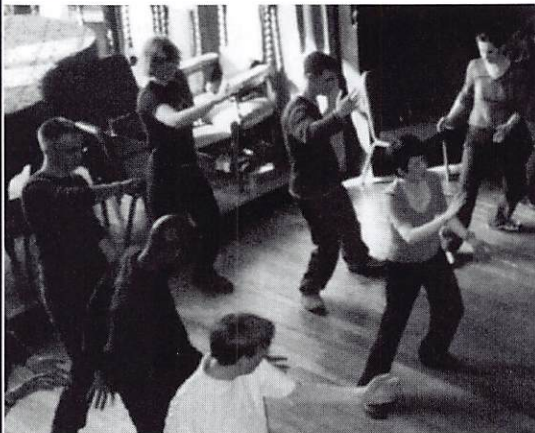


Global 2000—a weekend of celebration with an inaugural Easter Ball. April 14-16. Venue—Tirley Garth, Centre for Moral Re-Armament, Cheshire, England. Fifty young people (age 17-35) from 18 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, The Basque Country, China, France, Ghana, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Switzerland, UK, Ukraine, USA and Zimbabwe. Alcohol-free zone. Non-stop fun from tai chi to tango to trance music. Space to reflect on 'Life, Faith, Art'—have you ever stopped to notice the beauty of a fried egg? Yes, the morning after the night before. Brunch. And go. See you next year...



The morning of the Ball—tai chi with Xia Lu, China. Photos: Christine Karrer

The banquet—left to right, Olesya, Ukraine; Andrew, Zimbabwe; Nicci, Australia; George, South Africa



Next issue: Nationalism—how do you feel about your country; its past, its image, its traditions, its future prospects...? **Deadline:** June 12, 2000 (but please contact us before then)

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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 commercial youth magazines, 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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Rules that guys wish girls knew

- 1 If you ask a question you don't want an answer to, expect an answer you don't want to hear.
- 2 Sometimes, we're not thinking about you. Live with it.
- 3 Don't cut your hair. Long hair is always more attractive than short hair. One of the big reasons guys fear getting married is that married women always cut their hair, and by then you're stuck with her.
- 4 Learn to work the toilet seat. If it's up, put it down.
- 5 Don't ask us what we're thinking about unless you are prepared to discuss such topics as navel lint, beer, or very fast cars.
- 6 Sunday sports. It's like the full moon or the changing of the tides. Let it be.
- 7 Shopping is not a sport, and no, we're never going to think of it that way.
- 8 When we have to go somewhere, absolutely anything you have to wear is fine. Really.
- 9 You have enough clothes.
- 10 You have too many shoes.
- 11 Most guys own three pairs of shoes. What makes you think we'd be any good at choosing which pair, out of 30, would look good with your dress?
- 12 Crying is blackmail.
- 13 Your ex-boyfriend is an idiot.
- 14 Ask for what you want. Let's be clear on this one: subtle hints don't work, strong hints don't work, really obvious hints don't work, just say it!
- 15 No, we don't know what day it is. We never will. Mark anniversaries on a calendar.
- 16 Yes and No are perfectly acceptable waivers to almost every question.
- 17 Come to us with a problem only if you want help solving it. That's what we do. Sympathy is what your girlfriends are for.
- 18 A headache that lasts for 17 months is a problem. See a doctor.
- 19 Check your oil.
- 20 Don't fake it. We'd rather be ineffective than deceived.
- 21 Anything we said six months ago is inadmissible in an argument. All comments become null and void after seven days.
- 22 If something we said can be interpreted two ways, and one of the ways makes you sad or angry, we meant the other one.
- 23 You can either ask us to do something or tell us how you want it done, not both.
- 24 Whenever possible, please say whatever you have to say during commercials.
- 25 Christopher Columbus didn't need directions, and neither do we.
- 26 The relationship is never going to be like it was the first two months we were going out.
- 27 All men see in only 16 colours, like 'Windows' default settings. Peach is a fruit, not a colour.
- 28 If we ask what's wrong and you say, 'Oh nothing', we will act like nothing's wrong. We know you're lying but it's just not worth the hassle.
- 29 We're not mind-readers and never will be. Our lack of mind-reading ability is not proof of how little we care about you.

GE

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Contents

- **Scattered Thoughts** 3
- **Parent-Child Relationships** 4-9
- **Materialism:** Different perspectives from Australia, South Africa and the UK 10-13
- **Three Trees and an Open House:** A microcosmic reflection of the Israeli-Palestinian story 14-17
- **What-U-Think:** How do you combine the spiritual with daily life? 14-17
- **Insight Out:** No to Ragging 18
- **Arts Expressed** by Edith Craig 19

parent child relationships



Photo: Christine Karrer

My parents became schoolteachers when they were eighteen. They gave me a stable lifestyle, but it didn't satisfy my young, curious heart. I wanted to break free from the traditional Chinese family; so at sixteen I left home to study and only returned at weekends. When I went to university, I even stayed away at weekends, which annoyed my parents, who complained to my sister about my lack of care for them.

It was a privilege for me to study in Britain and to experience life with several host families. My hosts were the same age as my parents. I enjoyed chatting with them and watching them cook and do the housework, etc. I discovered that their own children seldom stayed at home, which they usually complained about. An unforgettable experience was when my host phoned his son and begged him to return on Boxing Day for his mother's sake. I suddenly saw myself very clearly.

During my five and a half years overseas, my father wrote me a letter each week, with fresh news about the family as well as encouragement. Gradually I learnt how to communicate with my parents by telephone and letter. Last December I received the final letter from my father, saying 'I am not sure how much what I said in the letters meant to you. At least I have tried to improve communication and understanding.'

I am now living with my parents and appreciate the opportunity of chatting with them before I leave again. Although sometimes our opinions are quite different, I believe there is still a way to communicate with each other. It is important for me to know about their lives and for them to understand me. When I look back on the difficult times I have been through, my parents have always supported me unconditionally—being tolerant, and wanting the best for me.

I have learnt that we can't choose our parents,

but we can choose what sort of children we are. It is only when we know how to get on with our parents, that we understand the responsibility we have for our own children.

Sam Lai, Taiwan

My newborn baby was crying his heart out. He was supposed to be asleep; in fact he usually went down happily after each feed. My Mum was watching me across the Sunday roast. I was suffering and could feel the baby's cry right through my body. Eventually he settled down and was peacefully asleep. He was fine and so was I. Wisely my mother looked at me and said, 'This is how your life will be from now on. When he is sad you'll feel sad, when he is happy you'll be happy. You MUST start to let him go NOW or you'll be forever living your life through his!' I had made the discovery that all mothers do: the umbilical cord might have been cut off but there was still an extremely strong, though invisible, tie between me and my child. And I will probably spend the rest of my life trying to work out what to do about it.

At this point I am in a very interesting position. I am still a daughter in that my Mum is still alive. I rely on her, ring her up about how to make a sauce to go with salmon, or about what to do with the rest of my life. She is always there for me and I know I can turn to her about anything. And I do.

I am also a mother, to a son and a daughter in their teens. They still live at home and I have no idea how I will react the day the first one flies the nest. I could almost do a drawing of the invisible links that go from me to Mum and from me to my kids. They are many and varied, some strong, some in colour, some very thin and weak, and others like cables in durability and clear communication. Are these helpful I ask myself? Are they healthy? Are they needed?

I know for a fact that at times I feel so strongly for and with my children that I nearly go under. Not so long ago one of them had a very big upset and I was awake all night, empathising so much it took over my life. In fact it was nothing to do with me... well not really, it was just that it was my child who was affected. 'My' child, there is the key. I became too involved and it wasn't good for either of us, helped neither of us.

On the other hand there is an awareness that comes with this invisible cord that can work wonderfully. It can be a warning or just an inkling. There have been many times when my Mum has phoned at just the right moment—when I needed to talk. And vice versa. I know of someone who cancelled a long-awaited holiday to go home to be with her elderly parents earlier than planned. On the journey home she received a message that her father was critically ill. She was soon at his bedside thankful for the inner prompting. Had she gone on holiday not only would she have been far away but also out of contact. This time the invisible cord was definitely a fully working lifeline.

The other day my Mum rang from Sweden, where she lives. I could tell as soon as she spoke that something was wrong. She had difficulty breathing and something strange was happening to her voice. Was she having a heart attack? After all, she is 81 and has angina. I was concerned although she tried to assure me all was well. Ten minutes later she rang back, free to talk. It turned out she was seriously worried about her 'child', whom she had been spending time with. So I quoted what she had said to me when my first-born was



Elisabeth and her daughter Karin, Photo: David Channer

crying—something about keeping a distance and living one's own life. Hmmm, wise words that no doubt someone will have to tell me again and again.

Parent-Child Relationships...

I was fourteen, and standing in the kitchen of our bungalow in Surrey one August morning. My foster mother had a letter in her hand from my mother in London. Apparently she'd booked me into a boarding school in Devon, starting in September.

I knew nothing of this move. I'd been fostered on and off since I was six months old, by a couple who lived with their son in Worcester Park. But for some time my foster mother (whom I called Missy) had been getting fed up with me. Since I was 11 there'd been growing difficulties. Finally, when I was 13, my mother had found another foster home in nearby Banstead. They were a nice couple, and I felt quite happy there. Then I got a letter from Missy, saying "You'll always be my second son," and other surprisingly nice things, which made me weep. Next day her 18 year-old son came to see me and said she was willing to have me back.

Oh dear. Dilemma. 'Just get the bus back after school,' he suggested, 'on the other side of the road.' Feeling under an obligation to be grateful, I ran away, and went back to Missy.

After that, there were angry phone calls between London and Worcester Park. The phone was a recent installation, and I dreaded it ringing. A 'tug of love' ensued, with court proceedings threatened. This went on for months, and gradually the situation deteriorated, with me in the doghouse most of the time. Then the boarding school idea came up. Strangely, my mother had never discussed it with me, so it came as a surprise.

Did I want to go, Missy asked me. Inside I felt

exhilaration—most of the books I'd read were stories based in boarding schools—and also trepidation. I didn't realise I had a choice but

she was implying I had. She was dead against it. 'If you want to go there, after all I've sacrificed for you—well!'

I was in turmoil. If I said yes, it looked like rank ingratitude. I wanted to go but mumbled that I'd stay. That was my first really bad decision.

I was 'encouraged' to write to my mother saying I never wanted to see her again. I broke

off 'all diplomatic relations'. It meant not going up to London to see her, or her partner, in the big house they had in Bedford Square. He owned an advertising agency, and I used to play on the typewriter. I enjoyed those visits and was sad to make the break. My mother then stopped her weekly payments of 25/- (£1.25p) for my keep.

One evening my Scoutmaster came to see me. He explained how difficult it was for my foster mother to keep me without any money, and now that I was 14 I really ought to start work. After all, her son had gone out to work at 14, why shouldn't I?

That Christmas I did a postal round, and was able to hand over a princely five pounds. After New Year I went down to the Labour Exchange and got a job as a routing boy, starting on 1 January 1945 at J Walter Thompson, the best ad agency in the world. I must have had a good guardian angel to fix that!

Ten years elapsed. I was having a quiet time one morning, reading my Bible. As I prayed the Lord's prayer, I suddenly stopped at the bit where it says, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us'. Out of the blue I thought of my mother. I realised I'd held a grudge against her all that time. For what? Well, for having me in the first place, then for not looking after me herself, or for providing the father. Dimly I became aware I needed to put this right—that I should apologise for holding that grudge.

This meant finding her. I quaked at the thought. I confided in a friend, who suggested I phone the ad agency. A woman's voice told me my mother was away. Could I have her address please? Majorca. Life was busy, and I'm a born procrastinator. It took a month and seven drafts before I was ready to post my letter.

My friend said I'd better ring up and make sure she was still out there. 'Oh, she's back. Would you like to speak to her?' Hurriedly I put the receiver down. Oh dear, that meant I had to go and see her. Finally, with feet dragging like they were turned backwards, I took the tube to Tottenham Court Road, crept up to that impressive front door, and rang the bell.

The door was opened by a lady, and I glimpsed my mother on the staircase behind. Next moment she swept down and embraced me in a huge hug. I had been expecting surly resentment—'What d'you want, coming round here...?' But no, just unconditional love and a warm welcome. I might have been the Prodigal Son (except no Dad).

I've tried since to find healing, through psychotherapy, but it hasn't been easy. I still choke up when I see fathers on TV being nice to their sons.

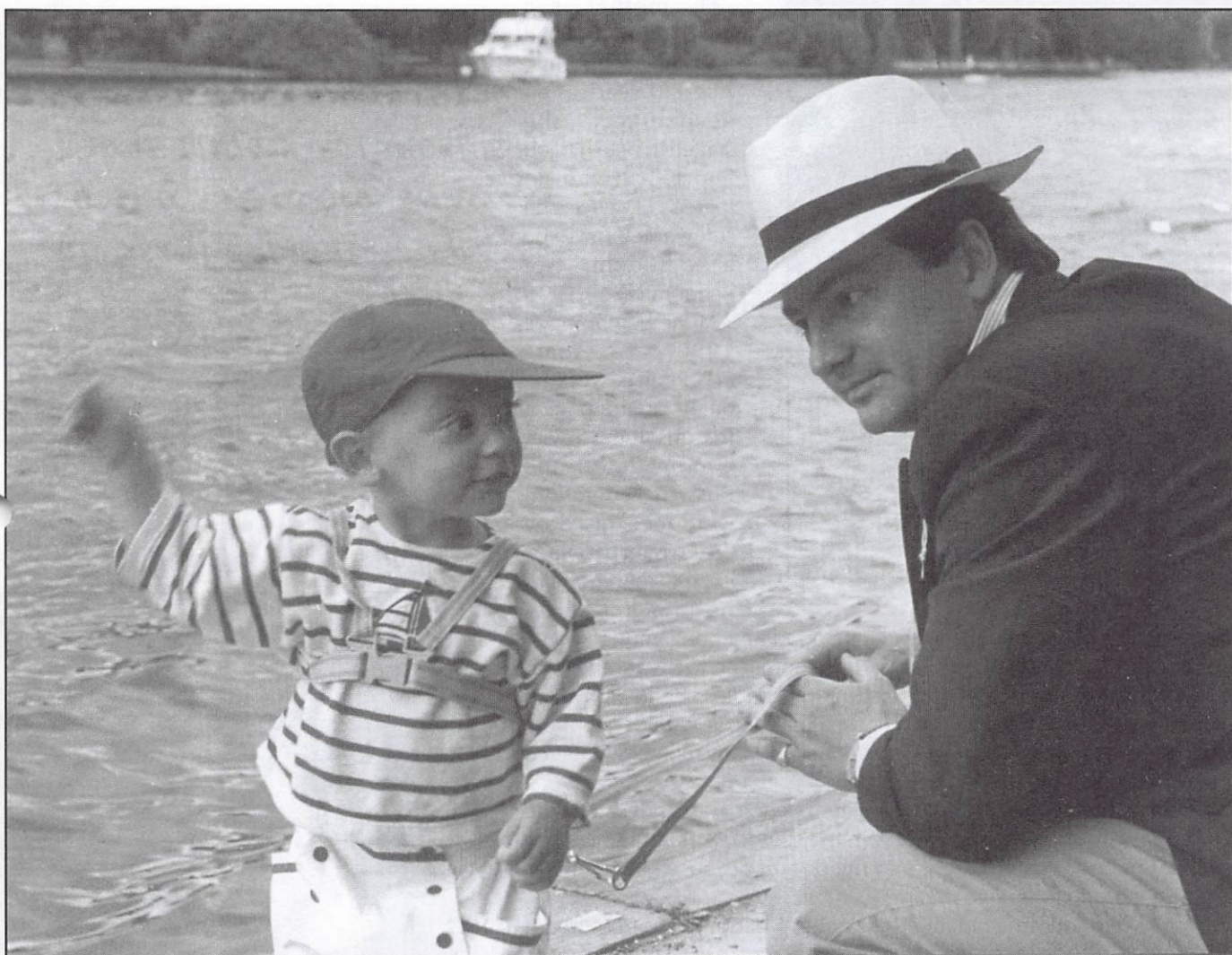


Photo: Peter Sisam

I can't remember any more of that day. I must have stumbled out my apology, but I don't think she heard. Maybe we had a meal together, or maybe I made my excuses and ran. I was overcome.

Within a couple of weeks she arranged a holiday on the Isle of Wight, and I nervously got to know her. She kept herself sprightly and I enjoyed playing table tennis with her. A little girl watching us asked me, 'Is she your wife?' Mum dined out on that for weeks.

That was my first experience of forgiveness. It was the most creative step I've ever taken and has since brought me untold blessings.

It took me much longer to realise I needed to give up the grudge against my father, whoever he was. I was 44, on a social work course, and it dawned on me after a fellow student described me as an angry person. Me? Mild and gentle me? He'd detected, under the mask, real currents of anger and unhealed hurt. I've tried

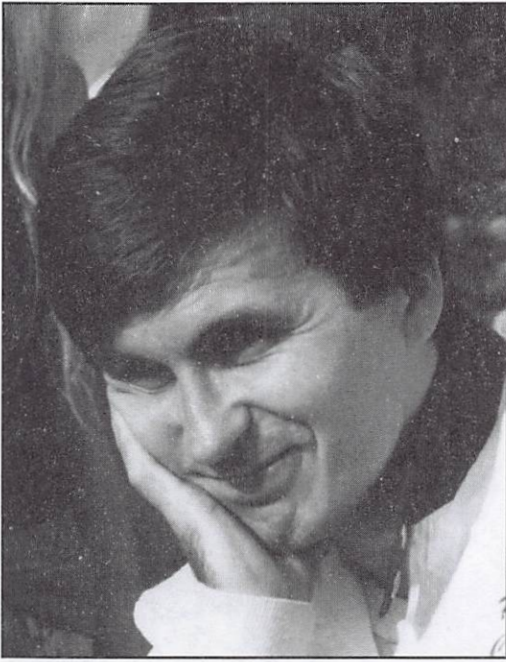
since to find healing, through psychotherapy, but it hasn't been easy. I still choke up when I see fathers on TV being nice to their sons.

Then last summer I attended a conference on 'Cleaning the Slate' before the millennium. I'd come to realise how much I'd run down my foster mother in conversations with friends, and totally written off her husband. There I was, still holding a deep grievance fifty years on. On the last morning we were invited to shred our resentments and leave them behind. In tears I determined to do it. Whether it made a difference to them up in heaven I don't know, but it gave me a freedom I hadn't had before.

Nobody's ever had perfect parents, and no one will ever be a perfect parent. It has taken me decades to realise how forgiving I must be of other people's failings; then they might be inclined to be generous towards me. That's what the Cross is about, after all.

John Munro, UK

Parent-Child Relationships...



My mother is a good example of bad luck in accounting. After 20 years as an accountant she started to hate her job and left it with no regrets. However she still wanted me to be a student of economics.

At the beginning of 1990 some economists working on the programme of reforms in the Soviet Union (later, the Russian Federation) were recognised by the Russian people as experts in their field.

As a result, faculties

of economics in the universities became popular among young people and began to attract the best brains. I did not listen to my mother and entered the Faculty of Philology. Cultural Studies, Philosophy and Literature are more my field—I feel a calling and a confidence there which enables me to give most to my students. But my mother wondered how I would be able to support a family.

While I was studying at the university teachers descended into the worst paid category of employee. When I started work as a university teacher I put my salary straight into my pocket because I knew it was not even enough for an ice-cream.

As a teacher and an academic researcher I had a lot of free time. I worked part-time for five years at different places; I was an assistant to many bosses, gave private lessons, and did translations. All that time my mother was reproaching me, pointing at my successful friends in banks, business and TV. My closest friend was one of the most influential businessmen in my home town. He offered to help me find a prestigious job. But going out to 'make money' would have meant leaving the university.

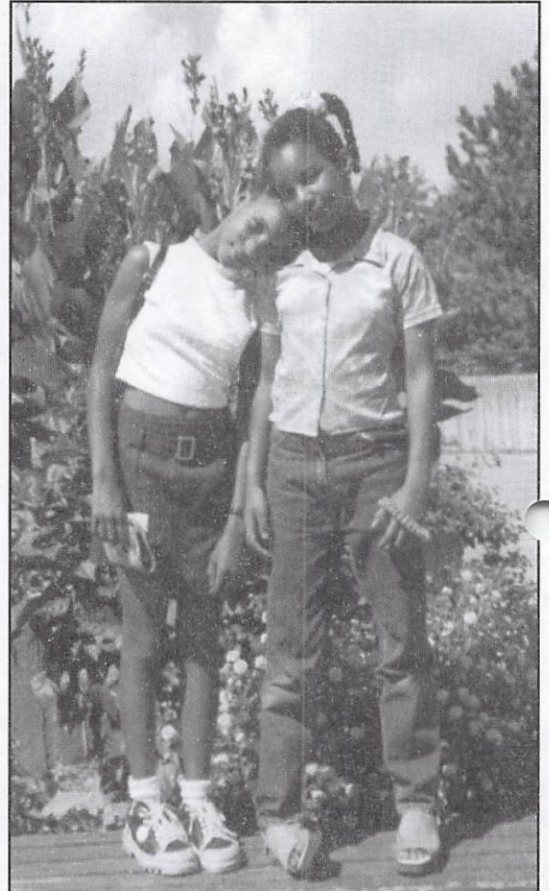
I was tired of hearing from my mother that I was obsolete, out of date stupid, giftless, an idiot etc. From time to time I also felt angry and started to believe that my mother was right. Still, I could not imagine myself as a big boss balancing on a leather armchair.

My friend became one of the most important oligarchs in the country, running the Russian Unified Energy System. This was a very difficult time for me and I gave a huge sigh of relief when he was fired for embezzling millions of dollars. But I was extremely happy when my mother said, 'It seems you were right'.

My mother is awaiting my return from England (where I am currently working for a year) to continue our disputes. The departments of cultural studies in some universities are still waiting also. I'll probably earn more money there for my family, when I have one, because I don't like ice-cream any more.

Igor Smerdov, Russia

I was tired of hearing from my mother that I was obsolete, out of date, stupid, giftless, an idiot etc...



Stephanie (right) and Camille are twelve-year-old twins living in London. Their mother, Vivienne Witter, wrote them a letter (opposite) to optimise home-life.

Dear Steph and Mimi

Today I think it would be a good idea for me to write to you about our relationship. It's important that I help you grow up to be good responsible citizens, in an environment of love and support.

Please understand me and my needs as I try to understand yours. You are growing up and that means all kinds of emotional changes. I realise that at times you will flare up and fly off the handle. In a way I am growing up too and changes are occurring in me as well. I can be cranky and miserable at times. As you can see we all have stuff to deal with.

So how about if we help each other? I will try my best to be patient, loving and understanding.

My pledge/promise to you:

- *speak quietly even when I am mad with you
- *listen
- *be supportive and reassuring
- *explain and state clearly what I am not happy with
- *not criticise
- *stick to my promises no matter what (that includes when I say you are to be punished)
- *give you your space and respect your privacy

What I expect from you:

- *consider my feelings, be thoughtful
- *speak to me and others with respect
- *be consistent in the things planned, ie. your routine in doing your chores
- *be more orderly, ie. do not desist from your planned activities no matter who is visiting
- *treat our home with respect, show others by your example
- *adopt an attitude of tidiness and leave things in the order in which you find them
- *do all your homework in adequate time
- *no television after 6:30pm on school days/9:00pm at weekends

I do not wish to keep repeating myself since you find this a great source of irritation. I also find it distressing. I have been blessed with two lovely daughters and hope you will continue to grow up as the thoughtful, polite, creative and intelligent girls that you are. Keep your feet firmly on the ground; your mind on your studies; your thoughts on the great things you can achieve. Hold your heads high, always being proud of who you are so that I too can be proud of you!

This way. The thumping bass sucks me into its orbit. But not for long—as my eyes draw me forward, my ears catch a different beat across the way. A song I think I know, I think I like.

Search for its source and stride towards it. Stop! Shoes. I've been looking at that pair for a while and they catch my eye like new friends I hardly yet know, but who are already familiar and desirable. Maybe it's time to buy? They're expensive. But if I owned them, along with that music, I'd be content. Moving towards the music again, almost running. Beginning to gasp, the breath hitting the bottom of my throat and going no further. Rows upon rows of glaring CD covers curdle my mind. The shoe-shop's smell of fake desire turns me away and draws me back. Where to focus? Where to stop?

I am not a shop-a-holic. Yet, most of the time, I have a product in mind, wanting to buy: that pair of shoes, that CD just launched. I imagine that if I purchase the golden item, it will change my life. That those difficulties which ache at the back of my mind—how to apologise to my friend for that unhappy incident a week ago, how to cope with a difficult job—will dissolve. 'The job would be a whole lot easier if I had that music to listen to/those shoes to wear', etc. For a few days after purchase, perhaps things *do* appear easier. That is until the golden item has been superseded by the thought of a different product—this time, one which will undoubtedly make me happy... Like shopping malls designed to lure us in and prevent easy exit, our minds trap us into a cycle of desiring, buying, and desiring again.

The 1990s kick-started a new culture in the Western world—a culture in which lavish consumption is encouraged as the way to self-fulfilment. With material goods such as cars and computers obsolete almost as soon as they are sold, we experience a rapid turnover of objects, and an equally rapid turnover of our desires. We are taught to live in order to

maximise our own, immediate pleasure: 'Too much is never enough', pronounces a huge neon sign above New York City, and 'Shop Shop Shop!'. Material wealth—with its ability to satisfy instantaneously, if temporarily—has become the Number One priority. Continual out-moding causes us to feel obsolete as people, unless we continually redefine ourselves by getting and spending. Gradually we are learning to treat everything, including ourselves and others, as disposable, replaceable; divorce in Britain today affects one in three marriages.¹



TOO N



Junked cars in a meadow, Photo: Peter Sisam

In the popular new computer game, *The Sims*, in which players recreate their own lives in a virtual suburbia, the Sims are 'made happy by buying new items... such as a pool table or microwave'.² And the recent box-office hit, *American Beauty*, depicts a couple so obsessed with items that they are no longer living; so driven to achieve materially, in the belief that this is the way to satisfaction, that they lose each other. A four-thousand dollar Italian silk sofa is still, after all, made for sitting on! 'The American [read Western] dream causes a lot of problems... It's not about spirituality,

your soul, it's about how much money you make and how great you look doing it' (Wes Bentley, actor). Insecure in our relationships and in defining ourselves, we have developed an 'insane attachment to things' in our search for stability and contentment.³

Ramphay is a Laotian refugee, now settled in Australia with her husband and sons. She describes feeling bombarded by the push for material wealth in Sydney. 'The minute I wake up, the TV is full of commercials telling us to buy and buy... The message each day is to get and to grab as much as you can.' The family runs its own business, lives in a desirable home with a swimming pool, owns a car, wears good clothes... They have everything material within their reach, and yet Ramphay is plagued by an emptiness, a void.

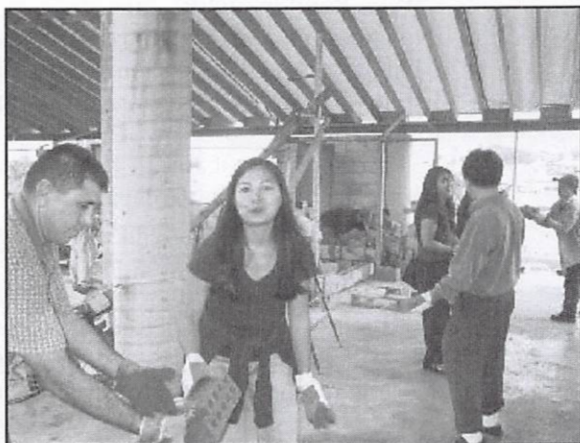
It is natural to want to fill a void. And it is when we feel empty that this culture of consumption erodes our consciousness, whispering to us the items we desire to overcome it. (Ramphay owns numerous black cardigans as a result!) Ironically, we seek fulfilment in the one way which ensures ultimate dissatisfaction. By putting our hope in constantly obsolete material items, we cannot help but be disappointed and find ourselves wanting more. This cycle of trying for contentment and finding none can lead to an addiction difficult to overcome, since our deepest cravings can never be satisfied in the material world.⁴ Of course we need 'things' - they provide physical comfort and even happiness! A materially comfortable life is certainly not something to be opposed or taken for granted. But these things fulfil temporary needs and it is when we place *too much*

importance on material possessions that we face emptiness, or what some call spiritual poverty.

Newspaper report: a billionaire, apparently owning all that she could want, commits suicide. I experience a wave of reality, when I realise for a frightening instant that I will never find happiness in the material world. The fear comes from the sense of hopelessness that these moments bring, for if what I find myself striving for is worthless, what is the point of this life? But as I become more aware of where else I can seek fulfilment, these moments overcome me less frequently

MUCH

Materialism...



Ramphay at work on the multi-purpose hall

and with less intensity.

It is possible, though increasingly difficult, to remove ourselves from the consumer environment. My favourite place is the mountains (those where, so far, there are no 'packaged' walks!). Here I can escape, for a time, the constant 'need' for material products. With no possibility of purchasing anything, I am left to appreciate the unbought beauty of the landscape and enjoy the company of the people around me; all consumer pressure is abolished. Atop a mountain, there is nothing to hide behind or grab to redefine myself. Suddenly I am free to face myself and others, and our situations, as we are. This is true freedom, unlike the much-vaunted 'freedom' to spend. This space is not the deceptive spaciousness of a shopping mall, which tears my attention from side to side and steals my breath away through fear of discovering an empty hole somewhere deep inside. In this space, the wind blows unabated through my emptiness and the void inside is gone, for a time.

But for urbanites like me, the mountains are for holidays; all the time I know I must return to the complex consumer

She gained no satisfaction—only pressure and frustration—from the material world, and sought a new space. She found it amongst a group of people in her own community, constructing a local multi-purpose hall. For her family, involvement in the project has been 'the most refreshing thing ever'. After a week of struggling through the consumer world, Ramphay is always uplifted by the work (beginning with 'little things like fixing the taps'), by the lack of material competition and by the focus it gives to her life. By working and spending time together, a genuine concern for each other has developed amongst the group which Ramphay finds difficult to put into words. This 'thing' cannot be described in material terms—given a colour or size or price. But it is the thing which, by its very immaterial nature, fills Ramphay's emptiness and gives meaning to her life. By valuing ourselves and others for what we are, we begin to recognise the value of life for what it is, instead of valuing it only for what it might provide materially.

Nicci Long, Australia

¹The Independent on Sunday, 23-1-00, p.4

²Adam Sherwin, 'Playing the game of your life', The Times, 12-2-00, p.11

³Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline

⁴Henri Nouwen, The Return of the Prodigal Son, 1992

⁵The Guardian, 20-11-99, p. 2 (Saturday Review)

Padlocks in South Africa

Standing at the counter (I work part-time in a bookshop), I was thinking about this animal called materialism. It started out as an academic exercise until I was reminded of my own list of 'must haves' written somewhere in my diary. The urgent need to own more and more.

With ownership comes the fear of loss of ownership. So we build higher walls, buy bigger locks. There's a whole industry built on our fear of loss of possessions. In this process of hoarding and protection we start to lose track of both our humanity and the sense of community which strengthens us in times of need. Gone are the days of popping over

IS NEVER

world. Rather than simply rejecting consumption, I must learn to shake its grip by recognising its perpetual emptiness and by choosing to focus my attention—and to find fulfilment—elsewhere. Subcomandante Marcos (an insurgent fighting for liberation from the Mexican state) speaks of the vital need for a *new space*, an alternative to 'the false promises used everywhere to justify and idealise the delinquent and insatiable need to sell'.⁵ While this consumer culture continues, the only way we will find such a space is to deliberately build it into our own lives.

Ramphay's gnawing emptiness forced her to question why she lived and where she was heading.

to the neighbours' for a cup of tea or to borrow some sugar. You now have to bypass intercoms, automatic gates, dogs trained to kill and a padlocked door. As a consequence we no longer take the time to listen to other people's stories and get to know them.

The increasingly rapid breakdown of society—where will it leave us? Who will teach the next generation of our culture, traditions and sharing? These are integral to passing on morals and values. We are rushing at breakneck speed into the future but when did we last stop to ask where we are going?

Michelle Horn, South Africa

Relationships...

Men—out of my head and bed

Celibacy was a subject I would giggle and snigger at. It was for people who were too ugly or too weird to get sex anyway. So it is with more than a little humility that I admit to having committed myself to a six-month celibacy contract, with an option to recommit for another six months, if I want to.

I have been dating since I was eight, having sex since I was 17. I am now 32, which amounts to a long time with men in my head and in my bed.

It was the end of another high-sex and high-drama relationship that brought it on. I would walk out with him chasing me down the road; a few tears later and I would be curled around him again in bed. I thought I could fix everything with sex. If you think this is romantic and passionate, try doing it five times a week for four years. Exhausting! But I stayed, even though I knew he had been unfaithful. I never trusted him again and had many affairs myself in an attempt to get even.

It was the most damaging relationship I had been in; I had never before stayed with anyone who had cheated on me. But it took me a while to notice how extremely unhappy I was and then another year to walk away from it. At that point a girlfriend suggested I 'go celibate for a while'.

'Why the hell would I want to do that?', I asked.

'To give yourself time to think about you and what you want in a relationship. I did it for six months. I had the best time', she replied. Lots of her friends, male and female, were doing it - or rather not doing it - right under my nose, she said.

Celibacy did not conjure up thoughts of having 'the best time' - more like loneliness and boredom. 'Well, maybe you have a warped sense of what a boyfriend is', my friend said. Slightly below the belt, but I knew she was right. My idea of having a boyfriend is someone who loves me no matter what, who won't get angry with me, someone who will not say no to me and is available 24/7. He's my lover, my best friend, my father, my mother and my career counsellor. Is it any wonder I am constantly disappointed?

Perhaps I did need to review the situation.

I sat down with a friend and agreed to be celibate for six months. I wrote down on a piece of paper what celibacy meant for me: no sex with anyone, no dating, no sexual intrigues (aka cruising), no sexual movies or literature and no calling old boyfriends for 'a chat'. I signed it and dated it.

I use the term 'contract' loosely. It's an agreement and I can cancel it at any time, but so far so good. The first four weeks flew by. I did indeed have the best time. I filled my diary with waxing sessions, make-up consultations, yoga, girls-who-do-sandwich-lunches and cinema dates, and I finally sussed out how to get a library card.

I am now in week six and on the verge of barking madness.

I am still asked out on dates, which is surprising because I was sure that I had 'celibate' tattooed across my forehead. I have told a couple of men that I'm on a contract and don't date at the moment. The responses have ranged from an incredulous 'What d'ya wanna do that for?' to 'Good call.

It's the most important thing to have time for yourself', followed swiftly by 'When are you off it?'

The most frustrating bit is that I'm also learning a lot about myself I simply don't like. I hadn't realised how much I depended on having a boyfriend as a measure of my self-worth. I have lost confidence because I don't have a man around.

It's a struggle going out with my friends because I think: 'What's the point? I can't pull anyone.' But there is a point: I can have a laugh; make new friends; dress up for me. I do feel lonely sometimes but not as lonely as I was in my relationship, and that's progress.

I wouldn't be doing this celibacy thing if I didn't see it working around me. It's not perfect, I admit: a friend stayed on the contract for three months, then went back to where she'd started because she wasn't ready to give up her old behaviour. Others swear by it and they are the people I see forming loving, committed relationships, even though they are still obeying the celibacy rules.

Friends are really encouraging and say the first eight weeks are difficult, but after that it gets better. As I inch into week seven feeling mad, I realise this is pure serenity compared with where I was two months ago.

Alison Whelan, UK

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Alone, Photo: Lisa Kesby

ENOUGH

Three Trees

An old lemon tree standing in the garden of a house in Ramle, a town east of Tel Aviv, in Israel, is a symbol of hurt and of healing. The house and garden were once the property of a family of Palestinians. During the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, the family was expelled.

Treated as 'abandoned property', the house was given to new Jewish immigrants. Today it is the site of the Open House project, providing educational services to the Arab community in Ramle and serving as a meeting centre for Arabs and Jews.

Dalia Landau, who lives with her husband, Yehezkel, and son, Raphael, in Jerusalem, came to Israel from Bulgaria in 1948 as a baby. She and her parents were among the fifty thousand Bulgarian Jews who decided to immigrate to the new Jewish state. The family settled in a big stone house in Ramle that had belonged to an Arab family. She loved the house, its spacious rooms and huge windows and the lemon tree which almost collapsed each year under its fruit. 'I grew up there without asking myself



Photo: Christine Karrer

any questions about the past', she says.

One morning in 1967 after the Six-Day War, when Dalia was nineteen, a 26-year-old Palestinian, Bashir Khayri, turned up at the front door and said that the house belonged to his family. Dalia invited him in. It was the first time she had ever met a Palestinian, and the first time she had ever given thought to what had happened to the house's earlier owners.

She responded to his invitation to visit his family in Ramallah and enjoyed their hospitality. Their political views were far apart, each seeing events through the lens of the suffering of their own people. But there were the beginnings of a bridge. After the first visit by Bashir, Dalia felt that the home was no longer just her

and

WHAT - U - THINK

Next issue we look at: What teachings have inspired or challenged you to do extraordinary things?

Deadline: June 12, 2000

This issue: How do you combine the spiritual with daily life?

Christine Kenny, USA

A prayer before going to work in the morning and going to sleep at night. A thank you when my favourite song is played or when my food tastes especially good. A call for help when a decision has to be made or when a crisis looms. An appreciation of the birds, trees, sun, and

all the gifts of nature that surround me. An understanding that there is not one moment of one day that I ever spend truly alone.

Will Hone, Australia

The mind is often said to be in the head, which is a funny thing as the mind, to my knowledge, is not a physical thing. To lose the physical is to lose distance and time, which puts the mind in a different realm; one where there is neither birth nor death; where anything is close (yet somehow far away). Thought is the word. Regularly, thoughts come flying through. The individual's choice is what to do with such inspired flashes. Take hold and follow through to find where

home, and that the tree which yielded so much fruit and gave so much delight lived in other people's hearts, too.

On a day that was unforgettable to Dalia, Bashir's father came to the house. He was old and blind. He touched the rugged stones of the house and then asked if the lemon tree was still in the backyard. He was led to the tree which he had planted many years before and caressed it silently, with tears rolling down his face. Many years later, after the father had died, the mother told Dalia that whenever he had felt troubled at night and could not sleep, he would pace up and down his Ramallah apartment holding in his hand the shriveled lemon that Dalia's father had given him on it visit.

It was painful for Dalia to get to know the unspoken history of her country. She had been led to believe, for instance, that the Arab population of Ramle had fled in cowardly fashion before the Israeli army in 1948; but in reality, as she discovered, they had been expelled. The story was convenient, she says, because it spared the invaders guilt and remorse. 'I didn't stop loving my country because of that, but my love lost its innocence.'

Bashir had been six when the family was forced from the house and ended up in Gaza. One day there he was play-

ing with something which he thought was a toy and it exploded, blowing four fingers off one hand, an experience that was perhaps the trigger that set him off on a road of bitterness and revenge. In 1969 Bashir was imprisoned, charged with involvement in a bomb attack that killed several civilians. For fifteen years he sat in Israeli prisons. Passing the Ramle prison on her way to work, Dalia often won-

dered if he was inside but never had the courage to ask; it was too painful.

In 1985, when her father died, Dalia inherited the house in Ramle. She and Yehezkel decided to dedicate it 'to some healing purpose'. Wanting to do this in conjunction with Bashir, who had by then served his sentence, they sought him out. They offered to sell the house and give the money to the al-Khayri family. This was not to make a statement that all such properties should be

returned to former owners but to acknowledge the suffering there had been. 'I don't want money', said Bashir. 'I would like to see the property turned into a kindergarten for Arab children so they can enjoy the childhood I could not have.'

It was difficult to get agreement on how this should be worked out because of political considerations but, as Bashir's wife, Sheherazade, said, 'For the house we shall always find



Peace Camp, Photo: Open House

an open house

such whispering leads, for all walk their own path and the thoughts you find (or that find you) are your first, most personal guide.

Tony Tsai-Fu Chuang, Taiwan

I am really pleased and feel lucky to be a Buddhist. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Buddha for the philosophy that he has taught us. Before I became a Buddhist I worried about my job, marriage, money, houses etc. I could not relax even for a short time. Also a lot of suffering comes to find you no matter where you are and when. The philosophy of Buddhism says that the suffering you have today is from the bad things you have done before (includ-

ing in past lives). In order to prevent or reduce the suffering, we need to know which actions will cause it. There are five basic actions which will cause huge suffering and which we should not do: 1. No killing 2. No stealing 3. No sex except in a formal relationship 4. No lying 5. No alcohol/drugs.

Also, if you hope to get good results in the future, you must try to be a kind person and do good things to people and all the world.

If you hope to understand more about Buddhism, please find a correct and proper book (eg. What the Buddha Said, by Ven. Walpole Rahula).



Peace Camp, Photo: Open House

a solution. The important thing is to keep the bridges open between our family and Dalia.'

At the end of 1987 the *intifada* (uprising) began, and the Israeli authorities arrested some of the Palestinians they regarded as the most dangerous, among them Bashir, who was deported to southern Lebanon. On the eve of his deportation Dalia wrote 'A letter to a deportee', which was published prominently in the *Jerusalem Post* (January 14, 1988). In it she chronicled movingly the ongoing saga of her meetings over the years with Bashir and called on him to use his new, higher profile to 'demonstrate the kind of leadership that uses non-violent means of struggle for your rights, a leadership based on education for the recognition of your enemy and his relative justice'.

She appealed to both Palestinians and Israelis to understand that the use of force would not fundamentally resolve the conflict. It was the kind of war no one could win: either both people would achieve liberation or neither would. She concluded her letter:

Our childhood memories, yours and mine, are intertwined in a tragic way. If we can not find means to transform that tragedy into a shared blessing, our clinging to the past will destroy our future. We will then rob another generation of a joy-filled childhood and turn them into martyrs for an unholy cause. I pray that with your cooperation and God's help, our children will delight in the beauty and bounties of this holy land. Allah ma'ak - May God be with you.

This letter to a deportee was a courageous act. The letters that came in to Dalia were all supportive, and the paper received only one negative letter. One of her friends, though, would not speak to her for a while.

Bashir is a member of the militant Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and lived in Am-

WHAT - U - THINK

Benita Powrie, Australia (currently caring for babies and children in Salaj Hospital, Zalau, Romania)

I am not good at maintaining quiet times—I don't do early mornings and the day runs out before I'm finished. Church attendance isn't easy as I don't understand the services here. For the first time, I don't have strong Christian friends close by. But everyday life in Romania is enough to keep me in a close walk with God. Prayer has become a moment by moment event. Walking down the street, standing in the post office, and holding one of 'my' babies are all conversation starters between Him and me.

16 The first provides images of young children beg-

ging in the streets outside the ostentatious houses of the corrupt and greedy; God steers me away from questioning and renews in me the passion to fight against injustice.

The second gives me a personal taste of the petty bureaucracy that cripples Romanian progress and drives me to distraction; God gives me patience I don't possess on my own. The third is both the most rewarding and heart-rending of my roles here, and God comforts, reassures and blesses me. Many things I experience here seem beyond my limits and I am forced to turn to Him. With His guidance and through His strength I have been able to see the positive aspects in apparently negative situations.

man until 1996, when he was allowed to return to Ramle. He has published a book that contains the story of the house. Dalia criticizes his approach and is aware that he has never denied the terrorist act for which he was sentenced. But she respects his love for his country without respecting his actions. She finds him a person who feels the suffering of others and believes that a basic feeling of mutual respect has grown up and a shared feeling that one day a common destiny will be found.

In April 1991, responding to Bashir's earlier request, the Ramle house became Open House, a community center which houses the only nursery school in Ramle for Palestinian children taught in Arabic and is the first Jewish-Arab cultural center in the town. The first major program for both Arabs and Jews was a summer peace camp for forty youngsters, which has since grown to more than a hundred.

The Open House executive director is Michail Fanous, a Christian Arab raised in Ramle and the first Arab to sit on Ramle's city council. Yehezkel is administrative director responsible for financial management and fundraising. Support has been given from many overseas, including a grant from the World Council of Churches. George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has endorsed the project and says that the story of the Landau and al-Khayri families and their friendship 'symbolizes a new hope for the future'. He was moved to learn about Muslims, Jews and Christians who had dedicated themselves to 'practical peace-making'. 'The suffering of this region will not end', he wrote, 'until the land is fairly shared; that requires an urgent political settlement. But peace also needs brave and imaginative ideas from individuals determined to create a new society.'

Although the lemon tree has died, two of Bashir's sisters, Nuha and Chanom, joined the Landau family and Michail Fanous in planting an olive tree in the yard next to the house in January 1995, when the tree festivals in the Jewish and Muslim calendars converged. The sisters wrote in the Open House guest book, 'Looking forward to a time when the fruits of love and peace will be enjoyed by the children of both peoples'.

Michael Henderson, UK/USA

An excerpt, reprinted from his book, *Forgiveness: Breaking The Chain Of Hate*, published by BookPartners Inc., Wilsonville, Oregon, 1999

This song was written by Garth Hewitt for Dalia & Yehezkel Landau, and Michail Fanous.

three trees (and an open house)

Three trees and an open house
With open hands and an open heart
Three trees and an open house
Where love can grow and peace can start

*A lemon tree was planted many years ago
By Ahmed al-Khayri when it was his home
He came back and found it when he was old and
blind*

*And the lemon tree made lemonade for all who came
inside*

*The jacaranda tree—so beautiful to see
Was the next one to be planted by Moshe Ashkenazi
And though he tried to chop it down it seemed to rise
again
And its leaves gave shade from the hot summer sun*

*In January '95 at the new year of the trees
A third tree was planted—it was an olive tree
Muslim, Christian, Jew—they all joined hands
And prayed the olive oil would bless the people of the
land*

*A symbol of their common attachment to the land
Planted as a prayer that the wounds would be healed
And they prayed for the fruit of justice and of peace
Which all the children of Abraham surely long to taste*

Listen to the trees. Keep an open heart

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Louise Jarvis, UK

Spirituality is said to be a capacity of human beings that distinguishes them from animals. Paradoxically, it is the natural world which can be a gateway to combining the spiritual with daily life. Taking time to contemplate the beauty of God's natural creation—a crocus bursting into flower, a stunning sunset—is one way to experience a spiritual dimension in our daily lives.

Experiencing a spiritual side to life means both standing back to see the whole picture and being alert to details; it means looking around and outside ourselves and noticing God's hand guiding our lives. It is treasuring every moment and

seeing it as a gift from God, as encapsulated in the Quaker saying, 'the present is now and now is sacred'.

Jennifer Padua, Philippines

If I set a demarcation line between my spiritual and my daily life, it is the same as trying to put a division between my heart and my soul. Our lives must always follow the direction our heart and soul take each day. A life without God is a senseless and unproductive one for me because I do not give focus and priority to what should matter most. If we try to offer everything we do each day to God, life becomes more and more meaningful.

no to ragging



Photo: Christine Karrer

When I entered the Engineering Faculty of the University of Peradeniya (Ceylon) in June 1995, my initial feelings were of fear and anxiety. I had been warned about this thing called 'ragging' or 'hazing'. I knew of many mind-chilling stories such as the girl who jumped out of her window, on the third floor, to avoid being ragged and ended up paralysed. I was warned not to hang around in common rooms, corridors and

lonely places because these are the favourite hunting grounds of the 'rag teams'.

Ragging is a process of mental and physical abuse which second-year students inflict on freshmen. The idea is to instil respect for seniors, to get to know the freshmen better, and to inspire discipline to enable them to endure hard situations in life. Freshmen are verbally abused and the guys are later treated to a physical rag, which can get perverted and twisted. The rag season goes on for three months. I am ashamed to cite the death of a freshman in 1998 due to renal and heart failure. He was asked to perform 500 sit-ups non-stop, and collapsed in the process.

The history of ragging is interesting... In the early days (1950s and 60s) it was done with the sole intention of socialising, and it was all very innocent and taken in good fun. Both the seniors and freshmen had a laugh at the end of the day. Unfortunately as politics spread its cancerous cells through the university system of Sri Lanka, ragging became a tool of political manipulation; it was used to distance the students from the staff and inculcate a culture of hatred towards anything and anybody which threatened their freedom and rights. This included parents, staff and the government. The strategy is simple, yet effective: Give the guys a severe physical rag, then speak to them nicely, treat them well, and slowly feed them subversive ideas. Some break down mentally during the rag, lose self-confidence and give up hope. When the same person then talks to them nicely they feel good and look up to the raggers as mentors. These students are then selected and trained

to carry on the tradition. Again, some break down and the mental torment continues throughout their lives. Others take it up but remain impartial, in that they neither resist nor approve it.

The anti-rag movement started in the early nineties, when some students were bold enough to stand up and say 'NO'. Initially they were laughed at and the seniors gave strict orders that they were to be ignored and sidelined by the rest of the batch. With undeterred courage they braved their way through and others slowly realised that perhaps there was another way of living on campus—by standing up for what you believe in. The anti-rag students were looked after by the lecturers, who ensured that no physical harm was inflicted on them. Slowly but surely in each incoming batch of freshmen there was a group of anti-rag students. They were secretly admired by the rest. Seniors kept away from them because the anti-rag movement was now a force to be dealt with.

These little groups welcomed freshmen warmly and explained that living by moral standards is possible. They were encouraged to speak out and say 'no' to ragging or anything else that was unacceptable to them morally or spiritually.

I joined the anti-rag movement; there were both seniors and fellow batchmates who hated me. I lived by my standards, and faced quite a lot of hostility at the beginning. In my first two

years I didn't have many friends. I too had faults; I distanced myself from my batchmates, mistakenly assuming they didn't want to accept me. Also, I was arrogant because I had resisted and others hadn't. Life on campus was miserable. Then I looked into myself and realised my own faults. I attempted to correct them and immediately saw what I had failed to see before: smiling friendly faces. I made lots of friends. I helped them and they helped me immensely. These are lifelong pals.

The Sri Lankan government has made ragging a punishable offence. Things are slowly but steadily changing. Students no longer fear standing up for what is right. Nonetheless, over 70% still get ragged. There's work to be done.

My message is simple: Don't be afraid to live by your beliefs, for your own good and that of others, even if it means standing alone. However bad the situation, there's always something valuable to be learned from it.

Roshan Dodanwela, Sri Lanka



Poems by Edith Craig, Scotland

Cloud Dreamer

Your spirit can spread its wings
To soar in the twinkling of an eye
Up into the dazzling snowy cliffs and
valleys

Of a sunny autumn sky,
And dance on the dark blue-grey banks

Of a fiery golden lake
In which the evening sun sinks
With silent magnificence.

You can hear the song
That the wind sings
As it flies across the fields.

Be humble

For you are fortunate.

Lying voices may whisper
That your precious treasure is worthless.

Do not believe them,
They have spent too long scrabbling in
the mud,

They have forgotten how to dance with
the angels.

All the world's wealth
Could not match what you've received.

For who can imprison the dreamer?
And who can rob him of his dreams?

Believe me, my friend, when I say
That 'idle dreams' and 'foolish madness'
Are the only hope of sanity
That this world has.

Corners

Music that takes you round corners,
Like healing tears that wash your soul
clean,

Like rose petals falling softly on the
surface of a pool,
Like a sunrise spilling over a mountain
range

In a glorious burst of morning majesty,
As the heart of a glacier cracks
Over the sheer beauty of spring,
Like the tender touch of God
In our confused and broken lives,
The music plays on
Taking us round corners.

A Blink of Heaven

It was only for a moment,
As we brought in the last bags from the car.
We looked up and saw a rent
In the sad rainy cloth of the evening sky,
As if two great hands had torn it apart,
And through that hole
We saw a soft shining blue sky
And a single cloud
Of purest gold.

