

GLOBAL EXPRESS

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Love

Loneliness

- How serious are you?
- Two minutes is a long time...
- Gente Que Avanza - People On The Move

Zoning Out

We've just read something which makes you feel bad about all the times you've ever complained. It's the account of a young graduate's work in a refugee camp in southern Ethiopia. Fresh from St. Andrew's University (Scotland), New Zealand-born Fiona Leggat was part of a programme run by the UNHCR where volunteers are able to work with and experience the lives of refugees. She writes: "My camp had 16,000 Sudanese refugees... The constant attention was a little overwhelming at times, as everyone wanted to shake your hand and be your friend. Wherever we went we were watched and if we didn't wave or say 'Salam' (or the appropriate greeting) they were very hurt. Actually, in terms of friendship it was exhausting and almost lonely." Intrigued? The full account will be in the next issue of Global Express, January 2000. What else? Well, that's up to you—what would you like to see in our Millennium issue? Other ideas and articles (not on the 'M' word) are also welcome. Very welcome. Worth mentioning is that the Millennium issue will be used throughout 2000 in the UK high schools during sessions entitled, "Moving Out Of Your Comfort Zone"—one of our previous themes.

Talking of zones, we're off to South Africa to represent Global Express at the forthcoming CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) in Durban, November 11-15. We also have the good fortune to be spending some time in Johannesburg. Naturally, on our return we expect to be deluged by all your contributions!

Deadline next issue: Nov 20, 1999

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GLOBAL EXPRESS

seeks to:

- be an independent media service
- establish and support a global network
- be culturally inclusive
- respond to a rapidly changing world
- connect personal and global issues
- encourage personal integrity and responsible attitudes
- encourage people to act on creative inspiration

believing that:

- you matter
- you can make a difference
- goodness has an image problem and spirituality is marginalised
- sincere communication at every level is essential
- peace is possible if we face the causes of division and injustice in our own lives and communities
- time for reflection is essential to find direction

Why Global Express?

Global Express (GE) was started to link up young people who care about the future. Dissatisfied with what we were being offered by the media, we felt an alternative was needed.

Our aim is to inspire and encourage people to fulfil their potential. In GE you can question the way things are, and search for solutions. It is also a great opportunity to make contacts outside your 'comfort zone'.

Most of the GE team met through MRA (Moral Re-Armament), which is a worldwide network of people working for personal responsibility and conflict resolution. Absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, together with a search for inspiration from God (or the inner voice), are central to this approach to life. MRA is a Non Government Organisation recognised by the United Nations.

For more information visit: <http://www.mra.org.uk>

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Loneliness. And love.

Mother Teresa said, 'In the West there is loneliness, which I call the leprosy of the West. In many ways it is worse than our poor in Calcutta.' She also had some incisive things to say about love. Love was the motivation for all she did. She encouraged non-believers like this: 'If you don't believe in God you can help others by doing works of love, and the fruit of these works are the graces that come into your soul. Then you'll begin to slowly open up and want the joy of loving God.'

Recently I had an experience of loneliness. It came as a bit of a shock because I don't see myself as a lonely person. What happened was I felt 'out of it'—estranged from what I perceived as the 'in' group. I found myself feeling ashamed of the kind of person I am, the beliefs I hold and the views I have. It led me to ask, 'Why is it so important to be loved, accepted, appreciated?' Deep questions, deep needs, difficult answers... but something we'll all be faced with at different times, however popular we are.

Then it dawned on me that perhaps feeling lonely is something which (in healthy amounts) is necessary for our growth... an essential part of the human experience. Jesus knew what it was like to be lonely. And he didn't find it easy either. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' he cried out. And yet, the cross is the ultimate symbol of love.

I have heard several people say that they have given to others the very thing they longed for most themselves—love. That strikes me as a powerful antidote to the paralysing feeling of loneliness.

What follows on the next four pages is not a comprehensive essay on the relationship between loneliness and love. It is a collection of writings on the two separate (but obviously related) subjects. Loneliness was suggested to us by Lucia Nastas in Moldova. We chose love as a perennial favourite.

Laura Trevelyan, UK



One of the last photos of Mother Teresa, taken in 1998 by Steen Piculell, Denmark

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Not all opinions in GE are shared by the editors!

GE

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L O N E L I N E S S

Loneliness... For some people this word means nothing. They are used to it and are not afraid of it. But for me, a person used to communicating with many people, used to company and lots of activities, loneliness is something that I can only imagine as a nightmare.

I grew up in a family with lots of relatives. So from my early childhood I have been used to large gatherings for holiday celebrations or birthday parties. At school, and now as a college student, I always take part in different activities that involve a lot of people and a lot of work. So I cannot imagine not hearing the door bell ringing, with news of someone who has come to visit. If that were so, silence would hang on me as a dark cloud. And then I would no longer care whether my room was clean or whether I had something delicious in my fridge. I'm afraid of that happening and would do anything to prevent it.

What I can say to those who share my fears is that love can save us from any disease, even from loneliness. But that is another story...

Ann Pavlova, Ukraine

Having been an only child I remember feelings of loneliness right back to when I was a wee little girl. There've been times I've felt so much loneliness it's been like an overdose—sending

me into deep depressions, where negative untruths are aroused.

For me loneliness has often meant fear, fear of being alone forever. Loneliness does not always mean being on your own; it can mean not being understood; being alone in your thinking perhaps—misunderstood and alienated from those you love. At one point I felt such a surge of loneliness, I described myself as a breeze. No-one could see me or hear me. I was a mere presence that momentarily touched them, making very little impact, if any.

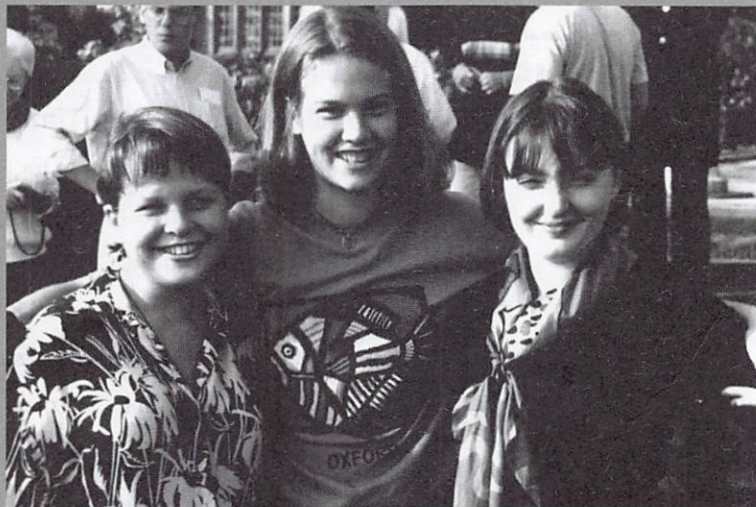
Such feelings can lead to terrible lows. At my lowest I became disillusioned and lost touch with reality. The 'always never' syndrome; 'I'm always going to be alone' or 'I'll never find anyone who understands me and loves me for who I am'. Dangerous thinking. I had hidden myself away and was convinced life would never change. What I should have said (and can say, is: 'OK, today I'm feeling alone, but tomorrow is a new day. Who knows what might happen?' Simply saying this begins to lift that great mound of solitary foreverness.

My fear is of loneliness being everlasting. I need to acknowledge that fear, work with it and understand it. I know my loneliness won't last forever but when it's there it feels never-ending. It's painful, isolating... hard to express in words, it's so desolate. It's deep in a place I don't even want to go sometimes.

However loneliness, as I've discovered in recent years, isn't all doom and gloom. Being alone

is a chance to focus on who you are and what makes you tick. Needing people around us all the time can be a diversion from being alone and confronting who we are. Lonely times can be used constructively. I started writing a journal last year about what I feel. I chose lonely moments in which to write it. It's been such an insight into my thinking and growth—an invaluable asset to the telling of me. With the right perspective, loneliness need not be so desolate. There's always a person with you that you may not notice or listen to very often... it's you!

Natalie Porter, UK



Ann Pavlova (left) with friends

Melbourne, September '99

Dear Katrin

As promised, here's the story of the life-changing experience I had while overseas. It happened during the conference I attended in Europe—150 people of different nationalities and ages. An extremely caring atmosphere greeted me the moment I arrived. Every morning I was part of a community group. Meeting under the leadership of a skilled facilitator allowed friendships to grow. And yet... much of the time I was very lonely.

Can I hear you saying: 'Lonely, amongst all that caring and sharing?!' Or perhaps: 'At your age!' Or even: 'But Ann. What about the heaps of experience you've had facilitating groups yourself, supposedly to help people overcome their anxieties and fears?'. On the other hand, perhaps you can understand from your own life that loneliness is not confined to any age group or amount of experience.

The odd thing about loneliness is that it comes and goes in waves. Also, I was surprised by my inability to share this loneliness with anyone, as if it were somehow unacceptable. When loneliness was present it didn't do anything for my self-esteem. 'I don't have anything worthwhile to contribute' and 'I only speak one language and everyone else speaks at least two' come to mind. You know, the 'Poor Me' syndrome? (Later, I put it down allowing the fear of 'will people like me?' to control my actions.) You will be glad to hear, however, that I got into action and did something about this state of affairs. This is what happened..

The Great Spirit nudged me into enrolling in a workshop called 'Painting from within', conducted by an inspiring Swedish artist, Gerd Ekdahl. She had talked about the poet Rainer Maria Rilke's idea of 'embracing emptiness'. My thought was 'perhaps loneliness could be embraced too'.

Gerd emphasised painting from our gut and getting in touch with our spontaneity. Even when writing this I experience again the excitement of using the paints—the rich colours, the thick satisfying texture. I will attempt to convey, in black and white, the process I went through to express, in colour, my feelings about loneliness.

First I was drawn to red and splashed it onto the bottom of my canvas. Red represented 'anger' and I had a great time, with lightning-like splashes erupting upwards and sideways. I continued in this way—each emotion leading to a related colour—and was astonished to find that with every brush stroke my attitude was changing. As I painted past 'anger' and 'anxiety' I remembered the understanding, the kindness, shown to me by my community group and others at the conference. So yellow for 'joy', green for 'caring', pink for 'love', blue for 'confidence', with purple splashes as God's blessings bringing it all together, was the deeply satisfying result.

But, amidst the exhilarating spontaneity, I'd overlooked the colour of 'loneliness'. I knew immediately that an unobtrusive, paler colour was needed. In the middle of my picture can be seen (if you look very hard) a small swirl of grey, unimportant but necessary.

After sharing this picture of my loneliness, I was touched as others told me their similar stories. We agreed that loneliness is ever present AND there are ways of embracing it. Finally, I learned through my painting that 'lonely' is a state of mind and so I have the choice of doing something about it. I chose to take a risk and share how I was feeling. I'm also seriously considering telling people whenever I'm lonely. I'll keep you posted on this one.

Katrin, I'd really love to hear how you embrace/manage your loneliness. Perhaps it's through caring for others? Or the time you spend in the garden?

I send you love and blessings

Ann xxxxx

Loneliness...

I have often been asked, "You are unmarried and live on your own. Aren't you lonely?" My answer is, "No, I enjoy having my own home and being alone." Some of you reading this may well have travelled the world on your own. I wonder if you discovered, what has been my experience, that when you are alone you make more new friends than when you are with one or more companions. I can decide to feel lonely or to be at peace with myself and enjoy a creative aloneness.

The bigger of the two bedrooms in my home has two beds and I love people to come and stay. My neighbours have got used to seeing people from many lands, including young relations, coming and going. One year, I had about nine months when I was physically unable to go much beyond my walls. I've never had so many visits from my neighbours and other friends! Once I started to become busy again a couple of them complained that they preferred it when I was in when they knocked!

Love is what makes the difference. When I open my heart to love, either giving it or receiving it, I don't feel lonely. I have often heard, "God is love". If I believe that with all my heart then I can believe I am loved even when there is no one here to tell me so!

Joy Weeks, UK

I got married when I was 29 and my wife, Neeru, 26—late by Indian standards. The delay was largely on account of my search for the partner whom God cleared in my heart. It had to be someone who had the capacity to care for more than just me and our own family. It was my dream that our home would be a place where everyone who came would experience welcome and love. There is so much hunger in the world.

Ours is an arranged marriage. The first time I saw Neeru I felt in my heart that we were meant to be life partners. But that was not the way she

felt. She found me too thin and too rigid in my ideas. She turned down the proposal. However, others in her family liked me and prevailed upon her to accept me.

Soon after we were married we ran into rough weather. I had a large circle of friends with whom I was involved in the work of Moral Re-Armament. I was often busy with them after my time at the office. Many would accompany me home in the evening. Neeru wanted privacy or to go to the movies with me, but I was unavailable for her. She started getting withdrawn and trapped in moods. She developed guilt about not being a good wife. I did not know how to deal with the situation and felt angry and disillusioned. Life became hell for us both.

Then God intervened through a good friend. He made us sit together and talk. We realised how both of us were responsible for the breakdown in our relationship. I apologised for my insensitivity and she for her inflexibility. It was a beautiful moment. Our real partnership in caring for people together began from that day.

As our three daughters started growing up, our lives became very full. We also have my parents to give some of our time to. Very often we have frictions. But we have also learnt to lighten the atmosphere by poking fun at each other. Apologies are not always in words; quite often they are conveyed through conciliatory gestures.

**The moment I saw Neeru
I felt in my heart that we
were meant to be life
partners. But that was not
the way she felt.**

Notes and letters are written when it is difficult to express ourselves orally.

As a family, we have found it important to have fun and to care for others who are lonely or in need. We make it a point to have dinner together, with the TV off. It is the one time when we share the day's happenings with each other.

As our daughters have become young adults, we as Indian parents have to specially learn to trust them for their choice and not bind them with our ideas and fears. We try to make them aware of the possible consequences of their decisions and then leave them free. This is a big

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Kiran (right) with family and friends in Pune, Photo: David Young

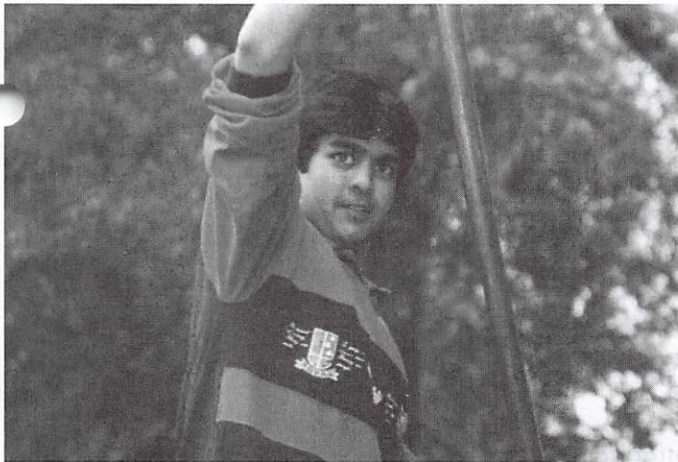
challenge. Prayer and faith are valuable in meeting it. By no means are we perfect. We are learning all the time. What helps us stay together is our commitment to each other.

Kiran Gandhi, India

Relationships—the most beautiful memory of life but sometimes also the most painful. So hard to build and at times so easily broken, relationships seem to be losing their significance.

As humans we've been made for relationships. Many identify with the idea of finding a soulmate, to the extent that it is almost a crime in today's teenculture not to have a boyfriend/girlfriend. If we are impatient we may get involved

If you find someone in love with you and you don't love them, feel honoured that love came but gently refuse the gift you cannot return. Do not take advantage, do not cause pain.



Deepak punting on the River Cherwell, Oxford, Photo: Edward Peters

with someone whom we don't necessarily love from within. Such a solution may avoid peer pressure, may even satisfy our physical needs, but is it good in the long run? When we flirt with someone, we forget that we are also playing with our own emotions, hurting ourselves. We may become desensitized and lose respect for love, changing partners like clothes. But if we are wise and patient we will find the right person and be enriched for life.

Deepak Ajwani, India

If you find yourself in love with someone who does not love you, be gentle with yourself. There is nothing wrong with you. Love just didn't choose to rest in the other person's heart.

If you find someone else in love with you and you don't love them, feel honoured that love came and called at your door, but gently refuse the gift you cannot return. Do not take advantage, do not cause pain. How you deal with love is how you deal with you, and all our hearts feel the same pains and joys, even if our lives and ways are different.

If you fall in love with another, and they fall in love with you, and then love chooses to leave, do not try to reclaim it or to assess blame. Let it go. There is a reason and there is a meaning. You will know in time. Remember that you

don't choose love. Love chooses you. All you can do is accept it for all its mystery when it comes into your life. Feel the way it fills you to overflowing, then reach out and give it away. Give it back to the person who brought it alive in you. Give it to the world around you in any way you can. There is where many lovers go wrong. Having been so long without love, they understand love only as a need. They see their hearts as empty places that will be filled by love, and they begin to look at love as something that flows to them rather than from them.

The secret of love is that it is a gift; it can be made to grow only by giving it away. Remember this, and keep it to your heart. Love has its own time, its own seasons, and its own reason for coming and going. You cannot bribe it or coerce it, or reason it into staying. You can only embrace it when it arrives and give some of it away. But if it chooses to leave from your heart or from the heart of your lover, there is nothing you can do and there is nothing you should do. Love always has been and always will be a mystery. Be glad that it came to live for a moment in your life. If you keep your heart open, it will come again.

Anonymous

I asked a group of people what love is. They came up with all sorts of definitions and most of them were right. I learned that the best way to express yourself is to use the most simple language. So this is my definition of love...

When chocolate is put in a freezer, it freezes but does not stop being chocolate.

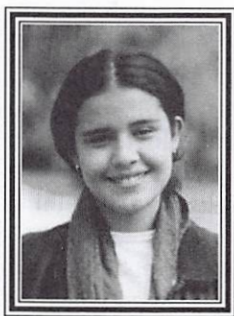
When it is exposed to heat, it melts but does not stop being chocolate.

When it is at room temperature it stays in its original shape and is still chocolate.

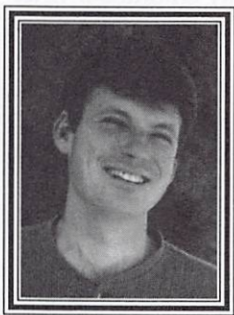
Like chocolate, love can take different forms depending on the circumstances. But at the end of the day, it is still love. Let us have the kind of love that, when exposed to any conditions, does not fail. Then we will create a better future for ourselves and all those around us.

Vera Wanderi, Kenya

Gente Que ! Avanza !



Angela, 20, Columbia



Jose, 25, Argentina



Cynthia, 23, Guatemala

Fancy a year on the road with a travelling show? Mark Perera and Ellen Doherty describe what happened when they encountered forty Latin Americans 'on the move'.

There are times in your life when you have the privilege of encountering truly special people, people who really touch you. It happened to me this summer...

The brief period that I spent in the company of Gente Que Avanza was one of the most fulfilling and rewarding experiences I have ever had. Anyone who has been to Caux in Switzerland will understand what a special place it is, but the arrival of this forty-strong group of Latin Americans injected a warmth and energy which was difficult to ignore. From the moment they stepped off their coach (following a 27 hour trip) and happily treated the accumulated throng to an impromptu rendition of their

eponymous signature tune, it was clear we were in the presence of wonderful people.

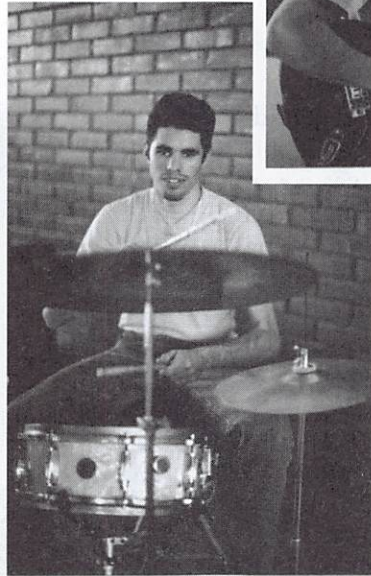
Gente Que Avanza (People On The Move) was formed in January 1970 as a platform for Latin American youth to work together to help construct a more unified and progressive society. Through a training program, centred around cultural, spiritual and ideological development, the group aims to promote values and personal change. Focused on increasing integration between Latin



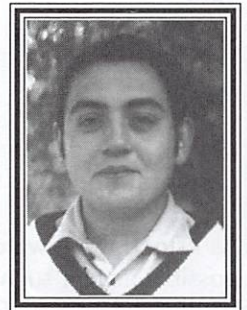
Gente Que Avanza in Valparaiso, Chile, Photo and portraits: Gunnar Soederlund



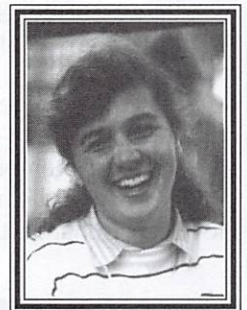
Matias Pablo Ahumada, 21, Argentina



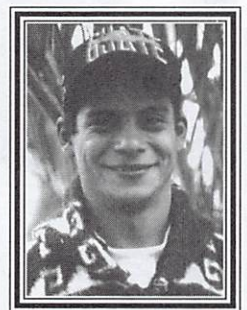
Diego Fraga, 20, Venezuela



Pablo, 20, Paraguay



Fabiana, 28, Brazil



Joel, 20, Venezuela

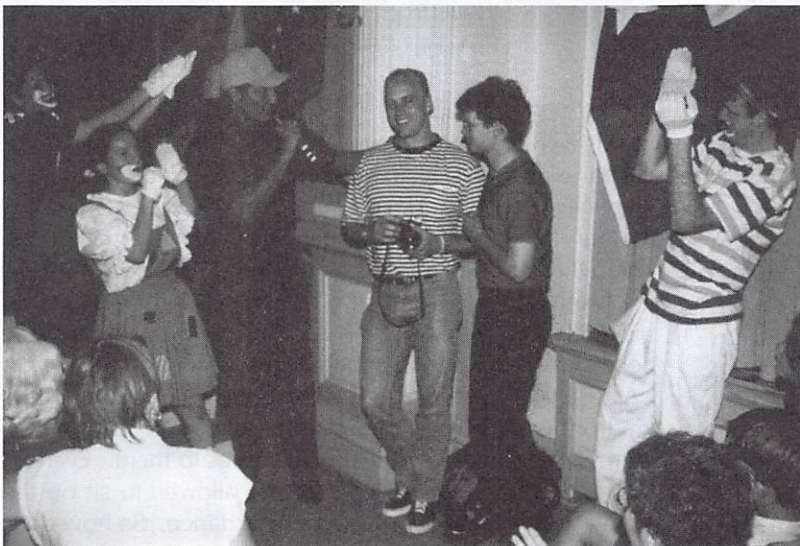
American countries, the group's main activity is a two-hour show of music and dance. July '99 in Switzerland was their European debut.

What struck me was their wisdom—young people my own age, and younger, whose insight and knowledge was at once awe-inspiring and reassuring. Sipping *mate* and chatting into the early hours in broken Spanish/English, we discussed everything from God and the future to football and

music. I quickly realised how much I could learn from my Latin friends who, despite their years, had experienced so much.

The honesty and willingness with which we talked was due to the fact that all of us, whether European, Latin American or African, realised we were experiencing something important. Growing up in our respective parts of the world, we found we knew little about the lifestyles of our counterparts. Living in England, I do not hear about the

struggles and issues facing people living in Latin America, and vice versa. Convinced they would have a cold reception, many of the group were fearful of coming to Europe. On the contrary, and despite the language barrier, we found we had more simi-



Clowning around in the audience... Gente Que Avanza is an interactive show, Photo: Tony Hazell

flirt-free, Drink-free

larities than differences.

As real friendships developed, not only was I offered guidance, help and support, I was actually asked for it. This was both unexpected and humbling. There was a real sense among us that we had been brought together for a reason and, however trite that may sound, it is something I certainly believe. Gente Que Avanza touched many, and will doubtless continue to do so. I for one have been permanently changed—watching them overcome cultural barriers was quite simply an education and an inspiration.

Mark Perera, UK

Life shone from every corner of the Caux Cafe. Music filled the air along with laughter and conversation.

As I stood there watching, I wondered if my heart could possibly accept such an influx of pure life all at once. It could, and it did. Gente Que Avanza left a prominent mark on me. Their philosophy of constructing a more positive society has been shared by many through the ages. So what makes this group different? It is simple: a strong belief that they can make a difference, a conviction that together they will.

One of their bigger objectives is to help bring about change on a world-wide scale. The words of Fabian Herrera (cast member) really spoke to me: 'If I want to change the world it has to start with me, in my own heart. How can I change things if I cannot change myself? It

would be hypocritical to tell people that they can change their world if I have not been able to make changes within myself first.'

The group's achievements are remarkable. Twenty-nine years ago Gente Que Avanza were received by the President of Chile. This year the current group met his son, now President also. According to one of the founders, who still



The first half of the two-hour show comprises traditional songs and dances



Sipping mate... Photo: Gunnar Soederlund

travels with the group, they went 'with nothing to hide, nothing to ask for, just to express appreciation for the people who care for us'. Another example of the group's impact is the story of how one of their seminars changed many lives. The father of one cast member changed dramatically having taken part in a seminar. The relationships changed in his home and then at work. As a result, the work of many people in Chile who were about to lose their jobs, was saved.

As you will have gathered Gente Que Avanza are not the kind of people who sit around and wait to be entertained. 'Introverted' is not a word which applies to them. Even on that first night I knew I would not be allowed to sit on the sidelines in the cafe and watch them dance. So how does

e, Smoke-free Zone



in the various Latin American countries, Photo: courtesy Gente Que Avanza

an Irish girl learn to do Latin American dancing? All I know is that someone who couldn't speak a word of English had the courage to grab my hand and teach me—I think I may have been the comedy element of that particular night!

Coming from a country where religious and racial barriers are paramount, it was very special for me to join an English person, a Croatian and a German and to learn one of the songs from the show. 'Ahora Ya' means 'Right Now':

*New times are starting right now!
Another chance right now!
Be brave, come with me,
the world can't wait.*

*Don't run away from uncertainty right now!
In your life you will find right now!
more colours in the horizon right now!
purity in every look.*

*Your passion, your blood and strength.. right now!
Your tomorrow, your strength right now!
Your tireless search for something better.*

Their tireless search for something better has taken them far. Here's hoping we see more of them in Europe in the future.

Ellen Doherty, Republic of Ireland

The minimum age for joining Gente Que Avanza is 17. Completion of highschool and parental consent is mandatory. Applicants must be willing to give a minimum of one year (including a three-month trial period). They are not chosen for their musical ability, rather their willingness to be trained as leaders, and the desire to do something for their countries. The 'norms' which they have to agree to before joining are: no alcohol, no smoking, no flirting. This helps the group dynamics. It is more than a musical show; it is a way of life. The seminars which can last up to five days are taken by the young people themselves who share their personal experiences of change.

For more information on Gente Que Avanza...

e-mail: elencolat@hotmail.com

website: www.members.xoom.com/gqa



Music from the Andes, Photo: Tony Hazell

TWO MINUTES IS A LONG TIME

The most decisive moment in my life took place in a public reception in the Randolph Hotel in Oxford. Final exams had begun along with training for Henley Regatta as stroke of the Isis crew. I was planning to spend two years in the Antarctic with the Falkland Island Dependency Survey (FIDS—now the British Antarctic Survey). The moment was about two minutes in duration. I had seen a film that did not stir me. I was talking with a man whose outward appearance did not impress me, though I remember his eyes. They had a sparkle. He was a complete stranger. However, within ten minutes of talking with him, he had discovered that I believed in God and even prayed. So he asked me, 'Do you think that if you can speak to God, he can speak to you?' I suddenly felt trapped, not by him, but by a theological consideration that was blindingly obvious, but which I had never considered before. I said 'Yes', and hoped that that would be the end of the matter. He said, 'Would you like to listen to God then?' I again said 'Yes', and began to move away. 'Why not try now, and write your thoughts down so as not to forget them?' Here, surrounded by all these people, in a crowded hotel? How preposterous! I sat with him and was silent. 'Don't go to the Antarctic,' was the hammer-blow thought that hit my head from nowhere. I wrote instead, 'God is love'. Theologically true, I am sure, but not what He was saying to me at that point.

Looking back, that was the point at which my life changed direction. My enthusiasm for the Antarctic, really a glamorous escape route for not knowing how to be effective in a world I knew to be in a helluva mess, disappeared. Ever since wanting to go, the thought had been at the back of my mind that it was the wrong thing to do. I didn't cancel the interview with Sir Vivian Fuchs (FIDS) but arrived



Patrick Colquhoun stroking what was to be the winning Oxford Trial Eight, 1959

20 minutes late and was failed.

Instead I went to the *Moral Re-Armament* (MRA) conference in Caux, Switzerland, where I met many who were evidence that people could change for the better. They also were convinced that God could use us to make a better world, and that He had a plan which we could find and fit into. I decided to do anything that I felt God wanted me to do, even if it meant washing dishes for the rest of my life.

There have been many dishes to wash but God had some other things in mind too. Being human means by definition we get things wrong. Yet the most important thing is to try to follow God's will. Life has been an unexpected adventure ever since and, contrary to the time at Oxford, I no longer altered myself to suit the company I was in; it was the same Patrick all my friends now saw.

I have dwelt in some length on this part of the story, as it is fundamental to all that has followed since. There has been both a conscious and an unconscious commitment to do the inspired thing. Just as ambition, greed or bitterness can govern our decision-making processes so can this deep commitment to do God's will, coupled with the belief that—however often we continue to miss it—there is always the right way forward, even in the most awful situations.

So what has happened since? Within five days of arriving at Caux, I had invited myself to work full time with MRA. No one asked me to, and probably many wish I hadn't. The decision was made in a matter of moments—a response to an inner calling that was always there, and which finally surfaced.

An early milestone was going to India for a year to work with the writer Rajmohan Gandhi and his colleagues. I will never forget the young Hindu who came one day and said

that he was beginning to hate his Moslem friends. We asked him why. He replied by listing the Moslem atrocities (it was the time of the worst Hindu/Moslem riots since Independence). We said this was no reason to hate the Moslems, let alone his Moslem friends. He replied that he hated his parents. We asked why, and he said that his father slept with the maid and his mother went out with an Englishman. We said this was no reason to hate them, why did he? He instantly replied that he hated himself. We asked why, to which he replied that he had been going out with prostitutes. By this time the Moslem issue had disappeared, as had his hatred of his parents. Indeed he then put things right with them.

The whole conversation took no more than five minutes, at the end of which he was a different man. His honesty allowed God to work a miracle in him.

While in India there passed a decisive fleeting second. At approximately ten minutes past seven on the morning of 8 January 1964, after three years of remaining affection free, a hand grenade exploded in my heart and I fell in love with Frances Cameron, and knew that one day we would marry. After seven years and some perseverance—being once turned

down and learning to give to God even what I knew to be right—we got engaged and were married. It was an incredibly faith-building experience. Frances' different perspective on life is enormously valuable. Our home in Cambridge, that other place, is an open one and over the years we have enjoyed having hundreds of friends to stay as well as being entrusted with two super daughters.

My Oxford studies covered the Soviet Union. I was deeply interested in and concerned by the suffering of millions under communism. My new born faith gave me a vision and hope that things could change in that part of the world despite the fact that MRA could not operate openly there. The Soviet dissidents were deeply inspiring. Another mile-

stone occurred the day I read Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Prize for Literature Lecture. It took about an hour to read and it changed the course of my life. I gave copies to many people. My wife and I felt it lent itself to visual interpretation. Others responded. They not only kept the idea alive, they also made a film dramatisation of the lecture, *One Word of Truth*.

I devoted much of the 80's to first raising the money to make

There were showings of the film in the White House; in Lambeth Palace; in the Maize Prison...



Alexander Solzhenitsyn spoke at Eton in May 1983, accompanied by Patrick Colquhoun (right), Photo: courtesy The Daily Mail

the film and then developing its distribution worldwide, especially in the field of education. As well as being an invited feature at many educational conferences on both sides of the Atlantic, there were showings of the film in the White House; in Lambeth Palace; to the South African Police commissioner and to heads of 14 of his 18 departments; in convents, schools and the Maize Prison in N. Ireland. The occasion that perhaps meant the most was when I delivered a copy of the video to a young unmarried English mum in Ontario. She had seen it on TV and commissioned a friend to find a copy. It took him two years and as I was about to go to Canada I delivered it myself. She told me that seeing it had been an inspiration for her; that it had been the one thing that had kept her going during the two previous difficult years. It was worth making the film just for her.

In the Czech Republic, the film is currently a recommended resource for their new Civic Educational Curriculum and is in the process of going to all 5,000 schools. So far 2,000 have been covered. It goes out through seminars entitled *Jedno Slovo Pravdy (One Word of Truth)* for teachers of Civics, His-

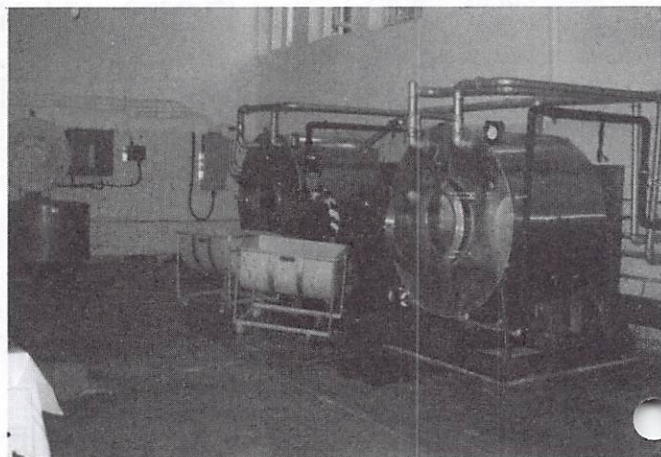


Decrepit washing machine in Salaj Hospital before MSR's laundry installation...

tory and Literature. I undertook to raise the costs involved: £100,000—£20 per school which covered video, Resource Pack and seminar support. The job is yet to be completed—we still need the last £66,000. The film, available in 17 languages, is popular in the compulsory *Theory of Knowledge* module of the International Baccalaureate syllabus. A mas-

sive distribution in China, yet to happen, could have a huge impact there where 12 years ago the word dissident was barely comprehended. There's an opportunity for someone who loves China to see this through.

In December 1989 the world witnessed a violent revolution (often referred to as the 'so-called revolution') in Romania. I,



...and after the laundry installation in September, 1998

like millions, was moved by the events. A five-minute conversation two months later was another milestone which altered the focus of my life, without changing in any way my basic commitment. I was in Scotland in the home of an old school and university rowing partner. His wife said she wanted to do something for Romania and I offered to be a driver. I returned that evening from showing *One Word of Truth* in a school, and she said that a friend of hers would come too. We were 'on'.

That five-minute conversation led me to start the medical charity *Medical Support in Romania* (MSR). Since then 95 medical specialists and engineers have made 154 visits to Romania under MSR's auspices and over 50 Romanians have been to the UK for training. I have been a driver for all 17 supply-runs to the 1148 bed Salaj District Hospital in Zalau and made 27 visits in all. Seven X-ray units have been stalled in Salaj Hospital and a year ago we replaced the entire laundry with 10 tons of refurbished equipment. We have an as yet unfunded £6.5 million Infrastructure Project at the hospital which has been accepted by the Romanian Ministry of

WHAT - U - THINK

Next issue we look at:

The new Millennium—what have you got to say?

Deadline: November 20, 1999

This issue: How do you address serious life issues without taking life too seriously?

Joey Long, Australia

To tackle the big issues and take life too seriously is perhaps a contradiction in terms. As with many big questions I find myself looking to nature for an alternative. The balance, perspective and simplicity of needs in nature help me to determine the big issues and to see just

how seriously is too seriously.

Take the otter. Frankly, I'm a big fan of the otter. As in every environment, the otter has to tackle some big issues. What to eat? How not to be eaten? Where is a mate? However, the seriousness stops there and the otter actually makes 'time' for play.

And the otter 'goes with the flow' to deal with difficulties rather than 'tackling' them. It will sometimes play 'chasey' games with a predator before making its escape. It accepts its own limits but is not afraid to take risks within them. As a result it survives—fulfilled (I like to think), humorous and making a difference.

Health as a pilot for the whole country. It will be managed by Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge.

The medical specialists as well as the eleven who have gone out to teach English in the hospital all raise their own travel costs and give their time free. This volunteering activity not only enables MSR to achieve much more than would other-

Can we dare to say that we bear no responsibility for the running sores of today's world?

- Alexander Solzenitsyn, *One Word of Truth*

wise be possible, it also sets a fine example to a nation where the State used to do everything, and volunteering is neither commonplace nor well understood. One Romanian doctor even asked a mutual friend whether I was a spy!

The big gift from the 80's and 90's has been friendship with many people from Eastern and Central Europe, especially Russia, Romania and the Czech Republic. These countries suffered hugely under communism, and yet I have always felt enriched by such friends. It is a reality that those who have suffered the most have the most to give. All that we do in Romania is tempered by this realisation. Those who go to assess needs and give training return feeling they have received far more than they have been able to give. A Norwegian friend who knows many of the Soviet dissidents once said that for Russians friendship always has to be more than just words. This is why I was glad that my first visit to a post-communist country involved practical help.

Aid is potentially corrupting but in the right spirit it need not be. Indeed it could be the lever to reducing corruption in the receiving countries. The aid given to UK National Health Serv-

ice (NHS) hospitals by their *League of Friends* is massive and non-corrupting. It can be the same for Romania. Salaj District Hospital is MSR's partner in seeking to improve Romanian hospital health care. As new standards and techniques are piloted there, the hospital's weaknesses are also exposed, making it vulnerable. We salute the hospital for being such a willing partner.

Ten years ago my only experience of hospitals was as a patient. If anyone had asked me whether I would ever be involved in such work I would have looked blank and questioned their sanity. The truth is that we all need anvils on which to work out our calling. Change does not happen in a vacuum. Others may find their calling within education, business, the civil service or elsewhere. Wherever it is, people exist and need care, vision and challenge. The nature of the friendship we give those we meet will define our effectiveness in this world where people are the key to a 21st century that works. I recently heard a description of the process of giving friendship—the widening of our inner space for others. We can all do that, and there is no knowing where it will lead.

My great grandfather, Admiral McClintock, spent nine years in the Arctic searching for the remains of Franklin. He had a motto, 'Persevere unto the end'. I have made it my own and would recommend it to anyone. His motto was the most tangible benefit I gained from my interest in matters Arctic and Antarctic. I have no regrets.



Baby incubator below mural by art students from a local high school, Photos: Patrick Colquhoun and Dron Hore-Ruthven

Patrick Colquhoun, UK

e-mail: PatrickColquhoun@compuserve.com

Alyssa Kuzmarov, Canada

I learnt about not taking serious life issues so seriously from a thirteen-year-old girl who had recently gone blind as a result of a brain tumour. I was her social worker and although I sensed that she liked my visits, I couldn't really reach her. Of course, all that meant was that she was not conforming to my agenda; she didn't want to talk about cancer, death or feelings. She was not in denial about what was happening, she just didn't want to have her whole being swallowed up by the lump in her head.

One day, racking my brain about how to create space for

her serious reality, I asked if she liked stories. Together we created the story of 'Bessie the tumour'. Concocting schemes of where to send Bessie on vacation filled hours with laughter as I sat on her bed, drawing Bessie in Honolulu and skiing in the Alps. I realised that the space of serious reality needs illustrations, humour and the permission to self-express in whatever way is the most healing for the individual. That space also needs to be shared without anyone's agenda but simply on the level of human contact. I held her hand after we had finished the fifth episode; she had tears in her eyes and so did I. For once, though, I didn't ask her how she was feeling.

Getting on with the job in the Nilgiri Hills



Emma, Photo: David Woolfenden

ACCORD, Action for Community Rehabilitation and Development, is an Indian NGO which was started in 1986 by Stan Thekaekara, Mari Thekaekara and K T Subramani. The aim of the organisation was to enable the indigenous tribal peoples of the Nilgiri Hills in the south of India to fend for themselves in twentieth century society. The need for a cohesive force to represent the tribals was acute. By nature they are a gentle and self-effacing people who, over time, had retreated deeper into the Nilgiri forests to avoid

confrontation with colonialists and various other entrepreneurs who grabbed lands to claim as their own.

Since the early 1980's the tribals have had nowhere left to retreat to. They were forced to interact with the people who had invaded their forests and taken their lands. They have their own culture preserved by an insular lifestyle; they are not part of the Hindu caste system and have a different set of values. They were seen as being ignorant and incapable. An oral tradition meant that many were illiterate; in their own society they had no need to read and write. Each tribe has its own language so children did badly at the government schools where they had to adopt a new non-tribal name and to be educated in a language foreign to them. Their history of sharing everything they have with their fellow villagers, their innate trust in man made them easy prey for unscrupulous racketeers. They were shunned at government hospitals, loss of their lands made gathering of their traditional medicines difficult, economic oppression lead to starvation and the incomers carried new diseases which their immune systems had not

been exposed to. The tribals, the first people to inhabit India, were being wiped out. ACCORD planned to empower them through education and support, eventually aiming to become redundant and leave them to run their own affairs. In the beginning the people were mobilised to stand together in defence of their land and homes. The core group of ACCORD gradually expanded, allowing health, education, building, cultural and business systems to be developed. Now the tribal people run a hospital, a community health programme, a school, a housing scheme, a tea estate and other business ventures.

I ended up here after answering a small, curiously worded advertisement in the International Health Exchange magazine. I had been planning to work abroad for some time and had survived the years as a junior doctor in the UK. The process of finding the right post was time-consuming and exhausting, and I was slowly beginning to despair. However this suddenly turned around after an extraordinary interview in London with a friend of ACCORD's who had no medical knowledge at all, but

WHAT - U - THINK

Lindsay Cartwright, Australia

There are ways of taking a break from serious issues so that you can come back to them with fresh perspective. Watching a beautiful nature programme on TV plays a part, as does a Mozart Concerto. A lighter touch comes in by having a joke up your sleeve to share with friends. A hot drink and time spent in quiet with God enables me to go into the day with trust and peace. A good read of a Hammond Innes novel helps me relax before putting the light out at night.

Alison Hayes, New Zealand

There is a saying: Ignorance is bliss. Unfortunately,

I have been exposed to many of this world's problems and have lost all ability to be blissfully ignorant. I am serious about a number of issues and always express my attitude with great passion. This amuses my family, who bait me just for a reaction. To them, I take life far too seriously.

My education is much to blame. By the time I completed my degree in Political Science I felt disillusioned with the ideological basis of Western governmental institutions and multi-national corporations. My entire view of life changed and I found myself questioning the beliefs of governments and institutions, family and friends. I was unsure quite what I believed in but had plenty to disagree with.

whose enthusiasm for the project and lack of bureaucratic tendencies filled me with good vibes. I arrived here in April '99 with no clear idea of what my role would be.

There are two permanent doctors here, a surgeon and, to my relief, an obstetrician. There is an ongoing problem of finding doctors to work with ACCORD. The rigorous training programme for junior doctors in India coupled with the low pay and relative geographical isolation does not make it a feasible option for many. I have now been here for nearly five months and feel that I am still on the steep part of the learning curve in several areas. The hospital is led by the nurses and it really is a multi-disciplinary team. Some of the nurses have been here since the hospital opened and are knowledgeable, responsible and highly skilled. All of them are helpful and friendly, putting up with my pathetic attempts at Tamil. At home as a junior doctor I often felt frustrated at the competitive nature of the medical field. The NHS (National Health Service), nurses, doctors, pharmacists, etc frequently engage in posturing shows of knowledge. That doesn't happen here which is incredibly refreshing; we can share our respective knowledge and skills and get on with the job.

The patients also actively participate in the day to day running of the ward; many of them were instrumental in setting up the hospital. Often they tell me they are coming for admission and even more frequently tell me when they will leave. Last week I couldn't understand why, overnight, every single patient became symptom free. I watched with trepidation as they coughed and limped their way home. I finally asked one old man, who had complained of abdominal pain every day for weeks, what had happened. 'Doctor, it's Onam (a local Kerala festival) tomorrow. I'll come back if I'm not better next week.' Neither staff nor patients have that freedom at

scared me away. Nevertheless it has been a positive experience, allowing me to get to know the staff and patients on my own terms and to develop a little confidence in areas of medicine I have never forayed into. Here one has to be a true generalist and it has been a humbling experience to witness the proficiency of the doctors in so many different fields. I am here for a year in total; after that I am not sure what to do. I enjoyed most of my time working in the UK but always had a sense of unease at the inequality in healthcare systems around the world and wondered if I was putting what little knowledge and skills I have to their most appropriate use. Human rights and health

problems of the developing world do not figure high on most medical school curriculae and still, as doctors, we are not encouraged to take breaks from our UK career paths. Given the state of health of the poor and the oppressed it seems strange to me that the medical profession in 'developed' countries devotes so little time to global health issues. While we discuss rationing of Viagra

in order to improve the sex lives of mainly older people in the affluent West, children are dying by the second from diseases we know how to treat. How do you justify that as an individual, a doctor, a nation?

Emma Woolfenden, Scotland

At home as a junior doctor I often felt frustrated at the competitive nature of the medical field—nurses, doctors, pharmacists posturing shows of knowledge. That doesn't happen here which is incredibly refreshing.

home for many reasons, not least being the ever present threat of litigation.

I have been alone for a while as the other two doctors, a married couple, are away. I have never worked alone at home so it has been a nervous existence, especially as obstetrics has always

At this time I heard the philosopher Noam Chomsky speak about conspiracy theories and possible global disaster. I felt disappointed, however, that he did not offer solutions to these issues. It was fine to educate people, but to leave them with no idea of how to solve the problems seemed a crime.

Later I attended the ninth APYC (Asia Pacific Youth Conference) on the theme, 'Think globally, act locally'. This affected me greatly. For the first time, I saw that individual change could truly make a difference. I also realized that one should work with people, not against them. I had been so busy criticizing others I had forgotten that the best way to bring change is to share a common vision. Serious problems must be approached with creative minds. By

focusing on the local whilst retaining a global outlook, one can approach serious life issues in a practical way without taking life too seriously.

Goretti Nguyen, Australia/Vietnam

If life were akin to climbing Mount Everest, then that would be an easy life—right? After all, I'd have all the best gear as I headed for that apex some 8848m upwards.

But since I am resigned to the fact that life itself is a mystery, I am taking each step without knowing or understanding the destination. Living with questions and in wonder has yet to diminish any quality of life for me. And seriously, that's OK.

Proud to be *German*

Today, I'm grateful to be able to say, "I'm proud to be German", because it was not always the case. For a long time, I was ashamed of being German, and wanted to be anything but. I would have given anything not to be German at that time. The reason for this rejection of my nationality, which implied rejection of my country and compatriots, was our history, or rather, the most terrible part of our history, the most horrific and painful part of the history of humankind.

In Germany we study the Nazi period at the age of 14, which is a difficult age to begin with. We went on a class trip to Dachau, a former concentration camp, not an extermination camp, but a camp which was used mainly for the internment of political prisoners, ie. communists, socialists, trade unionists, etc. For me, this visit was pure horror. I had seen and read many things on the subject, but it was only then that I realised the inhumanity of that period. Looking at the pictures and documents showing the suffering of the prisoners, I felt great pain: the experiments carried out on humans, the treatment of the prisoners who were punished and executed if they attempted to escape, the clothing, spectacles, gold teeth, soap and lampshades made from the fat and skin of those who had been killed. On many of the photos, you could also see the guards, contemptuous expressions on their faces, the same expressions they might have had in an ordinary workplace. How could the Germans do such a thing? My whole worldview broke down. I then started to look at my grandfather, a good man whom I loved very much, with distrust. Had he been part of it? Although he had not committed these atrocities himself, he had nevertheless supported the regime (in the same way as the rest of Germany, and also as a soldier), which in some way made him a collaborator. He certainly had not done enough to prevent it. The whole of Germany shouted, 'Yes!' when Goebbels asked, 'Do you want outright war?' That makes all the Germans of that time guilty. I despised my parents' generation because they started to come to terms with our history too late and because to my mind they had been too understanding of their own parents' generation. I accused my own generation of indifference, and I thought

it heartless when someone said, 'That's all in the past, I'm not guilty'. Without ever expressing what I myself felt, I did not give anyone a chance to explain or to give their opinion on the subject. I didn't want to have anything to do with these people, with our country or with our history. I renounced my German identity, and my solidarity. Yet still I had a feeling of shame and guilt, and that hurt.

But then I realised that there is a difference between guilt and responsibility, a very slight, but a very important one. You can only be guilty for the things you have actually done yourself, but you are responsible for the things you do not prevent. Each person and each generation has to find their own answer to the question of guilt and responsibility. One thing is certain, however. Guilt and responsibility only concern the people who can actually do something at that particular time. They are not something you can inherit.

At the same time, I also realised that these monsters were not essentially German, but human, a fact I had previously refused to recognise. This acknowledgement, that is, that the perpetrators of all this were human, was even more difficult to bear than the thought of them being inhuman Germans, because that implied having to ask myself, 'What about me? What would I have done?' I realised that it was all too easy to judge others collectively and without asking them, because in that way you avoid questioning yourself and you spare yourself.

It was only then that I was ready to see how much was being done in our country to come to terms with that history and to learn from it, so as to make sure such a thing would never be repeated. After the war, the words 'Never again!' could be seen painted on walls, buses, trains, etc, and these words still shape our behaviour today. After the war, most Germans made great efforts to create a new Germany, and as a result, good relationships and deep friendships with our former enemies developed. We Germans are one of the few nations to have really reflected on our national history in an open and merciless way, and to be still doing so. I am proud of it.

We must never forget that our history shapes our lives and our community, and if we want to build a successful future, we have to accept, and even love, our common past, because we are responsible for the part that past will play in the future. This responsibility concerns us all, both individually and collectively. If we want this future to be a good one for us and for the generations that follow us, we must stand together and cooperate with each other.

The generations that came before us had ideals and aims for the future, and they fought for them. So our present is the result of the visions of the generations before us. We will shape the future with our own aims and ideals. There can be no present without a past, no future without a present.

Angelika Eberhardt, Germany



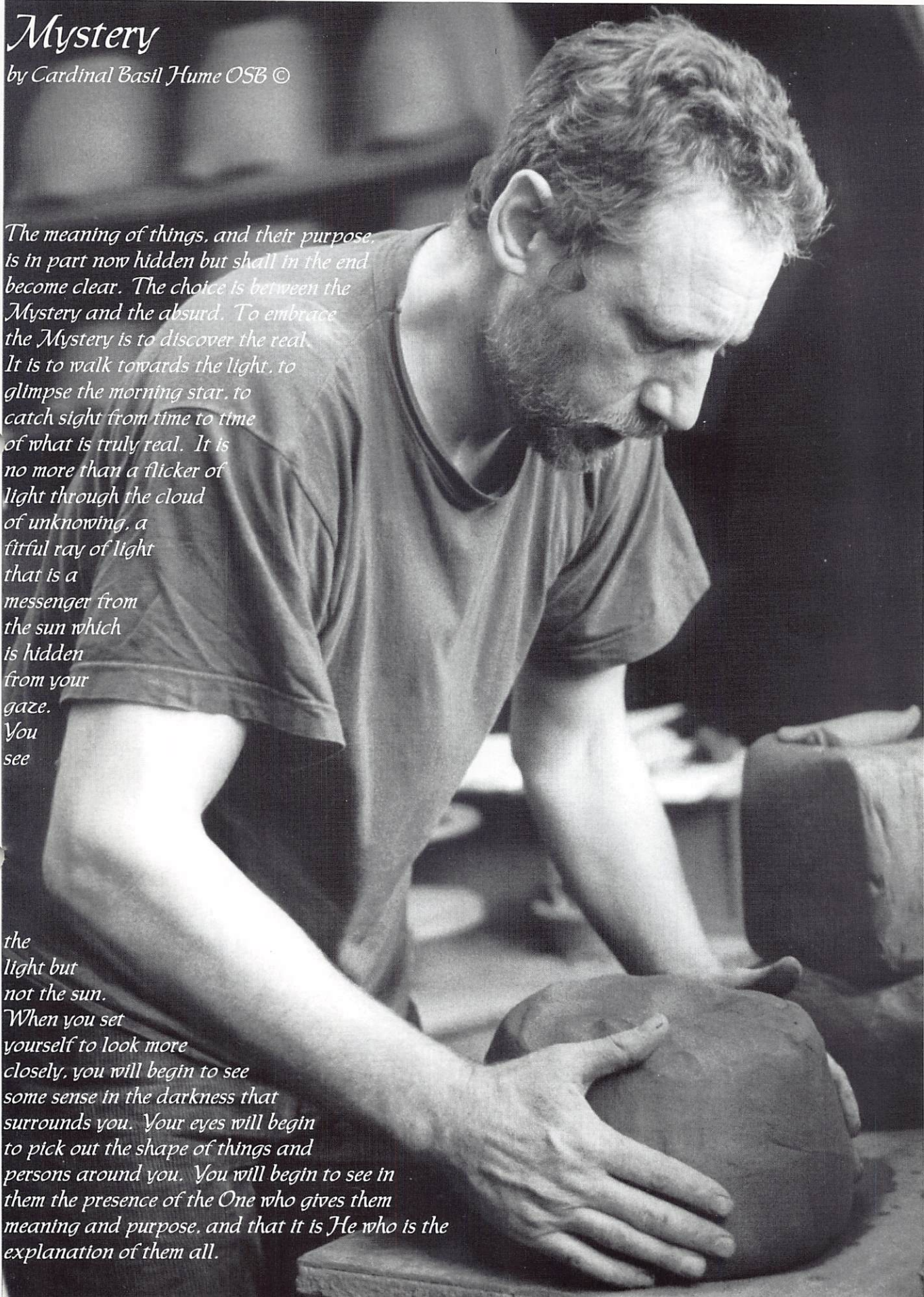
Angelika (right) translating with a friend, Photo: Spreng

Mystery

by Cardinal Basil Hume OSB ©

The meaning of things, and their purpose, is in part now hidden but shall in the end become clear. The choice is between the Mystery and the absurd. To embrace the Mystery is to discover the real. It is to walk towards the light, to glimpse the morning star, to catch sight from time to time of what is truly real. It is no more than a flicker of light through the cloud of unknowing, a fitful ray of light that is a messenger from the sun which is hidden from your gaze. You see

the light but not the sun. When you set yourself to look more closely, you will begin to see some sense in the darkness that surrounds you. Your eyes will begin to pick out the shape of things and persons around you. You will begin to see in them the presence of the One who gives them meaning and purpose, and that it is He who is the explanation of them all.



If you wish to know the nature of love, look to where it leads - St Augustine

In embarking upon a course, always remember the seventh generation - Native American proverb

We are either magnetic or repellent, which very much depends on how we treat our burdens - FB Meyer

I am also other than I imagine myself to be. To know this is forgiveness - Simone Weil

After all is said and done, there's a lot more said than done

To fear love is to fear life - Bertrand Russell

Scattered

Thoughts

Once someone found Michelangelo chipping away at a huge piece of rock. He asked the sculptor what he was doing. 'I am releasing the angel imprisoned in this marble.'

If I were organised, I'd be dangerous

Only a small crack... but cracks make caves collapse - Alexander Solzenitsyn