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The ENCOURAGER

EVANGELISE EQUIP EDUCATE

Magazine of the Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust



The Northland CFFD group in Trousoun Kauri park

A DEVOTION FROM MARGARET THOMSON

Margaret Thomson has athetoid cerebral palsy and has done many papers at Bible College and University.

Boccia is a game that is a cross between petanque and indoor bowls. It is a game of strategy, concentration and tactical awareness. It has been adapted for people with disabilities to play, and I have been enjoying competing for ten years. Boccia is not about winning the ultimate gold medal, but about participating. There is wonderful fellowship and such a sense of belonging in the Boccia family.

In late 2007 Sue, one of our members and supporters, was diagnosed with a brain tumour. There was nothing the medical profession could do. Cancer had to run its course. I could only pray that God wouldn't allow a lengthy period of suffering. The battle was in His hands. Late June 2008, Sue went through the gates of glory. Sue had lost her battle, but to me it was answered prayer.

I released a balloon into the grey looking sky. I kept watching it until I could see it no more. As the body left the church the bagpipes played "Amazing Grace", and the tears flowed freely. What more can be saidGod had taken a life, but as a Christian death isn't the end but the beginning of eternity. I find comfort in knowing this, and I can't wait to dance before the Lord!

Our Christian walk is like a race. A race, where everyone wins a prize, no matter how fast we run. What is the prize? It is eternal life. We follow Jesus Christ, our Saviour, whose Spirit is dwelling within us. Our focus is Jesus, not material gains.

Through Jesus God came and dwelt among His people. He chose to live physically among us for 33 years. God's son lived on earth. He had a family. He knew how to share with His siblings, He was aware of what it was to be poor, to be tempted, to make choices, to feel miserable, disappointed, pain and tears. Jesus knew all our human emotions, but He also was aware of the ministry He had been sent to carry out.

No one has seen God at any time, but He became visible to human eyes in the man Jesus, In John we read ...*"the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us."*, and it is through His living that life and enduring all those experiences, that we know He understands intimately all the hurts, emotional joys and devastation we go through at times.

What a Saviour! It is a privilege to walk in His footsteps, sharing the love of boccia with our family and friends.



A new book from Joni Eareckson-Tada

A LIFETIME OF WISDOM

"Do not forsake wisdom and she will protect you; love her and she will watch over you."

Proverbs 4:6

Joni writes:

One of my favourite joys in life is to write-whether an article or a book, I love putting down on paper what God keeps teaching me in my wheelchair. Nowadays, though, I'm noticing that not many people read books the old-fashioned way - they download bestsellers on their digital communication device (whatever that is), and if it's an article they use blackberry or iPhone to find it on the web.



Media technology is moving forward at a breakneck speed, but I still prefer a hardcover book with soft pages that smell like my hometown library. If there's something I can say in a book-a snippet of common sense or a closer look at a life-changing principle from God's Word-then I'm on it. Maybe I can help someone rise above their depression... perhaps I can change the perspective of someone embittered against the Lord.

It's why I wrote my new book *A Lifetime of Wisdom*. Many decades have passed since I broke my neck and, oh, how I wish I could go back and "talk" to that 17-year old girl I once was. She was an angry Joni, railing against God as though He were an enemy, trying to whip Him with her words. One scared little teenager, alone in a hospital room, still reeling from the horror of what her life had become.

Four decades have passed. I want to tell that frightened disabled girl that wisdom-insights into the nature of God and the ways of life-can't be found stewing in self-pity. Wisdom comes through long years of seeking God and trusting Him through the most difficult and heartbreaking circumstances of life. It's the whole point behind *A Lifetime of Wisdom*, and I can't wait to share it with the thousands of disabled people we serve through Joni and Friends. And remember, your prayers and support are helping us impart Christ-exalting wisdom to many more frightened young people facing life-changing disabilities. Thank you for partnering with us as we point them to God's heaven-sent wisdom from His Word.

TAKING A SEMINAR

We won't forget that seminar we took in the Korean "Church of Joy". With an all-Korean congregation it seemed wise to include in our team two former Korean students who had spent many weeks at our "Centre" as part of their training – both Andrew (shown here with his wife Gemma) and Won (below), translated for Di and Evan, and the two students also shared from their own experiences.



Understandably the need to give each message in English and Korean meant the service went way past its scheduled time allocation, but amazingly the attention of that Korean congregation never flagged, and they loved every minute of it.

IN A KOREAN CHURCH

When it was time for the beautiful meal to be served the congregation was split into many pairs, one to experience in a small way for a short time a taste of “being disabled”, and the other to act as their helper. Below, a “blind” man and a “tetraplegic” struggle with their meals, while on the right a “blind” lady was led around the room. Later in the seminar her helper discovered the correct way to lead by offering her elbow for the blind person to hold!



Finally the method of communicating through finding out a person's "yes, no" response, and asking questions with the "A to K, L to Z" and the "Is it a vowel?" techniques were explained, and then the couples tried communicating with simple words to sample just how communication can be achieved with a non-verbal person.



HOW BLESSED WE HAVE BEEN BY KOREANS

Looking back it is quite staggering the number of ways that Koreans have impacted our ministry.

Many have come to the Centre as helpers, others have come to camp, and we have had some great students who have proved invaluable in their placement at our Centre for 3 months at a time. Following a service that a CFFD team took at a Korean church, one young lady offered to translate our magazine into Korean and kept this up for many years.

Right now one lady is translating our magazine into Korean, and her husband has translated "Everybody Welcome" which will be invaluable in churches back in Korea as well as in NZ. Another lady comes to our Centre once a week to put together a series of beautiful flower arrangements. A Korean man heard of our need to have a ramp to get people out from the office area should a fire break out, offered to help and then built the ramp himself.

We've been invited to take the service in several Korean churches, and a number of these churches have supported our ministry through monthly automatic payments. On a number of occasions Korean churches have come to our Centre and presented a varied programme of singing, dancing, testimony and a message.

It's hard to believe but Young Ran, shown here, has finally ended an undertaking to come to the Centre virtually every week for 17 years in which she gave free haircuts

not just to those with disabilities but to our helpers as well. We do thank her for this incredible sustained gift of her talents. Also, she and her husband Choon Sic have on a number of occasions invited everyone at the Centre to their home and treated the large group to superb Korean cuisine. We now need someone to replace Young Ran.



Patricia Muir writes about

PANNING FOR GOLD

Does your life sometimes resemble a dry dusty place? A desert? No hope, no beauty? This has been my experience on and off over the last few years. A life once full of love and laughter, hope and purpose, blown apart, only to reveal the debris. A lonely place to travel through, but in the solitude – peace. In the uninviting sameness of dust and rock there are pockets of gold. Gems we wouldn't notice in the hubbub of the market place where life is busy, bright and noisy, all our senses satisfied.

Some people have come to places like this on purpose. Gold miners in lonely hills and deserted river beds, all hoping to find a nugget or two which will make them rich indeed. So when we find ourselves in this situation – let's go panning for gold. Treasures in God's Word we may have skipped over before. A different way of looking at things. More sympathy to the needs of others. Comradeship with others in life's valleys.

I've found some nuggets:

- A heavenly Father who loves me, cares for me, cherishes me.
- A Shepherd who watches over me, guides me, protects me, provides for me.
- A Friend who shares my every thought, knows my every weakness, but rejoices over me, laughs with me, cries with me.
- One who helps me search out more gold.
- One who holds my hand, steadies me and delights with me in every find.

His name is Jesus.

I knew about these pieces of gold before, but now they're mine. I can take them home.

HOW GOD HEALED ME

By Barry Austin

Barry Austin has been overseas with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) for 31 years, and recently has been running Leadership Development Courses in South East Asia.

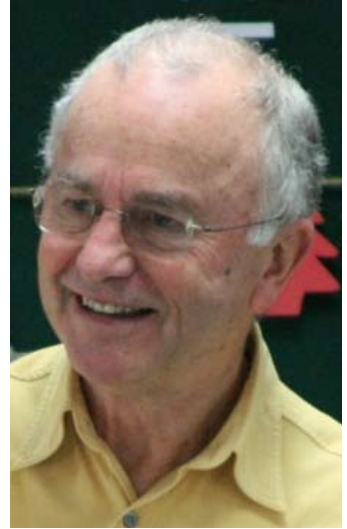
My world fell apart when I was 19 years old. I was severely paralysed with polio. I was a typical young New Zealander. I had two aims in life: I wanted to be successful at sport and make a lot of money. I had no interest in God. I was a moderately successful athlete; I almost made the Wellington provincial cross-country team for the three thousand metres. I was an apprentice in carpentry and joinery, and hoped to make a fortune building houses. All of this became meaningless when I fell ill with polio.

If it had happened one year later I would have received the Salk vaccine, but it was not available when I contracted the virus. It was the last epidemic before the vaccine came out. Polio is an extremely virulent disease, devastating in its effects. The virus attacks the spinal cord cutting off the connection between the muscles and the brain. Most of its victims are permanently paralysed. In this last NZ epidemic, many young men and women in their teens and twenties were affected. Many died or were paralysed for life. Several of my fellow patients in hospital died.

I'd been in hospital about a week when I fell from the bed. I hadn't realised how weak I'd become. I'd been sitting on the side of the bed and found I could not stop myself sliding off. When on the floor I managed to get on my knees by pulling myself up by the bedclothes, but I couldn't get any further; I was so weak. Another patient had to call for a nurse to get me back into bed. It was a devastating experience!

I started having difficulty breathing. I found out later that the hospital began preparing an iron lung for me. This was a mechanical device to help breathing when respiratory muscles failed. It was a horrible machine. Fortunately the fever left me before I ever had to use it.

Unknown to me people were praying for me. My mother, though not a committed Christian at the time, nevertheless believed in God. As there was no treatment for polio, when her teenager contracted the disease she felt that prayer was the only thing left to do. So she contacted anyone she knew who might pray. She telephoned every minister or vicar in the area and asked them to pray. She asked friends to pray; she wrote letters to others. Some of them had a personal relationship with God, and I believe their prayers saved my life.



I found out later that one person whom I hardly knew prayed for me every day for a year. I know now how hard it is to keep praying for someone when we don't have a personal relationship with that person. So I really appreciate all the people who prayed.

If the polio fever lasts for only three or four days, it is possible to have a good recovery. But I still had a fever after ten days. I was dangerously ill. But all the prayer had an effect, and eventually the fever left me and I slowly began to recover. After the fever left me, physiotherapists came to assess the degree of recovery I was likely to have. I had lost two stone (about 13 kilos) in weight in two weeks. They tested each of my main muscle groups. They graded them 1 to 5. 5 meant full recovery; 3 or 4 partial recovery; 1 or 2 no significant recovery. For several muscles essential for walking I scored 1 or 2. They told me that when I left the hospital I would be in a wheelchair wearing leg irons. I was very discouraged.

In actual fact, I walked out of hospital after two months without leg irons or wheel chair! I was still very weak, but I was walking! I had a pronounced limp, but God had begun a miracle. He was answering prayer. One physiotherapist told me that seeing my recovery was the highlight of his career. I discovered he was a Christian and had been praying for me. I was to find later that many people had prayed for me.

The miracle continued over the next two years as I steadily improved with physiotherapy treatment every day. Some people who prayed were Spirit-filled believers, and they prayed not only for my healing but also for me to experience the presence of God. One of my praying friends began to witness to me. He took me to movies and afterwards shared the gospel with me. I argued with him but I knew he had a reality of something in his life that I didn't have.

I had no understanding of Christianity. Later I was to find that there were no committed Christians in our family line for at least three generations. I had been to church occasionally with my mother, but I had no comprehension of what it was about. However, I was desperate to find meaning for my life. I'd lost my job; I had no hope of ever achieving anything in sport. My life was completely empty. I felt useless.

My witnessing friend led me in a prayer asking Christ into my life, but I didn't notice any difference. I still could not understand what it was all about. He took me to a Christian group of university students, and it was with these young men and women that the truth began to impact my life. I was amazed that they were excited about God and the Bible. I became aware that they had a spiritual dimension to their lives that I didn't have.

I don't know the day, but over the next 12 months the life of Jesus began to take root within me. About that time Billy Graham came to NZ, and I made my first public commitment to Jesus at a meeting on Athletic Park.

God does not cause disasters like polio, but He certainly uses them to bring people to Himself. I am so glad about that! It is nearly 50 years since that commitment on Athletic Park, and looking back now I am amazed how God has

worked His purposes in my life. It's been a life of adventure with God. I've shared the good news about Jesus in more than 60 countries. Much of my time now is taken up with leadership training in Asia. I would not change anything. I still have a slight limp from the polio. I call it my Jacob's limp—after the Bible character who wrestled with God. I wrestled with God, and He won!

SURPRISED BY DISABILITY

Why the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable

When my wife, Ellen, and I received prenatal confirmation that our second son would have Down syndrome, we were concerned but also relieved. Why? Because a previous diagnosis was more severe than our son's condition might have been, as the doctor put it, "incompatible with life." He told us that we could terminate the pregnancy, but we chose "to do no harm" and prepare for our child's birth, come what may. Several months later, we joyously and nervously welcomed Elijah Timothy Hsu into the world.

Life with Elijah has been challenging but not unmanageable. He has had his share of doctors and therapists. But for the most part he is a happy and healthy three-year-old who loves Blue's Clue's and Signing Time DVDs, roughhousing with his older brother, saying "No!" and giving hugs.

October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month, and the public needs to know that Down syndrome is not nearly as scary as many imagine. Recent articles in both the *American Journal of Medical Genetics* and *Prenatal Diagnosis* report that more than 90% of pregnancies prenatally diagnosed as Down syndrome are terminated. As prenatal testing becomes normative, expectant couples may be more likely to abort babies who are not exactly what they'd hoped for.

Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche communities which bring abled and disabled people together under one roof, warns in *Living Gently in a Violent World* that in a few years there may be no more children with Down syndrome in France because they will have all been aborted. In China, babies with disabilities are often abandoned. Extremist groups in the Middle East have even used people with mental disabilities as unwitting suicide bombers. The church must advocate on behalf of those most vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Care for the disabled is a global justice issue.

The 2000 U. S. Census found that 19.4 percent of the population is affected by physical or intellectual disability. One in 140 children now has an autism spectrum disorder, according to the 2007 Annual Review of Public Health. Cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injuries, spina bifida, Alzheimer's, and a host of other conditions affect



millions. If you don't currently know someone with a disability, chances are that you will.

All of us are only temporarily abled. We are only a car accident or stroke away from disability. As Joan Mahler, coordinator of L'Arche USA, told me, "All of us are able in some ways and disabled in others. People with developmental disabilities often help all of us understand our own brokenness."

The church must take up Luke 14's call to welcome the disabled to the great banquet of the kingdom. According to the Christian Institute on Disability (CID), perhaps 80% of the disabled are unchurched. As disabilities become more common, churches and seminaries increasingly need disability ministries.

**All of us
are only
temporarily
abled**

When Biola University recently offered its first-ever course on the theology of suffering and disability, registration filled up within one hour. California Baptist University now offers a Masters degree in disability studies – the first of its kind from a Christian institution – on campus and on-line. Joni Eareckson-Tada's organization, Joni and Friends, launched CID to equip individuals and churches for disability ministry. Its managing director, Steve Bundy says, "The Body of Christ is incomplete when it does not include the disabled."

Our theology needs to rediscover God's particular concern for and identification with the disabled. We worship a God who both healed the sick and took on our infirmities as the suffering, crucified Saviour. Nancy Eisland, author of *The Disabled God*, notes that it's theologically significant that Jesus' post-resurrection body still bore the scars.

My wife now uses American Sign Language while leading sign language at our church. People have told her that the beauty of sign language helps them experience God. Just as different spoken languages such as Spanish or Mandarin can help English speakers worship God in new ways, so, too, can the languages of the disabled allow us to worship God not only with our lips, but with our hands and bodies as well.

Jesus' ministry of healing gives us hope that the blind will see and the deaf will hear. But that's not all. The scars in Jesus' hands and side are not erased, but transformed into testimony to the Resurrection. We don't know for sure in what ways our disabilities will be healed, but we can have confidence that our resurrected bodies will be even more wondrous than if they had never experienced disability at all.

My family was surprised by disability, surprised by its unexpected nature, but also by the unanticipated blessings that Elijah has brought into our lives. Down syndrome may well be an effect of the Fall, but by God's grace, it has also become for us a window into the joy of the Kingdom of God.

This article by Al Hsu first appeared in the Oct 2008 issue of Christianity Today. Used by permission of Christianity Today International, Carol Stream, IL 60188

INCIDENT AT KNOXVILLE AIRPORT

Beth Moore is a gifted Bible study teacher, writer of Bible Studies, and a married mother of 2 daughters. This actually happened to her on April 20, 2005:

Waiting to board the plane I had the Bible on my lap and was very intent upon what I was doing. I'd had a marvellous morning with the Lord. I say that because I want to tell you it is a scary thing to have the Spirit of God really working in you. You could end up doing some things you never would have done otherwise. Life in the Spirit can be dangerous for a thousand reasons, not the least of which is your ego.

I tried to keep from staring, but he was such a strange sight. Humped over in a wheelchair, he was skin and bones, dressed in clothes that obviously fit when he was at least twenty pounds heavier. His knees protruded from his trousers, and his shoulders looked like the coat hanger was still in his shirt. His hands looked like tangled masses of veins and bones. The strangest part of him was his hair and nails. Stringy gray hair hung well over his shoulders and down part of his back. His fingernails were long. Clean, but strangely out of place on an old man.



I looked down at my Bible as fast as I could, discomfort burning my face as I tried to imagine what his story might have been. I found myself wondering if I'd just had a Howard Hughes sighting. Then, I remembered that he was dead. So this man in the airport... an impersonator maybe? Was a camera on us somewhere....?

There I sat trying to concentrate on the Word to keep from being concerned about a thin slice of humanity served on a wheelchair only a few seats from me. All the while my heart was growing more and more overwhelmed with a feeling for him. Let's admit it. Curiosity is a heap more comfortable than true concern, and suddenly I was awash

with aching emotion for this bizarre-looking old man.

I had walked with God long enough to see the handwriting on the wall. I've learned that when I begin to feel what God feels, something so contrary to my natural feelings, something dramatic is bound to happen. And it may be embarrassing. I immediately began to resist because I could feel God working on my spirit and I started arguing with God in my mind.

"Oh no, God please no." I looked up at the ceiling as if I could stare straight through it into heaven and said, "Don't make me witness to this man. Not right here and now. Please. I'll do anything. Put me on the same plane, but don't make me get up here and witness to this man in front of this gawking audience. Please, Lord!"

There I sat in the blue vinyl chair begging His Highness, "Please don't make me witness to this man. Not now. I'll do it on the plane."

Then I heard it..."I don't want you to witness to him. I want you to brush his hair."
(GULP - my own words!)

The words were so clear, my heart leapt into my throat, and my thoughts spun like a top. Do I witness to the man or brush his hair? No-brainer. I looked straight back up at the ceiling and said, "God, as I live and breathe, I want You to know I am ready to witness to this man. I'm on this Lord. I'm Your girl! You've never seen a woman witness to a man faster in your life. What difference does it make if his hair is a mess if he is not redeemed? I am on him. I am going to witness to this man."

Again as clearly as I've ever heard an audible word, God seemed to write this statement across the wall of my mind. "That is not what I said, Beth. I don't want you to witness to him, I want you to go brush his hair."

I looked up at God and quipped, "I don't have a hairbrush. It's in my suitcase on the plane. How am I supposed to brush his hair without a hairbrush?" God was so insistent that I almost involuntarily began to walk toward him as these thoughts came to me from God's word: "I will thoroughly furnish you unto all good works." (2 Tim 3:17) I stumbled over to the wheelchair thinking I could use one myself... Even as I retell this story my pulse quickens and I feel those same butterflies.

I knelt down in front of the man, and asked as demurely as possible, "Sir, may I have the pleasure of brushing your hair?" He looked back at me and said, "What did you say?"

"May I have the pleasure of brushing your hair? To which he responded in volume ten,

“Little lady, if you expect me to hear you, you’re going to have to talk louder than that. (God must really laugh out loud at times . . .)At this point, I took a deep breath and blurted out, “SIR, MAY I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF BRUSHING YOUR HAIR?”

At which point every eye in the place darted right at me. I was the only thing in the room looking more peculiar than old Mr Longlocks. Face crimson and forehead breaking out in a sweat, I watched him look up at me with absolute shock on his face, and say, “If you really want to.”

Are you kidding? Of course I didn’t want to. But God didn’t seem interested in my personal preference right about then. He pressed on my heart until I could utter the words, “Yes, sir, I would be pleased. But I have one little problem. I don’t have a hairbrush.”

“I have one in my bag,” he responded. I went around to the back of that wheelchair, and I got on my hands and knees and unzipped the stranger’s old carry-on, hardly believing what I was doing. I stood up and started brushing the old man’s hair. It was perfectly clean, but it was tangled and matted. I don’t do many things well, but I must admit I’ve had notable experience untangling knotted hair mothering two little girls.

Like I’d done with either Amanda or Melissa in such a condition, I began brushing at the very bottom of the strands, remembering to take my time not to pull. A miraculous thing happened to me as I started brushing that old man’s hair. Everybody else in the room disappeared. There was no one alive for those moments except that old man and me. I brushed and I brushed and I brushed until every tangle was out of that hair.

I know this sounds so strange but I’ve never felt that kind of love for another soul in my entire life. I believe with all my heart, I - for those few minutes - felt a portion of the very love of God. That He had overtaken my heart for a little while like someone renting a room and making Himself at home for a short while. The emotions were so strong and so pure that I knew they had to be God’s.

His hair was finally as soft and smooth as an infant’s. I slipped the brush back in the bag, went around the chair to face him. I got back down on my knees, put my hands on his knees, and said, “Sir, do you know my Jesus?”

He said, “Yes, I do.” Well, that figures, I thought. He explained, “I’ve known Him since I married my bride. She wouldn’t marry me until I got



“Sir, do you know my Jesus?”

to know the Saviour.” He said, “You see, the problem is, I haven’t seen my bride in months. I’ve had open-heart surgery, and she’s been too ill to come see me. I was sitting here thinking to myself, what a mess I must be for my bride.”

Only God knows how often He allows us to be part of a divine moment when we’re completely unaware of the significance. This, on the other hand, was one of those rare encounters when I knew God had intervened in details only He could have known. It was a God moment, and I’ll never forget it. Our time came to board, and we were not on the same plane. I was deeply ashamed of how I’d acted earlier and would have been so proud to have accompanied him on that aircraft.

I still had a few minutes, and as I gathered my things to board, the airline hostess returned from the corridor, tears streaming down her cheeks. She said, “That old man’s sitting on the plane, sobbing. Why did you do that? What made you do that?”

I said, “Do you know Jesus? He can be the bossiest thing!” And we got to share. I learned something about God that day. He knows if you’re exhausted because you’re hungry, you’re serving in the wrong place or it is time to move on but you feel too responsible to budge. He knows if you’re hurting or feeling rejected. He knows if you’re sick or drowning under a wave of temptation. Or He knows if you just need your hair brushed. He sees you as an individual. Tell Him your need!

I got on my own flight, sobs choking my throat, wondering how many opportunities just like that one had I missed along the way... all because I didn’t want people to think I was strange. God didn’t send me to that old man. He sent that old man to me.

John 1:14 *“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.
We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only,
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Oh Lord, may I be full of grace and truth as I minister to my husband, my children, those You lead my way! May they see Jesus in MY LIFE!

Taken with permission from Sound Words, put out by CBM in Australia

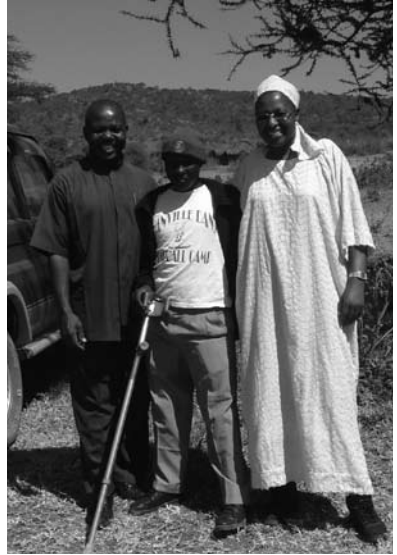
*Take into account that great love
and great achievements
involve great risk.*

COMING OUT OF HIDING IN TANZANIA

Lois Wagener writes from Tanzania

I have had the privilege of leading a number of women's conferences in Tanzania, a country where for ages women in Maasai culture have had no rights at all, and have been regarded as the lowest of the low. Asneth is one of the women in a leadership team that was formed as a result of one of these conferences. When she began evangelizing a remote bush area there were no Christians. Now there is a thriving little church of 60 people.

15 year old Logonsuva is part of this church and is shown in the photo with Asneth on the right. He shared during a service when I visited that he had lost both legs in a horrific car accident in the bush in the heart of Maasai land two years earlier. He testified to the goodness and love of God towards him, and thanked the Lord for his life and the opportunities the Lord had set before him. He has artificial legs and walks with the aid of a stick.



I was greatly impressed with his obvious delight in the Lord and his heart of gratitude. He wants to study hard and become a doctor. I doubt whether he ever would have known what a doctor was until the accident. God has the most wonderful way of turning what the enemy intended for evil into good!

Asneth is committed to 'life'. In Maasai culture, if a person is deformed in any way, they are killed. This young man was taken to hospital for the first five months after the accident, and then lived in hiding in case someone found where he was hiding and killed him. But a year and a half later he was brought back into the village and the clan! This was not without some very careful strategy. In this and many other cases Asneth was the instigator, and what she has achieved has brought freedom for the crippled and disabled. In Tanzanian law the disabled now have a right to life. Asneth went to the District Commissioner and found out what the law said. She then asked the DC to come and address the regional clan of the Maasai at a special homecoming of Logonsuva.. He spelt out the value of life and said that if any disabled person was killed the perpetrators would be brought to justice. The penalty is 20 years in a Tanzanian prison - not a place that anyone would want to be! Since the visit by the DC five other people with disabilities have come out of hiding!

SHOCKED BY A PARKINSONS DIAGNOSIS AT THE AGE OF 30

Barely out of her twenties, Margery Bramwell was puzzled when she increasingly felt stiffness and shaking in her body, particularly when under stress. Friends noticed that Margery had become slower and her left leg was dragging. They encouraged her to visit a doctor who sent Margery to a specialist. She was shocked when he told her she had Parkinson's Disease. "It's only old people who get that!" she thought, but even so it was a relief to her that something had been found.



She took a couple of week's holiday from work and was advised by the doctor to continue working, not to resign. With the support of colleagues and family she was able to continue working. She made a number of changes in order to adjust to her new enforced lifestyle. Using the clutch and foot brake in the car became increasingly difficult, and she changed to an automatic. Preparing a crock-pot at the start of the day when her energy levels were good helped enormously as it slowly cooked throughout the day. It wasn't easy having no one of her age group with the condition, but she was delighted to be at the first meetings run by the Parkinson's Association for younger people. These meetings she found very helpful as together they shared the difficulties of being stressed, getting very tired, and the techniques they worked out to make their lives more effective.

Margery's faith in Christ was a key in coping with her new life. She had no doubt that God loved her and understood what was happening to her. "I knew I was not on my own," she says, "for God was walking with me," and she spent a lot of time in prayer. She couldn't see how anyone would want to marry a person of her age who had Parkinson's, and had just settled with God that she was happy to be single. Her choice was to let her heavenly Father be the matchmaker. Which is exactly what happened, at the age of 39 she was married! Since then she has been places & done things that she dreamed of but had thought would no longer be possible. God is amazing; He turns our weaknesses into opportunities.

*The smaller we become,
the more room God has to move.*

CALLED TO A LIFETIME COMMITMENT

During the late seventies in Australia, Phyl and Hugh Dixon visited the Blackall Range inland from Nambour in Queensland – a lush, green rural area with stunning views of the Sunshine Coast. In their forties, they fell in love with the place and bought some blocks of land, thinking ahead both of investment and retirement.

On their return to Sydney Phyl had a very strong calling to do more with their lives than suburban living and child raising. She persuaded Hugh that their lives could be better spent doing something for less able people, and her focus was on the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. After their eldest child married, they up-anchored, moved north, obtained employment – he in real estate and she in teaching – and ultimately decided to start caring for those with an intellectual disability who had been displaced from government institutions after these had been widely judged, condemned and closed.



Phyl Dixon

Selling everything, they purchased 32 acres next to the Mapleton Falls National Park, 3km from Mapleton in almost rainforest. There they established a not-for-profit charity with the aid of parents and friends of their first residents. Initially, they all lived in dilapidated farm buildings, rented and repaired by Hugh, while Phyl taught by day at the local High School to give them an income. The residents paid a flat percentage of their pensions which provided operating expenses. Once the land was bought, Hugh moved into a caravan on the land, where he worked during the day with the residents to clear the land and start building a hostel. On her way to school each morning, Phyl handed the care of the residents to Hugh, collecting them each afternoon on her way home. This was the start of her lifestyle, maintained ever since, of being on deck, round the clock every day of the year. Hugh followed along and has been an outstanding and devoted supporter, even to her wildest plans.

They bought a second hand minibus, and lived a hand-to-mouth existence for almost three years, but it was a fun-filled, loving atmosphere in which the residents and their carers grew both physically and spiritually, with the aim of forming an extended family supporting each other through thick and thin. The support extended, as always, to any family members of the Teralba resident. In 1984 they were joined by Phyl's sister Dorothy and her husband, Selwyn Cosandey who lived 1000km away, when

they retired, moved north and built a new home on a piece of land cut off from the acreage. They together were responsible for all the administrative work, wages for staff when ultimately they could afford such a luxury, administration of the men's finances, mail etc, but the organization grew at such a rate that by 2002 there were 39 residents – all adult men, aged between 16 and 65. In 1993 Sel passed away and Dorothy assumed the roles of both Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer.



New legislation, aimed at preventing the abuse and exploitation of those with disabilities, made the whole organization inoperable, and then the drive for government funding started. This was an even harder road to follow. Always optimistic, and with a fervent belief that “God will provide”, flavoured with Dorothy’s belief that we had better find a way to help God, they made a

determined effort to keep Teralba going. The local MP became a willing helper and introduced the Minister for Disability Services Queensland to Teralba. He understood and appreciated the enormous voluntary effort that had been made to establish, maintain and operate Teralba, and promised to support them until the necessary changes to the organization to meet the new regulations had been made. He would then be able to provide funding assistance.

After years of devoted work, there is now a firm basis to the organization, committed people providing guidance and assistance, adequate funding support, a good staff and twenty adults in care, each in their own rooms with a lifestyle they deserve. Rapidly approaching their eighties, the three who have been at the helm constantly since it started are desperately hoping to retire, if not next week, then in the near future. Their lives have been fulfilled in so many ways that all the difficulties have been, in the oft-quoted words of Phyl and Dorothy’s late mother – character building!!! They will retire in the firm belief that Teralba will continue to flourish and provide a loving and supporting environment for those who call it home.



GARRY OSTER



The man in the centre of this smiling group of children is Garry Oster. The parents of these children have died from aids. The children have been discarded by their families, but through Garry and the trust he started in New Zealand they now receive “Jesus-love”.

He says ‘our job is to give them clothing, a bed, food and care. Sadly their lives will be short ...they will all die in a few years, they are all HIV positive.

Garry’s trust reaches out to the “neglected disabled ones” who mostly will remain unproductive, and in many cases may die soon.

He writes:

Our mission focuses on mainly terminally ill handicapped who may never be able to say thank you, or smile, or appear to be an encourager for you, the supporter. However, the fact that you do something in this family for their child opens theirs and other homes irrespective of whether they are Moslem, Hindu or Christian. Often

these severely handicapped are hidden even from the village they live in. We have found them locked up with pigs and chickens, or lying in bush huts with horrible sores, waiting for death.

Frequently the ignorance from the mother may be the cause of extra suffering and deformities, or has meant that medical help has been denied to the child (who may be an adult by now). As a Christian I am convinced that on the one hand we do need to bring Hope, but that talk alone is not the way to evangelise, we must also bring practical help. We supply the primary care, ie body and washing soap, deodorant, towels, mackintoshes, bedding, clothing, food, painkillers etc, and support in bereavement.

The aim of the DIPS'N Trust I started 14 years ago is to offer practical love and comfort to terminally ill, and dignity in death. The five letters stand for *Disabled Individual's Personal Special Needs*. Wonderfully, the government granted us tax refund status on donations received, because of our unique work overseas.

In a newsletter sent to supporters of the Trust he told of some of those he visited in his visits to countries in the Pacific Islands, India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Here is one girl in his report:

"I found Mary has one shrivelled-up leg from polio when she was a child, and one normal one. Because of bad diet etc, etc she now weighs 150 kg. Can't get up, so no wheelchair for her. Great problems with toileting and washing. No social welfare visits. Lives in a "poor house" provided by a relief trust for \$1 per week, and built by M.M.M. from Holland, receives \$50 per month as total income. We were able to give her one month extra income and some Gospel literature that someone will have to read to her. I gave her a big hug and she gave me a wonderful smile while tears of gratefulness flowed freely from her eyes. I cried too. Supporters, you made it possible to give to ten of these terminally ill a whole fifty dollars on my once per year visit."

To find more about his trust you can email him on garryoster@xtra.co.nz or write to:
47 Brookfield Terrace, Tauranga 3110.

DON'T FORGET...
DISABILITY SUNDAY
21st JUNE
DO SOMETHING IN YOUR CHURCH!

Patsy Appleby-Morrison describes

LOTS OF ACTION AT THE DUNEDIN MEETINGS

What a great year we had in 2008 – good Spirit-filled meetings with lots of music, fun, laughter, sharing, poignant moments and stories of lives being touched. New folk keep arriving, including a couple from “Torch” in Auckland, Liz and Alex Harkes, a lovely



addition and generous and helpful volunteers. Early in December our concert for the Disabled Group went wonderfully well. Alasdair and I have so much gear to take to these events! with guitars, bodhran (an Irish drum that I play), amplifiers, electric cords, percussion instruments, microphones etc etc.

Our new interim student pastor, Bruce Geddes from Auckland, a close associate of Charles Hewlett, (whose article was in Encourager 120), came to support us and be part of it. What a fabulous man! We sang our little hearts out, and did rock'n'roll numbers, romantic songs, middle of the road stuff, fast ones, some Christian songs and some carols. All in all it went down well and there was lots of singing along with us and wheelchair dancing. Lots of our CFFD folk were there, so that was super!

The previous meeting was very special with Felicity Bond, our lovely helper from “Friendlink” doing a silent signing version of the millennium prayer along with Cliff Richard on CD. Then with communion we had some wonderful sharing times. We make these an important part of our CFFD meetings, which we split up into two times of sharing, with music and worship in between.



To cap the year off there was our Christmas break-up at Woodhaugh Gardens celebrating my 60th birthday. We had our usual games with our folk and the maxi-taxi drivers all enjoying cricket, and our members playing with the sponge-rubber dice I made for CP hands and badminton etc. I was presented with a 60th cake and flowers plus cards. Most enjoyable. The first meeting for the year was last weekend's combined BBQ with our church and the Tongan church. Music, games, food, wheelchair walks, Alasdair's bubble-making machine providing great joy, and nearly all our members able to attend. Praise the LORD!!"

Next meeting 21st March with Indian missionaries guest speakers-the Khalings, working with International Needs.



BIBLICAL HUMOUR

'Somebody has said there are only two kinds of people in the world. There are those who wake up in the morning and say, 'Good morning, Lord,' and there are those who wake up in the morning and say, 'Good Lord, it's morning!'

A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a meter.

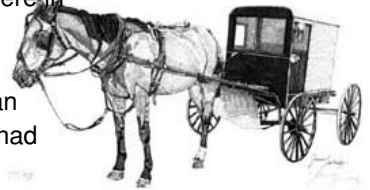
Then he put a note under the wind shield wiper that read: 'I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses.'

When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note, 'I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation.'



There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and said to his congregation: 'I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets!'

While driving in Pennsylvania, a family caught up to an Amish carriage. The owner of the carriage obviously had a sense of humour, because attached to the back of the carriage was a hand-printed sign... 'Energy efficient vehicle: Runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust.'



A minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump. 'Reverend,' said the young man, 'I'm so sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip.'

The minister chuckled, 'I know what you mean. It's the same in my business.'



Sue O'Brien describes:

AN INTERESTING SPIN-OFF FROM A VISIT TO THE CENTRE

A new church service called "Able 2 Worship" is being held in Warkworth every two months.

This is a direct result of last year's 'Disability Awareness Week' when a team of Warkworth people visited Christian Ministries With Disabled Trust in Auckland and were inspired to set up a group. These included a mother, Jenny Trotter, who has a son, James (19) with disabilities, and a former Liverpool specialist teacher, Sue O'Brien who worked with people with disabilities in England.

Rev Mark Farmer of Mahurangi Presbyterian Church supported the initiative, and services are held in this church with many attending from other local churches. The first service was held on a Sunday afternoon in August. Thirty or more people of various ages and abilities gathered to pray, praise, worship and share testimonies. Flags, ribbons and tambourines were used to express praise to God, and action songs and dancing. This was followed by afternoon tea.

At the second service people enjoyed lifting up and running underneath a parachute while singing the words of 'Rise Up' which declare God's greatness. There were also personal testimonies, skits and an illustrated message.



In January a barbecue was held at Keith and Jenny Trotter's home in Matakana with outdoor games played on the lawn and a time of worship.

Our vision is to continue to meet, worship and share the love of the Lord. We want to reach out, invite more friends and family members and grow as we learn from each other and share the gifts God has given each of us. We are also planning to develop a time of monthly Bible study and prayer.

All are welcome to attend 'Able 2 Worship.'

KNOWING THAT WHICH IS SURE AND CERTAIN

I had been having trouble with a badly swollen leg and had seen the doctor who ordered an ultra sound scan which showed something in my abdomen. I then had a very swift consultation at hospital, and the diagnosis was cancer. There followed a whirlwind of tests, scans and biopsies, with me in the middle, disbelieving, saying to myself, “There’s nothing wrong with me, I’m really well apart from my leg”, but no – I had a high grade Lymphoma, potentially fatal, including a very large tumour in my abdomen which couldn’t be operated on, as well as numerous small growths in my lymphatic system, so began immediate chemotherapy.

Some dear friends had urged me to seek healing prayer at a large church nearby, but I felt a deep sense of “no need, Father is in control”. Often I would be going about with “How great Thou art” singing in my head, and many scriptures holding me steady. Chemotherapy was hard, very hard at times, and my energy dropped to nil. Sometimes, I could barely drag myself downstairs, or on the worst days, even wash my face, but somehow I would be able to summon enough strength to make food for my husband, and kept up with the washing etc on my good days. The Lord has blessed me with such a wonderful circle of supporting friends and church family that I knew that when I needed help there was always help, someone there for me. I knew many friends were praying for us, and I sensed an upholding when I could only lie on the couch before God, unable to pray, but I knew someone, somewhere was praying for me. I knew His continuous presence, and had total confidence...

I have recently been reading a book called *“Down, but Not Out”* by Dr Eric Fischbacher: about a traumatic accident to one of his daughters. One passage reads, “There was a feeling of being upheld, almost cocooned in a blanket of divine grace and care, in a sense we did not need to fight this battle, God was so much in charge that we were able to leave it all to Him. At no time did we plead unto God, strike attitudes, make claims upon God or demands at His throne of Grace”. This passage encapsulated my own experience. I sensed I was in His Hands with no need to rush about pleading for health. I used to think “if He knew me before I was born, and knows all my days before one of them comes to be, He knows all about this and I am in His perfect will.”

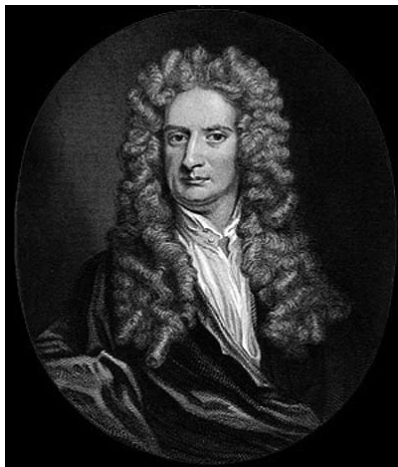
The saga is still ongoing as I have to have an operation in the next few weeks to remove what is more than likely a benign tumour on my right ovary. So hope? For me the sure and certain knowledge of the words of the Lord in Is 43 1-7, Psalm 91 and the comfort of John 14, for I continuously felt no fear of dying. I believe the Lord meant those words as much for us today as in those centuries ago. Not wanting to die, but knowing to be with Christ far better, as Paul put it in Phil 1:13. Hope means,

for me, the sure and certain presence in all the struggles and difficulties, not being taken out of them, but upheld, encouraged and strengthened through them, then at the end of it all the hope of heaven. Jesus told the people around Him, often, “Don’t be afraid”, and I never knew it more than during my illness.

Written by Sue Matthews for the Carers Christian Fellowship magazine in the UK

USE WHAT YOU’VE GOT

He was brilliant. Even as a child he was a gifted poet. At four years he learned Latin. Eventually he went on to read Greek, Hebrew and French. Later because he refused allegiance to the Church of England, he was denied entrance to Oxford and Cambridge, so he attended an independent Christian academy. His nose was crooked and overwhelmed his too big for his small were tiny and piercing. although a girl who read a romantic interest. down when she saw have problems? The rejection, Isaac Newton of compassion and he expressed in the wrote. You’re probably them, like “O God Our and “Joy to the World.” around feeling sorry for felt rejected. No, he said, “I must fight if I would reign; increase my courage, Lord. I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain; supported by Thy word.” What an attitude!



face. His head was body, and his eyes He never married, his poetry expressed But later she backed him. Still think you focus of overwhelming became a man sensitivity, which hundreds of hymns he familiar with many of Help in Ages Past,” Newton didn’t sit himself because he

So, when you’re tempted to use your limitations as an excuse for doing nothing with your life, remember, “God....made (you) what (you) are... to do good works which He planned.” God saw the specific need you were born to meet. He placed you into the exact circumstances required to develop your strengths and fulfil your life purpose. So instead of dwelling on what you don’t have, start using what you do!

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PHILIPPINES CFFD REPORT

The new SM Mall of Asia in Manila is the 6th biggest in the world, and it was chosen by the working committee, which included Briccio, to be the venue for an International Day of Persons With Disabilities last December 4. More than 50 organisations participated. Briccio, as newly elected honorary president of KAMPI this year, a group which partners with the Danish Government, brought along Marina and Samuel, Ed, Leslie and some PCFFD members.



Leslie and local PCFFD members holding the banner.



Wheelchair "ballroom" dancing!

Mr Henry Sy, the owner of SM Malls, is now a motorised wheelchair user, and has established the "Wheels of Hope" project for SM Foundation. This year, Leslie was one of the 52 recipients of a new sportsmatic all-purpose wheelchair.

The photo below shows the grand parade of wheelchair users entering into the Mall for the program.



NEWS FROM HEBRON



It is very important for parents to learn sign language so that they can use it effectively at home with their children. Teacher Monica started the class in September 2008, and it is held every Friday morning. In November the high school deaf students taught their parents drama and role playing with the use of sign language. The 30 parents have really appreciated the time.



Guess what the jumble of wires is? Ask James in the next photo. He knows all about it! A team of 8 from Ashhurst Christian fellowship led by Richard and Anne Tankersley, spent 8 “full-on” days in January setting up brand new computers for each department and connecting them all to one server (that photo). They also installed a new inter-connecting phone system, and everything was DONATED!!! What a wonderful tool for us to use!



Our Deaf Preschool students presenting their Christmas dance.

We are still looking for people who would be willing to help disabled children come to school and have a chance for education. Please email Ruth Beale at ruthpaul.beale@paradise.net.nz Thank you for all your prayers, love and support.

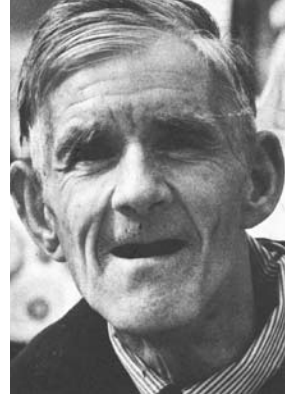
Briccio and PCFFD family.

An outstanding article from a very, very early edition of this magazine

A REMARKABLE TEAM EFFORT

In the world of disability one time and again comes across stupendous feats of disability. The production of the book "Tongue Tied" is one of the finest of these.

The author Joey Deacon was severely handicapped with cerebral palsy – all four limbs were affected, and his efforts at speech were so bad that until he was 26 few even in the hospital staff could make out what he was trying to communicate, but the arrival of Ernie, another with cerebral palsy, changed all that.



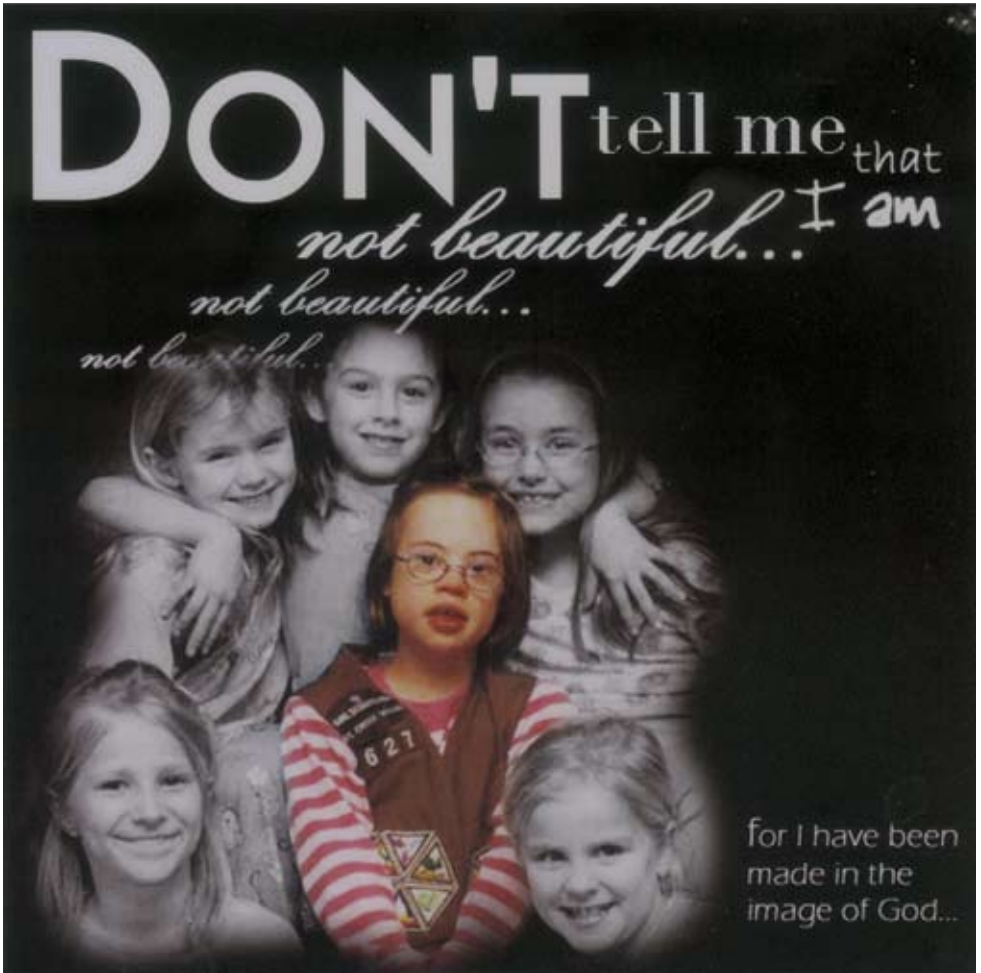
For the first time in his life Joey had someone who knew exactly what he was saying. It then came out that Joey had an incredible memory, that he could remember in great detail events that took place years before. Twelve years later it was suggested to Joey that he should write his life-story, but it was another twelve years before Joey decided to make a start.

He made the sounds, Ernie who could not read or write spoke the translation to Michael who could write, but only with great difficulty. They soon decided that their work should also be typed, so Tom, a fourth member of this remarkable team, was called in. Joey called out the words letter by letter, Ernie passed it on to Tom who bought a typewriter and taught himself to hit the keys. Slowly, laboriously, they worked through each day. At first just six lines in each day, but the team persisted, and one and a half years later, this remarkable book was completed.

But the story does not end there. When the book first appeared it achieved a remarkable success, was translated into several languages and published world wide. The BBC made a film, "Joey", and this was transmitted throughout the world.

Joey said that he had always wanted to go away for a holiday and also to have his own home in which he and his friends could live together. The BBC were instrumental in providing both of these, and the home purchased for Joey was large enough to take not just Joey, but his three friends as well. Joey died in 1988.





Mini-poster created by Isabel Lee

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