked on him and not because I had courage. Still dangling, I grabbed him around his neck and swung myself around him. Slowly but surely, he crashed backwards onto the floor. Triumphant, I sat on top of him and now he looked more like a beached whale than a giant, and just then the teacher came into the room.

When the time for exams finally arrived, I started to get cold feet. Frantically I tried to go through the books to study, but soon realised, that what I hadn't learnt in the last three and half years couldn't be learnt in two weeks. The only thing I could do was to pray, so pray I did! The exams took six days and things didn't seem to go as well as I hoped.

Finally, the night of the big graduation arrived. All the apprentices, the national apprentice committee and many important business owners came. This was the night when we found out who had passed and who hadn't. After dinner, the official announcement came. "The highest exam score and the best apprentice of the whole class and county is Albert Ruegg." I felt so relieved and happy, but I was immediately boastful, and I didn't give God the thanks as I should have. The dignitaries stood there, expecting me to come to the front to be congratulated. Instead, I had my feet on the table, a glass of

wine in one hand and a big cigar in the other, saying, “If you want to congratulate me you’ll have to come over here”. What arrogance! But that was how I was at 19 years of age. Finishing top of the class didn’t do my ego any good at all. Back home, I was eagerly waiting for my dad to congratulate me. No such luck. Eventually I asked him, “Aren’t you going to congratulate me?” He didn’t congratulate me, but simply said, “That is just normal, you’re not an idiot”. My favourite uncle, who is only 10 years older than me, was quite different. He not only congratulated me, but also invited me out for a night to celebrate my success. He gave me the best a worldly person could give to a young fellow – an entrée of escargots with white wine in a special bar in Zurich’s old city called the Niederdorf, followed by some entertainment at a strip club, and then off to a flash restaurant for the real meal. I really appreciated my uncle but would have so liked to have heard the praise from my dad.

Now I had finished my apprenticeship, I informed my work that I was looking for another job and that they should look out for a replacement. Just before Christmas, I handed in my resignation. The big boss was very upset and would not even speak to me for the remaining month at work. I took on a job as a fitter and turner at Zellweger AG, a place where my dad had worked all his life. It was a very large company and I had a great time. A friend from school worked there too and he used to come to my department to give me cheek. I had a very bad habit of punching people in the shoulder with a right straight whenever I said hello. Quite painful for the recipient! Of course, my old friend endured my special greeting many times and one day he wanted to retaliate. Unfortunately, he did not realise that I had prepared for this by putting a metal plate under my work coat, just in front of the shoulder. It was him who got hurt again. On another occasion he turned up to give me a bit of abuse but the moment he became side-tracked and talking to others, I took my lighter and lit his work coat at the back. He didn’t know that his coat was smouldering until he opened the workshop door. There was a draught which quickly fanned the fire and wow, suddenly he stood in flames. I won again. I must say, those worldly friends

did not always act as friends. For instance, one time when I visited him at home with my first little car, he was very cheeky and even booted the door, calling it a heap of junk. I took exception to this, so just as I left I wound down the window and said, "Have a look at this thing here". The moment he put his head through the open window to have a look, I quickly wound it up and jammed his head. Of course, he shouted and swore at me and tried to put his hand through to break something. At that moment, I accelerated, and he had to hang on with both hands on the window. Every time he tried to do something, I accelerated and told him not to do stupid things. I drove about a kilometre like this, with him running and jumping sideways along the car. I scored again, I thought.

WORKING LIFE

At Zellweger AG, I had a lot of fun. Another tall, weird guy in the workshop challenged me and I boasted that I could punch him in the chest while he was standing that would make him have to sit down. Now the challenge was organised in the workshop. There was a very large drum of cooling liquid in the workshop that he stood in front of. He braced himself and then I threw my punch. Well, he didn't sit down but flew right over the top of the drum. As he was landing on the floor, his long legs caught the drum which tipped in slow motion. Gallons and gallons of liquid poured over him and flooded the entire workshop. He had to go home, and I had to get bags of sawdust for the floor to try to soak up the flood. It was so funny to watch that a guy who was working on a drill press nearly needed to be resuscitated because he laughed so hard he had trouble breathing. The boss was a very nice guy and he seemed to like me. Once I asked him if I could quickly make myself a candlestick for Christmas. He agreed and let me do it in work time. My design was so elaborate that it took two whole days to finish. It was a great place to work.

One weekend I spent some time at the rifle range with my old mate Bruno. He informed me that he was going to be sick on Monday – just to have a day off. Just about then I got a splinter

in my hand and thought, I could be off work too. So we arranged to meet up together on Monday. I first went to the doctor and informed him about the splinter in my hand. He couldn't find it. Finally, I persuaded the doctor to cut my hand to get to the splinter. He still didn't find it, but now I had an injured hand from the cut. As the nurse bandaged me up, I requested she place the bandage in such a way that I still could hold playing cards but bandaged enough that I could not work. And so it was. Bruno and I had a great day! The doctor signed me off work for an entire two weeks. As it turned out, there really was a splinter and it came out by itself about a month later.

Despite having a great time at work and everywhere else, I still had this urge to travel around the world. There had to be more to life than just Switzerland and the Swiss lifestyle. I mentioned this to a couple of my mates and they seemed to be interested too.



Now my 20th birthday was coming up. In Switzerland this is the birthday where one supposedly comes of age and I immediately informed my dad that he could no longer tell me what to do; not that I had ever taken much notice of him before that. To celebrate this important event, I organised a big party. I hired a scout hall near the forest, hired beer mugs and bought a large barrel of beer. What a party it was, complete with laughs, fights, accidents and one guy suddenly playing a porn movie he had brought along. By about 3am, there was just one friend and I left. He was one of the fellows who had said that he would join me for my world adventure, so we filled the mugs, then cheered and called out "to Samoa", another cheer; "to Australia", and so on. Often, we cheered so hard that the mugs shattered to pieces. If not, we then threw the empty mugs against the wall.

I ended up not just hiring beer mugs but having to pay for replacements for many of them too. At about 5am we drove to Zurich just to continue the festivity. The clean-up was an enormous task.

After about a year at Zellweger's, I went to the personnel officer to hand in my resignation. Because of the economic boom, they did not want to let anyone go, so I was offered three different jobs. I accepted an office job as an organiser. Altogether there were eight organisers in the company. It was quite an interesting job and I had the opportunity to have my office in various departments, to get to know the system. In the main office there was an older guy, who I once heard boasting of how he threw out a fellow at a function. He must have felt like the top bouncer. One afternoon on the way out of the office I was walking next to him and I gave him a little friendly push with my shoulder, knocking him slightly to the side. He smiled and gave me a little push back, laughing at the same time. I held my ground, not moving at all. This didn't please him, so he gave me another push. Again, I held my ground. After the third time, he grabbed me on the arms to knock me off my feet. By then he was quite aggravated because he could not get the better of me. I had not imagined that this friendly push could cause someone to get so upset. As he held me on my outstretched arms I also took a hold of his arms. Unfortunately, my grip was a bit too strong so that I accidentally ripped his shirt. This made him like a mad bull. He tried to rip my jersey, but I simply slipped out of it so that it wouldn't get ripped. By now I was topless, and he was really on the attack. He pushed me on top of a desk, against the office wall and started to squeeze my throat. This was too serious to be funny. By now another office worker came in and was totally shocked and scared. He kept on saying, "Sirs, sirs, please don't". With this wild man gripping me around my throat, I managed to make a few moves and the older man crashed under the office desk which broke in the process. Eventually he got up, puffing like an old steam train and left without saying a word. As a matter of fact, he didn't say a single word to me for over a

month. I was not a violent fellow, but somehow, I managed to provoke others at times.

One time I was at a night club where there were a lot of young people around. I noticed that they were all picking on a fellow who pretended to be drunk or asleep. I sat next to him and told him that if he wanted to sleep, he might as well do it properly. I folded up the collar of his jacket and laughed. When it was time to go, I walked past this 'sleeping' fellow with my mate who suddenly pulled his hair so that he fell backwards off his chair and onto the ground. I still don't know why my mate pulled his hair, but it certainly revealed that this guy was not asleep at all. He was now in a rage. Thinking that it was me who pulled him off the chair, he attacked me furiously. I wrestled with him for a moment and then threw him over a table, back onto the ground. Once he got up, he again came running and screaming towards me. By now I was sick of wrestling and gave him two quick left straights into the face, putting him flat on his back. I jumped on him, pulling back my fist to finish him off when suddenly a fellow held my wrist and yelled at me to stop. Very quickly I came back to my normal self, got up and told the guy that this other fellow there on the ground wanted to beat me up and I really had nothing to do with it. The poor fellow was looking a mess and bleeding out of his face. He was still angry and started shouting again which convinced the bouncer that he was at fault and so he threw him out. He left but a few minutes later he came running in again with a big piece of wood wanting to kill everybody – or perhaps only me. When he made bomb threats the police arrived, at which point I quietly slipped away. The next day I started to feel very sorry for this young guy. It wasn't really his fault – he had been provoked. I found out that his father worked at the council and so I decided to go and see him. I explained to him that his son was provoked and that I had knocked him down in self-defence. I also said that I would be a witness of support for him should he be in serious trouble with the police. To my surprise, his father told me that he was causing a lot of trouble at home and that I had done a good job. As quite a few people from work attended that party, back at work I was looked upon with

caution by those people who witnessed the fight. It was strange because I was not really the fighting type and yet I had inadvertently earned a reputation.

INTERESTING FRIENDS



My neighbour who was five years older than me went to England for a year. When he returned, he was still the same eccentric guy but now with long hair. I had a car by now and every time my friend had a bit too much to drink he wanted to ride inside the boot. Another night as we went out, he insisted on taking my boxing gloves along. He also went home to pick up an old German WWII helmet. While I was driving he pretended to be a gorilla, breaking my dashboard in the process before we arrived at a restaurant. During the drinking session a glass got broken and the restaurant owner came to tell us off. While the owner was shouting at me my friend quietly disappeared. Suddenly, he stood behind the restaurant owner, tapping him on the shoulder. Being tall, he was looking down on him and said, "Something wrong, any complaints?" The situation was quickly resolved, not because of the statement he made, but because he looked like a mad man, wearing my boxing gloves and a German WWII helmet! Being older, he was my idol, and this often got me into trouble as he used to set me challenges, especially when we were drunk. For example, once when we were in a bar he wanted me to take a barstool without being caught. I did, and the barstool became the first of many 'souvenirs'. I will never forget the time in another bar when he whispered to me that we should pretend to have a fight. That sounded great as he was an excellent actor. Suddenly he shouted at me. Then I shouted back, to which he quickly grabbed me hard on my shirt so that a few buttons came flying off. By

then, we had the attention of the entire bar. I slipped off my chair and said, "That's enough!" I grabbed him from off the bar stool and I threw him over the top of me. He landed in the hallway with the bar stool still hooked on his leg. By then, everyone was in shock. As he crawled back in, everyone tried to make peace and they offered us free drinks. We enjoyed the free drinks and our little stunt was a success, with the exception of my shirt. There were many more experiences which could have easily cost us our lives while driving drunk and walking on railway tracks in the middle of the night. It is sad to say, but he died relatively young. Later in life I tried to apologise, fix and restore some of the bad things I had done, not only with him, but at many other times in my life as well.

I always had a passion for antiques and as I got older it also involved some firearms. I went to buy a revolver and had to get a collector's form from the police station. There was only one policeman in the office and he was well known to me. He was not well liked by many, including myself. After getting my form, I asked him how he would apprehend someone who was not cooperating during an arrest. He assured me that he had no problem, because he was the strongest policeman in the county. Just as I was leaving, I provoked him a bit by saying that he surely couldn't get my arm behind my back. At once he suggested, "Would you like to try?" "Why not?" I replied and then he opened the office door to let me in. Suddenly he jumped at me like a wild animal. We wrestled quite some time and then I had the opportunity to throw him over the desk. Since he was mad like a bull and carrying a gun, I thought that it would be wiser to let him win. So, I let him put my arm behind my back voluntarily! He huffed and puffed and said that he never had problems like this. My suspicion about him was confirmed a few years later when he was called to a domestic dispute, where he shot and killed the husband. Sometimes it is a lot wiser to let the other think that he is stronger than to try and prove the point. For me, the giving in was not a sign of weakness, but wisdom.

In those days, I decided to go to night school to learn about electronics. What a hard thing that was! Three to four nights every week from 6-10pm, learning about something I did not really need. It was a tough year. Starting work at 6.30am, then driving through the traffic to Zurich, attending night class until 10pm and then going out on the booze. I truly felt like giving it up, but I was not a quitter. Finally, the year passed, and I achieved my goal. "What for?" I thought. Nevertheless, my initial thoughts for doing the course were that if I ever for one reason or another would have to go back to my trade, the additional knowledge of electronics would give me an advantage over other job applicants. Little did I know at the time that all these things would indeed prove to be very useful one day.

Around that time, my school friend Bruno turned up rather distressed. He had a briefcase with him and he asked me if I could hide it for a while, because his brother had gotten into trouble with the police. I would do anything for a friend and so I hid the briefcase in my parent's basement. About three months' later, the brother was released from custody and turned up at my place. We went down to the basement where he opened the briefcase, with smiles all over his face. Inside was a lot of stuff wrapped in tin foil, mostly hashish. Eventually, he encouraged me to try some, so I did. It didn't do much for me, other than make me a bit spaced out and tired. Even though it became a bit of a cool thing to do, I never got addicted to it. There was also a large block of hashish which I sold to a guy at work, never realising that this was drug-dealing. I didn't make any money out of this but just did it as a favour.

Bruno and I often went out to various events where there was a band playing and people drank and danced. He would never dance, but I did and enjoyed it. Most of the time we ended up drunk. One night we were driving home and were singing and having a great time. We happened to pass the old quarry where I used to ride motocross. Of course, I had to have a try with the car. This was not a very good idea, however, we had a great time and only the car suffered. After this we tried to share the

driving, with one of us having one foot on the accelerator, the other on the clutch, one on the brakes, one steering and the other changing gears. It was a miracle that we didn't have an accident. The worst was yet to come when, on one of those nights, we decided to go to a night club at around 3am. It was already closed, but I was not ready for bed. Then I saw a large rubbish container on wheels. We released the brakes on it and I slowly pushed it in front of my car down the main road. It was then that I started to accelerate. With pleasure, I suddenly put my foot on the brakes watching the rubbish container roar down the road at speed, all by itself. Of course, it eventually crashed into a tree. Seeing the mess, I thought that it was time to leave.

Another time, my friend and I went to an event and sat there with a bottle of wine, enjoying the music. We left for a short while, then came back to find other people sitting at our table. My friend asked where the wine was, to which there was just a bit of laughter and no serious response. Knowing Bruno, I knew what would happen next. He was a very strong, quiet, bullying type of a man. I remembered how on school sports days he used to throw the 'grenades' further than anyone else, even out of the school yard. Suddenly he grabbed one of these fellows and yanked him with one hand out of his seat. The next thing he cleared the whole table so that all their drinks were on the ground. By this time, I had got involved too and I ended up outside with one of these guys. I was ready for a fight, but the other guy hesitated. I wondered why until I saw Bruno appearing out of the dark. Now no one dared to fight.

YOUNG DREAMS

Being full of myself and thinking that I was invincible often got me into the wrong company and relationships, which ended up in heartaches and disappointments. Since then I have learned that sheep are not normally found in the pigsty. But that was the kind of person I was and therefore the kind of company I always found myself in. Deep down in my heart, I still had this idea that somewhere in the world there would be a nice, pure, simple girl,

who would believe the way I did and perhaps would also pray to this dear God I secretly prayed to. But the longer I lived, the less I believed that there existed such a person. Instead, I met a much older married woman and, to my surprise, she was not at all true to her husband. Despite being quite switched on in a worldly sense, I was naive enough to think that once married, people would be faithful. This encounter caused a lot of hurt in my life, so much so that my trust and respect for women basically disappeared altogether.



Now another burden came my way – compulsory army training. The last thing I wanted was to be locked in under some authority and not be able to get away. My plan was to deceive the army and to get an exemption. Many of my mates said this would be impossible, and they even made bets with me. My plan was good. During the initial recruitment, I participated with vigour in all the sporting disciplines and was noted for my achievements. I was the fastest sprinter of the day, 80 metres in 9.7 seconds. This I did with a purpose. As I used to box, I was physically fit and capable. Therefore, I could not pretend to be slow and weak. The

crunch came when I was with the officer who did the placing. I told him that I wanted to work in the army kitchen and not, as proposed, to be driving with the artillery. The officer took offence to this and swore at me, threatening to put me in the infantry instead. At once, I shouted too, walking out saying, “What an outfit; having to go to the infantry even though I am not able to eat everything”. This trick worked. The officer thought that I was trying to hide a disability, because I acted like I really wanted to go to the army. It wasn’t long before I had to front up again before a panel of officers and doctors. Now this was serious! I acted

like a fool but was careful to always give the correct answers. This again I did with a purpose. They were aware of my tertiary qualifications so that I could not pretend to be intellectually slow, and therefore I acted rather like someone with psychological issues. Half the battle was won, and I now had an appointment with a psychiatrist. Before the appointment I started to practise being shy, fearful and just a bit weird. As I entered the psychiatrist's door, I purposely hesitated to enter until he called me in. I walked a bit stooped down and twitched with my eyes frantically. During the conversation, I pretended to be scared not being able to achieve and said that I also had a sore back. Then came another test. He showed me pictures of just lines and blotches, asking me what I saw in them. In one I saw a butterfly but thought that this would be too positive, so instead I told him that I saw dead soldiers. The psychiatrist was then convinced that I was not fit for the army. It took me about an hour and two bottles of beer to get back out of my pseudo character. When I finally realised that I had succeeded in deceiving the army officials, I celebrated and began collecting my bets. Years later, I wrote a letter of apology to the army for my deception and lies.

When I was around 21 years old I met a girl who wanted to be serious with me, even suggesting that we should get engaged. My heart was still longing for freedom and adventure and to see the world. The last thing I wanted was a 'Swiss life' – work, eat, sleep, being insured for everything, get married, have children and to continue in that rut until retirement. Therefore, I said to her that I would only consider engagement two years before getting married and that at this moment, I had no such plans. Well, her love for me seemed to disappear instantly, and again, women appeared to me to be all the same. No love, no suggestion of waiting – it must have been the wrong one!

Around that time, I had again been drinking at a night club and was about the last one to leave, when I looked out the window and saw a police car next to my car. Of course, I could not get to my car in the state I was in, so I walked a few hundred meters to an apartment block where my ex-girlfriend was living. I

thought that I could perhaps wait at her place until the police left. I rang the doorbell, but no one was home. As I kept on ringing the bell, a neighbour looked out the window and swore at me for making so much noise. Away I went and sat in the car outside the apartment block and fell asleep. About two hours later I woke up and took my car keys and tried to start the car. I couldn't even find the key hole and got very frustrated. "Have I lost my mind?" I thought. This made me so upset that I began to rip out wires from under the dashboard. Finally, I looked in the glove box and to my surprise there was stuff in there which did not belong to me. It was then when I realised I was in somebody else's car. I quickly left and found my own car and by then the police car was gone, so I drove home.

MY TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND

As I always felt that there was more to life than just eat, sleep and work, I ended up doing all sorts of things out of the ordinary. As soon as I achieved one of my goals I found that the satisfaction only lasted for a short while and left me just as empty as before. The urge for life, freedom and adventure remained so I finally decided that I had to go beyond Switzerland to find it. I was also concerned about living in the middle of Europe, mixed with fears of possible nuclear war. I approached two of my mates who had said they wanted to go for an adventure too. One got cold feet and got married instead and the other wanted to wait for another two years. Not me, I thought. I was determined to go even if it meant going alone. This was a very big decision for me, especially because I always got homesick after a few days of being away from home. Not only that, but everybody discouraged me by saying that it would be impossible because I may not know the language, I wouldn't have a job to go to and I would be all alone. Unfazed by these negative comments, I started looking for a 'safe' place on the world map and found that the most distant place from Switzerland was New Zealand. I looked it up in an encyclopaedia and discovered that the main language was English and that there was quite a lot of farming. This suited me fine and so I wrote to the New Zealand Embassy

enquiring about a visa. To my surprise, they even offered me a free trip, as long as I committed to staying for at least two years. I decided against accepting the free trip, because it would have locked me in for two years and would have compromised my freedom. Eventually all went well, and I had my visa application approved. Just as well because I had already booked a cruise to New Zealand. The reason for deciding to go by boat was that I thought I might be able to learn English during the six-week trip.

It was now time to make some serious decisions before my departure to New Zealand. I still had a few months to go so the first thing I did was to get a higher paid job to save more money for my big journey. I was 22 years old and my new job was a quality control management position, supervising 13 women. During that time I also had to attend management courses. After only a few months I handed in my resignation, much to the disgust of the employer who had big plans for me. This was not a nice thing to do. Another heart-breaking thing for me was having to sell my antiques that I had collected since I was very young. I knew that if I wanted to be free, I could not have those treasured belongings waiting for me in Switzerland.

Finally the day, or rather the night, of my departure arrived. Off I went on the midnight train from Zurich to Genoa in Italy where I had to catch the boat. My mother waved and waved, and it



seemed that she wanted to wave me back. I loved my mother and the separation brought a tear to my eye, knowing that I may never see

her again. During the train journey I could not sleep because I

was hanging onto and protecting my two suitcases. I arrived at the railway station in Italy and then I used my little Italian dictionary, so I could ask someone where to find the harbour and my cruise ship, the Galileo Galilei. The trip began with a surprise. At first, there was a dead body floating in the harbour and then the crew called for a three-day strike. Eventually we sailed via Napoli, Messina, Malaga, Canary Islands, Cape Town, Freemantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney to Auckland. On the journey I experienced many unforeseen events and I learned very quickly that I was by myself. I really struggled with the English language and was therefore pleased to meet a Swiss family. The father was an older man but had the ambitions of a younger one. He told me that he wanted to go to the very bottom of New Zealand and just enjoy life and go fishing. He also told me that he never wanted to go back to Switzerland. No wonder, as he had left Switzerland without paying his taxes and had also made a fraudulent insurance claim.

One day on the deck, two old English women asked me something. Not being sure what they said, I simply shrugged my shoulders, to which they walked away in disgust and said, "Typically Italian!" I must have looked a bit Italian since my grandfather was a Swiss Italian. Poor Italians, they got the blame. We were now approaching Spain, the last port before going through Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean. Worried about getting seasick I went out drinking in Malaga. I ended up in a bar, drinking and selecting songs on the jukebox. Everyone was very friendly and one of the girls helped me to get the right music. I felt happy with those Spanish people and decided to invite them all for a free drink. To my surprise, when I left, I found that they had paid for everything including my drinks. It seemed that they expected to meet up again. Not knowing Spanish, I had said to the girl and the others, "Manana, Manana," which I believe means tomorrow.

As soon as we hit the Atlantic it started to get a bit rough. By then I wasn't sure whether it was the waves or the booze that made me bounce around a bit. I had trouble finding my cabin

and somehow, I ended up on the Captain's bridge. Soon some officers tried to get a hold of me, but I jumped down the stairs and shot through. I never got seasick and was very happy that I had finally found my 'sea legs'.

We arrived in the Canary Islands early in the morning. I left the boat with bare feet and could not understand why the locals looked at me strangely. As midday approached I started to understand. The ground was burning hot and I jumped and ran from one shady spot to another.

The entertainment on the boat was very poor and a lot of people moaned about it. As there were still several weeks to go, I didn't want to be upset, but simply wanted to make the most of the situation by creating my own fun. One of the deck activities was the occasional wrestling match with other young guys. There was one quite mean fellow who told me that when he was in India, he had broken some fellow's fingers. He was also a bit into drugs. We wrestled, which was fine until he grabbed my foot and slammed my ankle onto the hard deck. He delighted in hurting other people which I found disgusting. One day I saw him again out on the deck in his Yoga position. He had his legs totally folded up. I said, "Wow that is cool". Then I went behind him and told him that I would carry him to another place and just to wait. I lifted him up, his legs still folded and not touching the ground. Then I had a short battle in my mind – "Should I, or shouldn't I?" Finally I decided that I should. I simply let go of him and he crashed back down onto the deck – tailbone first. That made up for my bruised ankle.

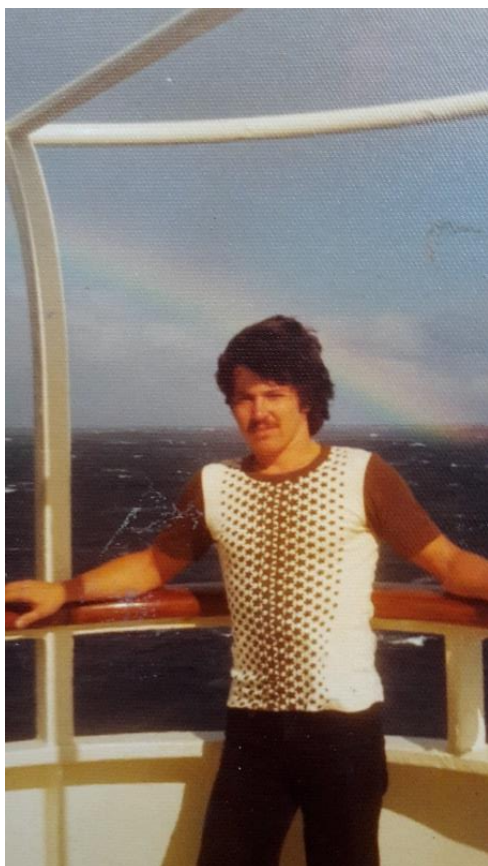
In Cape Town, quite a few new people boarded and with them came drugs. That is when the wrestling guy became useless, because he was stoned all the time. Soon after our departure from Cape Town we got into a huge storm. Most people were seasick and some were injured from all the stuff flying around everywhere. I went up to C-deck holding on to all the ropes which were installed because of the storm. I opened one of the port holes to take a photo. It looked like mountains out there and just

then a wave came crashing up and over the boat. I realised then why everything was shut. It was too rough to have dinner served, but it didn't matter, as most people couldn't eat anyway. I ended up getting some sandwiches. After about three days the storm was over and the sun was shining again.

By now I had a bit more courage and tried to practise my English on one of the newcomers from Cape Town. I approached a girl and, trying to make conversation, I wanted to ask her if she was bored, but instead I said, "You are boring?" Going by the bewildered look I received from her, I gathered that something was wrong with my question so decided to change the words around and said, "Boring you are?" to which she looked a little disturbed and just walked away.

The staff on the boat were quite slack and I had the suspicion that they were also stealing from the passengers. It was supposed to be the last trip for that boat, which may have affected the service. For instance, my jersey stolen and I was pretty sure it was one of the staff members who had admired it. I also observed the barman ripping off passengers gambling with poker dice. This wasn't fair, I thought, and therefore challenged him to gamble with me. I was in a real winning mood! We gambled for expensive drinks. Once I had won a few, it was double or nothing. Eventually I won dozens of drinks! The barman didn't want to serve them all and his excuse was that I could not drink them all at once and that I should spread them over a few days. I didn't trust him at all and demanded that all the drinks had to be served right there and then. The commotion attracted quite a few people, to whom I gave all the free drinks.

Since my destination was New Zealand, I was eager to meet New Zealanders on the boat. I met one interesting couple. He was quite a patriot and I'd say, a bit overconfident. One day the deck steward arrived all bandaged up, because the previous day he had played 'knuckles' with me. Since I was super-fast, I kept on winning this game and dished out lots of sore hands. One night I played the game with this New Zealander. After a while,



he got very sore and decided to stop. He then told me that he had another game to show me out on the deck. I happily went out to the deck, just to have him show me his karate skills while he attacked me furiously. It was late at night in the middle of the Indian Ocean with no one else around. I had to do some quick thinking! I could have hit him, but then I thought that one or the other of us could go over the side and be lost forever. Then it crossed my mind that I did not want to become a murderer. Therefore, I decided not to hit him, but just to protect myself until he was tired. It worked. I never hit him, but I ended up with quite a few bruises.

After an eventful six weeks at sea I finally arrived in New Zealand. The New Zealand couple invited me to stay the first few nights with them at his parents' place. The man's brother also came to visit as they hadn't seen each other for over two years. After a while it was suggested that I would have a game of knuckles with his brother. He was instantly agreeable, but I was not keen at all. Not being able to explain myself, I felt forced to give him a game. After the first few hits I already knew the outcome – not good! His hand got more and more swollen and red, and because I was too fast, he stopped moving his hand altogether. I tried to stop as I saw his eyes firing up, but to no avail. Then the other brother stepped in and suggested that stopping was the right thing to do. Just then his brother turned around and punched him in the head, sending him down by the fire place. What a drama and what an introduction to New Zealand on my first night!

MY FIRST JOB IN NEW ZEALAND

With the help of a woman I had met on the boat, I got my first job. She asked me what I had been doing in Switzerland. Not knowing how to explain my work as an organiser, I finally said that I used to work with typewriters. I never would have gone back to the old trade as I had worked myself up to much better jobs, but in New Zealand I thought it wouldn't matter as nobody knew me here. She took me to an office equipment place where I had an interview straight away. The manager was a Scottish man with a very strong accent, and along with my very limited knowledge of English, I really did not understand much of what was said. I just kept on answering, "Yes, yes, yes". After I left the place, the woman who was helping me looked quite excited and said, "Congratulations!" I did not know what for, but she informed me that I had got the job.



A few days later I ended up at the company's Tauranga branch working as an office equipment technician. I stayed temporarily in a guesthouse and one day I invited a guy who also lived there

to my room for a snack. I gave him bread, luncheon sausage and sauce. As I could not speak English, I failed to explain that it was not tomato sauce, but Tabasco pepper sauce. I don't think he had ever tasted anything that hot before and the moment he tasted the sauce, he began to panic, probably thinking that I was poisoning him.

I also bought myself a 250cc trail bike. As I wanted to ride the bike legally, I had to quickly get my motorbike licence. I asked my colleagues at work what questions I may be asked. I only had to answer five verbal questions and luckily most of them were the ones I had just been told about. My English was very poor, so the officer ended up speaking out the answers just for



me to repeat after him. I also had to go for a ride. The officer didn't want to sit on the back but followed me with his car. He told me where to go and where to wait for a hill start. Unfortunately my throttle cable was

broken so it was very difficult to operate the throttle by pulling on a broken cable. I managed to lose the officer by crossing the main road just before a whole lot of traffic passed, preventing him observing my riding style. I then waited for quite a long time for him to turn up for that hill start. Because of the broken cable I ended up taking off on the back wheel. Back at the station, the officer questioned me about the wheel stand. I let him know that I used to ride motocross and that I had no problems riding on the back wheel. I don't know how much he understood of my broken English explanation, but he gave me the licence anyway. For me it was like motocross every day and everywhere. One night on my very late return to the guesthouse I finished my bike ride with a few doughnuts on the guesthouse's front lawn. As everything was locked, I then had to knock on the main door. No answer. I then used my fists on the door and made a very convincing knocking noise. After quite some time, the owner came out, dressed in striped pyjamas. He was very upset and was swearing at me, but I could not keep a straight face as I looked at that old Englishman in striped pyjamas shouting at a drunken Swiss who could not understand what he was saying. My guesthouse days soon were over, and I moved into my first flat. When it began to get cool in the evenings, I started to search for the switch to turn on the central heating. No such luck. The only heating was an old fire place. It never crossed my mind that this was meant for heating! I simply thought that it was there to create a bit of ambience.

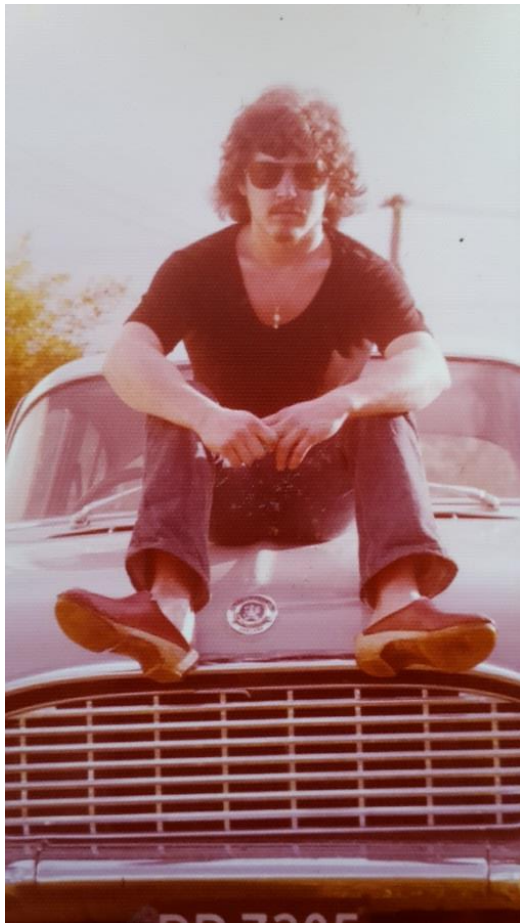
At work I initially felt a bit unconfident, but I soon realised that the Kiwi style was to put on a good front even if there was not much behind it. I could just be myself and I got away with a lot of things. I was treated very nicely and made to feel like a very valued person in the firm. I met a young fellow there called Richard. He was often teased by the others, as he wasn't always the most successful with his repairs. I still remember one time he had been servicing a typewriter and had returned it to the customer, only to find the entire escapement mechanism still sitting on the bench when he got back to the workshop. The other workers also cheated him out of money when gambling with dice after work in the social room, but somehow, I felt sorry for him and wanted to help, despite being told not to waste my time with him. On one of these social times I played dice with him and purposely cheated him out of his money. At the end, I handed it back to him and shouted at him that everybody was doing this to him and that he should wake up to it and be more careful. Unfortunately, by trying to get Richard out of his naive state, I introduced him to what I thought was my cool lifestyle, which was partying and drinking. One of the first 'education sessions' took place at a dance. I told Richard that he had to go and ask a girl for a dance. He was too shy, but after a few drinks he gained enough confidence to cross the floor. Richard was not used to drinking and he was quite drunk. As he approached the girl he tripped and landed flat on the ground right at her feet. Still lying there, Richard looked up and asked, "Wanna dance?" She declined.

Richard was over six foot tall and as he weighed next to nothing, I thought he looked just like a string of spaghetti. His English parents were very old and complicated. I still remember being invited there for lunch. The table was set complete with tablecloth, placemats, coasters, plates and more plates, but hardly any food. After the 'meal', I said to Richard, "Come, let's go and have a hamburger somewhere!" Looking back, I was quite rude saying this in front of the hosts. Because Richard was so skinny, I tried to fatten him up. Every Friday I cooked for him, frying up great big steaks and making him eat more than he was used to. I told him he should leave home and get away from that

strange environment. I meant well, but this was not really the way to go about it. Nevertheless, Richard followed my advice and transferred to Hamilton. I still remember the postcard he sent me. "I am boarding with a young family and I am getting beautiful big meals all the time." At work the store man and I became good mates. He was an older ex-navy guy; stocky, strong and sometimes very grumpy. Most workers, especially the boss, whom he once threw into a pool, feared him. As I arrived one morning the boss stopped me and warned me to keep away from the store man, as he was in one of those moods. I was always honest and straight forward with him and I think he appreciated the difference. As I walked out to the storeroom I saw him – almost steaming – and said, "Hey, you silly, grumpy old fool, chirp up!" He did and I remained unhurt!

Partying and drinking most nights usually meant that I went to work the next day with a hangover. One day I had to go and repair an electric typewriter at a solicitor's office in Te Puke. This ended up being my worst day at work ever. Still half drunk, I attempted to re-solder a type. After dismantling the covers, I lit the gas torch, getting ready for the soldering job. As I was tilting the machine with one hand, I forgot about the gas torch in the other hand which fired up the wall. Finally, I managed to solder the type, but then the cleaning with methylated spirits was another story. I tipped out the entire bottle, soaking not only the typewriter, but also customer records, and a letter which had just been typed by the office girl. And then the typewriter also caught fire for a moment. I was looking forward to leaving that place. Quickly I screwed the covers back on and attempted to get up, only to find that I had also screwed my tie between the machine and the cover. Quite a heavy necklace I thought. So, I undid the covers again, released my tie, replaced the cover and then said good bye. I picked up my tool bag but unfortunately it wasn't closed properly, and all my tools spilled out on the floor. When I got back to the workshop I told Richard what had happened and that this was truly my very worst day at work. Richard gave me a strange look and said, "This happens to me all the time".

One lunch time Richard took me to a car dealer where I bought my first car in New Zealand. It was a 1962 PAX Vauxhall. I had never had such an old car in my life but thought that it was great fun. As I wasn't used to driving on the left side of the road, I often ended up driving on the wrong side. I got to know many of the policemen and they all treated me very well. One night I forgot to switch the lights on and nearly ran over a policeman. After I



stopped he came running up to the car, infuriated! When he saw me he just said, "Oh, it's you Al, where are your lights?" "Here in the box somewhere," I said. He let me off – again. 'Working life' seemed to me like being on holiday and every new thing, I thought, was great. That was the positive attitude I planned to adopt before arriving in New Zealand. As I could not speak English, I ended up in many unusual situations where it could have easily turned out very badly for me. Most of my spare time I spent drinking and I soon used up my savings because I was not able to live on my wages alone. However, the great new feeling left me after a few months and

everything again seemed like work, eat and sleep. The desire for real freedom and liberty started again to manifest itself deep down in my heart.

TRYING TO QUENCH MY THIRST

I was still thirsting for something I could call real freedom, but I did not know how to get it. So I decided to leave work and just cruise around New Zealand on a big motorbike. I sold, or gave away everything I had, quit my job and my flat and was ready to roll. The night before my departure I was invited to stay with the

storeman and his wife. They were quite well to do people and put on a very formal dinner. While we were eating, one piece of meat on my plate felt a bit tough. I did not want to have to saw the meat and make the lady of the house embarrassed, so I tried to inconspicuously just apply more force without sawing. Unfortunately, it did not go unnoticed, for suddenly there was a big bang and the entire plate split in half and the food was strewn on the table cloth. The hosts were very gracious!



The next morning I rode away on a big motorbike, a GT750 two-stroke water-cooled. I had painted a small Swiss flag on the front of the helmet and this made me feel like I was in a race and that I had to win for Switzerland. I passed everything that was in front of me. One car gave me a bit of a race and I was close to 190 km/h before I managed to pass him.

As I neared New Plymouth I rode into a whole flock of birds. All I could do was keep my head down and wait till the banging stopped. Straight after this, when I was again at full speed, I noticed a herd of cows crossing the road. I managed to stop only a few inches away from a cow. "Whew," I thought and decided to go to the next pub for a break. As I placed my helmet on the bar I got a few strange looks. The helmet was full of feathers and blood! There at the bar I also met a couple of unusual foreign men. One looked like a bouncer and the other was decorated with a big gold chain and a flash watch. Ignorantly I chatted along with them, not realising they were up to no good, even when they asked questions like, "Are you traveling on your own? Where are you going? Is somebody expecting you? Do you have any friends or family in New

Zealand?” Innocently, I told them that no one knew where I was and no one was expecting me. Their countenance changed slightly and to my surprise, as I left the place they followed me. By then I realised the danger of the situation. I crossed the road a few times and so did they. Finally I fled into another pub, only to find one of them waiting at the front door and the other at the back door. A little bit worried, I sat at the table where there was a rough looking fellow. I told him what was happening, and he volunteered to help me in my dilemma. Eventually, after a long time, my pursuers noticed my new-found friend and disappeared. I decided to stay in New Plymouth for the night and the next day move on towards Wellington. From there I went by ferry to Christchurch. Little did I know that my future wife was living in this city, however, she was only eight years old at that time. When I arrived in Dunedin, I visited the local branch of Armstrong & Springhall, where I used to work in Tauranga. The area manager was so excited to meet me he put on a party for me and paid for my motel. I was very impressed by the friendly people of the South Island!

About ten days after leaving Tauranga, I arrived right down south in Invercargill, where I ended up staying for a while. First I went to see the Swiss family I had met on the cruise ship while traveling to New Zealand. To my surprise, I did not find a happy lot. Everything was compared with Switzerland and seemed not to come up to their expectations. That was one thing I didn't do – I simply enjoyed the difference. They introduced me to one of their Swiss friends, with whom I was able to stay for a couple of nights. Through them I also met a man from Sri Lanka and I ended up sharing a house with him and another Sri Lankan. They were very nice to me and it was there that I got a taste for curry.

By this time, I had to work again to make a living, so I accepted a job at the Invercargill branch of Armstrong & Springhall where I repaired all sorts of typewriters. Once all the machines were fixed, I asked the boss about all those electric typewriters on the back shelf. He told me they were beyond repair, worn out, and

that the customers had bought new machines. Being curious, I asked the boss if I could have a look at them. I ended up finding the problem and within no time, all these machines worked again like new ones. Slightly embarrassed the boss then asked me to pass on my knowledge to others and the machines were now lasting much longer! I believe my skill and knowledge helped me to keep my job with that company, even though I turned up many times half drunk and very tired.

Eventually, my luggage arrived from Tauranga by rail. To my surprise, my guitar was missing. The railway company paid me quite a bit of money for my loss and I went straight to the music shop to look at new guitars. The one I liked was slightly out of my budget. Then I saw a violin in a second-hand shop. I thought it was a bargain and bought it for next to nothing. I then went back to the music store and asked if they would consider a trade. Lo and behold, they paid me a lot for my old violin and I got my brand-new Ibanez guitar.

One Thursday night, as usual, I went to the Glengarry pub on my 750cc motorbike. When it was time to go, I gave a girl a ride up the road. As I only had one helmet, I gave it to her. Trying to impress her, I tried to do 100 miles per hour up Yarrow Street. Looking at my speedometer, I got to about 97 miles per hour when suddenly there was a slight bend in the road. I was leaning down as much as possible and so was the girl, who appeared to be a very experienced pillion passenger. Immediately, I realised that I could not make the corner. Straight ahead was a petrol station and a big concrete wall! I lifted my body up while the bike was still leaning and then threw my whole weight down, causing the bike to go down just a little bit more and take the corner, which saved our lives. "Wow," I thought, "What a close one, but really impressive!" We then stopped at a takeaway shop. There the girl shouted words at me I had never heard before. One of them was maniac! Maniac? At first I thought that it meant cool, but looking at her and her expressions, I thought it perhaps meant something different. In those days I had many police cars with flashing lights following me, but I always managed to lose

them. Sometimes I was riding the bike in such a drunken state, that I had to attempt to climb on it several times, because I kept falling off the parked bike. Once my hand was on the throttle, nothing could stop me. Finally, I decided to sell the bike and buy myself a Ford Falcon 500. This was a great car.

In those days I did a lot of trout fishing in one of the many nice rivers in Southland! I kept a bag of potatoes in the boot of my car and I would spend many hours fishing and barbequing the freshly caught trout and potatoes. It was nice to be alone at the river. During one of those fishing days I encountered a herd of bulls in the paddock bordering the river. It was not long before the bulls became more than curious and started to move towards me with their heads down ready to charge. I quickly headed for the fence, but the bulls were a bit faster and I realised I could not make it in time. I stopped and charged the bulls and hit them with the fishing rod. This stopped them for a short moment, just long enough for me to escape. I told the story to another fisherman, a Swiss guy, who just laughed and called me a wimp for running away from a few cows. Not long after that, he too fished at the same place. The bulls came again and soon he realised that they weren't cows and that my story was true, only he ended up in the river. I had the last laugh!

At that time, I also took on a part-time job as a barman. At the pub, no one wanted to work in the public bar. Strange I thought, because it was the place with all the action – bottles flying, fights, ambulances and police on a regular basis. One night an old fellow without teeth asked for a “phiph”. So I took out a pie from the pie warmer and gave it to him. Then he swore and shouted and kept on saying things I did not understand. Perhaps he wanted tomato sauce with his pie, but again, this was the wrong choice. Finally I worked out that he wanted a “Five” – a special five-ounce glass for this regular boozier. At this job, I got invited to a lot of parties, mostly by girls who thought I was handsome. Not knowing what handsome meant, I soon learnt it was something that got me into favour with the girls.

By now I was starting to miss my mate Richard and therefore I told my boss that he was a great asset and knew a lot about certain machines. It worked, Richard got a transfer for a few weeks. Well, my old mate Richard was now with me, so the party



continued in a higher gear. Whenever Richard had too much to drink, he wanted to smoke. He was prohibited from smoking at my place because he always ended up burning holes into my carpet or furniture. Once at a party, Richard was drunk enough to have the urge to puff on a cigarette. Since we were at someone else's place, I gave him a smoke. After a few minutes, I asked Richard where his cigarette was. "No idea" was the answer. I then found it, smouldering between the couch and the cushion, just in time before turning into a big fire.

We had a lot of fun at work. Once I showed the boys how to make a 'bang' with match heads in a small copper pipe heated up with a blow torch. Soon they got the hang of it and started to add ball bearings. The little canon was perfect. Many shots were fired in the workshop – mostly straight up. We realised the 'mistake' the next time it rained – ah yes, the roof was leaking. Another one was a balloon bomb made from acetylene gas and oxygen. I detonated it in the driveway just as the boss arrived. What an incredible boom! People flooded into the streets from various nearby buildings. This one could have easily gone wrong! After this I decided to go for a less powerful methylated spirits rocket. Once I used a bit too much meths and one of the workers caught fire.

As my thirst for freedom still wasn't quenched, I thought that maybe I needed to go to a bigger place like Australia. Perhaps living in a van and traveling without any plan would give me the satisfaction I sought. I enlightened Richard of my new idea,

Australia, and I persuaded him to come with me. Before we left, we ended up at another party drinking. Richard was a bit concerned about the trip and had many questions. I was drunk and became a bit emotional, so I told him to just ask me if he had any problems and should I be unable to find an answer, I will ask Him, pointing up towards heaven. As I did that, I got tears in my eyes. Somehow, I had a longing for God, but was very far away from Him.

Off we went to Auckland airport and encountered our first problem. The airline was on strike for an entire week. We ended up walking down Queen Street in Auckland City carrying our bags. Richard was very nervous and kept on saying, "What are we going to do now?" Not having much money meant that something had to happen. I reminded Richard of what I had said at the party and again pointed up to the One Who knows! Just then someone on a motorbike passed and called out. There was a girl on the back we'd met a week before in Tauranga, when she was on a school trip. Well, we had free accommodation for an entire week. God was faithful – I wasn't!

LIVING WILD IN AUSTRALIA

We arrived in Sydney where we visited a Swiss couple I knew. They were very helpful to us and we stayed with them for a few days to get organised for our trip. We bought an old Holden station wagon that just needed a bit of servicing. This ended up being our home for several weeks. Richard would do the dishes and I would do the cooking and the repairs etc. I hated doing dishes but felt somewhat guilty for getting Richard to do that kind of job all the time, so I decided to let Richard do the service on the car while I did the dishes for a change. It took Richard hours to do a little servicing, but nevertheless, he finished the job. There was only one problem – the car wouldn't go any more. I tried to find out what Richard had done to the car, but he denied any wrongdoing. To try and diagnose what had happened, I ended up asking Richard, "Have you touched this part? Have you touched that part?" until I figured out that there was

something wrong with the distributor. Soon the problem was fixed, the car ran again, and Richard was back on dishes. We now stocked up on camping gear, food, plenty of booze and cigarettes.

We left Sydney and went to the capital city Canberra. I still remember sleeping in the back of the station wagon and waking up all the time because of the stuffy air. I always opened the window then Richard would wake up because he was cold and would close the window again. This went on and off for the entire night. Perhaps we should have invested in an electric window? Early in the morning the police knocked on the car window because we were parked in the middle of town. We pretended not to be there then took off in a hurry once the police had gone. We headed north, passing Sydney again and went to Newcastle. There we visited a doctor from Sri Lanka whom I met through the flat mate in Invercargill. The dinner was very formal and of course, curry and rice. Knowing that food in their culture is eaten by hand, I told them that we didn't need the cutlery. I didn't have to mention it twice and the cutlery was removed straight away. So, I politely ate the curry dish the proper way with my right hand. It was then I noticed Richard with both hands in the curry, trying to put it into his mouth. It looked more like he was trying to rub his face with it. He was quite embarrassing! The next night we attended a folk concert by a singer called Melanie Safka. It was not quite my scene, but we enjoyed the experience very much.

Now it was time to move on. We ended up in a small town called Coolah. We hadn't been there long before we were visited by a local young fellow. He informed us that he had heard there were a couple of "Wogs" in town and he wanted to come and beat them up. I am happy to say that he did not regard us as "Wogs" (Italians and Greeks) and we evaded the beating. This guy seemed to be a bit strange and I did not really trust him. Nevertheless, we went hunting together and I made sure to keep an eye on him. At some stage, Richard wanted to carry my gun. Of course, I gave it to him. As we walked I told Richard not to stand on the logs of fallen trees, because they could be slippery.

I think Richard got a bit sick of me always telling him what to do. It wasn't long though before Richard did stand on a log and slipped, sending the rifle flying one way through the air and Richard the other.

I decided to carry the rifle from then on. Finally I shot a small Kangaroo and decided to eat it right there in the field. Richard nearly got bitten by a whole lot of Red-back spiders when he picked up a log for firewood. I had just told him a minute before to kick the logs first in case of spiders. I then made the Kangaroo



casserole and we all had a meal of it. It was then that our Australian partner informed us of his life's ambition, which was to kill a policeman without getting caught. My bad feelings about him were again confirmed that night at a party in the small town's community hall. Lots of food and drink and the party got livelier as time went on. I still remember throwing around prawns. At about that time, the Australian guy came up to me and asked me to go outside with him. This made me very suspicious, so I never let him out of my sight. Outside, I was ready for an attack and I asked him what he wanted. He noticed that I was ready and so he

changed his mind and just asked if I had any food in the van. Of course, that was not the reason, because there was an abundance of food inside the hall. There was no fight with me, but back in the hall, he attacked the local policeman.

The next day Richard and I left and travelled further north. Some of the roads were badly flooded. It was very pretty with a lot of native birds and animals and we experienced many interesting things. While driving, suddenly a darkish cloud came towards us and then 'bang bang' on the windscreen and all over the car. It was an enormous swarm of very large locusts. We had to drive



down the middle of the road because the edge of the road was all muddy from the floods. As I wanted to roll a cigarette, I asked Richard to hold the steering wheel. He volunteered to roll the fag for me, but I told him that I wanted a cigarette and not a rocket. Alright, he agreed to hold the steering wheel while I was driving and rolling a cigarette. Richard took the opportunity to try and learn the cigarette rolling skill and was busy watching me instead of the road. Now we were stuck in the mud with no way to get out again. On these country roads one only sees a car every few days. I took a shovel and posed for a photo, pretending that I was digging. It must have

been our lucky day because soon a car full of kids turned up. Mum and Dad and all the children helped, and while they all ended up covered in mud, I ended up on the road again, posing for a photo with a shovel and pretending to do something.

The next interesting encounter was in Walgett. There we stopped in the middle of the small township. There was a shop with an open area where two Aborigines were playing pool. One

was a tall, young guy and the other was old, short and stocky. They gave us unusual looks but continued to play pool. The old fellow said something to which the tall young one took offence. He just turned around and punched the old fellow with full force right in the face. I would have been knocked out, but the old fellow just laughed and continued to play pool. Those Abo's are tough, I thought.

We now moved on to Lightning Ridge, an Opal mining town. Richard and I agreed that this was just for an experience and not for a long stay. As we walked into the township we heard a lot of noise and the breaking of glass. It came from the local pub, The

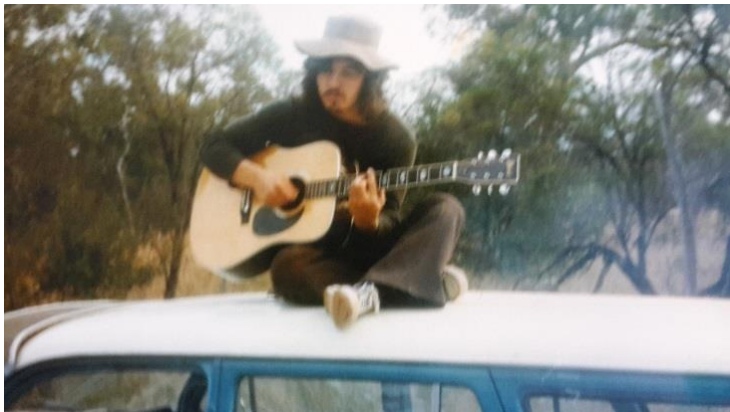


Diggers Rest. It didn't sound restful at all. Just as we passed, a man came flying out through the doors and landed right by our feet.

“Wonderful,” I thought. “Just like the Wild West!” We ended up staying three weeks. We met some interesting people, dug holes and tunnels and were drunk every night. For a while we stayed in the bush about 10 miles away from Lightning Ridge. It was called the Berlin Rush. First we set up camp and I asked Richard to clean up the bush around the camp while I was building a fireplace. Suddenly I heard a scream. I ran back to where Richard was. There was a head sticking out of the ground where Richard had just swept. I thought it was a poisonous snake and shot the thing right through the head. It



then jumped out and died. It wasn't a snake, but a big lizard. The sound of the bullet attracted the attention of a man who lived in a shack nearby. I was quite surprised to see other people out there in the bush. He was suspicious of any newcomers as he had had a shoot-out earlier on with two other men. It was wild living alright. We became friendly and he and his son took me pig hunting one day. I was glad to go with two experienced Aussies. Walking through the long, dry grass I was a bit worried about snakes and spiders. Suddenly the two dogs stopped a great big boar but then took off after some other pig. Full of enthusiasm I charged the boar with a small .22 rifle. I knew that I had hit it several times, but to my surprise the boar did not drop! Then I looked about for the two experienced hunters. One was hiding behind a tree and the other one was up a tree. The boar started to get aggressive and by then, I too thought of going up a tree until I saw a huge spider sitting on the first branch. Quickly I went for another tree and waited a while. The big boar finally felt the effect of my bullets and dropped. Great, I had my first wild pig!



There were many shady characters living out there. One day I spotted a man with a wheel barrow, dressed only in gumboots. Then another family turned up. This man was a good looking 40-

year old and he carried a revolver in his pocket. I soon gathered that he must have had some mental problems. His wife was big and fat and a witch. She told us she could tell where the opals were, and went to get an old part from an electric motor windings with a light bulb full of water stuck to it. Then she wrote on a piece of paper and stuck it inside the device. She started talking to some non-existent whatever – probably the devil. Next she told us there were Opals at a certain place. After they left Richard looked bewildered and I then informed him that this was a lot of

nonsense. How could an old light bulb tell you something about opals? After a few days we moved back to the township. We stopped at a camping ground and I had my first shower after a week in the bush. My hair was quite long by then and full of dirt from the mine shaft we had dug. The weather was nice every day and the lifestyle very relaxing. Boozing at night and hanging around during the day. On one of those boozing nights I began to feel a bit emotional. I told Richard to make me a promise. He had to promise that if he ever felt so low he wanted to end his life, he had to contact me first. What a strange request, but Richard promised. This made me feel better because I had really come to care about my tall, skinny, clumsy mate.

Time just flew past. I still remember asking a man how long he'd been in Lightning Ridge. He told me that he had come for a three-week holiday two years ago and had never left! This made me think it was time to move on. What a job it was to cure Richard of his 'Opal fever'. It took all my power of persuasion to get him to leave that place.



We continued our journey towards Brisbane. On the way we treated ourselves to a night in a caravan. After boozing all evening we made our way back to the caravan park. However, I missed the turn off and drove straight into a paddock. Just then a policeman turned up and asked if we had been drinking. Of course, I couldn't hide the fact that we were drunk and so I replied, "Yes, a whole lot too". This took the policeman by surprise, so I told him I came from Switzerland and that it was legal there to drink and drive. He was not at all sure whether I told the truth or not, but he could see I was just a tourist from Switzerland, so he let us go. In the morning the caravan park keeper came into our caravan to inform us that he was going

away for the day. He was very lucky because I was sleeping with a loaded rifle, just in case we had an intruder.

Our station wagon started to show some weaknesses by now. Far into the out-back, I drove down a hill on those sandy red roads and a lonely truck followed me. The car shook like mad when I went too fast and therefore I had to slow down. When the truck driver tried to run us off the road, I told Richard to take the rifle and shoot if he hits us. We managed to get away from that truck and off the road where we discovered that the problem with the car was the driveshaft. It was only held in place with a couple of loose screws.

Eventually we arrived in Brisbane where I visited a family I had met on the cruise two years earlier. They were very happy to see us. In my opinion, at that time of my life, the woman seemed to be a typical Australian mother, watching television non-stop and with no idea about cooking. A typical dinner was spaghetti out of a can. Since I had got into cooking, I offered to cook dinner the next day. My beef casserole with mashed potatoes was a hit with the fussy children and they asked for second and third helpings, much to the mother's embarrassment. Richard wrote in their guest book, "Clouds are grey, and skies are blue – I hope you enjoyed Al's special stew".

By this time we had run out of money. Richard still had some left in New Zealand and so he went to the bank to arrange a money transfer. Everything was so slow in those days and the money just didn't arrive. Finally frustration took over and I ordered Richard not to come out of the bank without the money. This time he stayed a bit longer in the bank but came out again empty handed. Well, I thought, I must do this job by myself. On Richard's behalf, I went to the bank and asked for the manager. The girl behind the counter told me that he couldn't help me either. That sounded unreal and I informed her that I was not interested in her opinion, but that I wanted the manager. Finally he turned up and tried to dismiss me too. I then asked for a bridging loan until Richard's money arrived. The manager told

me I could only have a loan if I had an account there. I had to remind him that if I had an account I wouldn't be needing the loan! They just couldn't cope with anything outside their normal procedures, so I finally instructed the manager what to do. I told him to ring the bank in New Zealand at my expense to find out how far the transfer had progressed and to have its legitimacy confirmed. Overseas phone calls in those days were quite expensive and not that common. After about 10 minutes the manager came back with a great big smile on his face saying, "How much would you like?" Now we had a small amount of money again, so we went back to Sydney. We were a wild, rough pair by then and I still remember having to rescue a drunken Richard from being beaten up by a bouncer. Needless to say - it was me who ended up getting hit in the face. It was time for us to return to New Zealand, but before we did, Richard went to a hairdresser and came back looking like a pageboy. I tried to fix his strange hairdo but could not find any scissors and therefore I finished the job with a pair of hedge clippers. "Be tough," I told him, because the clippers did more ripping than cutting.

BACK IN NEW ZEALAND

Following the Australian experience, I returned to Invercargill



and even had my old job offered back to me. I refused at first because I wanted to do something different. I visited a nearby farmer during lambing season. It was quite an

experience to help with those newborn lambs. In his house, I discovered a wardrobe full of expensive shotgun ammunition. I suggested to the farmer that I could fire some shots to scare the big gulls away. Those gulls were quite big birds and they often picked out the eyes and tongues of newborn lambs. I wasn't too

interested in scaring birds away, but rather firing the shotgun. And fire I did, hundreds of rounds!

There were a few labouring jobs advertised, but all required a truck licence. Straight away I went to the Police Department and made an appointment to sit my truck driver's test. I had about a week to learn how to become a truck driver. The theory was no problem, but I had no idea how to drive a truck. A farmer lent me an old vehicle that was classed as a truck even though it was more like a car to drive. The day came for the test and the officer checked my theory test. My one hundred percent result made him very happy. He was a friendly policeman and we ended up talking about how I came from Switzerland and my love of trout fishing, until the office girl knocked and reminded him there were other people waiting. He then apologised to me for the lack of time we had for the driving test. He just had me drive around the block for about three minutes and I ended up with my licence.

Soon I had a labouring job and the first thing I had to do was take a truck up to Tuatapere, about one hour's drive away. I had no idea what all the knobs and levers were for but managed somehow to get there. Once I was part of a fleet of trucks that were all loaded with shingle to be spread along the road. One after the other they went and spread the load when the boss gave the signal. Finally it was my turn. I must have been given the oldest truck with no power steering and a sticky hoist. I tried to spread the load, but instead I ended up dumping it all abruptly in one place. The boss jumped up and down and then organised a loader to clean up again. The boss also operated a grader and tried to be a 'real man' by showing off. One day I asked him what he did before driving trucks. He said, "Driving trucks". "And before that?" I asked, "Driving trucks" was the answer. "And before that?" "School," he said. "Is that all you can do?" I replied. I think I may have offended him, because he started to take his driving to a new level. Whenever I was with him in his truck or grader, he tried to show off. Once in the grader I said, "Watch out there is a fence!" He said, "I see no b***** fence!" and simply mowed it down. Another time I was again in the grader with him,

but this time on a main street in Invercargill during rush hour. In the middle of the road were traffic islands planted with quite large bushes and small trees. Suddenly he said, "These bushes p*** me off", and lo and behold, the grader blade came out and everything was flying all over the road. What a mess! He intended to give them a little trim, but instead the gardens were destroyed.

One night I ended up at a gambling place in Invercargill. At about 10pm an old mate from the pub turned up. He used to play in a country & western band at the Glengarry pub and he had been looking for me all over the place. He had a job interview the next day and was going to have his photo taken for a security card. He needed to look his best and wanted a haircut. For some unknown reason, he thought I was also a hairdresser. Having had quite a lot to drink, I felt very confident and said to him, "No problem, I'll do you a haircut for free". Off we went to the place where I was boarding temporarily where I found some scissors. Having been to world champion hairdressers in Switzerland, I felt I knew all about hairdressing. First I took him to the bathroom to have his hair washed and he then sat on the chair with great anticipation while I started to comb and snip. During the process I cut myself several times! After the haircutting, came the blow-wave and hairspray. It was an instant hit. His wife liked it! Soon everyone was convinced – Al is a hairdresser! After that drunken haircut session, I had various people lining up for haircuts. By now I got adventurous and gave haircuts to the mother and daughter where I was boarding. Because I was from Switzerland, everyone was convinced that it was good and the latest fashion. In that home, I was very well received. They seemed to think everything I did was the best! It was always, "Al makes the best coffee, Al does the best haircuts". It was nice to be popular and to be treated like a celebrity!

Now after three months of truck driving, tractor racing and earning easy money, I was so bored with it that I finally accepted an offer from Armstrong & Springhall to work in its Dunedin branch. I bought myself the cheapest car in town – a Skoda

station wagon – and persuaded the mechanic in the garage to give me a warrant, despite the steering being completely worn out. I told them I would mostly use it just to drive from one farm to another. With my brand new warrant I was driving down Dee Street in Invercargill being followed by a traffic officer who eventually stopped me, wondering why I was veering left and right all the time. Of course I could not tell him that the steering only worked after turning the wheel more than half a turn, and therefore told him that the strong wind was catching the side of my station wagon. I managed to convince him. He let me go and I drove that thing up to Dunedin.

At the new job I got stuck into work with enthusiasm, despite feeling a little lost. I was working much faster than anyone else, until the boss told me to slow down, which I did immediately. I didn't need any encouragement to slow down, so I threw the hammer on the bench and went for a walk. Being broke financially and broken spiritually, I really got into heavy drinking. I needed a whiskey and a beer after work just to feel reasonably normal. Despite being quite scruffy and rough, I seemed to stand out with my unusual ways. For a while I was picked up from work in a big, fancy limousine, driven by a very young girl. The girl's dad owned a car sales yard and she took the various fancy cars for a spin, just to pick me up from work, much to the amazement of the other jealous workers. One day after work, I had already had too much to drink but I had made an appointment with a mate to go out on the booze for the night. He came to pick me up at about 8pm. By then I was asleep on the floor and thought that it was morning. It dawned on me one morning, when I was sober again, that I had been drunk every day for weeks. I tried counting back to the day I was last sober but lost count. This made me consider things more seriously.

After about three months I received a phone call from the head office in Wellington. I was sure they were going to fire me, but to my surprise I was offered a transfer to Wellington. Since I still had this longing in me for something real, I accepted, thinking that I might find it in Wellington. I did not find it in Wellington and

things only got worse. Stupidity, drinking, dancing and smoking the odd joint – life was still empty. By this time, I felt so restless within myself that I was almost impossible to work with. I constantly swore and would never consider others. I just said and did whatever I felt like. The workshop manager just about had a nervous breakdown because of me. The day came when I just could not handle it anymore and I handed in my resignation. To my surprise the Personnel Officer offered me a temporary transfer to New Plymouth, which I accepted.

Life in New Plymouth did not change much either except that I met some folky type of people. This lot added to the different groups of people I got to know over the years, such as country and western clubs, disco freaks, boozers, druggies, gamblers, sports people, travellers, business people, doctors etc. About that time, 1978, I also became a naturalised New Zealander, which had been one of my goals before leaving Switzerland. On that day I went to the Egmont bar and invited everyone for a free drink. I also developed a weird habit of ripping off people's shirt pockets and collecting them. I would rip them off within a split second and sometimes people hardly noticed it. My friend Richard didn't own a single shirt that still had a pocket on it. I had a great collection of them and decorated my room with those trophies.

One day at work I got really upset with one of the workers when he sent a telex to the head office in Wellington requesting spare parts for a typewriter. That was okay, but what really upset me was that he signed it off with my name! "Why in the world would you do such a dumb thing misusing my name?" I shouted at him. Quite embarrassed, he told me that the parts arrived a lot faster when he used my name instead of his.

In New Plymouth, I first lived in a motel which the company paid for. One night I returned late and saw lights at the motel's adjoining restaurant. As I wasn't yet ready for bed I went and knocked on the door. The manager came out and informed me there was a private function. Since he didn't want to let me in I

asked if I could buy a drink instead. He asked me what I wanted. To be sure to get it I asked for something expensive and ordered a bottle of champagne. Once I paid for the bottle, I persuaded the manager to let me drink it on the premises. Reluctantly he let me in. There was a big table with many middle-aged men in suits and ties playing poker. I quietly sat there, observing them and drinking my bottle of champagne. By now I did not want to go to bed and so I ordered another bottle of champagne. After a while one of the gamblers asked me if I wanted to join in for a round. Obviously, they thought that I had some money. This was what I was waiting for as I was in a winning mood. And win I did. I acted, I bluffed, and I cleared up everything. With both of my pockets full of money, I finally went to bed around three o'clock in the morning.

After a couple of weeks I moved into my own little flat. I remember one day when I was hanging out my washing, I overheard two little children talking about me. One was saying, "He is a man". Then the other said, "No, he is a woman because of the long hair". "No, he is a man, because he has a moustache!" the other exclaimed. Then the other one said, "No, because my Kindergarten teacher has a moustache and she is a woman!"

In New Plymouth, due to the influence of the 'folk people', I made up a little folk song. It was probably an expression of how I felt and perceived things at the time.

Life is short, and life is fast
Life has soon an end
Everybody moves, and everybody rushes
And that lasts all day
They all want to live a rich man's life
That's why they work every day
But before I will sell my life
I have to think it over
My destination is not clear, I just sit here in the sun
My destination is not clear, I just sit here in the sun

After a few weeks I moved about 10 miles around Mount Egmont to a beach place called Oakura, where I rented a bach by the beach. There I started to think a bit deeper about my life and my future. I concluded – I am getting nowhere. What was the purpose of my life? I decided the least I could do, perhaps would be to save up enough money to buy a house. As it seemed impossible to earn that kind of money in New Zealand, I thought that I either had to go to Australia or back to Switzerland to work. By this time I hadn't seen my parents for about three and a half years and I felt if I didn't go back then, I would never go back. So, in the back of my mind I began to plan a trip back to Switzerland. With leaving on my mind, I wanted to go for a visit to Tauranga where I had first lived in New Zealand. Somehow I felt I wanted to say goodbye to the old workmates and other acquaintances.

MY REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

On the Friday morning of Labour weekend 1978 I left New Plymouth on my Kawasaki motorbike. Soon after I left I realised I had forgotten my gloves, but it was not my style to turn around, so when I finally had to stop for petrol, my hands were half frozen and stiff and I could not even undo the petrol cap. Soaking wet I arrived in Hamilton where I went to visit the Armstrong & Springhall office. The guy who originally employed me was still there. After letting me have a shower, he invited me to his office. He pressed a button and a whole tray of booze emerged automatically. He enjoyed showing off his flash office and buxom secretary. Warmed up again, I continued my trip and eventually arrived in Tauranga.

I went straight away to visit my old work place. Being full of expectations I ended up quite disappointed. Perhaps the disappointments came because I now understood English quite well and could comprehend all the rubbish that was being spoken. In the evening I went to the Star Hotel in the city's Red Square. I had a few drinks in the public bar and then went to the

lounge bar before walking across to another pub only to return to the Star Hotel. Every time I swapped bars I had to walk outside and through the Red Square. There I noticed a group of people, including a Māori fellow with a guitar. The Māori guy smiled at me each time I walked past. They seemed to be Christians and somehow I thought they were probably on God's side and therefore had my sympathy. After another hour or so, having won quite a bit of money playing poker and having had a few more beers, I thought it was time to check out the lounge bar to find out where there was going to be a party. By this time I felt quite happy and stimulated and as I walked across the Red Square, I decided to say "Hello" to this Māori fellow who looked at me again with a smile. I walked up to him, patted him on his shoulder and tried to encourage him by saying, "Keep up the good work and just convert those heathens out there". I tried to convince him that I knew God and that He had just blessed me with all this money I'd won playing poker. The man spoke about Jesus and I spoke about God. Again I patted him on the back and said, "You do a good job, just convert those heathens out here". This man realised there was no hope of getting through to me and he just smiled but then, with a compassionate look in his eyes, said to me, "May I pray for you?" This question nearly knocked me over. Pray for me? Since I had never prayed for anybody else, only for myself when I wanted something or when I was in trouble, I was taken by surprise by this question. I just mumbled, "Yes", and then he began to pray right there outside the pub. It was just at the time the pub closed and I heard some people in the background making fun of me as I stood there with my eyes fixed on this Christian man who was praying for me. Another rough looking man, covered in tattoos, was standing there and he had just decided he wanted to follow Jesus. As he now wanted to quit smoking, he gave me his packet of cigarettes. This really sobered me up. I realised that I had become lower than that man! It is hard to see oneself as you really are. As my standards had dropped, so had the quality of my mates, which left me with the illusion that I was always a cut above. Only God can give us a true assessment! The desire to go partying had

left me and therefore I went straight to the hotel reception to book a room for the night. I fought with tears all the way to the room. To my surprise there was a Bible in the room. I picked it up and read a few lines and then went to bed, where for the first time in many years, I just cried like a little boy. Suddenly I realised how low I had fallen and that, claiming to be a Christian, was just an illusion. I was just as bad, or even worse, than the scruffy bunch I had been with in the pub.

The next day I travelled on to Rotorua. Somehow I felt very sober. All the motels were booked out and I had no place to stay for the night. As I kept on thinking about the previous night's experience, I had no desire to get drunk or end up at some party. For the first time in my life I thought about God by thinking about Jesus Christ. There was no longer any difference. Jesus Christ had to be God, or else I could not pray to Him, for I knew that there was only one God and that I should have no other gods besides Him. For the first time in my life I identified Jesus Christ as being God Himself. Not wanting to get drunk, I drank only one beer. Then I thought, if this Jesus really is God, then He would know that I need to find a place to sleep. Somehow I felt confident that God, Jesus Christ, was with me and so I stopped worrying about accommodation and went to a restaurant for a pizza. About 9pm I went to the motel next to the restaurant to enquire if there was any place where I could spend the night. They assured me all the motels were fully booked and that they even had people sleeping in the hallway. Just as I was leaving, the woman at the reception called me back and said she had an address for people who sometimes took on boarders or students. At this late hour she rang them and they accepted me for the night. It was quite a long ride on the bike in the rain, but I finally arrived in Ngongotaha, where this family lived. To my big surprise they spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ too! In the morning after breakfast, they gave me a New Testament Bible instead of a bill.

CONVICTION OF SIN

On that same morning I rode my motorbike back to New Plymouth, feeling richer with a Bible and new experiences. As time went on I started to read the Bible. To my surprise it rather condemned me than blessed me. I found so many things written in there where my own life didn't line up at all. For a moment I wanted to stop reading it because perhaps it would tell me of more things that I shouldn't be doing. But I had enough sense to realise how stupid it would be to just ignore the truth as this would not change the facts. The words written in the Bible were still in there, whether I read them or not. I believed the Bible was the truth and therefore realised it was me who was wrong. Simply not believing the Word of God would not have changed the fact that I was lost and bound by sin.

One day I read that drunkards would not be ready at the Lord's second coming. This Word of God stirred me up, as I was drunk most nights. Therefore I decided not to drink as much and to stop before getting drunk. One night as I went to town again, I had already drunk quite a few cans of beer and I felt it was time to stop. Nevertheless I felt like going to another nightspot to have a few more drinks, but something kept on reminding me of the Scripture I had read about being drunk. I said to myself, "Blow it. I want to enjoy myself", and so I went. Later that night, as I took off on my motorbike to go home, I was followed by a traffic officer with the siren going. Straight away I accelerated, thinking I would lose him as I had done every time before. To my surprise I just could not get away from him. This was very strange. As I skidded on a gravel road and came to an abrupt halt, I finally got caught and ended up losing my licence.

Living about 10 miles out of town, I found myself a bit stuck. It was very strange that since the Lord had spoken to me about this matter of drinking I no longer got away with it! Having lost my licence, I decided to buy a pushbike. One morning I slept in and missed the bus for work so I decided to go by pushbike. Half asleep I pedalled those ten miles up and down the hills. At lunch time, I went to the bike shop and sold it back to them. I couldn't stand the thought of riding home again.

As I was living in quite an isolated place, I now had a lot of spare time to read some more in the Bible. Again, a verse struck me. This time it was about offending or misleading little children. The Bible says it would be better to have a millstone tied around the neck and to be drowned, than to offend one of these little ones. Straight away I felt bad about the things I had taught Richard. He was so innocent; just like a little child when I first met him, but I was the one who got him into all the bad ways. With enthusiasm and limited understanding, I had tried to teach Richard of my ways, but it had been the blind leading the blind.

Shortly after this time, I was transferred back to Wellington and Richard and I started flatting together. As his birthday was approaching I went to buy him a Bible, as a result of the conviction I had concerning him. On the cover page I wrote the following words: "May this Book of Life help you through life to find life". Before giving Richard the birthday present, I persuaded him to promise me to do something, without telling him what it was. As I handed the Bible over to him I said, "All that I have ever told, taught or shown you was wrong! Please forget it! Here is a Bible and this is the truth. Forget about me and do what the Bible says instead!" Richard was totally puzzled but accepted the Bible and discarded it in the 'bottom drawer'. A few days later I came across a pamphlet which said that alcohol and tobacco were not for Christians. Again I felt spoken to, especially about my heavy smoking. On one of the following nights, just as I rolled a cigarette, I said to Richard, "This is the last one! I will never smoke again". Of course, Richard did not take me seriously since he had seen me 'give up' smoking many times before. But this time was different. For the first time I really realised that it was not just bad for my health or a bad habit, but that it was also wrong for me to smoke. I went to my bedroom, got down on my knees and said, "Lord Jesus, you know that I want to give up smoking, but I can't do it by myself, so please take it away from me". The next day there were none of the usual withdrawal symptoms, but a feeling that I was breathing pure oxygen. I was free, totally delivered from smoking! Praise the Lord!

TRAVELLING BACK TO SWITZERLAND



During my time in Wellington, I again persuaded Richard to travel with me overseas. I was ready to go home and thought it would be a great experience for Richard. We

booked a cheap cruise on the Taras Shevchenko, a Russian cruise liner, and left New Zealand by ship at the beginning of winter 1979,



headed for England. This trip was very eventful. There was a big storm soon after leaving Auckland. Having drunk too much the night before, I ended up being seasick for

three days. Seeing our first port, Tahiti, appearing on the horizon was a lovely experience. A few guys picked up girls at the port, plus a few more things they had to see the ship doctor about. I kept away from that side of things and went to town for a while. Having already travelled a lot by now, the excitement was not as great as one normally feels during such a trip. I now could sit back and observe the ship life without getting caught up in it myself. My observation was that for the first one or two weeks on board, people usually manage to control themselves quite well and keep to themselves, because not everybody meets their standards. But living on a ship means that there are restrictions of where one can go and with whom one can spend time. This

frustrates some people after the first few days of excitement have passed, and, as it is not possible to leave the ship in the middle of the ocean, people usually show their true colours after a while. They start to make friends, get engaged and lose their money while gambling etc., forgetting completely that finally there will be a harbour where their values and things will be altogether different.

The entertainment on board the ship was great, and there was a very good band. I used to like dancing Tango, and Tango I did my style. Being full of confidence, booze and excitement, I was dancing the Tango, tilting my dancing partner backwards, nearly to the ground and then up and around again to the rhythm of the music. Well, down she went again, more and more, till she touched the ground. Then I simply let go, walked back to my seat and left her lying on the ground. It was quite a struggle for her to



get up in the middle of the packed dance floor. She wasn't very impressed but kept on hanging around me because I could dance after all and I must have been entertaining. I always got away with a lot. If Richard would have done the same thing, he would have had his face slapped. It wasn't long before I ran out of money, so we started using Richard's. That is what good mates are for. There was a lot of entertainment on the ship, including a dress-up and performance competition. I can say that I didn't find it hard to show off and so I won the competition. The first prize was champagne and now it was my shout. When we finally

arrived in England I saw people who had clung to others while on the ship, just being left on their own. So-called 'best mates' did not even bother to say good bye, but instead shot off as soon as

they put their feet on solid ground. These observations made me realise how tragically some situations can end, especially when people place their trust in other people. Of course, not everybody is like that, but I witnessed many disappointments.

Now Richard and I went our separate ways. Richard stayed in England and I borrowed some money from a generous Irish girl and then flew home to Switzerland, where I intended to settle. I landed in Zurich wearing jandals and carrying an old suitcase and my guitar. I felt very strange. Even speaking again in my own mother-tongue seemed to be embarrassing. Finally I arrived home, totally out of money, and was reunited with my family after more than four long years. My mother had put aside one Swiss Franc for every day I was away. This was very nice of her and I ended up with quite a bit of 'welcome money', so was no longer broke. One thing I did notice was, except for the fact that everyone was older, no one seemed to have changed in themselves. Of course the past four years had formed and shaped me quite a bit and I soon realised that I was a stranger in my own home country.

One day my dad wanted to take me to some striptease clubs in the big city, but because I was trying to live a better life, these suggestions made me feel very uneasy and I declined. At this, I was accused of being scared – a wimp. My own personal improvements made me feel quite self-righteous – as a matter of fact, I had become quite religious. Feeling so much out of place everywhere, I started to frequent some of the clubs and places I used to go years before. After a few weeks I noticed myself slipping back into my old ways. At the same time I received many job offers and, after some consideration, I selected two that I thought may be suitable. One was near home as a manager and the other was in Caracas, Venezuela, for some office machine company that had its head office in the French part of Switzerland. The company set up a meeting for me with the manufacturing company, to do a training course on its equipment before moving to Venezuela. Eventually I realised that the last thing I wanted to do was to live in another strange place where I

didn't know the culture and the language. After I declined the Venezuela offer, I received a phone call from the manufacturing company expressing their disappointment. However, when I convinced them that I would not change my mind, they then offered me a very good job in their company. This also meant that I would have to go away from home and be all on my own again, plus I would have to learn French. But somehow I thought this might be better for my religious life and it looked like a way of escape from falling back into my old ways. Therefore I accepted the job offer in the French part of Switzerland, despite the salary being less than what I had been offered at the other job. Suddenly all my previous working experiences, even the electronics course, my knowledge of English and being a confident traveller, became useful in this new position. I was now a Technical Instructor in Yverdon for Hermes Precisa International, a company which manufactured office machines.

LEARNING FRENCH

I left home for the second time and again I found myself lonely. The odd weekend I would drive home to visit my parents. My religious behaviour pleased my mother and, as soon as I would arrive at their place, she would whisk me into the kitchen where we could be alone and talk about God and have discussions about religion.

Very soon I realised that I could not run away from my old habits and ways, as they kept on following me wherever I went. As well as drinking and going out every night, I also joined a local rugby club. There I was able to release some of my frustrations and did this to such an extent that some of the players complained about me being too rough.

One weekend I went to my parents' place to pick up another car. The drive back to Yverdon took about three hours. Despite being a bit tired from my drive, I decided to go to a night club in Orbe, about 15 miles out in the country. Something inside of me told me not to go. This prompting reminded me of my time in New

Zealand when I had my motorbike accident. Nevertheless, I went and just stopped on the way quickly to consume about half a litre of white wine to get rid of my tiredness. Then I drove on, speeding along the winding country road. As I was enjoying skidding around the corners I was suddenly surprised by road works. The road became narrower and it was simply too tight to straighten up the car. The next thing I knew, there was a terrible banging, flying lights, broken glass and other bits until I finally came to a halt in a paddock. The first thing I did was pull the handbrake but found that it was broken off and, to my surprise, the whole engine was pushed into my seating area too. The car was a complete wreck but I myself was unhurt. This accident caused me to again think about the things of the Lord. I knew that this was the correction and the result of my disobedience.

A couple of weeks later Richard arrived from England because I had invited him for the Christmas holidays. Finally it was me who had the money and I was able to look after my mate for a change. I needed to get another car quickly, so I got myself a Mini. We went skiing in Zermatt and had a great time together. Richard had never been on skis, but nevertheless, I took him up to the small Matterhorn which is nearly 4,000 metres high! It was an extremely cold and stormy day – minus 24 degrees celsius! We were the last passengers on the gondola before it was closed because of the bad weather. At the top, Richard was quite scared but I was not very understanding. I simply gave him a push and off he skied, at least for a few moments. Richard made me laugh, as he looked so funny with ice on his cheeks and an icicle on his nose. Poor Richard nearly froze to death, so I gave him my gloves. He ended up walking down the hill and going to the First Aid post at the first station. On New Year's Eve we ended up drunk and silly. I still remember jumping out of the window from the party at five in the morning. After Richard had gone back to England and I was back at work, I thought about what I had been doing on New Year's Eve. I knew that it had been wrong and I expected some more correction from above to follow, but nothing happened. This worried me because I thought God did not care enough to correct me anymore. I just knew that

the situation was serious and that there was no room for playing games with God.

MY FIRST CHURCH EXPERIENCE

One Sunday morning I finally got up in time to attend a church service. The church atmosphere seemed to affect my emotions



a little bit but that was about all there was to it and I had no great desire to go back there. About that time I shifted to another office that I had to share with one other man. He was the type I would have classed as

straight, hard-working, serious perhaps, like some school teachers or policemen. In any case he was not my type at all and I would never have accepted any advice from him, or from anybody else for that matter. I thought myself to be so much superior to everybody else. One day I told him about a fellow in the rugby club who was a convinced atheist. During this discussion, I realised that this work colleague believed in the Creator and not in evolution. This seemed to help me talk to him more openly and one day, being frustrated and sick of everything, I said to him, "It is just impossible to meet decent people in this world? Everywhere I go it is the same old story; stupid talking, booze and silly women". He then told me of a group of nice young people who came together on Saturday nights to talk and sing songs etc., and that he could mention me to them if I would like to go along to one of these nights. I agreed, and finally ended up there on a Saturday evening. The first time I went I felt quite embarrassed but appreciated the sincerity of these people. We sang songs, talked about experiences, and they even prayed together. This made me feel quite uneasy as I thought they should be praying on their own at home rather than in a group. I kept in contact with those people and they invited me for tea and other outings.

One Saturday the group went to visit a rest home and I was asked if I would like to join them. As I had got to know them quite well by now, I decided to go along. To my surprise they sang songs to the old folk, and one fellow stepped out and spoke to them about the Lord Jesus Christ. I felt very embarrassed standing among this Christian group and, as I looked around and saw some people in wheelchairs and other sick people, I thought to myself, "What are you doing here?" Feeling so much out of place I kept on looking at the young nurses, trying to indicate that I did not really belong to this humble bunch of people. I was still ashamed of Him! Only a week later I got caught up in a similar situation. The whole group, and some others from their little church fellowship, went singing in the Lausanne city centre. They also handed out invitations to a week of special gospel outreach meetings that were to be held at their assembly. I hid behind the group, fearing that perhaps someone from work would spot me amongst them. If this happened, I thought it would be impossible to return to work on Monday, after having been seen with these humble believers.

The following week I went along to their special gospel meetings. Of course, it was all in French and there was not a lot that I understood, but I sensed a lovely atmosphere and so I decided to go along again the following night. After the meeting I felt very happy and it seemed to me that God really loved me. On my way home I was singing in the car and by this time I really looked forward to going to the next meeting.

As I was sitting in the meeting that night I had a vision. A picture of a mountain ridge appeared in my mind and it was accompanied by the thought, that if I said "yes" to all that I heard and would be identified with this humble bunch of believers, then I would be crossing that mountain ridge and there would be no way that I could ever go back to where I was. On this night, the 21st of February 1980, the evangelist who was preaching offered to stay behind for anyone who had any questions. As I was sitting in the meeting I was constantly pounded with the most

terrible and filthy thoughts. Even though I did not want these thoughts, they kept on coming to my mind. I certainly would have liked a solution to this problem. When the service was over the evangelist stood by the door saying goodnight to everyone. As I came to the door he shook my hand and said, "We'll have a little talk together, won't we?" My answer was an instant "Yes", but what surprised me most was that this evangelist spoke in my Swiss-German mother tongue (he was a Swiss-French.) After everybody had left we started talking together.

RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST

The evangelist was very surprised to find out that I had difficulties understanding French, as he didn't know I was not from the area. However, he could speak Swiss-German and was able to answer my question about my thoughts in a very simple way. He said to me, "If a bird flies over the top of your head, this is not your fault, but should the bird start building a nest on your head, then you can certainly do something about it". He soon realised that I had much deeper problems than just this question and he started to read some Scriptures to me. This didn't affect me much, as I thought because I had already read the Bible, there was nothing new he could tell me. Also, this talk about being 'born again' and being a new creature in Christ seemed a bit overdone to me. I thought, I'd always be me and that it would be impossible to become somebody else. Perhaps, at best, I could improve over the years and become a better person as time went on. He also asked me whether I had ever stolen anything, to find out if I was aware that I was a sinner. I couldn't remember having ever stolen as my parents had taught me this was wrong, so I had never got into stealing in a big way. But stealing at this point of time seemed to me such a harmless thing and I thought, if it was only stealing, I would not be worried at all. As I was reflecting on my life, I felt totally sinful, and I knew that it was hardly possible to be any worse than I was. We ended up reading a Scripture in Acts 26:18: *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which*

are sanctified by faith that is in me. Somehow this Scripture spoke to me as never before. The evangelist then asked me if I understood the meaning of it. I said yes, that those people in the Bible were sanctified and made holy because they believed in Jesus Christ. He seemed to agree with me and he asked me, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ?” I certainly had no doubt about my belief in Jesus Christ, as this was the reason of my trying to live a better life for all this time. As I answered yes, he then asked me, “Then how does the Scripture apply to you?” I thought I would be a hypocrite to say I was sanctified, especially as I had scenes of my past life floating in front of my eyes. But then I thought, “The Bible says so, and the Bible is the truth”. God’s Word is true, no matter what. Despite being nervous and hesitant I answered, “Well, umm, then, I am sanctified, I am holy, a Saint”. For a moment I thought the evangelist would tell me off for making such a statement, but the brother simply said, “Have you ever thanked Him for it?” As I had never thanked the Lord for having sanctified me, we both went on our knees and we thanked the Lord for what He had done for me. I stopped shivering and a warm feeling came over me.

Straight after this I left and started driving home. I kept on thanking the Lord as I was driving along. The joy in my heart became greater and greater and suddenly, it felt as if Heaven came down and I found myself in the sweet presence of Almighty God, something I had never experienced before. I knew, “He is here!” That kind of joy was far greater than any earthly joy could ever be. I was praying, praising, singing, crying, shouting, screaming, I even lost my voice. I was happier than I could ever have imagined to be possible. Me, a Saint, a child of the living God! Accepted, loved, redeemed. The happiness I experienced at that moment came from above.

There are no words to explain this kind of joy and supernatural Presence. It must be experienced to be understood! That Presence opened my eyes to the truth, to reality and I was finally in my right mind. That wonderful Holy Spirit filled me and

became one with me! I was now truly born again, a new creature in Christ!

FREE AT LAST

Since that moment, I have never been the same, I never can be, nor want to be again. My entire taste for things changed instantly. Things I used to like, I hated, and things I used to feel attracted to, sickened me and I wanted to run from them. This was manifested in quite a few radical actions. For instance, I poured all the booze I stored at home down the kitchen sink. Neither did I want to waste my time watching television anymore, so the television went at the same time. I kept away from clubs and bars and suddenly, I spoke without using bad language. It took a while to speak fluent English again because I was so used to incorporating bad language into most of my sentences. To the surprise of many people, I started to like children too and nothing seemed to get on my nerves anymore. The peace of God that passes all understanding was now mine!



Finally I was free, and I had found what I had been searching for all these years! Later I found a Scripture in the Bible that was fulfilled in me: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:35-37)*. Free from the invisible chains of sin. I simply did not need to do the things I used to do because all my desires had changed. I even liked to go to work. Every day was full of excitement now that I experienced real freedom. If somebody had locked me up in a broom cabinet, I would still have been free and happy, knowing that the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour, now lived within me by His Holy Spirit: *...even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to*

whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:26-27).

With this new freedom I was conscious that my past life was gone, that all my sins were forgiven and that I was completely separated from my old self. Even so, there were things of the past which I felt I should try and put right. One of the very first things was to apologise to my parents for my difficult and rude behaviour, especially during my teenage years. They were more embarrassed about my apology than I was, but at least they knew I meant business with my new life. There were other things too. For example, I went to see some people I had lied to, and I repaid money for things I had stolen – there had in fact been a few occasions. As soon as I had put these things right, they were off my mind. Of course, there were many things I could not put right, but I knew that God would remember those things no more, because I had received forgiveness for all my sins. Putting things right was a good thing and by doing so, the accuser, the devil was put to silence. It was no surprise that my old friends no longer wanted to have anything to do with me. It appeared as if I had just come from a different planet and even my favourite uncle didn't seem to be so keen on me anymore. He was full of reasoning and was most upset by the thought that I would pay tithes to a church. I explained to him that there is a blessing in it. He had just bought a house and so I made the example that the Lord could bless me in such a way where I could get the same house my uncle had just bought, for much less. The difference would be the blessings that would outweigh the tithes paid. Of course, he didn't agree, and little did I know, that this scenario would come to pass later in my life.

MY FIRST CONVERT

Soon after my conversion I was contacted by my old mate Richard. He wanted to come to Switzerland. I let him know that he was welcome, but that I would not join him for outings as we used to do, because I was now a Christian. He didn't mind and

sent me his arrival date and time at the Lausanne Railway Station. The day arrived and early in the morning I went to Lausanne to pick him up. I waited and waited, but Richard never arrived. Knowing him, I calculated that he had got his dates mixed up and he would arrive a day later. And it was so, only this time Richard waited and waited as I left it up to him to find his way to my place. Finally he turned up in Yverdon. I was happy to see him and was just about ready to give him one of my 'special greetings'. As I was pulling my arm back to punch him in the shoulder I looked at my fist and instantly realised that I no longer needed to do that. No bruise for Richard! The Lord gave me His Holy Spirit and now He was teaching me to yield to it. Richard was tired from travelling, but this did not stop me from talking about the things of the Lord until late at night. I even made him sit down and listen to a sermon I had on tape. During the sermon Richard nodded off to sleep a few times. I kept on waking him up, telling him how important and serious it was.

My new way of life meant that I spent many evenings at home. Not knowing what to do with all this new-found time, I started to play the guitar, compose songs, read the Bible and I even started painting. Of course, Richard was slightly forced to become part of my new lifestyle, especially for the first few days. He was very skinny, and I tried to make him eat more. I was just like an 'eating coach' saying, "Come on, have another helping, just one more spoonful!" After one of these eating sessions, I started with my painting. Richard had to be my model. I tried to draw the parable of the sower, so Richard had to pose like someone who is sowing seed. As I was drawing, Richard started to move. "Keep still", I kept on saying, but suddenly he had to make a run for the bathroom as the big dinner had just been too much for him.

As I had to go to work in the morning, Richard was home alone during the day. He spent the days relaxing and reading the Bible. When I got back home from work I would talk to Richard about the things of God. He was very surprised because I would talk about the same Scriptures he had just read during the day. When this happened day after day, Richard asked me, "How can

it be that you talk about the very same thing I just read in the Bible today?" I told him that this was the work of the Holy Spirit. This strange phenomenon also led to Richard praying the Sinners prayer. God answered. The things of the Lord became so real to Richard that by now he was earnestly praying for the baptism of the Holy Ghost because he knew that without it he was not ready for the Lord's return. I assured him he would receive it because the Bible promises the Holy Ghost to those who ask for it. By now I also introduced Richard to some of my new-found church family. We travelled around together to other towns and meetings and one Sunday night after we got home, I was talking to Richard, but looking down at some Scriptures, when suddenly Richard made a strange kind of laughing noise. I was about to tell him to show a bit more respect but when I looked up, I saw him radiant with joy. I had never seen Richard in such a happy state before. Finally, when he could talk again, he exclaimed, "They are gone, they are gone", before returning to making happy noises. "What is gone?" I kept on asking until finally Richard was able to say, "They are all gone, my sins are all gone. Jesus Christ has taken them away!" We both fell on our knees praising God for His wonderful grace and mercy. Praise God, Richard my best friend was now saved.

As time went on, Richard and I went to many Christian meetings and enjoyed our new, real life in Christ. Richard soon met new friends in church and was invited to stay and work with another brother from the church, but still we got together quite often. Richard confessed to me that he had been contemplating suicide when he was in England, as he was so lost and unhappy. Praise God for keeping him.

A SUPERNATURAL INCIDENT

On my first visit home after having had a real experience with Jesus Christ, my mother was not so happy to see me, neither did she want the discussion in the kitchen that she used to enjoy before my conversion. Instead, she shook her fist at me as I got out of my car before I was even in the house. She saw that I had

had quite a short haircut and she objected to it very much. I previously had quite long and wavy hair as was fashionable at the time, but when I heard that the Bible teaches men should have short hair and women long hair, I decided to have a haircut. For a while my family thought I had been brainwashed or something. They just could not understand how I could be so different. A supernatural incident happened one day at my parents' place. My mother and sister were talking very seriously about me, even suggesting that I was mentally sick, or had brain malfunction. They were quite rude in what they said about me, however they did not realise that I was sitting in the room not far from them. I was so astonished and even walked up to them, looking at them closely with a look of disbelief as if to say, "Don't you know that I am right here?" It was then I realised that they simply could not see me. I was invisible to them! The Lord allowed this incident just to show me that He had truly changed me.

Surely the change in me was so complete that it even affected my appearance. The Spirit of God made all the difference! This made me believe and act in agreement with the Bible, even without being aware of it. My attitudes and convictions were so different from what they used to be. It was often much later that I found these things confirmed in the Bible. Later I realised if the same Spirit that wrote the Bible dwells in us, then we would have to agree with every single Word. If one does not agree with the Word, then that person either does not have the Spirit of God or is deceived in the mind through the traditions and teachings of man. As time went on my family came to see that this was not just religion or another interest like I used to have, such as boxing, motorbikes etc., but that it was a reality and it was here to stay. This change of mine caused quite a strong separation from my natural family, but a very close unity with those who had the same experience of receiving the Holy Spirit, the mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Every time I visited home we seemed to have an argument, as they always felt the need to justify what they were doing. I stopped having fruitless discussions with my

parents because I believed that the truth stands on its own and does not need to be defended.

WALKING IN THE NEWNESS OF LIFE

Over the next few months I experienced countless blessings and miracles in my walk with the Lord. I now attended a small fellowship, where I went to all the meetings possible, even the ones in other towns. I felt that I would not want to miss any opportunity to hear the Gospel and what the Holy Spirit may want to minister to me. I truly enjoyed every meeting, because I went with an attitude of meeting with the Lord. Sure, sometimes the preaching appeared a bit flat and did not excite me too much, but I always got a blessing out of every meeting, even if it was only the song we sang at the end of the meeting or a prayer from a brother. Just to hear and to talk about Jesus was, and still is, the most wonderful thing to me.

One night after a meeting a man from another church group came to my place for supper. He was sent by his fellowship to try and proselyte me to his church. There was no witness in my heart that I should change fellowships and I said to him that I thought it would be better to get the lost sheep in before we start shifting the saved ones from one fold to another. As I was saying these words, suddenly an awesome presence came in the room. This brother jumped up with excitement, spilled his cup of coffee and then wholeheartedly agreed with me. He had not really wanted to proselyte for his church group. Later that night I lay awake for a long time. I was still too excited to be able to sleep. I kept on praying and praising the Lord and then suddenly something happened to me. My speech turned into an unknown language and I was praying in a language I didn't know. My spirit was praying separately from my mind. I realised that this was the speaking in tongues the Bible talks about. I kept on praising the Lord under the anointing of His Holy Spirit for at least fifteen minutes before I could speak in my own language again. The church I attended did not teach this and cautioned the people against speaking in tongues. It was an interesting experience

and, as it was Scriptural, I was able to receive it from the Lord. Let every man's word be a lie and God's Word be the truth! I shared this experience with a man from a Pentecostal Church. "Praise God," he said, "Now you have the Holy Ghost!" This statement surprised me, for I knew the time when I received the Holy Ghost was that night in the car. It wasn't when I spoke in tongues. I believe there are people with the Holy Ghost who speak in tongues and I also believe there are people who speak in tongues without the Holy Ghost. Some people only have an anointing and not an infilling. That can be very confusing. The test is simple – does the Spirit in you agree with all the Bible, and does your life line up with it? It should, since it was the Holy Spirit that wrote the Bible. Yes, there is the true biblical Pentecostal and early Church experience of speaking in tongues and that is a true gift and blessing of God, but there is also the counterfeit or perversion of it, inspired by the devil and not the Holy Ghost. The Bible teaches also that God lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust and sometimes the true anointing of God falls onto an untrue vessel. Many people make the mistake of dismissing the whole thing when they see the counterfeit instead of seeking the real thing. There must be the real thing if there is a counterfeit!

Working as a technical instructor went well for me and I was now being sent abroad to run training courses. The biggest concern about this was to be away from fellowship for a month. My first trip took me to Dubai. The plane was delayed and the poor fellow who had to pick me up stood the whole night at the airport in Dubai waiting for me. He was very glad when I finally turned up. I was driven to a hotel complex on the edge of the desert called the Metropolitan Hotel. There were a couple of restaurants and a night club called Lucifer's Place. I did not need a lot of discernment to know that this was not a place for the children of God. Where could I go and what could I do for three weeks? Outside it was very hot and there was nothing but sand and dirt. One day I watched the news on television but found myself watching some rubbish afterwards. This caused me to unplug the television and instead I went on my knees to ask the Lord to let me be a blessing to someone. Even while I was praying, the

devil was trying to make me doubt myself saying, “How can you be a blessing being locked up in your room?” I started to write a few postcards thinking this may be how I could be a blessing to someone. After a while I rang the room service for a drink. Soon after there was a knock on the door and a shy young Indian man stood there holding my orange juice. After a few moments he got even more nervous and said, “Sir, may I ask you a question? What book is that?” As I replied, “This is a Bible”, he started to smile. He showed me a small Catholic prayer book his mother gave him before he had left home. He never had a Bible and did not know much about the Scriptures. I enlightened him about the Lord’s second coming and many other things. At the end of more than an hour I prayed with him and gave him a Bible. After he left I realised that God had just answered my prayer.

The biggest challenge was not the running of the training course, but the official invitation I received from the company director. This was to celebrate Diwali, an Indian god of fortune, at the



Sheraton Lounge. As I was pondering over the gold-framed invitation card, I became quite disturbed and ended up having a sleepless night. Should I go and be a witness or should

I refuse to go? Finally morning arrived, and the sales manager came to pick up the acceptance card. Without thinking I said, “I am not going. I am a Christian and I do not celebrate Indian gods”. The sales manager had a fit and was very upset. That was the confirmation I needed and I knew I had made the right decision. Sometimes salt is more noticeable when it is missing than when it is there!

The course was very successful and I finished it by inviting the whole class to a formal dinner at the hotel. I was able to change

my ticket and decided to take a private holiday before heading back home. I flew first to Egypt. What an experience! It started right at the airport when all the taxi drivers started to fight for me. I ended up at a local hotel from which I had to flee a couple of days later. It was quite a dangerous place. One afternoon, when I was in my 'hotel' room, I heard knocking on my door. I didn't answer and soon someone tried to force the door open. A man dressed in a suit and tie entered my room. He was totally surprised to find someone inside. When I asked him what he wanted, he told me he was the plumber and needed to check the tap. It was then I decided to leave that place. It didn't happen without people chasing me, but I managed to get away. I found refuge at the Heliopolis Sheraton Hotel. There I met a travel agent who seemed to find me interesting and he asked me to have a drink with him after he finished work. In the restaurant, I witnessed to him about the things of God. He got so nervous and was so convicted that he didn't even finish his drink.



It was quite impressive to be out in the hot, yellow desert, riding a camel and seeing the pyramids in the distance. I couldn't help thinking

about how the children of Israel had been slaves there.

The Arabs were constantly begging for money which began to get on my nerves. They would suddenly come running towards me with an open bottle of Coke they wanted to sell. They found it hard to believe when I refused to buy it from them. I did give some money to one little boy who was leading some camels. Shortly afterwards an older man with rotten teeth begged me for more money to buy food for the abused looking camels, only to

be informed by the boy that I had already given him money. This didn't please the old fellow who then started to abuse the young boy before continuing with his plea for more money. By now I had had enough. I told him I had no money. At that moment a fifty-pound note fell out of my pocket and I realised that I just had lied. This troubled me for the following three weeks as I thought God had left me! All I wanted to do now was to get out of Egypt, so I changed my ticket and took the next flight out of the country and ended up in Greece. As well as going for a cruise around some islands, I travelled by bus to the old city of Corinth. It was an amazing experience to be there meditating upon the things of God and realising that the apostle Paul had walked in the same place. From Greece I flew to Rome, visiting friends and then back home to Switzerland.

Back in Switzerland I was still struggling with the lie I had told in Egypt, but I was comforted by the Scripture that says even if your own heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart. One night Richard came to visit me, as by this time he lived only 10 km away. We talked for a while and then he had to leave to catch the last train home. Before he left I said, "Just stay for another moment, I'll just read something in the Bible". I opened the Bible and read Psalm 114:

1 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

2 Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

3 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

5 What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fledest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

6 Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

8 Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

I was really spoken to by this Psalm and became aware of the amazing greatness and power of our God – my God! We went on our knees and I started to pray and praise the Lord, when suddenly the presence of Almighty God filled the room and the Spirit of God once again took over my speech, only this time it was in English. Richard said that the prayer I prayed was so wonderful and the words were so beautiful. It was supernatural because my English vocabulary at the time was not that extensive. This event took place on the 8th of December 1980 and I will never forget it! Even though I had grieved the Spirit, He had not left me. The Scripture says that we are sealed with the Holy Ghost until the day of redemption! Yes, even if our own heart condemns us, God is greater than that and His Word never changes!

MY FIRST SUPERNATURAL HEALING

One evening as I was sitting at home by myself, I wondered when I should go to hospital to have an operation on my foot. For a long time I had had a growth in my foot which hurt me quite often. Another man at work had had the same thing and the operation put him off work for about three weeks. While I was looking through my diary to find a suitable time for the operation, suddenly the revelation struck me: God Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and earth is my heavenly Father! In past years I had often prayed the Lord's Prayer, starting with, "Our Father which art in heaven", but now it was quickened to me and I suddenly comprehended the reality of it. Well, I thought, if He is my Father then I can surely ask Him for healing! I straight away prayed and asked my heavenly Father for a new foot. As soon I said "Amen", I looked at my foot and it was still the same – a growth on the sole of the foot and a corn on my toe. That evening when I was in the shower, I was washing my 'good' foot when suddenly I noticed that standing on the 'bad' foot didn't hurt anymore. A miracle had taken place! The growth was completely gone! As a matter of fact, I had received a new foot. Even the corn on my toe was gone! This was my first miracle and it made me more aware that I was dealing with the Living

God. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. Many more miracles happened in the months to come and living with the Supernatural became quite a natural thing to me. If you see it in the Bible and can believe it, then you will get what you expect.

VARIOUS EXPERIENCES

Another change in me was that I became content with my wages. Before my experience in Christ I used to ask for a pay rise every three months but now, to my surprise, I not only received a pay rise at the end of the year without asking for it, but also a bonus payment.

After a short time of living the Christian life, it became my desire to tell my old friends and everyone I came across that there is hope beyond this earthly life; there is life eternal! God is real! This was one thing that made work frustrating. I thought that teaching people about office equipment and computers was a waste of time as there was something of far greater importance – Jesus Christ! Nevertheless, I had a lot of opportunities to witness to people I would not have otherwise met. One incident was a manager from Nigeria who came for some technical training. One evening I invited him to my place and before I took him back to his motel I prayed with him. After we got up from our knees he exclaimed, “What a wonderful prayer!” Once we were in the car he added, “This was the nicest prayer I’ve ever heard!” After we had been driving for a while he said, “I really felt the presence of the Lord when you prayed!” By the time we arrived at the motel he stated, “When you prayed, I saw a light come down from heaven!” In a way this progression of feelings and observations seemed quite funny to me. We stayed in contact for a while exchanging letters, in which I was able to share truth with him as it was revealed to me.

At church, I met a young man, who asked me to join him for a secret Bible smuggling trip to Romania. In those days Romania was under strict communist rule and Bibles and Christianity were



prohibited. We had a specially prepared car with a double floor, full of Bibles. We also decided to take a huge chilly bin full of butter for the brethren because it was very hard for

them to get any dairy food, but this was dangerous in itself. At the border, we had to remove everything from the car however we left the chilly bin on the back seat. The boarder control searched everywhere in that car, but they never seemed to see the chilly bin. What a miracle! We finally found our contact and, after dismantling the car floor in the forest, we filled up bags with Bibles. We had a wonderful time of fellowship with those believers, and even though we could not understand the language, there was such a unity in the Spirit knowing that we had all met the same God, Jesus Christ. One of the older men had just recently been released from prison after having been incarcerated for three years just because he was a Christian.

Another time I went to an outreach camp in France. It was a great opportunity to witness to the people on the streets and to some of the young people in the camp. One young Catholic boy stood out from the rest of the group. He was very diligent and full of desire to serve the Lord. Once I spoke to him about how it is wrong to worship Mary, to which he took exception. Straight away I changed the fruitless discussion and told him to seek the Lord for the answer. "This is the Holy Spirit speaking," he replied. A few weeks after the camp he contacted me to say he was finished with the Catholic Church. He came across the Scripture where Jesus says not to call anyone father except the heavenly Father. Full of enthusiasm, he tried to enlighten his Catholic Priest of his new-found revelation. Of course, the Priest did not

accept this and therefore he decided right there and then to follow the Word of God rather than a 'man-made' church.

Back in Yverdon I was still living in an apartment, but really desired to have a house in the country. Knowing that the Bible teaches us to be content, I did not want to force the issue by praying for a house. A few weeks later I had to take a group of visiting technicians out for lunch. After lunch I noticed an advertisement for a house to rent, in a newspaper that was lying on the table. It was the house I had been dreaming of, so I stepped outside to a phone box and, after quickly praying, I rang up to enquire. What a blessing, I got that house. It was the perfect place for me and very affordable. I now rented a beautiful, completely restored old house, built in the 1700s, in a nearby village called Fiez.

During the first Christmas in my new home I tried to visit every household in the village of about 365 people and to give them a Christian calendar. It was a very close community that even had its own fire brigade, which I joined. In that house in Fiez I hosted many visitors. One day a Moroccan man turned up at my place wanting to stay with me. When I asked him why he had contacted me, he said he had heard that Christians have a lot of money. He also told me that he really wanted a job, therefore I said to him, "Let's pray together and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to give you a job". I told him to go down onto his knees, which he reluctantly did, and together we asked the Lord to grant him a job. Before going to bed he let me know that I could go to work in the morning and leave him there at the house to do his own thing. "No way," I told him. We had just prayed for a job and I insisted that he go and find it in the morning. At 7am I drove him to a nearby village, telling him to meet me back at my house at 5pm. He turned up on schedule, full of excitement exclaiming, "I got a job and accommodation too!" He was more surprised than me.

One evening I invited a married couple and Richard for a special dinner. The tablecloth was on the table, the candles burning, and

the casserole and vegetables were placed in various dishes on the table. After giving thanks, I wondered why the visitors didn't eat. Then I noticed I had forgotten to give them any plates or cutlery. I was so used to having only Richard around for dinner, that I had only set the table for two. Many times people from the fellowship visited me and quite often I had a full house and many blessings. Even an old boss from New Zealand came for a visit. He wanted to see Richard, not me, but Praise God, I had the chance to host him and apologise for my bad behaviour while I had worked with him.

Around that time Richard's parents came for a visit too. They were not impressed about his conversion and blamed me for it. Richard had quite a hard time as they hammered him concerning his beliefs. But he was not alone – the Lord was right there with him. One night when they were out for dinner, his mother was really giving him a blast, to which Richard replied that she had no guarantee to be alive the next day. Just as she wanted to dispute that, she nearly choked to death on a piece of meat. After they left Switzerland, they wrote a letter to Richard warning him against me.

ESCAPE FROM MAN'S RELIGION

My new-found freedom in Christ was soon attacked. The enemy knew that I would not go back to the worldly, sinful life I once was living, so the attacks were subtler. It came not in the form of worldly bondage, but religious bondage. There are many 'church spirits' which are not the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit will always provide a way out with the conviction and of course, will always agree with His Own Word – the Bible! Jesus said, "When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will glorify me." At first some people in church had plans for me and even tried to match-make me with a girl. I never felt comfortable about this because I believed the Lord could give me a wife in a supernatural way. During one sermon the Lord ministered to me when the preacher said it takes about five years for a new Christian to become mature. I thought that I could not get married and start a family before I

was mature, so somehow, I knew I would have to wait another five years! Because of this I decided to apply for the church group's missionary school. I had all the qualifications they required, but I was puzzled by some of the questions they asked, such as, "Do you have insurance? Do you have health problems? How much do you earn? Have you signed the abstinence agreement?" Christ is my insurance, actually 'blessed assurance'. Christ is my health. Christ is my Provider! Why sign an abstinence agreement when Christ had delivered me from alcohol? Despite those questions I handed in the questionnaire, but to my surprise and bewilderment of others from the local church, I was not accepted. It took me quite a while to understand this. Here I was, willing to give my all and it was refused. The Lord showed me in His love and mercy, that I was falling in love with the church and then I realised the only One to be in love with must be the Lord Jesus Christ and not the church denomination.

Unfortunately, this experience made me begin to see man's input in the church, which up to this point, I had refused to believe existed. It was only when I found myself defending the church to my mother that I realised God's Word stands on its own and doesn't need defending. However, I did not want to get a wrong attitude towards people and I often had to pray against such thoughts. It took me a while to see that, as the Lord had delivered me from the world, He was now delivering me from a church denomination. I felt that my time there was up and I was about to turn a page.

I have since learned that when Jesus sets a man free, it is then very easy to fall into bondage to man-made religion. Church spirits are harder to discern than the obvious spirits of the world and a man under religious bondage often judges others who are not under the same bondage. A truly free man doesn't judge but shows mercy and prays for the others.

I once again felt in my heart that I would like to go back to New Zealand. The only hindrance was that I had to give three months'

notice at work and I would have liked to have had more money to take with me. Another ‘problem’ was that I had already given notice on my rented house in Fiez. I felt sure at the time that I would be going to the missionary school, which meant that as from September, I would have no accommodation. Just at that time I was asked to go for another business trip to Saudi Arabia. That worked out well because while I would be away, staying in hotels, I wouldn’t need a house – in the meantime anyway. Therefore I went to the local Council and simply told them I was going to work in Saudi Arabia, and then I would come back to Switzerland for a very short time before permanently leaving for New Zealand. I was told that I could deregister from paying taxes in that village, due to those circumstances. After I left my meeting with the Council, I thought, “Why did I say that?” I shouldn’t really have made that statement as I was not sure I would be able to go to New Zealand. The flight for Saudi Arabia left from Zurich and landed for an hour in Geneva. As I was concerned about being away from fellowship again, I quickly left the plane in Geneva and rang my friend Richard. Richard encouraged me and prayed with me. Back on the plane, the seat next to me was empty. Just before taking off a man from Kentucky came and sat next to me and within a few minutes we shook hands and he said, “God bless you brother”. It was a blessing to meet him as he was also working in Riyadh on a contract and would pick me up from the hotel for fellowship with an underground Christian group. It had to be hidden because Christianity is forbidden in Saudi Arabia. They were mostly Americans and I enjoyed the fellowship and the love the people had for one another. But one thing puzzled me. These people appeared to me to be quite casual with their faith, as I had been taught holiness according to the Bible by my church. Not wanting to be judgmental I somehow had this thought coming to mind, that the main thing was love. This illusion was soon to be taken away from me.

During the training course I had a rather hilarious, but quite edifying experience with one of the trainees. Every few hours all the shop doors closed, and everything came to a halt. Out came

the prayer mats and prayers were said by all the faithful Muslims. During one of these prayer times an Indian trainee exclaimed, "What a stupid religion, they have to pray five times a day! I am a Catholic; morning prayer, evening prayer, done!" It was obvious that he still only had 'a religion'. Some religions are better, some are tougher, some are more relaxed, but they all are only religions with no power, no life, no resurrection from the dead, no living founder and no eternal future!

After my three weeks in Riyadh I stopped in Dubai for a week and visited the company where I had previously run a training course. During the week I organised a sales seminar, visited a subsidiary in Abu Dhabi and went out for dinner with the company director. My company in Switzerland then contacted me and requested that I run another course in Ireland. I replied telling them to delay the course in Ireland, because I was going on a holiday and then needed a week to prepare. Finally I was on holiday. I had a ticket to go to Israel via Egypt. At the Hyatt hotel's lobby, I asked a staff member about Egypt. This lady was very excited and led me to understand that she was an Egyptian. I then asked this patriotic woman what Egyptian Airlines was like and her countenance changed immediately. Semi embarrassed she said, "I don't know because I always fly with Swissair!" Slightly concerned, I boarded the Egyptian airliner the next day. Well, the plane wasn't very clean and some of the seats were broken. Nevertheless, we got off the ground. When we flew over Cairo, the plane suddenly started to shake and stall, nearly dropping onto house roofs before somehow recovering and finally landing safely. Leaving the plane was a fight on its own as there was such a press. One poor old woman with her veil in her mouth and carrying several heavy bags tried to get off the plane. People started to push and shout abuse at her and no-one offered to help. I must have looked a bit odd in my business suit, but I offered to help her. She could not understand any English, but somehow trusted me and as I took her very heavy bags and carried them out for her, she kept on saying, "shukraan, shukraan, shukraan!" At the airport the taxi drivers started to fight over me, and I finally ended up in an old Mercedes. The

driver told me the price for the fare to the Sheraton Hotel. He laughed and drove like a maniac, suddenly turning into a one-way street at full speed. A policeman blew his whistle, before jumping out of the way to avoid being hit. With another fit of laughter, the driver began to talk price again. I told him that it was not my first time in Egypt and that I would fix him up at the destination. He stopped in front of the hotel where I gave him the money. I said with a loud, stern voice, "Here is the money for the fare and here is a tip, and now say thank you!" He shook, looked scared, took the money and said thank you! I was still in my 'instructing' role as I had just come from the training courses.

At the Sheraton I met the travel agent who I had talked to the last time I was in Egypt. This time, with great excitement, he invited me for dinner at a local Egyptian restaurant. It was a bit rough and I seemed to be the only non-Egyptian. I really enjoyed the authenticity of everything, including seeing a very cute little girl, dirty, smiling and wearing a head-scarf, come into the restaurant trying to sell old newspapers. The next thing surprised me a little bit. Suddenly a huge piece of metal was thrown into the restaurant and it landed exactly next to my plate. Praise God, no harm came to me.

The night before I flew to Israel I stayed at the Heliopolis Sheraton again. My desire to meet real Christian believers was so great that I fell on my knees and cried out to the living God. I insisted in my prayer that the Lord would lead me, not to just a church group, but to real children of God! The next day I felt very confident that the Lord was in control and that He would guide and lead me as I journeyed to Israel. I rented a car at the airport and started driving towards Jerusalem. Nothing could upset me in Israel, because I knew that the Scripture says, "Blessed is he that blesses Israel, and cursed is he that curses Israel". I was there to bless Israel! On the way to Jerusalem I picked up a hitchhiker – a soldier in uniform with an automatic rifle. He couldn't speak English but tried to give me some directions as we arrived in Jerusalem. Somehow, I lost my way and ended up in a Jewish hotel in a back street, where I booked a room. Not

being familiar with Jewish hotels, I was asking the receptionist about the sign in the hallway which contained a list of ‘Sabbath regulations’. She told me that Jewish people were religious people and that I could go down to the Western Wall to watch them pray. Then I told her that I found no pleasure in watching people pray, as I was a Christian and prayed myself also. To my surprise, before she said anything I heard a voice from behind a curtain shouting, “Praise the Lord!” This sounded just like home to me. It was another staff member in the back room who was listening to our conversation. When I spoke to her I noticed she was very embarrassed and had not meant to say anything. The Lord had everything arranged and the next day, which was the Sabbath, this lady's parents picked me up for a meeting.

This was such a wonderful event and I knew immediately that my prayer had been answered. I was directed and blessed to meet with wonderful, real Christian believers. All the women had nice, long hair, long skirts, no make-up; just the beauty of the Lord shining from them. Everyone was full of life and praise for the Lord Jesus Christ. It was just beautiful and made me feel ashamed that I had even considered compromising on the Word of God when I was back in Riyadh, by thinking that love amongst the brethren was the only important thing. Now I saw love, life and the Word of God manifested!

After the service I shared my testimony with them and, to their surprise, I believed the same way as they did. They could not understand how I could have such knowledge of the truth without having heard of a certain preacher in America, William Branham, who led some of them to the Lord. The answer to me was simple. If we have the same Holy Spirit that the early Christians received at Pentecost, and if we're not misled by our own thinking and traditions, or denominational and man's teachings, then we cannot but speak the same language and have the same manifestations in our lives. It was evident that we were all filled with the same Holy Spirit. I ended up staying a whole week with them and had a wonderful time of fellowship. Seeing this lovely host family with 13 children – who were all very nice to me –

made me dream of a large family for myself one day. Leaving very early in the morning, I had to say my goodbyes to the little ones the night before. It was very touching! One of the little girls embraced me and didn't want to let me go. When I left they gave me an address for a church in Gisborne, New Zealand.

GOING BACK TO NEW ZEALAND

Back in Yverdon, life appeared to be different after my time in the Middle East. I shared my experiences at church, from which I received a mixed response. No matter what people said, I knew in my heart that God had directed me that way and that there was more for me to receive.

By now I had no house to go to and so I stayed at the company's motel unit for two weeks before going to Ireland to run another technical training course. Once again, I did not need a house for another three to four weeks. The trip to Ireland was very eventful. On the plane a woman sat next to me drinking champagne and smoking a cigarette in the non-smoking area. She was telling me about her partying the night before and her worries that her boyfriend may notice she had had a late night. I was quite put off by her and kind of ignored her. The smoking annoyed me a bit, so I turned the fan toward her, but she didn't get the hint. I then looked out the window and quietly prayed for her and the situation. Shortly afterwards I had an opportunity to witness to her about my experiences with the Lord. Suddenly we flew into a storm and the plane was caught up in the turbulence. Other people on the plane screamed and were in shock and this woman next to me also looked very frightened. I was totally at peace in the storm, which puzzled her, and I kept on witnessing to her, despite the storm. By the time we landed I was able to give her a Bible, which she accepted with tears in her eyes, and she told me she had never held a Bible in her entire life.

In Ireland I was picked up by the company director and after about half an hour he asked me, "Are you a Christian?" Many wonderful things happened in Ireland and I ended up in several

church and home meetings. A missionary couple picked me up one evening to go to a meeting. On the way there they also picked up a tramp, who seemed to take an immediate liking to me and kept on talking to me. Unfortunately, he had the most horrible, bad breath and stank incredibly. As the smell was nearly killing me, I opened the window a little bit and tried to catch a breath of fresh air to survive the journey. When we arrived at the meeting the tramp was still following me. Then I saw my way of escape – an empty seat in the middle of the crowd. Quickly I manoeuvred my way between the seats. Reaching the vacant seat, I sat there closing my eyes, relieved and quietly praying, when suddenly that horrible smell came back. The tramp had battled his way through the crowd and managed to squeeze in right next to me. After the meeting I again fled, but soon after, he had found me again! Now I realised that perhaps God wanted me to talk to him. I quietly prayed and then the smell was gone, at least while I witnessed to him! The tramp told me that he could not understand why Christ had to be crucified. I was able to share the Gospel and I believe it had an impact because later, when I was back in Switzerland, I received a card from him. At another one of those Irish meetings, I ended up at a home meeting of a group in Dublin that had only recently left the Catholic Church and started to have their own meetings. The preacher read the Scripture about the Angel coming to Mary. He said that our salvation depended on Mary's answer. Then he said, "Do we all believe that?" No-one said a word, but I could not let that one go unchallenged, so despite being just a visitor, I found the courage to raise my hand and say, "I don't believe that!" Slightly shaken, the preacher stuttered a bit and then he agreed and went on to preach a wonderful message on predestination and how Mary was chosen by God, because He knew that she would be a willing vessel. This experience impressed me so much that I made up a song about it:

Long, long time ago, Jesus saved my soul
Long, long time ago, He died for you and me
But only since a while I know
But only since a while I see

What the Lord has done, for you and me
There on the cross of Calvary

When I got back to Switzerland, I found out that all the brethren in Israel had been praying for me. This explained the incredible experiences I had had on that trip and the way I had been led in unexpected ways. Talking about Ireland, no one would think that it was a business trip, as it had turned out to be more of a missionary trip.

After having been in Israel, my heart was set to return either to Israel or New Zealand. It seemed the 'Swiss chapter' was closed and that I was turning a page. My heart's desire was still to have a bit more money and to leave work by Christmas. Of course, this did not seem possible, as I would have to give three months' notice at work and it was already December. Nevertheless, I had the promise of God's Word, *Psalms 37:4: "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."* Just at that time, the company was restructuring and offered redundancy pay for those who would voluntarily leave. Straight away I went to see the boss. He told me this was for other people and he didn't want to let me go. After a few discussions he then agreed to accept my voluntary resignation. I ended up with more than six months' tax-free pay in my pocket and I could leave at Christmas. What a miracle! I was now free to leave, and I also had the money I wanted. I decided to return to New Zealand, to tell my old mates about salvation in Jesus Christ. I booked a flight and left for New Zealand in January 1983.

Just a few days before my departure I faced another challenge – a hefty tax bill. I had to dismiss the thought to just leave and forget about it. I knew this would not be the right thing to do, so I went for a trip to the French part of Switzerland to speak with the tax department. After disclosing my absence from Switzerland and my planned trip to New Zealand, the tax man told me to go away and come back in 20 minutes. When I returned, he ripped up my tax bill and said that I did not need to

pay the tax. I was convinced that if this had been a tax office in the Swiss German part, I surely would have had to pay the taxes.

The night before I left, a friend stayed with me at my parents' house. Since I had triple the luggage allowance, I began to get very nervous. My mind went into overdrive, thinking of the various scenarios that may await me at the airport. I kept on quoting the Scripture in *1 Peter 5:7*: "*Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you.*" It wasn't too long before my friend simply said, "Why don't you do it?" He was right. Saying it and doing it were two very different things. From this point, every time when the luggage worries came to mind, I instantly dismissed them. The Lord is faithful! I arrived in New Zealand with all my luggage and no penalties. My motive was pure and my return to New Zealand was to be about the Lord's business. I started my 'missionary' work on the plane, by witnessing to a man who was slightly sarcastic. He said, "I see you've been brain washed." I replied, "No, I've had a heart transplant."

The plane was delayed and as I arrived in Auckland I tried to rush to the domestic terminal to catch my connecting flight to Invercargill. With the trolley full of luggage, I literally ran through the automatic glass doors which were slower opening than I was walking! They shattered and jammed and a couple of airport workers came and un-jammed what was left of them and freed my trolley. "Thank you", was all I said before speeding off to the domestic terminal. My connecting flight was also delayed and now I had to wait, and had time to ponder about how much I was yielding to the leading of God and how much was just me trying to lead myself.

In Invercargill, I first visited the family I had previously boarded with. They were kind to me but looked at me slightly sideways. Not everyone was excited about 'the new Al'. The next day I visited another, quite rough family I used to know, and they were pleased to see me. They had such a lot of smelly rubbish bags and an old washing machine blocking their front door, which didn't look very inviting. The dad was still in bed when I arrived

at 11am so I greeted him in the bedroom. He then called out to his wife, "Horse, bring us a cup of tea!" Just testifying was perhaps not all I could do, so I hired a trailer and cleaned up their messy backyard. Even though they liked me, I could not convert them. It takes a man to witness, but it takes the Holy Spirit to convince, or as the saying goes, "You can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make it drink".

During my three-month stay in Invercargill I tried to find a church to go to. This was rather difficult, not because there was a lack of churches, but rather that I wanted genuine fellowship without having to compromise on the Word of God. I tried the Baptist Church, the Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church, the Pentecostal Church and a Brethren Church. Some churches were dead, others worldly, and others totally set in their traditions and pet doctrines. As I said before, the Lord not only delivered me out of the world, but He had also delivered me out of 'man-made' organisations. Some of these places are falsely called 'church' – they should rather be called clubs or lodges. Believing that every Christian should have fellowship with others, I ended up spending some time at the Brethren Church. A true believer can share fellowship with anyone upon the basis of the shed Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There I watched, observed and listened. The Lord helped me to stay true to His Word and not to compromise with traditional beliefs and arguments. After about three months I left Invercargill by car and made my way up to Tauranga. Just before I left, a sincere young couple from the Brethren Church took me aside and said, "We also believe the way you do!" God has His children in many places to be a shining light, but I believe that sooner or later, the true believer will come out of these dead organisations where men have mixed their own ideas with the Word of God. As the Bible declares in *Revelation 18:4*: "*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*"



As I left Invercargill, I was driving and praying, when suddenly the presence of the Lord came into the car. That presence was still recognisable when I stopped to pick up a hitch hiker. He was very excited that I was going to

Dunedin because this was also his destination. He hopped into the car and I drove on not saying much at all. The presence of the Lord was still very strong and somehow it made that hitch hiker feel very uncomfortable, even though nothing was said. After only a few minutes we came into Gore, the next town. There he suddenly wanted to get out of the car and not go on to Dunedin with me as planned. He looked a bit scared. Yes, it is a scary thing to come into the presence of the Lord without the covering of the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On my way to Tauranga I visited some of my old friends and they were amazed to see the change in my life. Only eternity will reveal what they did with my testimony. There was one former workmate I visited in Dunedin. He was happy to see me, but after speaking to him the whole evening, he looked at me sideways, wondering if I really was this Al he used to know. After we had gone to bed, he knocked on my door at about 1am asking me if I wanted another coffee. He then asked me questions until the early hours of the morning and at last I encouraged him to pray and to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive him for his sins and to come and live in his heart. At that time I was not bold enough to pray with him, but I encouraged him to pray that prayer once he was back in his room. I don't know whether he did pray that night or not, but the next thing I heard of him, was that he had died suddenly while shifting house. He was just under 30 years old. If he did pray and if he received the Lord that night, my trip to New Zealand was more than worthwhile.

After crossing by ferry to the North Island, I contacted a Christian couple whose phone number was given to me by some people of the Brethren Church. I rang them, but soon realised that it was

not convenient to visit. When I was driving through Palmerston North a car with a couple of young fellows and a pregnant woman crashed sideways into me. They panicked, as it was their fault. Even before I got out of my car, I had a tremendous peace about the whole situation. Their car was quite damaged. I told them not to worry about me and my car and sent them away with a Christian pamphlet. I then had a closer look at my car. Another miracle – not even a scratch! The next day I drove up to New Plymouth where I visited an old workmate and his wife. They were not believers but to my surprise, they invited me in and put on a great meal, offering me a place to stay. I now also had the opportunity to pay for his shirt that I had ripped years ago. It was a strange habit I used to have, ripping off people's shirt pockets. This man was one who could not forgive me for it at the time and because I remembered this, I felt an apology and some money would be appreciated. He was surprised by this, but he just took the money, without saying anything. It made me think that this is similar with the things of God. The moment we say, "Thank you", we acknowledge and confess that we have received it. We did not talk about shirts that night, but I shared with them the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The next evening I arrived in Rotorua. I was wondering if I could find those people who had given me a Bible back in 1978. As I arrived at night I saw a restaurant with "Jesus is Lord" written on the roof. Surely, that must be the place to go to! It wasn't long before I had that family on the phone and it was so wonderful to be able to tell them what had happened to me. I nearly cried when I exclaimed, "I am saved!"

When I arrived in Tauranga I went to stay with Richard's parents. In the past I had found them irritating and complicated and though they still had their peculiarities, I had changed and could now appreciate them for who they were. They became some of my very best friends! In Tauranga I had further opportunities to speak to some of my old drinking mates and people I had known. I went to visit my former landlords, who were very excited about the change they saw in me. Since I had last seen them, they had

become Baptists. They invited me to their church meeting, where I met a lot of nice people. Unfortunately, the standard of holiness seemed to be lacking and it was obvious that they were only willing to go as far as traditional Baptist beliefs. This reminded me of another friend who introduced me to a 'Christian' lady, who, when he saw my expression of shock, took me aside and said, "She only accepted Jesus as Saviour and not as Lord". What a crazy thing to say and to believe, I thought! He is Saviour, Lord, Provider, Healer and all in all! We cannot receive Him in parts! We are either full of His Spirit and have it all, or we are none of His. *Romans 8:9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."* Just imagine, some girl getting married to a good looking, rich and loving husband. She would not only enjoy his good looks, but also his love and his money.

One weekend I felt led to travel to Gisborne. I had been given two addresses of believers to visit there – one from the Brethren Church in Invercargill and the other from the believers I met in Jerusalem. Off I went on my motorbike for my first trip to Gisborne. As I was not sure which place the Lord wanted me to go first, I prayed for guidance as I rode into the city. Then I saw the street sign of the address given to me by the believers from Jerusalem. There I met the pastor of the Gisborne Christian Fellowship. He sent me to 'The Gospel Tape Ministry', where his son was working. When I arrived there I was slightly suspicious of all the pictures and photos hanging on the wall. I have never been a big fan of having photographs of preachers on display, as it always made me think there was some 'man worship' involved. Therefore, I gave the brother a good, strong rundown of what I believed! "I believe that the whole of the Bible is the absolute truth and that the Lord Jesus Christ is God," I exclaimed, to which the brother shouted, "Amen". I kept on stating my beliefs and the more I did, the more he jumped with excitement. After some more fellowship he realised that I had never heard any of their Gospel tapes, so he went to find a tape and played me a passage. I certainly was not used to preachers shouting and

being loud, but I took no offence. When I left I took some recorded messages and a book about the Seven Church Ages. Back in Tauranga I started to read the book, which was a great blessing and I found it extremely enlightening, as it cleared up many questions I had. It also strengthened my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I really knew now that I could never compromise with denominational church teachings. Jesus Christ is the Word according to Scripture, and it is to Him that I want to be true. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” (John 1:1).* Also, *(John 1:14)* declares, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”* Any compromise with the Word of God, or mixed with man’s input, would have made me a spiritual harlot!

By now I had also received two job offers from companies in Rotorua. I really wanted to stay in Tauranga and therefore I asked the Lord, that if it was His will for me to stay in Tauranga, could I please have a job by Wednesday. At the beginning of the week, Richard’s mother told me that, because I had travelled so much, I should apply to become a travel agent. Well, I thought, travelling doesn’t make one a travel agent any more than drinking milk would make me a dairy farmer. Nevertheless, since I had prayed for guidance, I did not dismiss her suggestion, and rang a travel agent. To my surprise I got an interview, and by Wednesday I had my job in Tauranga! At this time I moved into a very nice flat in one of Tauranga’s most prestigious areas. I had many great experiences with the Lord in that place. Often, as I listened to the Gospel message tapes, the preaching caused me to stop the tape recorder, just to put things right with God, or to give thanks and praise the Lord. I believe that if the true message Bro. Branham preached is received correctly, then it will result in a greater appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ. A sincere sinner would come to repentance and into the experience of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Unfortunately, as is often the case, many people who not willing to ‘die to self’, simply receive it like a new religion and turn it into a denomination or cult.

One should continue to seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit and not just the letter of the Word. If the love for the Lord Jesus Christ is not increased by hearing the message, then only the letter has been received and not the Person of Jesus Christ. The letter alone causes people to become like a Pharisee – judgmental, arrogant and full of oneself, seeming to know everything. The Truth received by the Holy Spirit will make one humble and very much aware that we are saved by the grace of God, through the shed Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. The Bible tells us in (*John 16:13-14*): *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”*

The question about true Christian baptism was still on my mind, ever since I had first heard about it in Israel. I never dismissed it, but had only put it on the shelf. But now I came to a place where I seriously considered being re-baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I battled with it for a while, knowing that it was not water that cleanses from sin, but the grace of God, through faith in the shed Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I ended up asking myself, “Who would want to stop me from doing what the Scripture says? Certainly not the Holy Ghost who wrote it!” Therefore I decided to be re-baptised according to the original early church baptism, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. On 1st May 1983, I was re-baptised and fully identified myself with His Word. *Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as the Lord our God shall call.”* What a blessing! When I came out of the water I saw lights around the edges of the ceiling and started to speak in tongues. Praise the Lord! Yes, all the fullness of God, the Holy Spirit, was poured into the Lord Jesus Christ and all that was in Christ was poured into His Church, the body of believers! God Almighty,

Who is a Spirit, came and dwelt in a body of flesh and blood and reconciled the world to Himself through His redemptive work on the cross of Calvary. Praise the Lord! Strangely enough, some church people I knew could not share the excitement about my re-baptism. I am sure glad that I do not need to be restricted by a church philosophy but can be led by the Word of God, which was revealed to me by the Holy Ghost. God will always lead in accordance to His Own Word! This Word of God about baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ also comes with the promise, the gift of the Holy Ghost! If repentance is true, the baptism is true, then also the promise will come to pass, and the believer will be filled with the Holy Spirit! To believe and to be willing to identify with all of God's Word will also empower the believer to combat all the attacks of Satan! *"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4),* Another Scripture says: *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."* (Colossians 3:17). I started to see that there were so many Scriptures about being baptised and having to be re-baptised, in the Bible. *"When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid [his] hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."* (Acts 19:5). Why only identify with some of the Word and not all the Word? It seemed that I had started a new page on my Christian journey.

Back home in Tauranga I kept on listening to Gospel tapes and, as a result, I was enlightened and drawn even closer to God. One of the messages was called *False Anointed Ones at the End-times*. This message answered a big question that had been troubling me. I had met many church people with a true anointing on them but they themselves didn't live according to God's Word. I now understood that the rain falls on the just and the unjust! To be anointed with the Holy Spirit and to be filled with the Holy Spirit are two different things. As I heard and recognised these Bible truths, I had a lot of overcoming to do. Overcoming traditional church teachings was one of them. Not

that everything I was taught in the past was wrong, but if it did not agree with the Bible, then I accepted the Bible truth instead no matter what. We must not put God in a box. Always stay with the original Gospel. Praise God, I was comforted by reading the Bible and listening to tapes. As it is with so many Christian groups, many are claiming to believe in Jesus Christ, but reality shows that they are not! Christ is the Word!

I met a couple of families in Tauranga and together we sometimes listened to a Gospel tape and had fellowship. They also invited me to Whakatāne, where the Gisborne Christian Fellowship held a meeting once a month. This ended up with yet another trial, as the early 80s was a time when various strange doctrines came to New Zealand. At one meeting someone would stand up and talk about the seven thunders of the book of Revelation. It didn't make sense at all! At the next meeting another brother went up and preached against it. I felt that I could not take a seeking soul to such a meeting and I was glad that I had the Bible and the tapes. I did not need to rely on people's private interpretations.

During my stay in Tauranga I also met some nice Māori brethren. I always had a soft spot for the Māori people and I had many great times of fellowship with them. For instance, one night at 11pm my phone rang, "Bro. Albert, do you want to come for some fellowship?" I couldn't turn down the offer and drove over to their place for some fellowship. At midnight a great big roast came out of the oven and the whole family was at the table, enjoying a very big meal and nice fellowship until very late. Meetings like that happened quite frequently. I also met an old Swiss woman who was living on her own. She was a confessing Christian but appeared to be quite easily intimidated. I tried to encourage her to be bolder when it came to accepting God's promises. Trying to make a suitable example, I told her to imagine how it would be if her neighbour were to build a garage on part of her land and so deprive her of her view and her garden. Of course she would have a right to complain. But what if the neighbour refused to listen, but rather intimidated and threatened her? She would

then live all these years without a view and a garden, which rightfully would belong to her. She really should go to the Council, get the title deed of her property and then visit the neighbour again with authority, informing him of the facts: "Here it is written, this is the blueprint, and this land belongs to me so get off my land." I explained those things to her so that she may be bold to claim and accept the promises of God. To my surprise the old lady now told me that the neighbour really had put part of his garage onto her land. I didn't know that but the Holy Spirit knows every situation and can reveal these things. Praise the Lord!

Still working for the travel agency, I was keen to go for a trip to Fiji but thought it would not be appropriate at this time to spend money on pleasure. Shortly afterwards, I was requested to go on a trip to Fiji for the travel agency, staying at the best resorts and hotels, all for free. Praise the Lord!

I enjoyed living in my nice, waterfront flat and I made the most of my spare time, by communicating by letter with old friends and acquaintances. One day I was surprised to receive a letter from a man from Nigeria, who I had not heard from for a long time. It was more of a confession than a letter. He had found an old letter I had written to him and by reading it again, had become very convicted and restless. He said that he and his whole family had been baptised in the wonderful Name of the Lord Jesus Christ! I kept in touch with another friend from Switzerland, who wanted to be sure I was not involved in a cult. Eventually I wrote to him that if a truth is spoken, then it won't matter who said it and that we should simply receive it. We always give the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ and not to anyone, or anything else! A true believer needs to see the truth in the Bible and then recognise the truth when they come face to face with it. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)*

In 1984 my friend Christoph decided to come to New Zealand to outreach to others and tell them the good news of eternal life. I quit my job and bought a van so we could travel around New

Zealand. I modified it into a camper and on the back of the van I had a motocross bike as well. Near the time of my friend's



departure from Switzerland his 84 year old grandfather asked if he could join us for six weeks. Of course this was not planned but it ended up being a great blessing! We

travelled together throughout New Zealand, testifying to people and having a great time. His grandfather even had a ride on the back of my motorbike on 90-Mile Beach in Northland. One

weekend we went to Gisborne, where my friend decided to be baptised and, to our surprise, grandfather also expressed his desire to be baptised. It was such an unforgettable and



wonderful day! When the pastor explained to grandfather true biblical baptism – in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of using just the titles, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the only comment he made was, “Then all those churches got it wrong!” He never even questioned the truth, but it was instantly quickened to him.

Following this great event we travelled on to the South Island. Grandfather was a gardener and therefore very interested in New Zealand's plant life. As he had only a little knowledge of English, he would often ask strangers for the names of plants and trees. All the names were then recorded in his little note book. After a while he noticed something was wrong, because

so many trees and plants had the same name – ‘I don’t know’. He had so many ‘I don’t know’ trees! One day, as we stood in a paddock full of hay, Christoph suddenly realised that he was healed of chronic hay fever. We had previously prayed together for healing and now it was manifested.

In Christchurch we met up with some of the believers and were able to park our van on one family’s back lawn. They were a nice Christian family who had recently separated from their previous church because their pastor had been experimenting with doctrines, which they weren’t pleased about. That pastor heard about the two young travellers and turned up to invite us for dinner, which we accepted. He and his wife were very friendly and put on a nice meal for us. It was there that I first met their 16 year old daughter Bronwyn. She was quite a cute young girl, I thought. Of course, I never thought any further because she was still at school and I was already 31. She obviously thought my English was a bit poor, so she spoke very slowly, making me wonder how good her English was.

Off we went again travelling further south. Near Wanaka Christoph and I had a little argument. I just laughed it off, perhaps a bit provocatively, but he seemed to be still under a thunder cloud. Suddenly a rock shattered our windscreen. It was like a sobering wake up call. Grandfather just quoted the Scripture, *“Little foxes spoil the vine”*, and then we all understood. When we got to Invercargill, we decided to go camping and fishing. I had boasted quite a bit about how great the fishing is down there, so after I caught many beautiful trout, Christoph acknowledged that he now believed me. It took more than words – fish in this case – to convince him, and I believe it should be the same with the Word of God. True faith will bring the Word of God to life.

Now it was time for grandfather to go back to Switzerland, so he left us behind in Invercargill. He was a true friend and brother in Christ! The next part of our journey took us to Stewart Island for a hunting trip. After getting over the sea sickness we walked

along the island and put up our tent near the beach. Half asleep, I tried my luck with a bit of fishing, and cast out a hand line. The word 'hand line' took on a whole new meaning because the hook caught my hand, whilst the heavy sinker was flying towards the waves, leaving my finger quite badly ripped and bleeding. By now it was 6pm and I was ready for bed. Despite feeling so weary and being nearly dark, I decided to go for a quick walk along the grass between the bush and the beach. The wind was blowing in my face as I sneaked up a little rise. As I slowly raised



my head I saw a deer! I fired and the deer ran toward the beach, where it collapsed. I fired another two shots, just to make sure the deer was dead and wouldn't suffer. Christoph was all

excited and having heard three shots, he thought I had three deer. One was enough and the next day we made our way back to the mainland. After another seasick trip we parked our van at some friends' place, where they helped us to skin and cut up the deer. They were amazed how blessed my hunting and fishing was. The Lord was blessing us in every way!

We travelled back towards Auckland, as we intended to go on to Australia. On the way north we once again stopped in Christchurch. The church there had organised a sports evening with the young people, where I once again saw Bronwyn and played badminton with her. We had a lot of laughs and it was nice to see her sparkling eyes when we won games together.

Christoph, another young man, and I decided to go for a hunting trip to Lake Sumner. Stomping through a paddock together, I soon realised that this was not hunting as I liked it, so I decided to take off on my own. As I had my motocross bike on the back of the van, I decided to go further afield. Off I went with my rifle

and tent. Finally I started to hunt near the bush. Absolutely nothing. The place appeared to be dead! Not even birds! Just as I wanted to pray for a deer, I changed my mind and prayed instead, that the Lord would open my eyes, so I would see the things which were out there. The place seemed to come alive instantly. Not only birds, but a hare and even cows! Sometimes it is not a lack of things present, but a lack of vision. Before I set up my tent, I also prayed that if there would be anyone out there that the Lord wanted me to talk to, that He'd direct me there. I instantly saw some smoke rising in the distance. This was my signal! Now I made my way by foot towards the smoke. Finally I arrived at a hut that I didn't know existed, where I found two very grumpy and unhappy looking fellows. One was chopping firewood with an axe and if I hadn't been directed by God to that place, I would have felt a bit scared. "Here are my victims," I thought, and now, what should I say to these men? I sat down across the table from one of them, a German, who was eating. Not knowing how to start a spiritual conversation, I asked the man if he had ever read the Bible. Very surprised he told me that just the other day he had been given one. Then I said to him, "Did you know that it is written in the Bible, that whosoever blesses Israel will be blessed and whosoever curses Israel will be cursed?" He jumped under conviction, because he was a Jew hater. Mission accomplished, but nothing achieved, I thought. Now it was the other fellow's turn. Again, I didn't know what to say, but felt led to talk about the end times. I noticed that the guy became very agitated. There was no fear in me and I boldly told him, "There will be nuclear bombs and war and whatever you are trying to do can't stop it!" He then confessed that he was on an anti-nuclear protest march through New Zealand. As I went to bed that night I prayed and wanted to apologise to the Lord for having failed to preach the Gospel. Right then He ministered to me that I had said exactly the right things and a beautiful, sweet presence surrounded me. The next day the protest marcher told me he had had a Christian upbringing. This was also a confirmation that it would have been the wrong thing telling him about Gospel truths that he already knew. When I met up again

with my other hunting partners, none of us had a deer, but I was an experience richer.

Christoph and I went on to Auckland and from there we flew to Australia, where we met up with an evangelist, who kindly invited us to stay with him and his family. He had a different sense of humour to mine and on one occasion, as we slept on the floor, he came in and poured water on me. He thought it was funny, but I felt this was just plain stupid. The best was yet to come. He had some garlic oil and he started to rub it on my neck, so that I would stink of garlic. By now I had had enough and started to tell him off. I thought, here we are on a missionary trip and trying to find the mind of Christ and here he was just pulling pranks. Eventually he realised that I was not impressed. This evangelist arranged for me to meet a man without telling me what he was like. I spent the next few hours patiently listening to the man as he explained pages of computer printouts about things William Branham was supposed to have said. Talk about confused! In my mind I thought, "I am already converted and a Christian and do not need another Gospel". This encounter only confirmed that I had once again come across another flavour of 'Branham religion'. Unfortunately there are so many scarecrows like that one hindering people from coming to the truth. There is nothing wrong with the messenger and the message, but if it is handled by people without the Holy Ghost leadership, then it will produce the wrong outcomes. Search the Scriptures, pray about it and find out for yourself. This is the best advice!

We met various people, had nice fellowship with Aboriginals and Samoans, and ended up in a Yugoslav Pentecostal Church, attending some of their youth meetings. We also had the opportunity to minister in a couple of their churches. By now we had bought a VW van and stocked it up with food. The evangelist and his wife were very generous and gave us a few extra supplies. They informed us of a convention up north, so off we went, travelling nearly 2500 kilometres to a place called Ravenshoe. I can honestly say there were many nice people, but I wondered how much they understood of the preacher's

strange doctrines. At the end of the meeting, after the convention speaker declared over and over that the Lord had already come, he asked if someone had a song they wanted to sing. Then one of the Aboriginals requested *He's Coming Soon*. I still remember a dear Aboriginal brother, who told us that his uncle had been taken by a crocodile just three weeks earlier. I told him that it was a dangerous place to live, but then he said with big eyes, "We only have crocodiles, snakes and spiders, but did you know that they have lions in Africa!" Time to go for a crocodile hunt, I thought. Sneaking around some bush near a river became more and more spooky and I abandoned my hunt before taking, or being taken, by a crocodile. After only one meeting, Christoph and I decided that it was time to leave. It had been a very long trip to attend just one meeting.

We began our journey south again and our first stop was at a missionary's place in Coffs Harbour. These missionaries were from Switzerland and they were very relaxed, I'd say, too relaxed. The missionary was wearing skimpy yellow shorts and his wife told us about having been swimming in her bikini. Christoph wasn't too impressed since his tithes and offering supported this mission station. While staying there we had quite a few discussions about many Scriptures. The missionary was quite uncomfortable with what we discussed and even started shaking. This family had three cute little boys, so the subject of discipline came up. I was thinking of a Scripture in Proverbs and said, "Sometimes it is necessary to give them a little smack". This comment was not at all well received and the missionary's wife told me off and led me to understand that there were better options nowadays. I felt somewhat embarrassed and humiliated and then kept quiet. Later, going to bed, I went to another room to pray. I still felt the effects of being told off, but as I prayed a wonderful presence came around me and it ministered to me, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me". Incredibly joyful, I now went to the bedroom. Even though I didn't say a word, my friend Christoph looked at me with amazement saying, "You have been with the Lord!" When we left that place, the missionaries were glad to see us, especially me, go. One

good thing to come of our visit, I thought, was that the missionary prayed more from the heart rather than just saying formal prayers, as was the case at first.

Another stop was nearby in Woolgoolga where we visited a very interesting, old man. We arrived after dark and were greeted with a shot gun! Once he knew we were Christians, he gave us a very nice welcome. His whole life had been quite tough. Initially he had been converted in Switzerland and was a strong follower of the teachings of Fritz Berger, an evangelist who once had a revival in Switzerland. Those teachings were very good and Scriptural and, in the time of revival, very anointed and with power and manifestation. Unfortunately, as it is with so many people, they build a fence around their belief and no longer have ears to hear what the Spirit says. They only have ears for what the Spirit said in the past, which results in organisations and dead denominations. Knowing that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, it is important to hear the Christ of today! As Jesus said in John 13.20: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me”*. To me, it is very important to have ears to hear what the Spirit says today. If He lays on someone’s heart to speak to you, you better listen carefully. This person can be the “whomsoever” Jesus talks about.

Our journey led us to Lightning Ridge, the opal mining town where I had spent some time in my wild days. We decided to outreach to the people and made special ‘first aid packages’ to hand out. The packages contained a New Testament, a couple of Gospel tapes and various Christian pamphlets. Christoph went door knocking, which was not at all my style, so instead, I went around the mines. When we met a few hours later, we both had ‘success stories’. He had knocked at the door of one house and although, someone said, “hello”, the door didn’t open. After a little conversation and a few more hellos, Christoph realised he

was talking with a cockatoo. I had met a few miners, who were very friendly to me and even asked us to stay with them.



One of the old fellows lived in a tin hut and had an old billy, continuously brewing something. He offered me a cup and it was hard to believe that it was tea, as all sorts of things were swimming in my totally chipped enamel mug. Situations like these break the ice and make room for more important things. While working around the opal mine, I parked our van next to the mine and played a Gospel tape to the old fellow on the car's stereo. There was not much response, until the preacher on the tape told a story about a deserter on death row. This deserter received a last minute, handwritten pardon from the president. When his friend told him about the pardon, he simply

would not believe that it was true and refused to talk to anyone. He was hanged the next morning. A court case followed, because a pardoned man had been hanged. The judge's verdict was, "A pardon is only a pardon when it is received as a pardon". This story visually changed the old miner's countenance. Previously I had given him one of those first aid kits we had made up and while he treasured it very much, it looked like this was as far as it would go. God has ways to speak to men, even when no-one intends to listen. Eventually, when it was time to leave, the old miner bought our van. He had no licence and never wanted to drive it, but just in case, if we ever returned, we would have a place to sleep. From there we took the bus and train back to Sydney, where Christoph left to go home to Switzerland and I returned to New Zealand. I stayed in Christchurch for a few days

and there I caught up with old friends again, especially Bronwyn. Now it was time to go back home to Tauranga.

The waterfront flat in Tauranga was waiting for me, as I had sublet it for the time I was away. Unfortunately, even though the tenants were professing Christians attending Bible school, they left without paying their big, phone bill, which I didn't think was a very good look for Christians! I thought of the saying, "Put your money where your mouth is". Just professing Christianity is not good enough! Rather say nothing about your Christianity, than become an offender.

Being on my own again, I wondered what I should do in the future. I spent quite a bit of time down at a boat yard, where I met a guy who wanted to sail around the world in a small yacht. He worked and lived on his boat and I enjoyed meeting such an ambitious person and somehow, I think, I dreamed of that kind of lifestyle myself. Living on a boat seemed such an uncomplicated way to live. I invited this young sailor to my place and I also offered him my washing machine and facilities. We had many nice meals and talks together. He was reluctant to receive the things of the Lord but was happy for me to pray for him and he accepted a New Testament before he left on his sailing trip. Still thinking about sailing, I ended up buying a steel yacht without realising the whole reality about boats – the maintenance, storage fees and other liabilities. I didn't have a clue about sailing, but soon learnt. During that time I often took Richard's parents out for an afternoon sail, but unfortunately most times the weather was stormy and uncomfortable. Richard's dad looked a bit frightened, but his mother was in her element. I was absolutely convinced that she would have sailed around the world with me, despite being nearly 80 years old. She was a tough woman, who used to drive an ambulance in England during the war.

In those days I often picked up hitch-hikers. As I witnessed to one hitch-hiker, I mentioned that God knew his very thoughts. As the quote goes, "Your thoughts speak louder in heaven than your

words". He didn't look too impressed, but then suddenly he started to scream. I didn't know what was going on so I stopped the car on the side of the road. We discovered a wasp, which had just stung the hitch-hiker in the back. I have no idea where that wasp came from, but as we continued driving, he confessed to me that when I spoke to him about how God knew his thoughts, he had thought it to be a load of rubbish. "Right then when I thought that, the wasp stung me in the back!" he exclaimed. He felt that it was a punishment from God and I am sure that he now realises that God really does know our thoughts.

MY RELIGIOUS TRIP INTO THE BUSH

By 1984 I had a yacht, a nice flat and a job offer with a company car. Sitting at home I wondered if this was the right thing for me, as a Christian, to have this nice and easy life. At that time I also saw a job offer in a remote place in the Matahi Valley past Waimana, up in the bush on a farm. Free accommodation in return for feeding the farm dogs the odd weekend. I rang up and enquired about the possibility of finding paid work. As the place was in the Urewera National Park, there was some forestry work available. It surely went against the flesh, but I decided to take up the offer. My boat was in storage and my beautiful flat was gone for good. The cottage was away from the farm, all by itself, in the bush. No luxuries, no phone and hardly any hot water. It was tough! Forestry work, involving medium pruning of pine trees, was not my kind of work either and at first, I injured myself very often. As I was on a contract, working all by myself, I hardly made any money.



I really wanted a phone, so I contacted Telecom, which finally agreed to get a telephone wire and some posts installed, just to connect me up. There was an old-fashioned wall phone with a handle to turn.

This was to alert the telephone exchange, where one had to request the number. During a phone call the volume would often go slightly down, caused by the nosey phone exchange operator listening in on the conversation. Instead of getting upset, I made use of the situation and usually started to preach.

Out there I also met a couple of Māori children. They often came to visit and I showed them how to make bread. Many times we had Sunday school lessons and then homemade bread to follow. The cottage I lived in felt a bit spooky one night. It was pitch black and at about 3am I was woken up by the sound of loud, heavy footsteps above the ceiling. The roof, however, was low pitched so there was no room for anyone to walk around underneath. The steps were loud and sounded like they came from a heavy person; not likely a possum or a rat. I quickly realised that it was an evil spirit. I called out in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and told Satan to get out of my place. Instantly, the spook was gone.

I spent a lot of time reading the Bible and praying. One day I read the passage about the great commission Jesus gave, to go out to preach the Gospel and to baptise. This started to minister to me. I prayed and told the Lord that I had preached the Gospel, but had never baptised anyone. I really wanted to be identified with this Scripture and therefore, I asked the Lord, to send me someone to preach the Gospel to and to baptise in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Within a week I received a mystery letter from a man from Auckland, telling me he was a Christian and asking if he could come for a break from the big city. I wrote back to him and invited him to stay. He got my address off someone I

didn't know. The day before his arrival I asked the Lord to show me something in advance about this visitor from Auckland. Suddenly, I saw before my eyes, that this man was a homosexual. At first, I thought, I should not judge him before he even arrives, but then I realised, that those were not my own thoughts, but a vision from the Lord. He finally arrived. Homosexual? Absolutely! He talked to me, showed me photos of his friends and tried to be friendly. Seeing his state and the photos of his transvestite friends made me quite sick. I just could not share the excitement. When I told him that he could not be homosexual and a Christian at the same time, he started to get angry and accused me of being a hard Christian. As I further talked to him and explained, that Christian means Christ-like and that Christ was the Word and that the Word was against homosexuality, he got very angry and started to swear. He looked demon possessed and I thought he would physically attack me, but instead, he stormed out of the house. After about two hours he came back and apologised. This happened twice. On the third day I took him to a prayer meeting with a few old Māori sisters in Whakatāne. On the way, he confessed to me, that I was right and that it was wrong what he had been doing. As we prayed together, he repented right there in the car. We then stopped at a restaurant before the meeting and to my surprise, he suddenly said to me, "Brother, would you please baptise me". After the prayer meeting, we had a wonderful baptism in the sea, at about 11 o'clock that night. It was in the middle of winter, but the water appeared to be warm all around me. This was the first baptism I had performed, and it was a direct answer to my prayer. When one wants to be identified with the Word of God, then God will make a way, as it is according to His will.

It was often very lonely out there in the bush, so one day, I decided to take a bus to Auckland. While waiting for the bus I quickly went to the local dairy in Waimana to buy something. Just at that moment, the bus arrived and, by the time I came out of the shop, I had missed it. I also had a migraine headache and to top it off, in my post box was a discouraging letter from a friend.

Forsaken, missing the bus and having a headache was quite a lot to bear, especially as I also had a lack of food at the cottage and there was nothing to go back for. I ended up going to Auckland another time. This next time, the farmer dropped me off at the bus station and promised, to pick me up again after the weekend. However, when I got back after a long, wearisome bus trip from Auckland, I found no-one waiting for me! Hot and tired, I picked up my heavy bag and began walking the 16 kilometres up the valley, towards my empty cottage in the bush. Various thoughts crossed my mind, but I acted contrary to my thoughts, believing the Scripture that says, "All things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose". Despite feeling miserable, not understanding why, I thanked the Lord that I had missed my ride. After about a kilometre I remembered I had once met a farmer, who told me he lived down there somewhere. At the first farmhouse I knocked on the door, but some other people came out. It was the right address, but the farmer was on holiday and the people were relations. They kindly invited me in and asked me to stay for dinner. During the course of the evening I had the opportunity to witness to these people. When I finished talking, one woman was very moved and said, "You just told me my life story". The Lord knew exactly what I had to say and praise the Lord, I did just that. At the end of the evening, the people were kind enough to drive me home. What at first looked like a problem, then turned into a blessing.

On another occasion I wanted to go to Tauranga. I had no car and there were no buses running. Hitch-hiking was against my style, so I asked the farmer's wife for a ride to the airport. Unfortunately there were no planes flying to Tauranga either. Next to the airport I saw an aero club and went and asked for a flying lesson – a cross country lesson to Tauranga. As we were flying along, the instructor was explaining about taking note of landmarks. Landmarks? What for? All I wanted was to get to my destination. Finally I landed in Tauranga and the instructor had to take the plane back without me. A bit more costly but at least I was in Tauranga! Where there is a will, there is a way.

Eventually I bought myself an old car in Auckland, a Morris 1100. When I took it in for a warrant of fitness, the garage told me it was beyond a warrantable standard and that I should take it to the car wreckers. Nevertheless, I drove it back to Waimana and tried to fix a few things on it. Besides other problems, there was something wrong with the wiring and so I attended to that before taking it again for a warrant to the local garage in Waimana. This mechanic was a lot friendlier than the one in Auckland. He even appeared to like my car! When he tested the indicator, the lights didn't go, but instead, the car caught fire under the dash board. I quickly turned off the ignition and put out the fire. Once again I fiddled with the wires and managed to get the indicators blinking after all. A few kicks onto the tyres and I had my warrant of fitness! A true country warrant and my little Morrie lived for another day!

At one time I got very sick and nearly died. At first I could not move, laying in my bed stiff and shivering for three days, even too sick to pray. On the fifth day, my phone rang. I managed to crawl to it and an old, Māori Christian sister was on the line. She realised how sick I was and said a simple prayer for me. Within minutes my terrible headache disappeared and I started to recover. My stay in the bush was a self-inflicted trial and it came from wanting to be more religious and holy and to draw closer to God. I have since learnt that I didn't need to go into the bush for that.



Soon after my recovery there was a convention in Gisborne and I felt the need to attend. Still very weak and having lost a lot of weight, I managed to get to Gisborne with my old car. Here once again I met up with Bronwyn. During the convention I went out for lunch with Bronwyn and her brother. I was quite surprised to see Bronwyn taking the front seat of the car next to me and having her brother in the back. Obviously she regarded me just like a brother and an old friend. They often cracked up laughing and at first, I wasn't quite sure why. One thing was that my old Morris was not in a good state and therefore, each time we sat in it, I had to ask, "Please slam the door!" That was the only way to keep it shut. Another time, as I was driving, I was so busy talking, that I forgot to change from second gear to third and the car was revving quite high. Eventually Bronwyn said, "Push the clutch", and when I did, she quickly changed the gear for me. During the convention and the fellowship, I noticed something about Bronwyn that had quite an impact on me. Despite being a city girl and not really too adventurous, she displayed an attribute that got my attention. I thought, she is quite tough and uncomplicated; a nice characteristic to have.

Back in the bush, life seemed quite hard. I pondered about the things I had heard during the convention and read my Bible a lot. There was not much else I could do out there. On Christmas Eve I sat in my cottage all by myself, a candle burning, and remembering my childhood Christmases. Suddenly, feelings and emotions came over me. At the same time I began to feel sorry for myself, but I knew that this was not to be entertained. Instead of feeling sorry, I started to read the Bible. As I finished reading the story of King Hezekiah, I felt tremendously encouraged. I picked up my guitar and started to play and sing, marching around the lounge. Instantly a new song came out:

There is power in the Name of Jesus Christ
There is power in the God of old
Yes, He slew hundred thousands' in the enemy's camp
There is power in the Name of the Lord
Halleluiah, Hallelujah, Jesus remains the same
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, glory to His Name

I was rejoicing and had a glorious time – real Christmas!

The Lord spoke to me clearly on three occasions that I should go back to Tauranga and be where the people were. I saw a job advertisement in an old newspaper. It matched exactly the kind of job I had turned down before going to the bush. I prayed and asked the Lord to give me an excuse to pass through Tauranga if He wanted me to apply for that job. Within moments the phone rang and a brother from Auckland asked me to come and help him with a job. Straight away I drove my old car via Tauranga to Auckland and, on the way, I applied for that job and left them with my friend's phone number in Auckland. Within two days the company rang and offered me the job. Knowing that it was the Lord leading me to go back to Tauranga, I was not worried about accommodation, which was very hard to find at that time. On the first day at work, to my surprise, I received a phone call. It was my old landlord. Somehow he had heard I was back in town and had rung various companies dealing with office equipment, until he finally found me. He said, "Al, do you want your old flat back? It just became vacant." This was again a miracle and I was delighted to move back to my beautiful flat. Praise the Lord! I not only enjoyed the flat and the view, but also went sailing with my yacht, just about every evening, rejoicing and giving thanks to the Lord for His wonderful blessings, which I had previously declined and now was able to enjoy, without feeling guilty. What good are riches if they can't be enjoyed? Blessed is the man that has them and is able to enjoy them.

MOVING SOUTH

During my stay in the bush, and following my return to Tauranga, I had kept in touch with the pastor of an evangelistic fellowship in Christchurch. He wrote to me on several occasions, encouraging me to move to Christchurch. I wasn't sure what the reason was. Perhaps he wanted to get more members in his church? Perhaps they were looking for a young man for one of their single sisters? Perhaps he just liked me! Not too sure of what to do, I ended up ringing a job agency in Christchurch. Instantly they asked me to come for an interview with a computer company. I flew to Christchurch, had my job interview and got the job. During those few days I met up with Bronwyn several times and we played a lot of table tennis at her place. We really got on well together. When I left to fly back to Tauranga, I didn't tell her I had the job and that I was moving to Christchurch. After one month I shifted down to Christchurch and stayed with some friends, but soon found myself visiting Bronwyn again. As I walked down their driveway, she was very surprised to see me walking passed the window. She had been sitting in the lounge, looking at a photo of me that was taken at the Gisborne convention, thinking that she would never see me again. She was also listening to the song *It Is No Secret What God Can Do*, and there I was!



I liked her and was pleased to see her again. One afternoon a few other young people were at the house and Bronwyn played the piano. I sang loudly and some

of the other young men laughed a bit sarcastically. There was one thing I never wanted to do, and that was to find favour with a girl by not showing my true personality. I hoped that one day a girl would marry me for being me. I never wanted to use psychology or pretend to be something I wasn't. She had to like

me as I was, so no big future surprises would follow! After a few days, a young brother told me that Bronwyn was his girlfriend. Of course I did not want to interfere in any way and I prayed for the Lord's blessings upon those two if this was the will of God. I also prayed and asked the Lord to remove my feelings for Bronwyn, or to increase her feelings for me if she was meant for me. I also prayed that her parents would get the same witness. The next time Bronwyn and I played table tennis, she appeared a bit unusual and uneasy. I felt that she liked me and didn't want to lose me as a friend. I wanted the best for her and said that we could stay friends and that I didn't mind she had a boyfriend. "Boyfriend!?" she said. No, she did not have a boyfriend and, I guess, the boy who had said that, liked her too. Now things were different. Her feelings for me had increased a lot and I felt incredibly excited, but also experienced an inner turmoil, especially considering our age difference. I tried to get rid of those feelings of mine and felt a bit guilty to even consider having more than a brotherly friendship with Bronwyn. It didn't work. Those feelings for her just didn't want to go away. Just to be sure, I asked Bronwyn, "If I were to ask you out, would you say yes?" This was a bit unusual. I didn't ask her out but wanted to know if she liked me enough to go out with me. "Yes!" was the answer.

Now I had a big task in front of me, as I wanted to ask her dad for his approval. The night came when I mustered up enough courage to ask – at least, that was my intention. Her dad and I were in the lounge that evening, all by ourselves. Bronwyn pre-warned him that someone would come and ask to take her out. It never crossed his mind that it would be me! Around 10pm I started talking to him, while Bronwyn and her mother were in the hallway, eaves dropping. By about 1am I still hadn't posed the question, but at least, I had attempted to. I said, "Uhm, ah, uhm" several times until he interrupted me and said, "Do you want to take Bronny out?" All I could say was "Yes!" and then, that was that. I never asked if he agreed or not; I just took his question as an approval.

The lunch date was on Saturday. A little misunderstanding made me wonder if it was all off. I thought that she would ring, and she



thought that I would ring. Eventually I rang. Bronwyn was never very relaxed on the phone and always appeared to sound so formal. Nevertheless, I went to pick her up for our lunch date and I saw immediately, that her interest was still very much there. We were both so nervous that we hardly ate any of our lunch. Later in the afternoon, we drove to Lyttleton and I showed Bronwyn the boats in the marina. She acted interested, even though boats were not her thing. As we walked along I shared a dream I had just the night before. In my dream, I saw another young man, who showed an interest in her, trying to put his arm around her. In my dream

Bronwyn got upset and swore at the young man, speaking in my Swiss German language. Quite a dream! I then laid my arm on her shoulder and asked if she would be upset at me too. To the contrary! Bronwyn said she knew right then that I was the man for her life. Of course, our courting took on new dimensions and occupied most of our time. It was a well-known fact to anyone who knew me, that I would marry Bronwyn! I had always said that I would never take out any girl unless I would consider marriage. After only two or three weeks, I asked the question, "Will you marry me?" The rest is history.

The big day finally arrived, 15th of February 1986. The girl of my dreams was a reality. She really existed! It was the second most beautiful day in my life; the first having been my encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ!



My parents didn't attend the wedding, but they paid for our plane tickets to travel to Switzerland, and, six days after our wedding and our honeymoon in Akaroa, we were on our way. I was proud to introduce my lovely wife to family and friends. We had a nice time, despite it being a bit hard for Bronwyn, who at this time did

not know the language. After having been single for a long time, I had to learn and adjust to being married. On our holiday trip to Zermatt, I told Bronwyn about the famous Matterhorn mountain we were about to see. Normally one can get the first glimpse of it while on the train. I opened the window and we had a look. It was too cloudy to see the mountain and so I said, "We can't see it today", and promptly pulled up the window again. Unfortunately I didn't realise that Bronwyn was still looking out. Her head was stuck, and I nearly decapitated her with the window! Being no longer single and having another person to consider took a while getting used to. Neither could I expect the same level of experience from a person who was 15 years younger than me. I needed to learn to be patient and considerate.

I took on a well-paid job and tried to save money for our future.



This was hard for Bronwyn because I was away the whole day and she didn't have much else to do except wait for me to come home from work. I felt this wasn't going to be good for us and that married life may be easier for us in New Zealand. After four months we decided to return.

One Sunday morning we decided to go to a local church, but ended up parking the car next to a river and talking about the things of God. Bronwyn confessed to me that she had never had a Holy Ghost experience the way I had and wasn't sure of her place in Christ. The pressure of being away from home, without a secure church environment, family and friends, brought

her to a point of soul searching. We read Acts 2:38 and as Bronwyn had been baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I assured her that God's promise to give the Holy Ghost, was for her. "If you haven't received it yet you surely will later," I said to her. If repentance is true, and the baptism is according to the Word of God, then His promise will certainly also come to pass! This helped Bronwyn to hold on to His promises.

Before we left Switzerland I was able to resign from my job, still within the probation period. The Personnel Manager was not very happy and offered me an even better job. I declined and prepared for our departure, having been able to save quite a lot of money within those two months. On the last day at work, I felt a need to go and speak to a certain woman, who worked there, about the Lord Jesus Christ. As this was probably the last time I would ever see these people, I felt compelled to speak to that particular woman. Just before lunch time I went to her office to say good bye and tell her I was going back to New Zealand. Not knowing how I could start talking to her about God, I inwardly looked up for His leadership. The woman then mentioned the lovely scenery in New Zealand and how she loved nature. Immediately, I felt an inspiration and told her how one can see the attributes of God in nature. I tried to make an example so that it could be better understood. "For instance," I said, "If you were to have a room at home, set apart, full of paintings by the same artist and you were to study the paintings, you would learn much about the artist himself." Now I looked and saw a very perplexed woman. Almost in shock, she said to me that she had such a room at home, full of paintings by the same artist. She also realised that it was the Holy Spirit revealing all this to her. She thanked me and wished me all the best for my return to New Zealand. She also said she would start reading the Bible again. I believe that she was the one God wanted me to speak to.

Back again in New Zealand, we drove our old Vauxhall Viva from Christchurch to Tauranga. All of our belongings fitted into the boot of the car. When we arrived in Tauranga we were able to stay with one of the families I had known, until we had our own

place. This was not so easy, as there weren't many houses available and the ads in the paper came out only once a week. Bronwyn was also pregnant and probably had the motherly instinct of wanting a home. I encouraged her to trust the Lord for the accommodation, despite nothing being available in the newspaper. Out of nowhere we got a phone call and had an old house offered to us. We soon moved in, only to find the place in a real mess and full of rats. It took a while for me to clean the old fridge and cupboards. Not that Bronwyn didn't help, but I didn't want my young pregnant wife to do such dirty work. We soon got some rat poison and prepared the house, even looking at a possible room for our first child. My search for work seemed to be successful. I had the approval for a job and all the company wanted to see was my official certificates. After supplying the certificates, nothing happened and eventually the job offer came to nothing. In those weeks that we had spent waiting for the company to get organised, we had managed to spend all our savings. Once the savings were gone I got another job. We felt the Lord was showing us that we should not trust in our own ability to save. He is our Provider, and this was our first lesson. The new job was to teach computer courses. It seemed to be quite easy for me, because of my background as a technical instructor. Work went well, and I even appeared in the newspaper a few times – with the mayor of the city and my class – being congratulated for the successful outcome of the course.

Fellowship was a bit of a problem because there weren't regular meetings to attend. The two families we knew just sat around and listened to a Gospel tape. This was quite hard for us, especially Bronwyn. She was missing a real fellowship, and then being introduced to my friends wasn't too exciting for her either. There were Richard's parents, the two families I knew and my down-to-earth Māori friends from Rotorua. A bit of a shock for my sheltered city girl.

MY WIFE RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Because of the lack of regular meetings, I decided to conduct a Sunday morning meeting at our place. The other two families joined those meetings and often the Māori brethren from Rotorua turned up as well. At times, people we reached out to also came along. My wife was still frustrated with spiritual things. One night, before I had to preach, we had a real attack from the 'enemy'. It became evident that my lovely wife had only heard about the Lord Jesus Christ and had obeyed His Word, but she had never really met Him. I therefore encouraged her to pray and to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to show her how she looked in His eyes, rather than in her own, which she did. Praise the Lord! On Sunday morning the Lord was very present and at the end of the meeting we all sang and were praising the Lord. Then suddenly, Bronwyn stormed out of the room in a rage, slamming the door behind her. It was a bit embarrassing for me, so I went out to see her. There she was frustrated, wild and tearful. "What's the matter?" I asked her. She replied, "You wrote that song, *It's The Grace I See, That Brings Tears To My Eyes*, but it is the grace I don't see that makes me cry!" Eventually I persuaded her to come back into the lounge where we all prayed for her.

The next day Bronwyn was doing the dishes and suddenly remembered something that happened during her childhood. She asked me if things had to be confessed or whether it was enough to have prayed about them. I said that sometimes we need to confess things before God and before man. This was very hard for her. Being exposed was not what the flesh desired. I encouraged her to confess it to me, and finally, sitting on my knees and after a long battle, she did. I didn't think it was too bad, but to her, it was terrible. Finally she saw herself as the Lord saw her – a sinner who needed to be saved. We read the Scripture that says, "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". We were on our knees when Bronwyn cried out, "Lord Jesus, please save me!" Then suddenly, a heavy weight the size of a tennis ball, left Bronwyn's heart and she was as happy and free as never before. She wanted to testify to everyone that she had found the Lord, or more correctly, the Lord had found her. She ran across the road

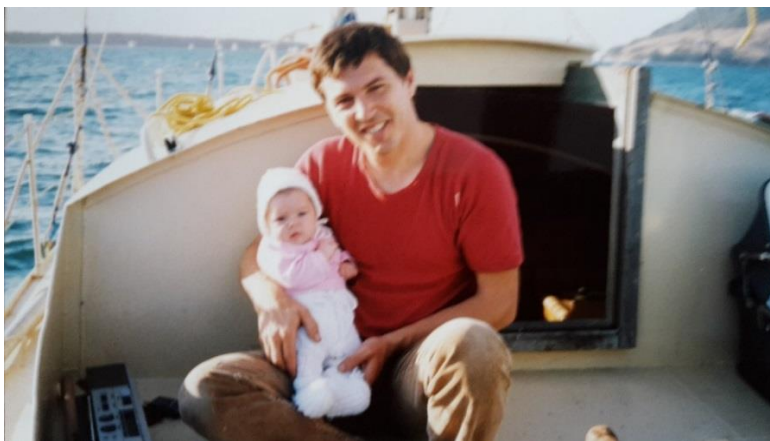
to the nearest phone box and rang one of our friends. When they answered, Bronwyn began sharing what the Lord had done and was full of excitement of how she had received the Holy Ghost. Suddenly, the phone clicked off, because in those days one needed to press a button when the phone was answered – which Bronwyn didn't do – otherwise they couldn't hear you.

The Lord is so gracious! Our lives went up to another level and our marriage has not been the same since! As Bronwyn testified, many church people she had grown up with were surprised to hear that she had received the Holy Spirit. Just a confession of beliefs and doctrines is not the real life, which only the Lord Jesus Christ can give. Yes, there is only one door – the Lord Jesus Christ whereby we must enter! To be born again means we become a new creation! Now Bronwyn loved to sing that song, *It's The Grace I See, That Brings Tears To My Eyes*, as grace meant something to her now.

EARLY YEARS OF MARRIAGE

During the early years of our marriage we had to shift about ten times. A strange thing happened in one of the flats we shifted into. The whole place felt a bit oppressive, which was also noticed by discerning Christians. It was at this time that our first child Christine was born, which was a wonderful experience and the beginning of my dream to have a family. Christine was only about three weeks old when Satan tried to kill her. Yes, there was an evil spirit living in that upstairs flat and one night it tried to strangle our little baby girl. She was twisting like a cork screw and looked like she was dying. We prayed and cried out to the Lord, Who saved our girl. We still took her to an emergency doctor to find out what was wrong, but they could only say that she had been very distressed and there was nothing physically wrong with her. Nevertheless, this evil spirit remained in the house, until my wife desperately sought guidance from the Lord about it. One night I woke up and heard Bronwyn in the lounge, on her knees crying, with a box of handkerchiefs and her Bible open in front of her. I asked her, to come to bed, because I had

to go to work in the morning and I wasn't really in the mood for what I thought, was yet another emotional carry on. "No!" Bronwyn said, "I want to know what's wrong! Here in the Bible it says love, joy, peace, and I can't see it." I knew then that she was serious and meant business. "Do you want me to pray?" I asked. Bronwyn said yes, so I too went on my knees. Tired, I mumbled a prayer and nearly fell asleep. Then Bronwyn started to pray. It didn't sound like her at all! Positive and wonderful words were pouring out of her mouth. I realised this was the Holy Ghost and I woke up in a hurry. As we prayed and worshipped the living God, the power of Almighty God filled the whole place. What a wonderful night that was! No tiredness, no worries, just praising the Lord! Around 3am we went back to our bedroom. It was then, while we were still praising the Lord, the Blood of Jesus Christ, and His greatness, that there was a sudden, loud bang and scratching sound on the window. The window was pushed open from the inside of the room. Bronwyn immediately exclaimed, "The devil just left!" Praise the Lord, the evil spirit had fled out of the window and was gone! I started to realise how real the spiritual world is. There is no room for playing around. We need the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Guide, our Lord and Saviour and only then are we protected and able to withstand those forces. Sometimes people get all excited when supernatural things are happening, but completely forget that the devil too is supernatural! The Lord Jesus Christ wants to give us life and life more abundantly, but the other force, the devil, wants to take and destroy our lives.



After we had been married for nearly one year, I launched my yacht again and decided to introduce Bronwyn to my interest in sailing. She reluctantly came out on the boat for a quick sea trial,

leaving our baby Christine with the grandparents, who were visiting from Christchurch. I thought it would be best not to go too far from the marina, so I went to a quiet area in the harbour, where I had not been before. "Come down below," I said to her. I thought that being in the boat's cabin, in still waters, would be romantic and I hoped she would get a liking for the boat. As we were enjoying the gentle rocking motion of the boat, suddenly, there was a thumping noise. I knew immediately what was wrong. We were in shallow water and the tide was on the way out. That didn't do much for Bronwyn's confidence, as she was almost beside herself. Her motherly instinct told her that little Christine needed to be fed and she couldn't just wait for the tide to come in again. Some people in a motor boat saw the commotion and 'rescued' Bronwyn. Being the captain, of course, I stayed on the boat. Bronwyn managed to get home, while I waited until the tide went out and then came in again. It was not a complete waste of time, because at low tide, while the yacht was on the dry sand, I was able to give the hull a coat of anti-fouling paint.

Many things have happened since the Lord came into my life, and knowing that I have eternal life has changed my priorities. People are more important than careers and money. I sought to serve the Lord and He has blessed me in a tremendous way! I simply had to learn to live by faith and to rest in Him! This took a while and came about by having challenging circumstances that were above and beyond my ability to solve. One of the first experiences of God's provision came during the early months of our marriage. We made a lot of phone calls to my parents in Switzerland and in those days, overseas calls were quite expensive. For some reason we did not receive a phone bill for several months, but when it finally arrived, it was a big one! We had no savings and lived from week to week, so such a bill was a huge amount for us to find. There were several nights when I lay awake in bed, wondering how to get the money to pay that bill. One day I suddenly realised that it was utter unbelief to worry. The Lord said to cast all your cares upon Him. I told Bronwyn to get the bill and put it on the table. Together we laid

our hands on it and committed it to the Lord. I then said to put the bill in the bottom drawer and not to mention it again. Every time that bill came to mind, I refused to think about it because I had given it to the Lord. About two weeks later at work, it was announced that we were getting a pay rise and that it was to be back-paid for quite a few weeks. The amount I received was enough to pay the phone bill! We were beginning to learn how wonderful it is to trust in the Lord.

Still at the little flat, I invited people from work, where I was teaching computers, to come and visit us for an evening. Of course, I had in mind to tell them about the Lord. The night came and quite a number arrived. Some of them were in a party mood and others seemed to have sensed my real motives. At the end of the evening we sang a song together. The same was planned for the next week, but this time not everyone came back. I ended up sharing my testimony and encouraged the visitors to believe in the reality of God. To prove this, I told them they could pray for whatever need they had. To get them started, I told them of a list of things that I was wanting. I wanted to sell our old Vauxhall HB Viva for a good price, then find a good, cheap Bedford van in Christchurch, get a cheap air ticket to Christchurch, quit the flat, have a holiday in Christchurch and then drive the van back to Tauranga and move into a three-bedroom house. As we could not afford to have a holiday and pay rent at the same time, quitting the flat seemed to be the only option. Quite a list of things I desired! This encouraged the others to share their desires – a job, money, direction for personal problems etc. Except for one woman, everyone shared their prayer requests and we all ended up praying, even non-Christian people who had never prayed before. The following week we met again, and I had wonderful news! My car had sold for a great price! My father-in-law, now a mechanic, said this was a miracle in itself! While I was at the Air New Zealand travel office, I was informed that everything was booked out. Just as I was about to leave, a very cheap flight became available because of a cancellation. The best was yet to come. My father-in-law went to an auction in Christchurch, where three Bedford

vans were auctioned off – two of them for quite a high price. The third one was in the best condition but had a problem with the starter motor and couldn't start, so my father-in-law managed to purchase it for a bargain price. It was a very minor repair job to get it started and the perfect van was mine. During the week I contacted my landlord to give notice. "Where do you go from here?" he asked me. "No idea," I said, "But I will look for a three-bedroom house at the end of January." He then told me about his son's house, which was going to be available, if we wanted it. This was more than perfect for us. We not only had the house but were able to move in whenever we wanted. When I shared with the people that all my prayer requests had been answered, they could hardly believe it! It encouraged their faith, and all of them, except the woman who didn't share her request, testified a week later that their prayer requests had been answered too. Praise the Lord! A few months later I saw the woman in town and she recalled the night of prayer. She told me of her unspoken request and that the Lord had also answered her prayer. Jesus is alive!

Off we went to Christchurch, where we stayed with Bronwyn's parents. I spent quite some time in the garage, constructing a cot/play pen in the back of our new van for our little girl Christine, who had just turned one. She liked the new cot very much and she behaved well and was easy to take places. We had an enjoyable trip back to Tauranga in our new van and it was great to come back and be able to move into our new house straight away. Yes, the Lord had certainly given us all that we had desired.

BUYING OUR FIRST HOUSE

Back at work there seemed to be some trouble brewing and general hints such as, "If you don't like it, you can go", were made. No direct threat was made towards me, but it was enough for me to consider furthering my computer skills and learning computer programming. I had an interview with the Polytechnic and was accepted for a one-year, full-time course to gain the

National Certificate in Business Computing. I was assured that the student allowance would go up and should be sufficient to cover my living expenses. Upon this advice, I resigned from my job and began my full-time studies. To my surprise, the allowance didn't go up and I received less per week than our rent alone! This really put me under intense pressure. It was not just financial pressure, but I also felt the criticism from friends and family, who thought it was very irresponsible of me to have left a well-paid job, especially as Bronwyn was about to have our second baby. In my desperation I went to see the Polytechnic counsellor, who advised me to ask for an emergency benefit, but not to declare that I owned a boat. This didn't sound right to me and I told him that if I couldn't get the money honestly, then I didn't want it at all. The next option was the Social Welfare Department. Once again a well-meaning woman tried to find a way for me to receive a benefit. Unfortunately I was again encouraged not to tell the truth about my situation and to say that my wife was living on her own. I knew this was not the right thing to do either. My mother heard about my situation and sent me some application forms for a bursary from Switzerland. I read the criteria and soon saw that I did not meet the criteria at all. Firstly, it was only for people living in Switzerland and secondly, they had to have lived at least two years in the town where the money was supposed to come from. Nevertheless, I filled out the forms and sent them away.

The Polytechnic course was difficult and I struggled a lot with the accounting module. There was one consolation – the teacher was Swiss and very helpful, and we became good friends. As I struggled financially, I wondered how other students coped. I asked an older student how he managed, to which he replied that it was no problem, because he was sponsored by a Māori organisation. This just didn't seem right, I thought.

One night at home I felt completely overwhelmed by the stress of trying to learn programming, accounting etc. mixed with the financial pressure and the criticism from friends and family. I was nearly tearful as I stood there in despair and said to Bronwyn, "I

do not know how we are going to pay the bills, but one thing I know, the Lord has never let me down, nor forsaken me!" The next day, as we were reading the Bible together, we came across the verse that says, "*Is there anything too hard for the Lord?*" Definitely Not! We were greatly encouraged by His Word!

After studying all day I also worked part-time in the Polytechnic library. It was not really the sort of job I enjoyed, but it brought in a few dollars. It was about two weeks after we had read that Bible verse, when we had our first answer to our prayers. A letter from my parents arrived saying that they wanted to pay for our rent while I was studying, so they sent us the rent money for the entire year. Praise the Lord! What a miracle!

On one of those evenings, while working at the Polytech library, I got a phone call to say Bronwyn was in labour. I rushed home, took Bronwyn to the hospital, and in less than an hour we had Sharon, our second daughter. We rejoiced greatly and now really felt that we were a proper little family.

About three months later, another letter from Switzerland arrived. It was very plain and formal. It simply stated that a decision had been made and unless we wanted to dispute it, a significant sum would be paid into our account. Another miracle! It seemed too good to be true that we had really received that bursary! But we knew that the Lord had made a way and that there is nothing too difficult for Him! At the end of that year I not only graduated and got my certificate in Business Computing, but we also had enough money left to consider buying a house.

We thought about the possibility of moving to the South Island, but my former boss kept on phoning me, offering me my old computer teaching job back. After his third call and the promise of the same employment conditions, I accepted. Now we looked for a place to settle in expensive Tauranga. Personally, I did not want to buy a house and borrow money from the bank, because since I had become a Christian, I had made it a principle to only get what I could afford. However we had to live somewhere, so

we decided to consider buying a section and building a house. Bronwyn and I found a lovely, full-size section in a new subdivision. There was a big price difference between half-size and full-size sections, but we opted for the latter. The day came when the solicitor arrived at our house with the contract for us to sign. As I read through it, I noticed that the vendor had put the price of the half-size section on the contract, despite the contract being for the full-size section. I informed the solicitor of the mistake, but he told me just to sign it, because the vendor had already signed the contract. We now had the full section for the price of a half section. What a blessing! It was then that I remembered the conversation I had had with my uncle regarding the paying of tithes, and how the Lord blesses the obedience to His Word.

As we had to leave our rented house, the landlord's father offered us a flat, very close to where we were building our new house. We could live there until we moved into our own place. We were excited to see our little house being built and watch the progress day by day. I often called Bronwyn from work during the day, but one day the phone at our flat had a fault and didn't ring anymore. Bronwyn could not ring me at work because of company policies, and I could not ring her because she would not be able to hear it ringing. I really wanted to talk to my sweetheart and I just decided to try the phone anyway. I waited only a few moments and Bronwyn answered. She said the phone had not rung, but she just really wanted to talk to me and so had picked up the phone in faith. It made us both very happy to know we were in tune with each other.

The day arrived, in 1989 when we could shift into our new home. We were extremely happy and grateful. In the first few months I spent all my efforts and money working around the house, making fences, building retaining walls, a cobblestone driveway and planting dozens of trees. The house was a blessing and we had many visitors and wonderful times of fellowship.

After a few months we were delighted to welcome into our family our first son. Of course, we named him Albert. When he was about 18 months old, we decided to get him a pet lamb. Albert liked to pat the lamb, but could only do so after I tied up its legs. Unfortunately, the lamb was not at all tame and it bleated the whole night, running around our fenced section and keeping the neighbourhood awake. The next morning I phoned the farmer to see if we could swap it for a more suitable pet. This time I came home with chickens and a young rooster that we called cotton-wool. As it grew, it started to crow, which also didn't impress the neighbours, so he too had to go.

Before long, Bronwyn was expecting again and we arranged for another home birth. All was going well when, right in the middle of giving birth, some visitors arrived. I quickly made them a cup of tea and told them to just wait a moment, as we were having a baby. Shortly after this our darling Melanie arrived. We now had four children in a rather short period of time. This made Bronwyn wonder just how many we were going to have. I kept on reminding her that children are a blessing of the Lord, especially if we receive them as such. I also told her that she would find the answer in the Bible. A bit reluctantly, Bronwyn searched the Scriptures and sure enough, the Lord showed her, that it is He who opens and closes the womb. So we felt happy to leave this matter in His hands. After a bigger gap than usual, Bronwyn was expecting again. This time she knew that it was the Lord's will and a blessing of Him. The Lord also told her that she would have a girl and what we were to name her. And, so it was, our cute Susanna joined the family. By now young Albert was surrounded by four sisters.

Ever since I was a child I had always wanted to have a dog, but had always been told that I couldn't, for one reason or another. I was so used to being told a dog was a waste of time and too much hassle that it wasn't until I was 40 years old, that I suddenly realised I could have a dog. I just had to go and get one, which I did. I chose a lovely German Shepherd puppy that we called

Rugge. Little Albi was so excited when he found out the dog was a boy, and he no longer felt like the odd one out.

As well as making a chook yard and gardens, I also built an office and a garage on our property. I worked three different jobs so I could pay for all the additions. One of those jobs was teaching night classes, and our little girl Melanie was always so sad when I had to go away in the evenings. I made up a song for her and used to sing it to her before leaving for the night classes.

Melanie, Melanie, don't you cry
Melanie, Melanie, I just say good bye
Melanie, Melanie, it won't be long
And I'll be back at home
Singing this song
So, don't you cry.

Finally we had all we wanted for the family – a lovely house with a chook yard, a playhouse, sandpit, swings, office, garage and gardens. Having a mortgage still troubled me a lot though. Trying to pay it back a bit quicker, we sold Bronwyn's beloved piano and my beloved yacht.

The Pastor who conducted our wedding had prayed for us, that our home would be a place where the sick would find a healer, the weary would be comforted, the sinner would find their Saviour and the Saints of God would rejoice together. It was a great blessing for us to see this come to pass in our home. One day a Christian sister came to visit with her teenage daughter. The daughter wasn't interested in visiting and stayed in the car, smoking. The mother stayed for quite a while until finally, the daughter knocked on the door, asking to use our bathroom. She walked through the lounge to the bathroom, then back to the car. Years later we met her again at a Christian meeting. It was then she told us of that visit with her mother. She said that when she walked through the lounge, she had felt a wonderful, sweet atmosphere, which made her decide right then and there, that she too wanted to become a Christian. Praise the Lord!

Another time I invited a man from work to our home for dinner, because I thought he needed some encouragement. He surely did. Just before he left, he told us that he had wanted to commit suicide, but now had changed his mind.

One day some people who had just been to a convention came to visit us and insisted that we should receive their 'new light'. It didn't seem to be the same Spirit that had ministered to me before. The Bible says, "*My sheep will hear My voice and a stranger will they not follow*". We got quite a pounding because we didn't agree with them. It was so intense, and they were so rude to me that Bronwyn started to cry. It was then when I felt it was time to dismiss them. The next day I was telling Bronwyn about the time when Jesus had rebuked Peter, when he said that he wouldn't allow anyone to hurt the Lord. As I was speaking, the presence of the Lord came down and I heard myself saying, "Jesus said to Peter, 'get thee behind me Satan', because Peter was trying to hinder Calvary, and any Spirit that tries to hinder Calvary from becoming a reality in a person's life, is of Satan; I don't care who it is". Right then, the room was filled with the wonderful presence of the Lord and we could not even speak for several minutes, just being in that wonderful atmosphere, experiencing tremendous joy and peace and confirmation of the truth.

CONTINUOUS OUTREACH

Around that time I placed advertisements in the local newspaper



with challenging thoughts and Scriptures which drew some response from religious people. I was brave enough to leave my phone number in the advertisement. I also

purchased a very old green van, which I used to take to the Red Square in downtown Tauranga. It was the place where a Māori brother had prayed for me years ago. I had the van arranged like a little shop with free Bibles, Gospel tapes and pamphlets. There were mixed reactions from people – some very positive and others very abusive, but the Lord protected me. It was a bit tough to be there on my own every Friday night, but at that time, no one else shared my vision for outreach. I still remember one night when a neighbour came down to see me. He was very disturbed. He hadn't come to get spiritual guidance, but to inform me that there had been a big accident at my house. Across the road, another neighbour had parked his truck on a steep hill and the brakes had failed, causing the truck to roll backwards down the hill, across the road, through our fence and crash into our house. The truck had struck a corner of the bedroom where Christine was sleeping. As I arrived home, I heard the neighbour's wife screaming, "We are so sorry, we are so sorry!" Not knowing if anyone was hurt, I rushed into the house to find that everyone was well. Just that morning, Bronwyn had felt the need to move Christine's bed from that corner to the other side of the room. Despite the room being covered in gib-board and dust, and pictures that had fallen off the wall, Christine remained asleep and unhurt. In fact, none of the children had woken from the noise, even though the whole house had been shifted off its foundations. Praise the Lord!

A few years later I used a small bus for the outreach. On one occasion, a loosely dressed woman came into the bus and wanted me to go somewhere with her. She was quite rude, and I felt a bit disgusted. She put her legs up onto the back of a seat and insisted that I leave the bus and go with her. Then she asked me what I was doing in the bus. I explained that I was doing outreach and was telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ. She wasn't impressed at all and said it was a lot of rubbish. Then she insisted that I kiss her. She came closer and closer towards me, wanting a kiss. She was not far from my face, when suddenly the Lord's presence came upon me. Instead of disgust, I felt a tremendous love and compassion for the woman. As my

eyes started to water, and as she also felt that presence, she started to shake and exclaimed that she was no good. To this I replied, "That is why Jesus Christ died for you. Your soul is worth more than many worlds." At this she broke down, dropped to the floor and cried and howled for about 15 minutes. I prayed for her. When she finally got up, she shook herself and explained that she didn't know what was happening to her. Yes, the love of God reaches out to the lowest sinner. He is no respecter of persons, which means he doesn't discriminate.

One day I received a phone call from a man who had seen my phone number in one of those advertisements I had placed in the newspaper. He explained that he felt the Lord told him to call me to ask if I could help him with preaching in the meetings he conducted on Sunday afternoons at the historical Elms Chapel. I told him I would be happy to help him. I didn't know what denomination they were, but it didn't really matter to me, because I just wanted to be able to share what the Lord would lay on my heart. I respected their church order, which meant the whole meeting had to be over in exactly 45 minutes. On one of those Sunday afternoons, I had a good message on my heart and had prepared quite a few notes. However, I was a bit concerned about how I could present it all in less than 45 minutes, as two hymns also had to fit into that time limit. When we arrived at the chapel, the minister was winding up the old pendulum clock, as if to remind me to keep an eye on the time. When I had finished preaching, I looked at the clock and was pleasantly surprised to see I had finished in time. Just when I thought that all had gone well, one old man in the congregation stood up and informed us that he had something to say. "Listen people," he said. This made me very nervous, as I wondered what I had done. The old man continued. "Albert spoke about Joshua, and how God stopped the sun, so the battle could be completed. But while he was preaching, the clock stopped for about 15 minutes and then started all by itself again. This happened so that Albert could finish the message." Wonderful! The Lord had performed a miracle! I then also realised that the Lord often works behind the scenes, but we are not always aware of it. The preaching at the

Elms lasted for quite some time, but eventually, the traditional congregation of mostly old ladies began to get uncomfortable with hearing the Gospel, which stirred them up. They were happy to have a short service and a nice cup of tea and it appeared that they didn't really want to be challenged in any way. The Word of God is too serious to turn a meeting into just a nice little religious gathering. The truth convicts, but it also sets us free, if it is received! So, my time at the Elms came to an end, but I was thankful for the opportunity I had had.

As our children began to grow older, we decided to teach them ourselves at home, rather than sending them to school. Apart from the bad influence in public schools, I believed we had a scriptural reason for doing it. I was thinking of the Words of Jesus when He said, that in the last days the world would be like Sodom and Gomorrah and the times of Noah. There is no doubt that we are living in the last days. Would Abraham have sent Isaac to Sodom to be educated by the Sodomites? I certainly don't think he would have, so why should I then entrust my children to a worldly state system, which is under the control of the Sodomite spirit? Home school went well, and Bronwyn did most of the work. The children not only had academic studies, but also learnt many practical things and discipline. They were all encouraged to be independent at an early age, which resulted in very positive outcomes.

In October 1994, Samuel was born, and Albert got the brother that he was missing so much. Our little house began to get quite cramped. It was time to think about moving into something bigger.

At work I started to feel the pressure. The organisation I worked for helped people to further their education and to find employment, but by now it was becoming very political. As I didn't play that game, I was singled out and suffered quite a lot of stress from it. For instance, there was the official opening of the new education centre and, to be politically correct, they invited a Māori official. We were told this Māori man was coming

to put a blessing on the building and that we were all required to walk behind him while he was chanting his stuff. Of course, I would never do such a thing and I simply refused to attend. There were a couple of 'denominational Christians' in management and I let them know that this was not right. Trying to find a solution, they just invited someone from the Salvation Army to say a prayer as well.

At this time we were all offered new employment contracts, which included new conditions. As this was not at all what had been promised, I resigned with dignity. In the preceding months I had been studying via correspondence to get my Real Estate licence. Having achieved this, I began working with a local company, however, the difficulty was that you only got paid several weeks after a sale had been completed, which made things tough financially. Bronwyn and I were careful not to spend more than absolutely necessary and to help us through, I taught night classes at the Polytechnic and the Girls' College as well.

BUILDING A HOUSE



Having seen many houses in the real estate market, I wondered how we could ever afford a bigger place. The only possibility I saw, was to

buy a piece of cheap land and build a house myself. We therefore put our beloved little house on the market. It was bought by a Christian couple, who said they liked the nice atmosphere they felt in this house. I soon found a piece of land that was affordable. It was one acre of land with a great view, but the city rubbish dump was nearby, which was why the price

was very low. Nevertheless, I felt the need to buy that land directly from the farmer who owned it. He was very nice and even gave us a further discount. We now owned an acre of freehold land and had a little bit of money left to build a house, or at least part of it. Bronwyn and I drew up plans for a large house, without really realising how much it would cost. The farmer had another old farm house nearby that we were able to rent for eight months while I began building. I now became a 'builder' which I really enjoyed, even though I had very few tools, no building experience and not a lot of money. I often drove around other building sites just to find out how it was done. Despite doing most of the work myself, we soon ran out of money. I also suffered tennis elbow in both of my elbows from hammering in thousands of nails. At the old rented farm house, things were going well. Bronwyn was very industrious and even milked a cow, which the farmer had loaned to us. From the milk Bronwyn made yoghurt, butter, cheese and ice cream. The menu was supplemented by fish I caught and eggs from our chickens, and we all had a happy time with plenty to eat.

Progress on the building site slowed down, mainly due to the lack of money. So far, the house consisted of a double garage, a small bathroom, a formal lounge and the entrance. The main part of the house was yet to be built, but as we had run out of money, I decided to close off the end of the house with plywood, until such time we could afford to continue. It was now decision time. Should we live in the part of the house that was built, or should we rent somewhere? There was a unanimous decision to move into our new 'house'. I found a very good, second-hand stove and kitchen sink at an auction for next to nothing. Soon we had a temporary kitchen set up in the corner of the garage. Bunks were arranged around the walls for the children and we set up the formal lounge as our bedroom. We had such a happy time living in the garage. The children enjoyed exploring outside and we began to collect quite a menagerie that included goats, sheep, chooks, ducks, a cat, a cow, and of course, our dog.

Ten months after we shifted into our new home, Elanah was born and we were all very happy to have another member in our family. We didn't have much money, but at least we didn't have a mortgage. It was during this time that we really experienced the Lord as our Provider. Every weekend, a nearby vegetable shop gave us boxes of vegetables that they hadn't been able to sell during the week and didn't want to keep until Monday. So we had an abundance of free vegetables every week. We felt like Elijah being fed by the ravens.

The farmer who had sold us the land was selling another six acres adjoining our property. I thought this would be a great opportunity for one of our friends. They did come and inspect the land but seemed to be a bit put off by the nearby dump and so decided not to buy it. I told the farmer I would like to buy the land but couldn't afford it just at that moment. He then offered it to me with a late settlement, a two-year settlement! It was an offer too good to be missed and so I signed the contract, not knowing the heartaches and blessings which were hidden in this purchase. The six acres were again very cheap! There was also an area with a farm shed on it which was subdivided off to be sold with another section. By mistake, that piece of land was sold twice, but thankfully, with no dispute it was awarded to me. After just a few months we received a notification that the city dump was to be closed and the land to be turned into a BMX track and park. Land values increased rapidly following this news.

Two years passed but our house had not progressed greatly due to the lack of money. I now had to organise a mortgage to pay for the acquired six acres, so I borrowed a little bit more to be able to carry on with my house project. Having a mortgage made me feel quite stressed. Things got worse when I found out the transport authority was planning to put a road close to our boundary and would require a small corner of my land as a buffer zone. This planned road destroyed my future. I had plans to do many things with this land for the family. I ended up requesting that the transport authority purchase the required land earlier than needed. Finally an official came along to value the property.

My stress level was incredibly high by now – shattered dreams and a wife and seven children living in a garage! One day I realised that being so stressed was simply the result of having a lack of faith. The Bible says that we are promised a peace that passes all understanding. “Where is it?” I asked myself. “Maybe I have done something wrong?” Therefore, I started to seek the Lord so that I could possibly repent if there was something to repent for. I just could not think of anything I had to repent for. About three weeks later, the Lord showed me where the problem was. “Not your plans, but My plans,” was the answer I received from God. I suddenly realised that all the plans I had for the family and the future were made without consultation. Because my plans were made with good intentions, it felt unusual to repent for them. Nevertheless, I went on my knees and repented for my plans and surrendered all into the hands of the Lord. An incredible peace and joy came over me and all the stress was gone instantly! Straight away I told Bronwyn, “I don’t care whether we have a mortgage or not, I don’t care if they build a road, I don’t care if we can sell some land or not, because I have the peace of God!”

A friend I met at an auction was interested in buying two acres of my land, with the idea of building a house for himself. Land values had risen considerably, but I agreed to subdivide two acres off for a low price. He declined, saying, to my surprise, that this was too cheap! A few weeks later he asked again if I would still sell those two acres to him. This time I suggested a higher figure, to which he replied, “Yeah that sounds much better”, and purchased the land. Shortly afterwards, the transport authority informed me, that its valuation had mistakenly included the two acres I had just sold, but because things were already in the pipeline, I may get the money anyway. It wasn’t long before we received about threefold the amount of what we had paid for the entire block of land! Praise the Lord! No more mortgage, no pressure to work and plenty of money to finish the house. Talk about showers of blessings! Just as well I had committed all things into the hands of God and let go of my own plans. It was at that time the vegetable shop that supplied us with free

vegetables closed its doors. Having so much money in the bank took quite a bit of getting used to. I still hesitated to buy things, because I was so used to not having much money. This can



happen spiritually too. A person coming into Christ becomes the recipient of all the promises of God! Just accept it and make use of it! Once it sank in that the bank statement

represented money I could spend, I did just that. We bought a bus, a boat and 2kg of gold. With the rest of the money, I finished the house. Twice we travelled around the North Island and South Island with the whole family in our bus. The boat got a lot of use too. My children really enjoyed going out fishing with me.



In May 1998 we were blessed by the arrival of our eighth child, Joseph Israel. On Fridays we used to have a family celebration night. Bronwyn always cooked a special

dinner and we had lovely music playing, candlelight and an enjoyable family time. Sometimes we read, sometimes we prayed, we often sang and sometimes we played games. On one of those nights, after dinner, all the children waited with anticipation to see what we were going to do. I had some phone calls to make, so I had to think of something quickly. I had a pile of old business cards and handed three to each child, telling them to write down some things they would really like. I did not promise to give them their wishes, but I thought, at least I would

know their desires, and this would also keep them occupied while I attended to my other business. When I returned to the dining table, I took the cards and began to read them out. First I read out Albert's card – Motorbike, chainsaw, strawberries. The next card was from Melanie and started with chocolate fish. Eventually it was Christine's turn to hand over her cards. She acted a bit strange, but then suddenly handed over the cards. Card one, empty, card two, empty, card three, "I want to give my heart to the Lord". This took me by surprise! All I could say was that she desired a good thing. I walked over to her seat and told her that she should pray. And pray she did! Christine repented and asked the Lord for forgiveness and to come into her heart. I then laid my hand on her shoulder and prayed for her, that the Lord would fill her with the Holy Spirit. A beautiful presence filled the room and Christine started to rejoice and she received the peace that passes all understanding. What a wonderful night that was! Praise the Lord! The following Sunday, Christine was baptised in the Wairoa river, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In June 2000 David was born. We were so happy to be blessed with all these lovely children and our boy/girl ratio started to even out. With all those homebirths, we got to know the midwives quite well and some of them thought that I was such a great husband and father. I considered myself to be just normal, but then I realised that many people are in relationships which aren't blessed of God and they don't experience the joy of family life like I could. One morning I was lying in bed and my dear wife had just brought me breakfast, when the phone rang. It was a journalist from the Bay of Plenty Times asking if they could do an article on my family for Father's Day. I was absolutely puzzled – Father's Day? I thought the article should be about Bronwyn and not me. I think it was one of those midwives who had informed the newspaper about our rather unusual family. We agreed, hoping that perhaps we could be a helpful witness to the community. We were cautious about what we said, as we knew the press can portray things in any way they choose, and there is a very fine line between being an example of the perfect

marriage and family, and being looked at as a religious crank who is overdoing everything. To my surprise, we ended up on the front page of the newspaper and the journalist had written a very positive article. There were several letters to the editor written in the days that followed and they were all very nice.

SUPERNATURAL EXPERIENCES

One day I had been to Whangamata to visit an old friend, and on the way home, I made use of the uninterrupted quietness, to pray and just talk to the Lord. I wanted to be led by Him, and the verse from Ephesians 4:30 which says: *“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”*, came to mind. Therefore, I first asked the Lord to forgive me, if I had grieved His Spirit in any way and to make me sensitive to the leading of His Holy Spirit. After this prayer, I felt quite alert and sensitive towards God. As I drove on this country road, I noticed what appeared to be a brown rag in the gutter. Somehow I felt I should stop and have a look at it. Usually I never stop when I am driving, but as I had just prayed to be sensitive to God’s leading, I stopped the car and walked back to the place where I had seen the item. The closer I got to it, the more it looked like a handbag. I picked it up and took it to the car and had a look inside. To my surprise I found a wallet with cash in it, credit cards, bank cards and a cheque book, in which I saw the name “Harrison”. I continued and drove towards Waihi. As I entered this town, I noticed a car parked across the road that was about to leave, heading in the direction from which I had just come. Right then, this strange feeling came over me again and I was sure that this was the leading of the Holy Spirit I had prayed for. Immediately I stopped the car and ran across the road. An older couple sat in the car and the man reluctantly wound down the car window when he saw me coming towards them. I then said to him, “Excuse me, are you Mr. Harrison?” He looked very surprised and said, “Yes”. Full of joy for having been led by the Lord, I told them that I had a story to tell. I explained how I had been praying and had found their belongings – which they had only recently noticed were missing – and how the Lord had directed me to their

car. To say they were surprised is an understatement. They were speechless, but gratefully accepted the return of their belongings. As I left them, the woman called out, "Thank you, but we don't even know your name". I told them not to thank me, but rather to give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ for the return of their belongings. As I drove away, an incredible joy came over me and two things came to mind. Firstly, the Scripture in Romans 8:14: *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"*, and secondly, I thought how great the love of God is, to care for these old people's lost property. Praise be to His Holy Name! His love, mercy and grace reach out to everyone!

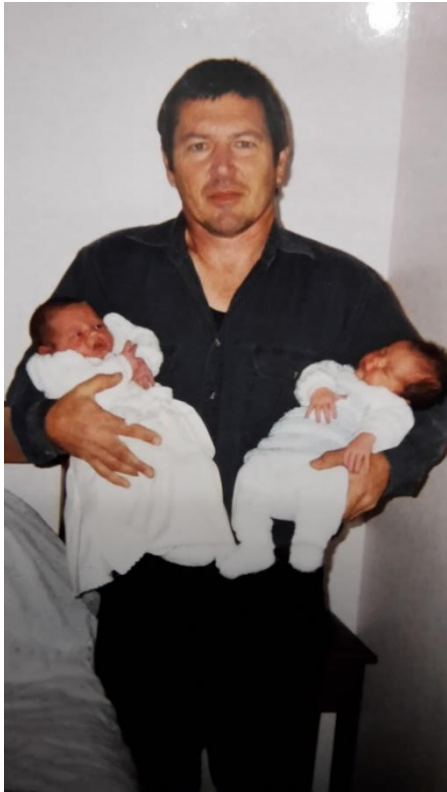
One day I received a phone call from Peggy, Richard's mother. She had to go to the hospital for a check-up and wanted me to look after Fred, Richard's father, for the day. When I arrived at their house, Peggy answered the door and informed me that Fred wasn't in a very happy mood, but I wasn't worried by that. I went in and found him sitting at the table muttering and as he was nearly completely deaf, I just took him by the arm and said loudly, that I was taking him out for the day. This must have taken him by surprise, as he didn't protest, and soon Fred was in my car and on the way to my place. I tried to talk to him, but it didn't go too well because he simply couldn't hear. Just then I had an idea. I took Fred into my little office and wrote on the computer screen, "Can you read this?" No reply. Now I zoomed in on the screen until I finally heard him saying, "Yes, I can read that". Next, I wrote that I had received a letter from Richard. This caught his attention. Then I wrote that Richard's daughter had given her heart to the Lord. By now Fred was shaking his head because he was an atheist. I explained that this was a good thing she had done and that I had done the same thing a long time ago. After typing a few more Gospel truths, I wrote on the screen, "Have you ever given your heart to the Lord?" I wasn't at all surprised when he answered, "No". Boldly I typed, "Would you like to?" "Yes," Fred answered. Totally amazed, I went over to him and told him to pray with me. I prayed the Sinner's Prayer and Fred repeated it word by word, asking the Lord for forgiveness and to

come into his heart. It was a miracle! Fred understood and heard every word I spoke.

Sometime later, Peggy had to have an emergency operation for cancer. She had been misdiagnosed for years and finally it was too late. Peggy underwent the operation but there seemed to be little chance of recovering. During one hospital visit, Peggy grabbed my hand and said, "Al, I am scared!" Peggy looked very serious and she was not the kind of woman who was easily frightened. She must have known that her life was coming to an end and she simply wasn't ready. I said to Peggy, "Yes, it is a fearful thing to walk through the valley of the shadow of death on your own. You need the Lord Jesus Christ to hold your hand!" After this, Peggy too prayed the Sinner's Prayer and received Christ. The fear left her and three days later she died.

During that time we had Fred staying at our place. One evening we had a Bible study and I asked Fred to read St. John 3. He felt very honoured and began to read. When he got to verse 16: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, Fred started to cry. The word of God had finally sunk in! Praise the Lord! Richard arrived a few weeks later and took his dad home to Switzerland with him, where after only a few weeks, he passed away. I had been storing some of Peggy and Fred's furniture at my place and now they were gone I asked Richard what he wanted me to do with their belongings. He told me that I could have it all. I felt obliged to tell Richard that some of the furniture was worth a lot of money. Richard simply said, "I have Jesus, I don't need more money!" It was a real blessing for us and I was able to sell most of the antique furniture for a good price. One interesting thing I discovered was an old pocket watch that had belonged to me. Fred had once offered me quite a lot of money for it, but because it meant so much to him, I had given it to him as a gift. I not only got it back, but there were over 30 more in the same box. I ended up swapping some of them for a motorbike.

One day we gathered the family together as we had a very special announcement to make. We had just found out that we were expecting twins! We were so excited, and I couldn't hide my emotions. The twins were born in May 2002, and we named them Stephanie and Joshua. I had always felt that someone was



missing around our big dining table, but after their arrival, I knew our family was now complete.

When Christine was nearly 16 years old, we thought it was time to consider her future. I therefore ended up starting a small business where she could assist in the shop, while doing some correspondence courses at the same time. This worked out very well. The interaction with the public and the courses she studied helped her to develop into quite a business woman. Opposite our shop was a restaurant where I used to park my motorbike. One afternoon I wanted to go home

early, but I could not find my motorbike key. I looked everywhere and eventually went out to the motorbike and there I remembered that I had left the key in the ignition. But it wasn't there anymore – someone had stolen my key! This distressed me very much, because the motorbike had a very complicated ignition system and a replacement key was virtually an impossibility. I walked back to my shop, where I desperately prayed and asked the Lord to show me where the key was! I did not even consider the natural impossibility of my request and simply walked down the shopping mall towards the main street, looking for my key. At the end of the shopping mall was a large roller door, between two pillars. Without even thinking, I just bent down at the left pillar to see if my key was there. It was! Praise the Lord! Afterwards I realised that I had prayed for the impossible, but with God, all things are possible!

One morning an old man turned up at our shop, looking very lost and unhappy. Christine spoke to him briefly and found out he was 79 years old and had just retired from his job selling real estate. After he had left the shop, Christine felt she should have invited him to church. She prayed that she would get another opportunity to see this old man. The next day, Christine was walking down the street when she saw him walking in her direction. She thanked the Lord for answering her prayer and then quickly offered him a card with an invitation to come to church. He was very puzzled about the invitation, but eventually came along to church one Sunday and again the next week and the next. Soon he was serious about serving the Lord and I baptised him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in a very cold river. We had many wonderful times of fellowship with this brother and it was wonderful to see him grow in the Lord. After 11 years, at the age of 90, he went home to be with the Lord.

One night I was in my room having some quiet time, when one of the children knocked on my door. I just called out, "Go away". Again they knocked and again I told them to go away. Persistently, they knocked for a third time. This time I jumped up and roughly opened the door shouting, "What do you want?" It was Albert. He said he wanted to give his heart to the Lord! I immediately felt bad for being gruff about the knocking, but at least I knew that Albert was serious about his decision. This is what you would call, "pressing in".

Another time, Elanah had some questions and had gone to Christine's bedroom to talk to her. After they had talked for a while they began to pray together and suddenly, the presence of the Lord came down in the room. They both started to rejoice loudly, which attracted the attention of Melanie, who then came and joined in, followed by Sharon and Susanna and finally the neighbour, Emma, who was staying with us. As each of the girls entered the room, they instantly came under the same anointing and couldn't help but worship the Lord. Melanie received the Holy Ghost that night. We didn't know that anything was happening, until Samuel came to our room upstairs and said that

something was happening with the girls. We asked him what he meant. He said that they were all shouting and speaking strange languages, but that they seemed to be happy! We said, don't worry, they are just fine. Of course, after a while we all gathered in the family room to continue giving God praise for what He had done.

On another occasion we had a home meeting and I decided to ask everybody present to comment on a time in their life, where they knew that God had spoken to them. At first, I was going to ask people to testify of when they received the Holy Spirit, but then I thought, that there may be quite a few who had never had this experience. As we went around the room, many lovely testimonies were shared and suddenly the Lord Himself came on the scene and His presence made us all rejoice. Our five youngest children were very moved by this spiritual experience and wanted to give their hearts to the Lord and be baptised in the name of Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord starts moving in our lives long before we really know Him.

Over the years I often visited my parents in Switzerland and these visits were more like a missionary trip than a holiday. On one of those trips I visited a mountain farmer and as it was summer, he and his family stayed up in the Alps in a mountain hut. We were just going to go for a walk, when his wife called us and said their daughter had become very sick. The girl had a very high fever and was almost unconscious. Both parents looked in shock, not knowing what to do, as the hospital was a very long way away. I asked them if they believed that the Lord could heal the girl, to which they replied that they did. Then I asked them if they had prayed for her. They hadn't, but the father then asked me to pray. I laid my hand on her and simply asked the Lord to heal her. Then I said to her, "Your daddy and I will go for a walk and when we come back, you will be well again". We came back after a couple of hours and the girl was totally healed. Later, I drove about three hours back to my sister's place, where I was staying. When I arrived, my sister told me that I urgently needed to contact the mountain farmer. I waited until the next

day, as it was already late at night. When I called, they told me their other daughter had also fallen ill with the same symptoms, but they ended up taking her to the hospital, where they diagnosed the illness to be meningitis. That farmer witnessed about the healing to other farmers, which opened a door for me to share more of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The following year I went there again, but this time, I could hold a meeting with quite a few of the mountain farmers. The next day when I left the mountains, I saw two men in a paddock. I stopped the car and they came up to me. It was two of the men who had attended the meeting. I asked them how they were. One man said that his friend – the other man – wasn't well at all. He had been sick for a very long time and could not find relief. I prayed for him right there on the track and said goodbye. A year later, I visited that mountain place again. On the way up, I saw a man in a paddock and when I stopped, he came towards me. It was the same man I had prayed for the previous year. The very first thing he said was, that we were standing at the exact same place as last year when I had prayed for him and that he hadn't been sick ever since. Praise the Lord!

CONTINUOUS WITNESS AND CHALLENGES

One day we received a phone call informing us that my younger sister Beatrice was suffering from a brain tumour. Beatrice wanted to be able to stay at home, but by now she needed full-time care. Her husband and two sons were not able to take time off work to look after her, so we decided that Christine should go and help. I also went over there to visit my sister and family. One day my sister's husband rang me and wanted to see me urgently. He wanted me to do something that would take away my sister's fear. I had to inform him that only the Lord can help someone in that situation. Nevertheless, I went and talked to my sister and she prayed the Sinner's Prayer with me and the fear left her. Christine also had many special times with her, as she sat by her bedside most days. The Lord told Christine which day Beatrice was going to die, so that she could be prepared for it. He also allowed Christine to see my sister talking to the 'other side',

saying that she was coming in a short while. Beatrice had peace and died on the day that the Lord had told Christine. During all those months, Christine didn't earn money but the Lord miraculously provided for her. After the funeral, a woman whom Christine didn't even know, came up to her and gave her an envelope saying, "Open this at home; the Lord told me to give this to you". There was quite a lot of money in the envelope. I truly believe that if one is on the Lord's business, then He will also provide! I experienced this myself many times, so I could never understand people begging for money, professing that they needed it to do the Lord's work. The Lord will always provide for our needs. If it is Him who sends us somewhere, then He will also make a way for it.

For several years the Lord opened a door for me to do prison ministry. Before getting permission, I was interrogated by three prison chaplains. As they were Catholics, they questioned me about the way I baptised people. God gave me wisdom and after first sharing some testimonies with them, I could tell them why I believed what I did about baptism. I told them, that if I were to believe that Peter – on the day of Pentecost and full of the Holy Spirit – had disobeyed the Lord's commandment to baptise in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, then I couldn't believe anything else he had said. I then told them I did however believe that Peter had a revelation of what that name was – the Lord Jesus Christ! There were no more arguments and I was free to conduct Bible studies in prison. Eventually I had the opportunity to baptise twelve prisoners in the middle of the yard, in an inflatable swimming pool, and I also had the opportunity to address many prisoners who had come to witness the event. One of the brothers I baptised was called Joseph. He was 33 years old at that time and had spent half of his life in prison. Shortly after that, Joseph was released from prison and we have been fellowshiping together ever since. The Spirit of God changes people!

Over the years I was often troubled by religious people. One point of contention was that some people referred to the

experience a believer needed as only having to believe the Word. While this is correct, I believe we also need to meet and accept the person of Jesus Christ, and this can only happen by receiving the Holy Ghost. I often thought that I would have liked to ask a prophet to explain this to me. As this troubled me greatly, the Lord was very gracious to me and gave me a dream. In my dream I was sitting on a bar stool and next to me sat Bro. Branham. At first, I cried and tried to explain my tears, saying, that I was crying because the grace of God was allowing me to speak to him, since he had already passed away. He never spoke a single word, but the expression in his face and eyes spoke volumes. Then I posed the question I had about the 'token' – is it the Word or the Holy Spirit? Again, there was such a wonderful expression in his face and eyes, that I had absolutely no doubt he understood exactly what I meant and what it was that troubled me. Still, without words, he took hold of a large block of ice and he held it over a bottle. Slowly the ice began to melt, and the water dripped into the bottle. I didn't need words! I knew straight away the answer to my question. The Word, the solid ice, could not enter a vessel until it was in the state of the Holy Ghost, liquid water. The Word, in the hands of the prophet, then became Spirit, so that it could enter the vessel – you and me. Ice and water are exactly the same element, only in different states.

The challenges I now experienced in life seemed to be less natural, but more spiritual. It happened several times that religious people came to our church, bringing with them their strong, religious interpretations of beliefs. It usually didn't take long, before the sweet atmosphere changed and it was quite difficult to pinpoint the problem. On one of these occasions, I started to get quite stressed, not knowing exactly what I was fighting against. I sought the Lord about it and He showed me the answer. One night I was lying on my bed, still troubled by the situation in church, when suddenly the Bible story of Naboth, Jezebel and Ahab came to mind. It witnessed with me straight away that someone wanted my vineyard and that this was the spirit I needed to fight against. Happy, I went to sleep, only to

wake up again at about 2am. I decided to listen to the Bible on my i-pod, which I had set on random selection. The very first thing that played was the story of Naboth! God does confirm His Word! From this moment on, the situation in church changed, as that spirit had been exposed. It is not the people themselves, but that spirit that wants to bring discord among the brethren.

The farmer who had sold us the land many years earlier had always been so kind and helpful to our family. Several of our children had been able to help him on the farm and he had given them calves and other things. Once, one of our boys came home quite upset as he had just received the news that the farmer had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. He got progressively worse and had to sort out the farm, getting rid of all the animals, even the chickens. He was very sick and lost so much weight that he looked like a skeleton. My son Joseph told me that the farmer was selling a rifle, so I decided to go and see him about it. It was quite a shock to see him so weak and sick and in such pain. When I asked him about how much he wanted for the rifle he replied that he didn't need money anymore and that I could give him whatever I wanted. He then told me the doctor had given him only two more weeks to live, but he didn't feel that he would even make it that long. It was a sad visit especially as he said, "There is nothing anyone can do". To this I replied that the only thing I knew was the things of the Lord and to pray. At this, he got a bit nervous and decided it was time for me to leave. As I left I mentioned to him that if he ever wanted to talk or pray with me, he could contact me anytime day or night. I had only been home for one and a half hours when the phone rang. It was the farmer and he wanted to talk to me. Immediately I went back to see him. We sat down and he began to explain to me how the pains were becoming more severe and a lot sharper. He talked to me like one would talk to a doctor. As I am not a doctor, I could only tell him of the things I knew, so I started to tell him about the Lord and what the Word of God says. I explained that the growth had a life which was not from God, but that an evil spirit was giving life to the cancer. I then mentioned to him that the Bible says we can cast out demons and lay hands on the sick and that

they will recover. I then said he had to have faith, and he assured me that he did. I placed my hand on him and started to pray. First, I asked the Lord to forgive him his sins, and I committed them under the Blood of Jesus Christ. Then I prayed against that demon spirit of cancer. I told the devil to leave in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! About a minute after the prayer, the farmer exclaimed that the pains were going away. This was wonderful, so I encouraged him to hold on and believe, no matter how the feelings may change. To my surprise, he then asked me how much I charged for this visit! Of course, there was no charge. Freely we have received and freely we give! The following Monday, the farmer went to the doctor to be checked. There was no cancer to be found! The doctor was very puzzled and sent him to be checked by another doctor, who confirmed that the cancer was gone. Praise the Lord! I visited him a few months later and hardly recognised him, because he had put on so much weight again and looked so well. He was 85 at the time of healing and died of natural causes in a rest home aged 90.

Not all healings do happen instantly. Just believe until it is manifested. Confess the truth for He is the High Priest of our confession.

It was just before Christmas 2017 when after playing tennis, I started to get incredible back pains. No pain killer gave me relief. There was not a single position I could sit, stand or lie without terrible pains. Of course I prayed for relief, but the pain continued.

Finally, after Christmas I tried to get some help. The doctors were closed so I went to a physio therapy. I was massaged and treated so much until I didn't know which pain was worse - the physio or my bad back. After the session I got up and had to be helped from falling over. I struggled to walk, but made it to my motorbike and off I went towards home. Getting off the bike, I just fell over. I had no more control over my foot. There was no way that I could lift the front of my foot. Walking was difficult as I now dragged my foot along.

At the next physio session I informed them of my paralysed foot. They were shocked and very concerned and advised me, if there was any more changes, to go directly to accident & emergency department at the hospital. They also arranged a special appointment with a doctor who specialised in back injuries.

Thanks to the physio, I could get an appointment straight away. The doctor checked me out and booked me in for a MRI scan. Before I had the results I started to go to a hot pool, trying to get some pain relief and also hoping that it may fix my paralysed foot. Unfortunately, that didn't work. I actually resigned to the possibility of being a cripple for the rest of my life.

Finally, as the scan results became available, I had another appointment with the doctor. On my way to the doctor I prayed very specifically. Since I didn't experience healing, I thought that it may be God's will to go through with medical treatment. Therefore I asked the Lord to speak through the doctor and that I was willing to do whatever he would suggest.

So it was. The doctor showed me the scan and told me that he hasn't seen anything as bad as this before. He suggested, that I should have an operation straight away so I would have a slim chance for my foot to work again. He looked a bit surprised when I agreed straight away.

Now I had appointments with various hospital staff and then, 10 days later was the date for the operation.

At the hospital I was prepared for the operation, including medication. Now I was wearing an operating gown and was wheeled to the operating theater. First the anaesthetist came, pulled down his mask and explained to me what he was about to do and possible soreness in my throat after the operation.

Then came the doctor, all dressed up and ready to operate. I must have looked a bit nervous, because He gave me a “last” pat on the shoulder and said: “How are you feeling?” Instantly I said: “A lot better.” Now he looked a bit surprised and started to check my leg and foot again. Then he asked me if I could walk. I got off the bed and walked up and down, dragging my foot along.

Now something strange happened. Suddenly, there seemed to be an unusual atmosphere. The doctor paused for a moment, tilted his head slightly to the side and looking straight into my eyes he said: “If I were you, I’d cancel the operation”.

Now a great feeling of relief and God’s leading came over me and with no hesitation, I cancelled the operation.

After I got changed, I walked back to the foyer. The nurses were very surprised to see me and asked me: “What have you done?” With a smile I replied: “I prayed.” The nurses were very friendly and prepared something to eat for me. While waiting for the food I rang my wife. She was very surprised that all went so quickly. Once I informed her that I opted out of the operation, she burst into tears. Tears of joy and also relief for not having to nurse me for the next three months.

I went home, still suffering from drop-foot, but convinced, that the Lord was in all this.

After another three days I got up in the morning and, praise the Lord, I was perfectly well again. My foot worked again and all pains were gone.

I had already received a get well card from the members of the tennis club and when I played in a tennis tournament a week later, they were in utter disbelief.

With man it is impossible, with God all things are possible.

There are so many more wonderful things I have experienced, and am continuing to experience, so that I could keep on writing daily. Of course, I must stop somewhere. I only trust and hope that what I have written will convince you that Jesus Christ has truly risen from the dead and is alive today and that His Word is the truth.

It is so simple. By grace are you saved, through faith – faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was crucified for our sins and shed His Blood as payment for our sins, so that we could go free and have eternal life. Just accept it, believe it and receive it! Jesus said, that whatever you ask of the Father in His Name, He will do it. Simply pray according to the will of God and He will answer! His will is that all would come to repentance and inherit eternal life. Ask Him to forgive you your sins and to come into your life! If you do that, watch what happens. He will lead you into all truth.

Did you know that Jesus Christ will be returning? The signs are evident everywhere! Just to name a few, the Bible says that in the last days there will be an increase in earthquakes, an increase in knowledge, an increase in violence and immorality, Israel will be gathered again into her homeland and become a nation (this happened in 1948), everyone will talk about peace, and God will reveal the truth of the Bible to turn his children back to the original faith, in order to get us ready for His coming. These are only a few of the signs which have already come to pass. The time is at hand and judgment is coming. Get yourself into safety as no-one can stop the destruction from coming. The only place of safety and the only hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ! He is alive! Yes, He rose from the grave! He is right here all present, knowing your very thoughts. Confess to Him that you are a sinner and that you need to be saved. Ask Him to come into your life and He surely will answer! It works! He says in His Word, "If you seek me with all your heart, you shall find me". You don't need religion, but Christ! The way of salvation has never changed! Accept the grace of God, the Blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for you and for me! Repent and die to yourself and be baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Then walk on

the path He has ordained for you until He comes. Christ is the Word, so be faithful to every Word of God. Separate yourself from all unbelief and man-made organisations and shun denominational, traditional teachings which are contrary to the Bible. We will not be judged by what any church or group says, nor how we feel about it, but by His Word! It is your life and your future. Be certain of God. Read your Bible and pray. Live your life free from the bondage of sin or man-made religion! Time is running out fast. Whosoever is not ready for the Lord's second coming will go into the great tribulation. This will be a terrible time like there has never been on earth before. I urge you, escape the terrible judgment! Come to Christ! Just think, once you take your last breath, you can no longer change. You will pass over into the other dimension as you are. Either to eternal life and glory, or judgment and hell. If you follow man's teachings, you may experience a blessed life, but with no eternal future. If you follow the living Lord Jesus Christ, you will have life and life more abundantly and at the end, eternal life!

All these things that happened were just the beginning. The Lord has led me every step of the way and I can truly say that He has always been my Helper, my Healer, my Provider and a wonderful Saviour. My wife and I have been blessed with eleven children and many grand-children. We have experienced many wonderful and supernatural things, as the Lord has taught us to trust Him. I just want you to know that God is real and that there is eternal life to be had! He loves you and if you call on Him, He will hear and answer you. There is no-one who knows you better than Him.

It is not my intention to draw you to a religious group, or even to influence you with my ideas. I just hope and pray for you, that this account of my life will cause you to consider your own position and to seek and find your Creator and Giver of eternal life, the Lord Jesus Christ. The only true hope for mankind. Is there any other hope?

God bless you.

Albert W. Ruegg



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