

**Not  
Finished  
Yet:**



**Chronicles in the  
Life of Peter Blank**

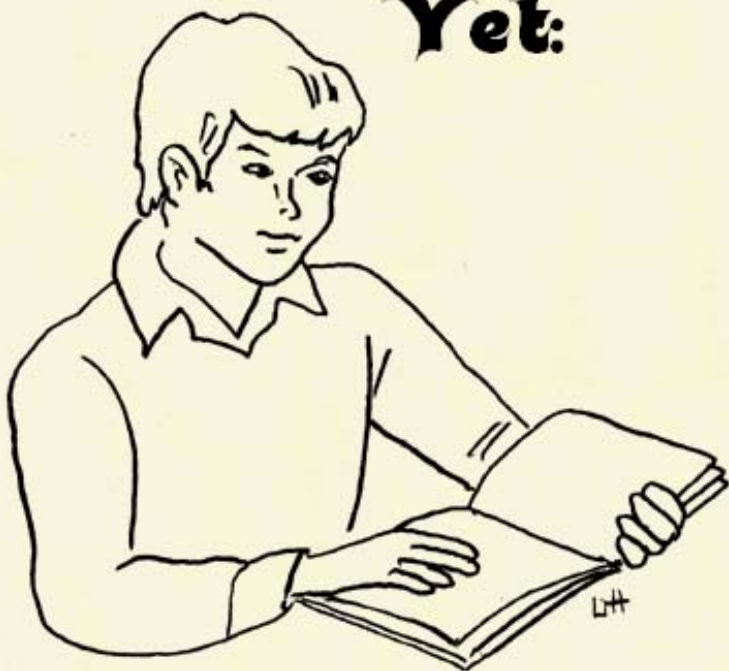
**Lionel Hartley PhD**



*This page intentionally blank*

*This page intentionally blank*

**Not  
Finished  
Yet:**



**Chronicles in the  
Life of Peter Blank**

**Lionel Hartley, PhD**

Not Finished Yet: Chronicles in the Life of Peter Blank  
Lionel Hartley, PhD

Published by L&R Hartley

Cover design and graphic by the author

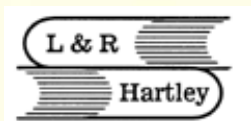
Copyright ©2000 Lionel Hartley

All rights reserved in all countries.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

All pen and ink drawings by Lionel Hartley ©

Typeset in Times New Roman and Arial



# Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1. The Genesis.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2. Peter is Washed Away .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3. Peter Has a Close Shave .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>4. The Stolen Bell.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>5. Peter Goes to Jail .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6. Peter's Teeth Change .....</b>	<b>59</b>
	(Cont/...)

---

Not Finished Yet - 7

<b>7. Peter Changes Religion .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>8. The First Day in a New Land.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>9. Outback Evangelism.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>10. A Com<i>PETER</i>able Match.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>11. An Attack Upon a Tumour .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>12. Peter Misses a Train .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>13. The Hitch-hiker .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>14. Theology for Peter .....</b>	<b>153</b>



# Introduction

**N***ot Finished Yet:*  
*Chronicles in the Life of*  
*Peter Blank*, is a serial  
saga, although novel, is not a  
novel.

It is merely a series of true-life  
episodes highlighting the  
extraordinary working of an  
extraordinary God in a very  
ordinary life.

Each chapter contained a lesson for Peter Blank, a lesson we can all learn, from a lesson-book life that is not finished yet."

The text first appeared publically in the online FreEzine Magazine from July 2000 and following.

The draft manuscript for *Not Finished Yet* was originally written for the author's daughter who required a manuscript for a school project teaching how to

format raw text into a book.

The author confesses to each of these true stories as being autobiographical, but, like this reprint, at the time of writing, his life is “Not Finished Yet”.

*This page intentionally blank*

# 1. The Genesis

**P**eter had waited three fourths of a year for this day. He hadn't necessarily planned it but he wanted it to happen and, although he was still bantam, he had the final say as to when the event would happen.

And, true to form, he announced the intention to herald his arrival at the most inopportune time.

His mother was many kilometres from the hospital where his siblings were born, and so the Mother, Father, and elder yet still infant brothers boarded their rattly old tin lizzie (a box-shaped Model-A Ford motorcar) which then gasped it's way over the hills to the nearest maternity hospital.

A country stream and a gumboot aided in providing a refreshing drink to the car's overheated radiator at the crest of the first hill, a process which was

repeated twice more before the anxious parents reached the seaside village where the hospital was located.

An inquiry at the local tavern revealed the horrifying news that the hospital could be found at the top of yet another hill, but this time the car showed no resistance to the added labour (no pun intended.)

Upon arrival, the expectant Mum was almost immediately assisted into the delivery room

and within minutes Peter was demanding the first meal of his life-long insatiable appetite.

His Dad was quick to remind his Mum of the work that still awaited her at home and consequently a return journey back over the hills was commenced within an hour or so.

Rattling home in the dark, rain now pelting the windscreen, the utmost care was taken as Mum, Dad, newborn Peter and his two



infant siblings journeyed  
homeward.

Another route would have been chosen, if they had only known that the rain had washed away a section of the poorly sealed road ahead. But as they didn't know, and as the hole appeared rather suddenly, it was perhaps inevitable that the car land in it.

Now we are not talking about a little pothole the size of the newborn Peter.

This hole was so large that the

car was completely inverted and landed in the bottom of the chasm, upside-down -- with the wheels level with the road above and the vehicle disappearing in the mud and water below.

This was long before the advent of seat-belts and child safety restraints, and the family flew around the car, landing in a heap on the canvas padded roof.

Only through his Mum holding Peter so closely was he spared a flight through the

window.

Miraculously, none were hurt in the tumble and a strange twist of Fate enabled their escape from the inverted vehicle: this car had the battery located under the floor and Peter's Dad had, a few hours earlier, replaced the battery. But because Peter had cued his Mother that he could not wait much longer to be born, his Dad had not had an opportunity to screw the floorboards back in place.

This meant that when the car came to rest downside-up in the hole, the floorboards fell away leaving an escape route.

Providence provided the circumstance; Opportunity revealed the occasion, Necessity motivated the action and, sadly, Coincidence received the credit.

The lesson for Peter was not finished yet.



## 2. Peter is Washed Away

**A** family seaside picnic found Peter (7 years) bored without the story books he normally used for filling his holiday hours.

This was a family affair, which included an assortment of relatives including two maiden aunts.

A neighbour's two daughters (school friends of Peter's siblings) had also accompanied them to the beach.

Swimming, or rather paddling, in the safety of a large netted shark protection enclosure preceded the luncheon.

While the adults chatted about the way things once were, the teens about the way things ought to be, and the younger ones about how they couldn't care either way, Peter, having gained

a reputation as a day-dreamer, reclined upon an inflatable mattress on the beach and closed his eyes.

The hot afternoon sun may have enticed others into the water, but for Peter it had a different effect.

The relaxing comfort of the air-mattress, the gentle lapping of the water (as the tide came in) and the gentle rocking of the now-floating mattress lulled Peter into a dreamy sleep.

Flotsam & jetsam may have washed up on the shoreline, but dreaming Peter drifted the other way.

In fact, he continued to drift, unnoticed until he awoke, startled, as the gentle waves were replaced by the more turbulent heaving of the ocean.

It was then that he realised both his predicament and the futility of shouting for assistance as he was by now some considerable distance out to sea.



Now that he had left the protection of the bay, he was rapidly being carried further by the wind.

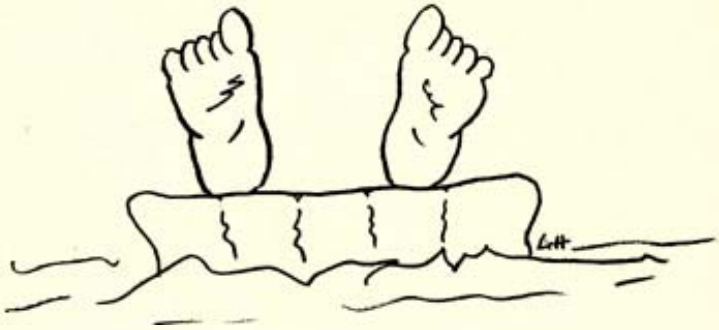
Although he felt no fear, he felt the anxiety of helplessness.

But God hadn't finished with Peter yet.

After what seemed ages, the bobbing head of a swimmer could be seen in the water between him and the beach.

The elder daughter of the

neighbour, herself only a teenager, had taken it upon herself to attempt a rescue.



But as fast as she drew closer, the wind carried Peter further away, until finally she gaspingly pleaded for him to lie flat on his stomach and try to paddle toward her.

Fortunately for both of them,

he did so, and she rested on the edge of the mattress before attempting to swim back.

Although exhausted from the swim out to him, she was somehow given additional strength to swim back to shore (against the tide) with Peter and the air-mattress in tow.

I hope you can imagine the praise and cheers this young lady received when they eventually arrived in shallow water again.

Peter is unable to relate that

part of the story as he better remembers two other things: his mother's rebuke for his foolishness and his maiden aunt's proclamation of gratitude to the God who had cared for him.

However, Peter's life lesson is not finished yet.

### 3. Peter Has a Close Shave

**P**eter (9 years), interested in things mechanical, volunteered his services several days a week (after school) in a local wood joinery shop.

Here in a converted brewery, the smell of beer long since replaced by the heady fragrance of freshly-sawn pine, and the

noisy clanking of bottles was replaced by the buzz of timber shaping and cutting machines.

Here the busy craftsman and his equally talented wife fashioned rough timber into beautiful furniture.

Childless, they adopted Peter for an hour or two each afternoon, so hot chocolate and jam scones always preceded his labour.

For Peter, no special genius was required. Sometimes he

stacked timber or swept up sawdust. Occasionally he helped to hold an item while glue clamps were applied or to help steady an extra large item while it was fed into an hungry planing machine or saw-bench.

Always he was allowed to take home an off-cut or two, a few nails or screws, or wooden dowels to fashion some creation of his own.

Mostly he just talked with youthful enthusiasm and stood by

watching with fervent interest.

On one sad occasion he stayed there on his own to answer the telephone or greet customers because, having witnessed the wife lose a finger while using the band-saw, the craftsman and his wife left him “in charge” while they hurried to the hospital.

Often they chatted about their God. The couple was Christian, but not religious. Unlike Peter, they attended no church, but they



knew their God personally and shared their simple faith enthusiastically, reminding Peter often that God has a personal interest in each of us and that we all have our own Guardian Angel.

One particular incident gave them opportunity to remind him of this often.

That day, Peter had been helping to hold a large glue-bound tabletop while the craftsman manoeuvred it across the circular saw bench.

With such a large item covering the saw-bench, neither of them gave thought to a doweling drill on the same shaft as the saw-blade. This twist drill, revolving in unison with the blade, protruded out from the side of the bench and was protected only by a little metal shelf a few centimetres below it.

As the pair slid the tabletop across the saw-bench, the spinning drill bit grabbed the front of Peter's cardigan.

Within seconds, his head was being pulled downwards toward the fast rotating blade.

Instantly, the machine was stopped by the quick-thinking craftsman, but momentum kept the blade spinning and the relentless drill was gathering up the frightened youth's cardigan and pulling him closer and closer to the deadly whining circle of hungry teeth. Peter's eyeball felt the brush of air from the blade as it loomed closer.

Finally the craftsman wedged a piece of wood against the blade, stopping it suddenly just as it was beginning to lick the hair off Peter's forehead.



With hearts pounding and breath hard to come by, they both sighed thanks to God.

Peter sensed the nearness of a God who had spared him, and often the craftsman and his wife, followers of their Master's trade, reminded the youth that God must have a special work for him, a lesson for Peter that is not finished yet.



---

38 - Not Finished Yet

## 4. The Stolen Bell

**E**ight-year-old Peter befriended a school chum named Buddy\*. Not that Buddy was really Peter's 'type', but Buddy was teased by everyone else and gravitated toward Peter for friendship and Peter responded.

(Maybe it was because Peter was a loner too. Peter regretfully

---

*\* Not his real name.*

---

admits that he was also a teaser, so that wasn't the reason!)

Buddy lived in a neighbouring suburb to Peter, and the two often walked home together as far as Peter's place before Buddy continued on to his own.

Unlike Peter, Buddy tried to buy friendship by doing daring things.

One day, he stole the little brass bell from the counter in a shop a few doors from where he lived. Buddy gave the bell to



Peter, without telling him where it came from.

However in the district where Peter lived, it seemed that everybody knew everybody-else's business, and it didn't take long for word to spread around the community that the little bell had been stolen from the shop in the next neighbourhood.

Soon Peter found out the bell was stolen and he challenged Buddy about it.

Buddy quietly confessed, but

was scared to do anything about it. So Peter took the matter into his own hands.

He boldly went into the shop and placed the bell on the counter. 'I stole this from you,' he lied, 'and I have come to return it and apologise!'

He then turned to hurriedly leave.

The elderly shopkeeper looked at Peter with one eye and demanded, 'When? I've never seen you in my shop before!'

This put Peter on the spot as he had no idea when the bell was stolen, but as Buddy had given it to him about three days prior, he lied, 'Three days ago.'

The shopkeeper continued to stare at Peter, which made the lad feel most uneasy. He remembered his mother's warning about lying:

*'If you tell even the tiniest fib,'*  
she had cautioned, *'it will catch up with you and you will have to keep on lying to cover up and it will then take a whopper to cover it.'*

Peter tried to dismiss his mother's portrait in his mind. 'I stole this from you three days ago, and I apologise!' he mendaciously announced a second time.

'You're covering up for someone else, aren't you?' the gentleman demanded.

At this Peter broke down and confessed to lying, and tried to leave Buddy out of the story.

But the persistence of the shopkeeper pushed Peter further

and further into a corner. Finally, Peter named Buddy as the culprit.

It was then that Peter felt sick in the stomach.

He had betrayed the very one he had sought to protect. And he had lied in the process — thrice.

This was a hard lesson for Peter and he wondered if lying wasn't worse than stealing.

He determined then and there to shy away from dishonest at whatever cost.

His friendship with Buddy somehow survived.

Peter never learned what action the shopkeeper took against Buddy but neither did he forget the lesson in honesty they learned that day.

Reform, however, is a process and for Peter the lessons were to continue...

## 5. Peter Goes to Jail

**O**ne day, quite unexpectedly, two burly gentlemen from the local constabulary confronted Peter (16 years) at his place of work.

It seems that he was being charged with the theft of some equipment from a church in a nearby neighbourhood as someone fitting his physical description had been seen there

late at night.

The evidence was watertight, he was to be detained overnight and would face the mere formality of a trial the next day.

Without the opportunity to seek for support, he was bundled into a police van and driven to a police station at an unknown location.





No need for interrogation — they had all the evidence they needed — he would now learn first-hand what novels alone had taught him.

Fingerprinted, photographed and empty-pocketed, stripped of necktie and shoes — even the leather buttons were removed from his Harris tweed suit-coat — before he was lead into a concrete-walled cell scarcely larger than the mattress-covered iron bunk that was cemented to the wall within.

Completely devoid of windows, save a tiny grilled opening in the door, the room carried the heavy weight of dank musty air.

The room was much taller than it was wide, and high in the centre of the ceiling a solitary light globe behind a wire mesh glared mockingly at the frightened form below.

The putrid stale smell of the sweat and urine of previous occupants added an unnecessary

melancholy to the already terrifying circumstance.

Why a bed was provided was a mystery as sleep was as elusive as the reason for this sudden incarceration.

Hope of an exoneration also was evasive as his imagination filled with episodes from the recently read “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs”.

The night passed as slowly as a knee-climb on Pilate’s Staircase in a thunderstorm.

Morning was announced, not by the entrance of the sun (as this room had seen none) but by the noisy arrival of a heavily guarded tin plate of some grey lumpy matter.

This strange grey mound supported an equally grey spoon, which stood to attention like a solitary tree on a hilltop.

One of the guards emitted some profound statement about the grey mound being porridge and that they would wait while

he ate it.

Peter had no stomach for such generosity despite the fact he had not eaten since the middle of the previous day and simply shook his hands in a gesture to suggest that they guard their valuable porridge somewhere else.

With no tool for measuring time, the eternity was punctured when the door swung wide and a pair of voices called for “Hey You” to follow “NOW!”

Along long corridors and then

into the back of a van the stocking-footed Peter padded.

The drive to the courthouse was immeasurable brief compared with the long lone wait in an anteroom at the courthouse.

Then late in the afternoon, hunger having been and now long since forgotten, unwashed, unshaven, wearing a button-less tweed suit and minus a necktie and footwear, eyes red with too much anxiety and not enough

rest — just when Peter felt in no presentable state to be on trial — an announcement was made to the effect that it was his turn “in the dock”.

How could a young man, innocent of the alleged crime, feel so guilty, so criminal, so miserably abandoned?

The newspapers had already carried the story of his “crime” yet he knew that not. His employer had told all the staff at the office, and reports with

embellishment and exaggeration had filtered through the town, but he knew not that either.

He knew only that he felt the humiliation and shame of exposure as if he were on public display naked.

With an unreasonable shame in the eyes, which looked only down, with the smell of furniture polish to the nose and the buzz of unfamiliar jargon to the ears, his bewildering few moments in the courtroom told him nothing.



He was, it seemed, just as quickly jostled into another anteroom, there to wait under the heavy cloud of ignorance and anxiety.

It was there in that half-panelled leather-lounged room that matters took a decided turn when he was finally informed what was happening, what had happened, and what would happen.

With overwhelming relief and unbelief, he listened as it was

revealed how the real crime perpetrator had confessed and that he would receive, in due course, not only his necktie, coat buttons and shoes, but also an official letter of vindication and apology.

These he did receive, but the scars of incarceration and the unexplained feeling of needless guilt remained and so the lesson for Peter is not finished yet.

## 6. Peter's Teeth Change

**P**eter (c20 years) had set up an hobby business, making 16mm. audition movies for budding actors, actresses and musicians.

With cameras and tripods, and numerous items of lighting and sound equipment to be lugged around, he desired to build a

custom-made trailer or caravan to make movie-making on location easier.

He purchased an old Fordson truck and, with the help of an elder brother, proceeded to convert it into a caravan/workshop.

The engine and gearbox were sold to a scrap-metal merchant, and an engineering friend designed an automatic steering mechanism using two motorcycle shock-absorbers to

replace the steering wheel. A solid draw bar was fashioned from steel and, although rigid enough to steer the vehicle in motion, hinged up against front of the vehicle when it was not being towed.

Unconcerned about the weight of their new creation (Peter had an old two-ton Humber Super-snipe Limousine to tow it) the two brothers set about welding steel panels where the radiator grill used to be, bolting new flooring where the truck driver

once sat, and installing an assortment of shelving, cupboards, kitchen equipment and bedding in the body of the van. The creation was finished with several coats of paint before obtaining the mandatory road-worthy registration.

The vehicle proved itself to be practical and Peter reaped considerable benefit from it. However, one memorable Friday it bit back.

Almost two ton of van and

contents was often difficult to manoeuvre unless it was attached to a vehicle and on this occasion, as they were only a few metres apart, instead of backing the limo to the van, Peter decided to pull the van towards the limo. But the van was a measure heavier than puny Peter anticipated.

With the dramatic grunt of a circus strongman straining against a football team in a tug-of-war, Peter pulled on the draw-bar with all his (petty) might.

The van remained stationary; Peter moved. His feet slid on the roadway and he disappeared under the van.

He would have continued completely out of sight if (fortunately?) the draw-bar hadn't stopped him suddenly!



It met him in the teeth and in one stunning milli-second, the heavy steel fist impacted all his front teeth up into his face,



pushing his cheeks and nose against his eyes. In piercing agony and blurry vision he cautiously but quickly drove to the local hospital. There he was given injections to dull the pain and halt the bleeding — and escorted home to await surgery two days later “while the swelling subsides”!

Peter has little recall of those two days, save that they ended on Sunday afternoon in the surgery of his regular dentist. This skillful artisan, with his patient under a

general anaesthetic, extracted what remained of Peter's upper teeth and reshaped his face.

Using X-rays from a previous dental consultation, he fashioned an upper denture, cleverly reproducing even a chipped front tooth for realism.

Peter left the surgery that day with the denture in situ, and his first look in a mirror welled up within him a gratitude to God, for the miraculous restoration. The lesson's not finished yet.

## 7. Peter Changes Religion.

**P**eter (24 years) had been attending (and wonderfully enjoying) the Anglican Church — High Church of England — for most all of his life. He had been a chorister (first a boy soprano and later a tenor/baritone) for 16 years and was involved with youth and men's social groups, the Religious

Drama Society, was a Server at the altar, a Sides-man at lesser services, a child preacher and occasionally a Deacon at High Mass.

His life revolved around the church with services every day, three and sometimes four times on Sundays and feast days, and he cluttered his busy life with numerous committees, clubs, societies and other involvements in between. But it seemed that one thing lacked.

He knew and could recite his Catechism, the Chorister's Handbook, all 150 metrical psalms, the Mass and other services from the Book of Common Prayer, and the few selections from the Holy Bible that appeared within the pages of the prayer book.

Peter measured time by the feasts of the Saints from one Michaelmas to another and apparently lamented a *feria* (non-feastday) in between. And yet something was missing.

He knew the names of and the reason for each item of vestment the priest wore and the associated prayers relative to the adorning of each garment. But still he felt an unexplained hollowness.

He had familiarised himself with the reason behind each colour chosen to adorn the altar in relation to each feast day — both major and minor, yet still an emptiness tugged within.

To the ultimate frustration of

his Latin master, he probed the ecclesiastical aspect of Latin in almost every language lesson in his upper primary school years.

He attended music camps for choirboys and men, took to music lessons with almost unparalleled enthusiasm and delved deeply into an extensive study of church music from Asaph to Plainsong; from J S Bach to Martin Shaw, and through to the contemporary. He loved his church — its fellowship, friendship, companionship, mate-ship, and

worship. And yet...?

He endeavoured to be the white sheep of his family, with a prayer journal to make a Pope proud, an history of good deeds to outshine every other Boy Scout, and a conceited abstinence from the defilements of swearing, immorality, tobacco and alcohol.

However he lacked a certainty of salvation and so, in consequence, he became such a “goody-goody” that he frustrated



everybody — the priest in the confessional, the fast-shrinking circle of companions within his peers, himself for his ever-regular and oft-repeated failings, his rapid-dwindling cluster of adult friends and his parents who sought for an ulterior motive lurking within his behaviour.

Finally, one day, an observant young lady commented on his seeming religious indifference despite a pretence of Christianity.

He replied to her that his

church going had been filled with busyness, business and emptiness - a strange admix of being absent yet occupied, of being involved, revolved, interested yet bored, held back yet thrust forward, and challenged yet letharged.

To his astonishment he found himself verbalising his uncertainties. She invited him to attend her church some day but he was quick to retort that his Sundays were summarily occupied.

Undaunted, she saw this as no obstacle and responded without hesitation that her church meets on Saturday. Assuming she meant that her church *also* met on Saturday (in addition to Sunday, Monday, etc.) he asked for its location.

Saturday found him seated in the pew of a strangely familiar and comfortable worship environment.

In some mysterious way he didn't notice the absence of a

colourfully decorated altar, the absence of ecclesiastical vestments, incense, candles, crucifixes, nor the bells and smells.

He did notice the unfamiliar hymns, but as the book-rest on the pew had provided him with a music edition of the hymnal — with the practiced chorister's skill in “sight-reading” music — he joined in the hymn singing with gusto (so much so that the organist caught his eye more than once during the service).

All too soon the service finished and the organist hurried to greet him and ask the seemingly mandatory, “Where are you from?”

To the revealed surprise of the organist, an Anglican church was cited rather than an Adventist one, and to Peter’s amazement, the organist replied with an invitation for the wide-eyed visitor to don chorister’s robes and join the choir for the Divine Service which was to follow.

Such astonishment on both sides allows for no hesitation, and the unfamiliarity of the order-of-service was laid to rest, as he became absorbed in the singing, the Bible-based preaching and apparent sincerity of the believers.

The shame of what happened next could only be absorbed in the reflective light of the baptism which followed a few weeks later.

To the utter frustration of the

spouse and daughter waiting in the car, the organist and Peter retired to a side room and spent the entire afternoon seeking biblical answers to a barrage of his questions about these strange people who “seem to take this Saturday business very seriously”.

Fortunately, the organist’s wife saved the day by curving a nose around the corner of the door jam and inviting the absorbed pair to continue their animated conversation in her lounge-room

following the refreshment afforded by an evening meal.

The invitation was welcomingly accepted, however temperance at the table was wasted as another form of intemperance eked the post-prandile study into the wee small hours of the morning.

Finally, in reluctance, with much more to learn, Peter returned home, his head spinning and his heart eager to find out more.



A midweek Bible study group, personal visits by the Pastor, and the blessings of subsequent Sabbaths meant that Peter, as he came to a knowledge of further things biblical, was compelled to make some hard decisions.

For many weeks he was quite able to worship on Sabbath in addition to Sunday, was able and willing to pay tithe to two churches, was content to be a Sabbath-day vegetarian, was even prepared to be baptised by immersion — but to continue to

be fully involved in the Church of England with the tuggings of Seventh-day Adventist membership at the sleeve of his conscience, he was finally resigned to the fact that he had to choose one or the other.

The Anglican Church had the strong lure of security, comfort, predictability, and the music he had grown to love over the years.

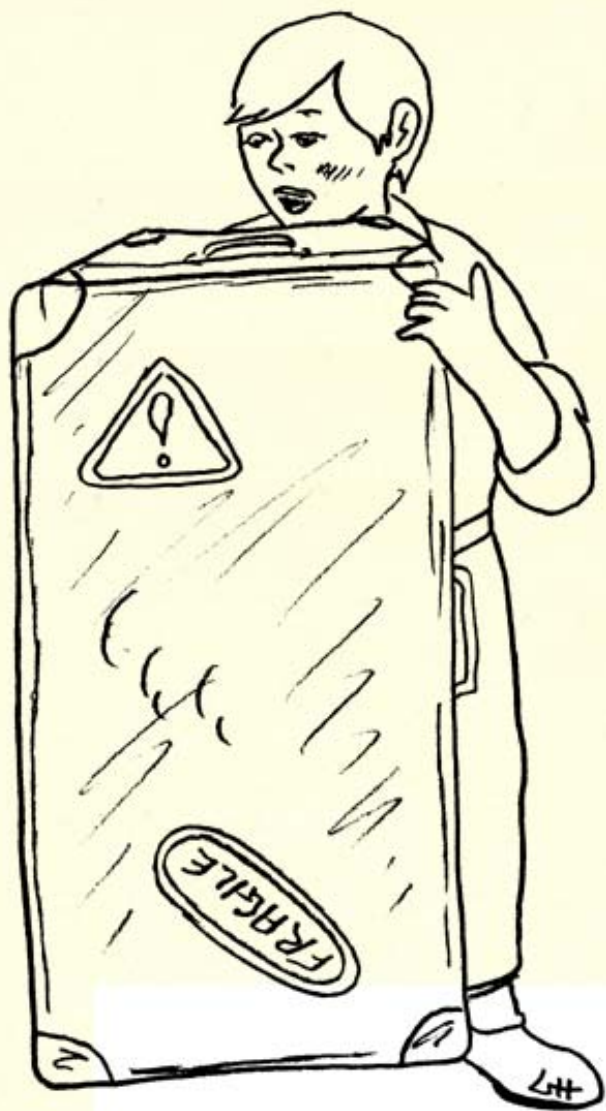
The Adventist Church offered him the opportunity to be able to

learn to get to know, love and share God personally and to worship Him in His way.

These two factors (Peter would later realise) summed up the totality of Adventist doctrine.

Peter finally broke his religious bonds with the church of his youth and, although the social ties remain until this day, the lesson for Peter is not finished yet.





---

84 - Not Finished Yet

## 8. The First Day in a New Land.

**I**t was Peter's first day in the new land. With a seven-cubic-foot cabin trunk and an airline travel bag, Peter struggled from an airport shuttle 'bus onto the footpath outside the City Central Railway Station.

Having been warned of the danger of leaving luggage

unattended in the big city, he searched in vain for a luggage trolley.

With difficulty, he then manually hauled the trunk to the luggage depot to have it put on the train for him.

He was, however, told that “due to an industrial dispute” luggage would only be accepted at a named station elsewhere in the city — a station he would have to “go to anyway to change trains” so as to get to his chosen

destination.

He was also told that not only were there no luggage trolleys or porters, but that the only way to the underground platform was on an escalator. The stairs were closed for re-tiling and there were no elevators.

With a great expenditure of breath and perspiration, Peter managed to get the trunk to the top of the escalator — a clanking mechanical staircase which hurried passengers down into the

bowels of the railway station.

The wide trunk only just fitted between the stationary sides of the moving staircase and they descended while Peter stood on the step above, balancing the trunk with one hand while holding his travel bag with the other.

As an herd of hurrying commuters pressed behind him, Peter was to learn something he had not even imagined. The walls of this staircase tapered



together as they neared the bottom.

This had the unfortunate effect of wedging the cabin trunk in mid-air. The cabin trunk stopped. Peter did not. In fact, the unrelenting escalator dragged him under the wedged cabin trunk, and it was there that he stopped!

Of course, the escalator continued to move, each step clouting his head and piling angry commuters upon him and the cabin trunk.

Somehow, someone found a switch to stop the mechanical monster.

And, with some difficulty and an abundance of Australian colloquialisms, Peter was extracted, carried, cursed, and bundled onto a waiting train in an almost singular movement.

The commuter train, in contrast to the escalator, was amazingly free of passengers — Peter guessed that most had sought safety from him and his

trunk in other carriages.

Knowing that he was to leave the train after only a few stops, he waited with his trunk, just inside the door, rather than try to find a seat large enough for himself and his travelling companion.

This would have been a good idea if, at the next station, a convoy of bicyclists, each with an antler-handled velocipede, had not tried to squeeze into the space he occupied.

The air was filled with phrases

in the Australian vernacular — words of unknown meaning yet unmistakable intent.

Finally the troublesome trunk, which seemed to grow heavier and larger by the hour, was lodged at the luggage depot at the named station.

Peter could now relax while an electric train sped him to the seaside town, which marked the end of the electric line and the half-way point in his rail journey.

Upon arriving, he made his way to the adjacent platform to await the diesel train to take him the next leg of his journey.

It seemed he was the only one travelling further north as everyone else had disappeared into the town. He checked his timetable again, and patiently sat alone on the platform to wait.

Presently, an elderly couple asked his reason for waiting. His response prompted them to advise him that the industrial dispute he

had been frustrated with in the City affected all trains other than the electric commuter trains.

There would be no trains further north that day. However, before he had time to become anxious, they asked him the location of his final destination.

He had hardly uttered the name of the tiny village when they exclaimed that they would be going by car through that very village — and would he care to travel with them?

That very day he arrived at his destination, travel-bag in hand, thanking God for His mysterious intervention.

The following week he had to return to the City to locate a lost cabin trunk and to have it put on the correct train, but by then the lessons learned were applied.

However, Peter is quick to acknowledge that his life lesson is not finished yet.

*This page intentionally blank*



## 9. Outback Evangelism

**A** pilot and an evangelist planned an ‘outback’ evangelism campaign and asked Peter and two young ladies to assist.

A small Cessna aircraft airlifted the team to the Australian ‘outback’ towns of Mungindi, Collarenebri & Burke.

At each venue, the campaign was much the same with the young ladies singing at the beginning, and Peter singing during and at the close of each programme.

Although the mission was successful, for Peter the trip was memorable for a few events of apparent greater magnitude than the campaign.

For example, at Mungindi, the airstrip was (and maybe still is) on an isolated part of the

property some ten miles or so from the homestead.

However no-one was there to meet the team when they arrived.

With no way to get to the homestead, they waited patiently for some hours until the lengthening shadows warned that maybe they had better start walking.

This was not a welcome prospect as they carried a certain amount of luggage in the form of musical equipment, a large slide

projector & screen and a public address system, as well as their personal items.

It was about this time that the pilot, who had been examining the condition of the airstrip in closer detail, invited the others to help uncover an old rusting truck he had discovered in the long grass to one side of the runway.

Miraculously the truck engine responded to a little coaxing and the team began the bouncing ride towards the homestead.

As the sun set, the team sang their way across the open plain and the truck made it without incident.

The unbelief of the locals when they were told of the journey by truck, evoked a story of how that, many years earlier the truck had 'died' and was abandoned to the elements.

None could understand how the vehicle could have possibly worked after all those years, and the sight of the vehicle in daylight

reinforced that belief.

Even Peter was at a loss to explain (apart from Divine intervention) how a decayed vehicle with most of the engine parts rusted and seized could possibly have been driven the night before. And yet, there it was! However, the lesson for Peter was not finished yet.

-o0o-

Collarenebri, being a small community, was hand-billed door-to-door by Peter and the

evangelist in a single afternoon - they having divided the town according to a map and taken half each.

One household is well remembered, for as Peter reached a hand over the gate to unlatch the fastening, a tiny dog - no larger than a kitten - chomped at him.

Although no skin was broken, the dog refused to release its treasure and as Peter raised his hand to investigate, the dog hung

suspended in mid-air.

Peter, with his hand still fastened in the clutches of the little dog's mouth, proceeded to open the gate with the other hand and venture up the path to the house.

It was a most astonished householder who opened the door to view Peter's up-lifted, out-stretched, puppy-dangled hand, and Peter asking, "Does this belong to you?"

Amid profuse apologies and



poorly concealed mirth, an invitation to the meeting was given.

That night, a couple came up to Peter after the meeting and with a gesture resembling that of Peter's out-stretched, puppy-chomped hand asked, "Remember us?"

How strangely God works to bring people to hear about Him! But the lesson for Peter was not finished yet.

-o0o-

Collarenebri is better remembered by the pilot. For it was there that the team found, to their dismay that a new fence had been built (that very day) around the perimeter of the rear of the hall - and the only key that had been provided to access the hall was for the rear door within the fence.

A padlock, left presumably by a workman, secured the gate and made entrance an almost impossibility.

Almost, that is, excepting that the pilot was of a disposition to emulate youthfulness and climb the fence.

Access to the building was gained and a front door opened for the rest of the team to enter a little more gracefully.

Following a most successful and Spirit-filled meeting, the equipment was brought out to the footpath and the pilot returned to the building to lock it up for the night and to climb the fence once

more.

As the team waited in the semi-darkness for his return, the evangelist pointed out a supposed alcoholic, crawling along in the darkness on his hands and knees. It was mentioned that the presence of such poor souls in that town reinforced the importance of the soul-calling work that the team was doing.

Then, as the figure moved into the light, it became immediately

necessary to change the course of the conversation, for the figure was none other than the pilot!

And, rather than it being inebriation which had rendered him prostrate, a broken ankle following a fall from the fence explained this out-of-character behaviour.

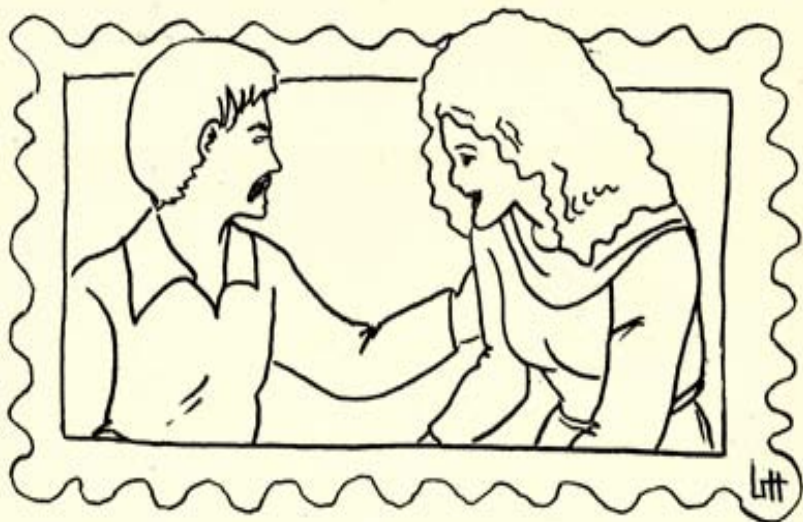
Upon return to their lodgings, the ankle was ice-packed and a splint applied. However piloting a plane the next day with a broken ankle was not a comforting

prospect.

Nevertheless, come morning, they all boarded the plane and prepared for a return journey.

Peter recalled the sincerity of the prayer for safe travel which preceded the journey that day, and the pilot not only flew the plane, but simultaneously gave instructions to the evangelist in the co-pilot's seat as this untrained reluctant assistant operated the foot controls for them.

God brought them home safely  
- but the lessons for Peter are not  
finished yet.



---

112 - Not Finished Yet



## 10. Peter Finds a Com*PETER*able Match.

**D**etermined that the bachelor life had lot going for it with its freedom for selfishness, Peter frankly admitted that not one of the many young ladies with whom he had acquaintance (he had never regarded any with

girlfriend status) as being suitable as a marriage partner.

He conceded that this might be because he had never had any romantic notions or feelings. However, this Cold-heart was in for a shock, as was his family who knew of his bachelorial resolve.

For into his life stepped Mary. No, it wasn't one of these "love-at-first-sight", bells clanging, stars twinkling, or heady walk-on-air encounters.

On the contrary, they had met and talked several times before he even noticed her. Because Peter was not seeking a match, he failed, at those first encounters, to see the immense beauty in Mary. It was not until one day when she took the time to speak to him that Peter felt, for the first time in his life, “noticed”.

This is not to minimise the wonderful love and understanding he had received from his kin, but here was someone — a wonderful combination of both inner and

outer beauty — bearing a caring smile and a soft voice.

Peter, however, was still somewhat hardened, for he did not (at this time) feel any romantic inclination. Instead he felt strangely drawn with a desire to get to know this person as a friend.

He perceived she had need of friendship and, if he would have been honest enough to admit it, he may have confessed that his need for friendship was equally

great.

Peter, with a smug self-righteousness began to fool himself into thinking he was doing her a favour by offering friendship. But as he got to know her, as he saw her inner beauty, her outer beauty became more apparent, and he began to realise his great need of her.

Soon he was smitten with the “think-of-her-all-of-the-time” syndrome, and the “must-tell-her-how-I-feel-about-her” condition.

It was in the actualisation of the latter that he learned that she considered him an answer to her prayer for friendship, and he was forced to admit that he too had pondered his unvoiced loneliness and wondered upon a God who answers a yet unspoken prayer.

The engagement, which followed, amazed them both almost as much as their kin who could not imagine marriage as the item of agendum.

The decades have passed

quickly since then, and yet Peter will still unequivocally claim that marrying Mary was one of the best things he has ever done.



However, the lesson for Peter is still not finished yet.



---

120 - Not Finished Yet



# 11. An Attack Upon a Tumour

**A**n infected cyst on the top of Peter's head saw him in the local medical centre preparing for a local anaesthetic to have the pesky lump removed.

His symptoms were few: dizziness, blurry vision and only a little pain. A nurse who

tactlessly quipped that he was going bald, shaved a small saucer-sized patch of hair from the top of his head.

A surgical operation was commenced, but very soon interrupted as the physician rushed away to an adjacent room for a few moments.

He reappeared with another physician who anxiously confirmed his observations.

With a feigned calmness, the first physician advised the supine

Peter that the cyst appeared to be, in fact, a brain tumour with strands extending into the fissures of the skull.

However, as the operation had already commenced, he would have to continue, and Peter would be required to “bite the bullet”, while the physicians crowded in to finish the procedure.

Ideally, he flatly informed his patient, the scraping and chiselling should be done under a General Anaesthetic. However it

was too late for that and a second injection was given to the site to numb any pain.

Pain it did numb, but Peter was still very much aware of the pricking, pushing, probing, prodding and patching.

After what seemed eons, he was taken home to await a biopsy report on the pea-sized squid-like object that the surgeon had proudly showed him before he left the surgery.

No more than two days had

passed before he was urgently summoned for admission to a country hospital for the removal of any further traces of this pervasive demon.

The report of the biopsy had added a certain compulsion to respond to the appearance of a cluster of further growths in the same site, and further surgery was planned without delay.

An overnight stay in hospital in preparation for surgery the next day, saw the rapid growth of a

number of additional surprises around his neck.

This time a General Anaesthetic gave Peter no recall of the surgery, although the row of suture sites around his neck and the “whopping” turban-like bandage around his head left no doubt that at least something dramatic had happened during his nap that day.

It appeared that the radical surgery was successful as during his week-long stay in hospital, as

his body was not accompanied by any more growth surprises.

However, less than a week later, two more “lumps” appeared. This time, he was subjected to a battery of tests that even a guinea pig would find a chore, and the prognosis he received was that further surgery would be futile because the growths were too rapid and widespread.

Peter was told, bluntly and coldly (in spite of the choking

compassion in the voice of the tidings bearer), that he could expect to live maybe two more weeks at the most to “set his house in order” and prepare to “meet his maker”.

Never-the-less, another operation was planned and Peter was to be escorted by a paramedic to his country of birth as soon as a flight with provision for a supine cot could be arranged. (The operation was to be there because it was anticipated that it would not be



successful and it seemed only appropriate that he be with his family at the time.)

A long drawn-out week intervened before Peter could travel, and until the time the day before travel, when he was to spend the night at a City hospital for preparation for travel and sedation if necessary.

This attenuated week was one filled with the prayers of many on Peter's behalf.

One of the most earnest

petitioners was Mary, who had promised him her hand in a marriage, which it appeared, would no longer eventuate.

She began the week praying that God would spare her beloved, reminding her Lord that He had brought them together in the first place, and He surely wouldn't whisk this new friend away so soon.

Toward the end of the week, however, this prayer had changed as she told the Lord that

she was prepared to let Peter go if that was what God required of her.

Peter felt no anxiety about dying, excepting that he could foresee the pain it would cause those who loved him. He knew that God had spared him in the past and that he had done so for a purpose. Peter's only question to God was in regard to having fulfilled that purpose. What had he already done for his Lord? Had he done it without even knowing it?

Peter prayed. He waited.  
Hundreds of supporters prayed.  
And waited.

The long week was pinnacled as Peter advised the surgeons at the City hospital that he believed he was cured and that neither the nurse escort to his homeland, nor the aircraft cot would be required.

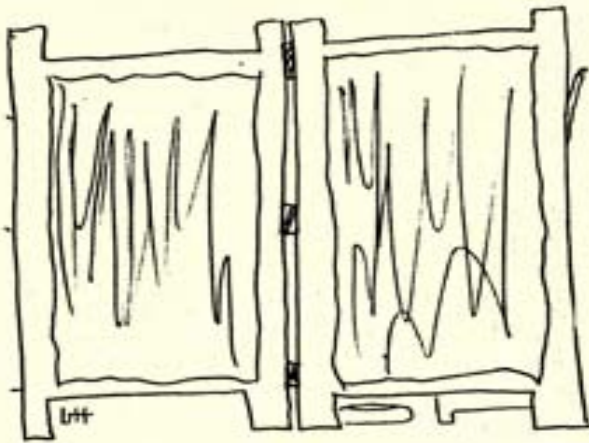
Knowing that a feeling of well-being often precedes the 'very end' as the patient becomes resigned to the

inevitable, grave faces accepted his proclamation with sympathetic unbelief.

However, Peter's assertions were soon confirmed when an examination revealed that, not only had the lumps disappeared, but there had appeared in their place what resembled the aftermath of skilful surgery and weeks of healing.

Peter did return home to his country-of-origin, unescorted, in a conventional aeroplane seat

(sitting staring at the cot that would have contained him), and then underwent weekly X-rays, blood tests, and physical examinations for the six months following, revealed no trace of the cancer.

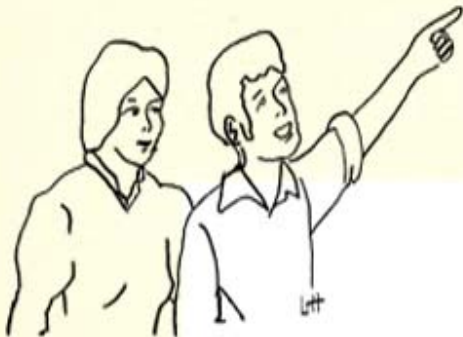


With courting continuing by mail, the planned wedding took

place the following year.

And a CAT scan eight years later revealed still no trace of the gremlins involved in the strange incident, which brought Peter closer to both his God and his bride.

Nevertheless, the lesson for Peter is not finished yet.



---

136 - Not Finished Yet



## 12. Peter Misses a Train

**P**eter, escorted by his nursing-qualified bride-to-be, was to go to a distant town for special tissue x-rays to aid the physicians in the treatment of a cancer which was invading his body.

The journey was to be by car to the nearest railway station and

then by train to the particular town.

The X-ray rooms were on the outskirts of the town and they would need get a 'bus or taxi from the railway station to their final destination.

With a limited train schedule to work around, you may well imagine their frustration when their car transport was delayed and they arrived at the station in time to see only the tail-end of the train snaking away in the

distance.

A conversation with the stationmaster confirmed what Peter imagined to be fact — that the train they had just missed was the last for many hours.

However, to his surprise, the stationmaster asked them to wait on the platform.

Obediently Peter and Mary waited on the deserted platform while the stationmaster walked along the tracks and out of sight around a bend in the line.

Within minutes a freight train was slowly rumbling past and mysteriously the guard's van shuddered to a stop right in front of the bewildered pair.

From further along the line the voice of the stationmaster called for them to board the train before he waved it on, and then he waved to them as the train rumbled passed him.

A puzzled guard in the dirty caboose, embarrassed at Mary's presence due to the female-nude

postered walls, asked how the train happened to stop for them to board.

Their explanation carried little weight as he was quick to advise us that the train did not go right into the town, but would pass the passenger train along the journey and arrive sooner but on the town outskirts at a railway freight siding — nowhere near a railway station.

Undaunted and convinced of God's leading, Mary and Peter sat

on a wooden box for the rattling journey.

The junket ended in a railway siding and concluded with instructions from the guard to cautiously cross the many criss-crossed tracks to a small gate, which would lead to a main road into the town.

Peter and Mary, now close to the town earlier than they had planned, were already thanking God for His helping hand when they passed through the gate and

saw the X-ray rooms immediately across the road.

A train fare saved, a 'bus or taxi fare saved, and then to be early for the appointment!

There was little doubting the providence of God, although the lesson for Peter is not finished yet.

*This page intentionally blank*



## 13. The Hitch-hiker

**P**eter was planning the return to the land of his birth. His bride-to-be, also born in that same land, was to follow some months later.

They decided that the bulk of her luggage, which was in storage, could be air-freighted along with Peter's luggage to save her the burden of organising it later in the year.

A taxi-truck was duly rented and the cabin trunk and boxes were delivered, along with Peter and Mary, to the Air Cargo depot in one of the outer suburbs of the city.

Peter and Mary felt a little anxious as the items were weighed. They only had limited funds, some which would be required for their return journey from the city.

They prayed silently as the scales creaked under the weight

of their parcels.

The depot attendant asked how much they anticipated paying. A chin-scratching “Hmmm” followed their reply, and he sighed, “I’ll see what I can do.”

A few minutes later he smilingly announced that, due to a reclassifying the luggage as household effects, the amount they had suggested would be the exact amount he would receipt for them.

Peter and Mary had gone to the

suburban depot in a taxi-truck — they now had to find a way back to the Central Railway Station in the heart of the city.

They felt their best option would be to walk the several kilometres to the International Airport and travel from there to the Central Railway Station on the Airport Shuttle Bus.

As they waited to cross a busy intersection, Peter jokingly pointed out to Mary a 'bus which had the word AIRPORT

emblazoned across the front.

Peter's pointing digit had apparently caught the eye of the driver who, it seems, mistook it for a gesture for him to stop.

He signalled a reply, to the effect that he would wait for them on the other side of the intersection.



They boarded the 'bus and were immediately directed by the driver, without verbal interchange, to jostle to the back of the 'bus.

In bewilderment, they did so, but were even more surprised when the 'bus failed to turn off at the side road to the airport, but proceeded immediately into the city and stopped outside the Central Railway Station.

Amid the clambering passengers they made their way

to the front of the 'bus. The driver was nowhere to be seen!

A perambulated circuit around the 'bus revealed the driver, an Oriental gentleman, unloading suitcases from the stowage area under the 'bus. Upon asking how much they owed for the journey, he said, "You hitch-hikers. No pay!"

With gratitude they made their way to the relevant platform and caught a much earlier train than was originally planned, thanking

God once again for attending to the minutest detail.

However, the lessons for Peter are not finished yet.



## 14. Theology for Peter

**P**eter had been married almost a year, had ceased employment in preparation for further study, and was attending a church camp, uncertain of the direction for his future.

He had a number of options, one of which was returning to

study, perhaps obtaining another degree, perhaps in theology. However to seek that option would require perhaps an additional \$1,000 more than he had saved.

He alternatively considered completing an earlier interrupted teaching diploma.



These and other possibilities were discussed often with his wife, Mary, but still a definite direction was illusive.

The local Church Conference President was a close friend and, on Christmas Eve Peter sought an opportunity to share prayer with him and seek counsel.

The wise pastor listened patiently as Peter shared the possibilities that he and his wife had discussed.

Then his counsellor suggested

something rather strange. He asked what was preventing Peter doing what he believed God wanted him to do. Assuming it to be obtaining a theology degree, he mentioned the need of a further \$1,000.

The pastor immediately suggested that if that was all he needed then he could determine God's will by testing out the Lord.

With them praying about it together, yet neither mentioning

it to any-one else, Peter would challenge God to show him within the following week how he could raise \$1,000 if God wanted him to pursue the theology option.

Peter didn't have long to wait for an answer, for the very next day, a Godly relative was sharing Christmas Dinner with them in their caravan.

“What are you doing next year, Peter?” she asked as the meal concluded.

“I’m not sure yet,” he replied, “Perhaps I’ll do some further study.”

“That’ll be expensive with a family to care for as well.” she mused.

“I’ve put aside some money I’m willing to contribute if you choose theology;” she ventured, and then quickly added, “One thousand dollars.”

Needless to say, Peter considered it an answer to prayer and a little more than a month

later was attending his first  
theology lecture.

Although God was moving in  
his life, the lessons for Peter were  
not finished yet.

This saga is to be continued...

*This page intentionally blank*





