

Helen and Peter Kidd's story

In recent TCFNews editions, we have been publishing some responses of members to the question of how they are spending their retirement. One response was from Peter Kidd who alerted us to a small booklet recounting their missionary service in **India. It's a great read, so we have included the text in full but only a couple of** photographs. Those who would like the booklet with all the photographs, which really add a lot of meaning to the text, can contact Peter and Helen (02) 4739 2762 and request the booklet. A small fee of \$5 is also requested to cover postage.

Helen and Peter Kidd both trained as teachers in NSW. They met in 1955 and married in January 1956, planning to serve on the mission field, possibly PNG. However, at the time, there were no high schools in PNG, and instead, an opportunity arose for them to serve in India. They left for Mussoorie in 1957, with Peter taking up the role of Principal at Wynberg-Allen School, which was 260kms north of Delhi, in the foothills of the Himalayas. The school provided for 300 boarders and 50 day students, in English-medium language. From their bedroom window, they could see a 3,000 metre mountain. Big langur monkeys would sit on the fence and they fed a mongoose in their back yard. A porcupine ate the daffodil bulbs in their front garden. All their four children were born in India - 1957 (Stuart), 1959 (Roger), 1961 (Jenny), 1963 (Chester). Tragically, Roger drowned in the school swimming pool in September 1962. After this, the family had a brief home leave in Australia (at the end of 1962) and then they returned to India, expecting to stay there for at least another seven years.

Helen recounts their story of July 1963...

It was a Wednesday morning and I was at home with Stuart and Jenny. Peter had gone up to Wynberg to take staff members to have Bible study at the hospital. Normally, I would have gone with them, but I was expecting our fourth child the next day.

Then the phone rang. Five-year-old Stuart answered it. I was in the sitting room listening to a tape. I'd been up to the hospital for a check-up the day before and I was rather tired. Then Stuart came running into the sitting room.

"The van's gone down the hill," he said, "...and the people are lying on the ground."



I looked at him. That was the message. It was the monsoon, and the roads were more difficult than usual. What had happened? Where were they? Was Peter okay?

Somehow, I started walking up the hill, as quickly as I could, being very pregnant. It was too steep for a rickshaw. In my previous pregnancies, I had been carried up **to the hospital in a dandi. So I don't know how I got there. I felt dread, and** confusion. It was so steep. The road is made of concrete, with indentations in it, to allow the water to drain off either side and to allow the mules to dig their feet in, **and get up the hill. Apparently, there had been 432mm of rain overnight and that's** why the road on the school property collapsed beneath the extra weight in the van.

I reached the site and there were people everywhere. They told me the van gone had gone 25 metres down the hill, rolling three and a half times. Apparently Peter had been thrown out of the van and it had landed on top of him. But the ambulance was already there and Peter was inside. They took me too. We drove to Mussoorie township for x rays on his skull, knee and wrist and then to the mission hospital. **He was not responsive, but during the trip he kept calling out, 'Lord help me...' over and over again.**

The X rays showed that there were breaks in his skull, knee and wrist. The other passengers in the van had already been taken to the hospital but they had **cushioned one another and weren't seriously hurt. As soon as we got there, twelve** doctors arrived at the door. The news had got out quickly! There were lots of extra expatriate doctors staying on the hill, because it was the monsoon, and they were doing language study and visiting their children at the American school, Woodstock. But when they examined Peter, they feared internal damage. He was bleeding from his ears and vomiting blood. They were worried. I remember them saying they would have to operate. But after praying, they decided not to operate. **They weren't sure he would live through the night.**

By then it was evening and I needed to stay somewhere overnight. The closest guesthouse was run by BMMF (now Interserve) and our good friend Sylvia Norrish arranged for me to stay there the night. I remember that she gave me a Bible, a nightie and a toothbrush, and then pointed me to a room. It had three beds in it. The other two were filled with two single missionary nurses. I remember that I **didn't want to disturb them, or put on the light... so I stayed still in my bed but I couldn't sleep. The baby was moving a lot. And I was so worried. Will Peter live through the night? Will the baby be born? I stayed awake for hours. And then early in the morning, I decided I needed to turn the light on, very quietly. So I did, trying not to wake the others... and I reached for the Bible. It fell open at Psalm 91, and I started to read it. I don't remember ever having read that Psalm before. The last two verses seemed to be alight and to stand out from the page. I was amazed. "He will call upon me and I will answer him." Peter had been calling out to the Lord, all the way to Mussoorie, even though he was unconscious. "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."**

I turned the light off again and had the most incredible sense of peace. It passed all understanding. I somehow knew the Lord was in charge. That He was with Peter. That He was with me, and the baby. That somehow, He would uphold us and answer us, as He had done before. I knew that I had been upheld before, in a very different way. Ten months earlier, our three year old son Roger had drowned in the school swimming pool. Our Aya was with him at the time, and they weren't able to revive him. It was the hardest time. Fifty years later, I'm still crying... and yet I know that the Lord allows things... and we don't understand why.

But this time, I knew that Peter would live. After I read the Psalm, early that morning, I was able to go to sleep. I slept for a few hours and then woke again. I

must have had breakfast and then I went in to see Peter. Someone had been arranged to look after Stuart and Jenny. Peter was still unconscious. Three days passed, which allowed me to take things in and come to grips with the situation. Then on Sunday the cramps began... **So I went to the hospital, and Chester was born, breech, without Peter there.** I was worried about him and wondering what to **call the baby. We hadn't finalized our list of names before the accident.** And I kept thinking that if Peter died, I would want to call the baby Peter.

But while I was giving birth, Peter was still unconscious. About a week after the accident, I walked into his hospital room. He was not responding. There were two nurses rostered on previously, but by now there was only one. I knew her slightly. Her name was Daisy Dunlop. She was sitting by the bed and reading her Bible, out loud. My ears pricked up straight away.

"Daisy," I said. "You're reading Psalm 91!"

"Yes," she said.

Then I told her what the Psalm had meant to me on the night of the accident.

She looked at me and she was quiet for a moment, "Helen," she said, "I was one of the two nurses caring for Peter on that night and I haven't been rostered back again until today. But I need to tell you something that happened that night. In the early hours of the morning, when we checked Peter, we couldn't find a pulse. We prayed and laid hands on him, according to the Bible... and felt his pulse return, so we thanked the Lord and read Psalm 91 together."

I just stared at her. **"Daisy," I said, "Do you happen to know what time that was?"**

"Of course," she said. "We had to enter the time on his chart. It was 2.10am."

That was the exact time I had been reading Psalm 91, in my room, not very far away.

The remarkable thing was that **if I hadn't entered the hospital room, at that moment, I wouldn't have heard Daisy reading Psalm 91. I wouldn't have known her side of the story and she wouldn't have known mine. Even if I'd been five minutes earlier, or later, I would have missed it. Or, if she hadn't been reading out loud, I wouldn't have known what she was reading.**

It showed me that God has a plan for us all. At times, we can't see His purposes but we need to trust him. He doesn't always allow things to work out the way we would want them to, but I've learnt to trust Him that He's in control. I'd already experienced His loving care ten months earlier when Roger was drowned in the school swimming pool. It was a dreadful time, for both of us, and for Stuart. I remember speaking at his funeral. I don't know what I said. We were so sad to have lost our little boy, but we both knew he was with Jesus. He used to love to sing. He was such a sunny child. I remember going to the hospital, but it was too late. So I held his little body, giving him a kiss, saying goodbye. Three days later, they sent me his parcel of clothes, still wet, and smelly! And then the funeral.

At the end of July, Peter regained consciousness and the doctors began operations. I remember listening to him screaming during one of them. They were trying to piece his kneecap together and it took hours. I lay there on my hospital bed with Chester and held my breath, hoping it would stop. At that stage, Jenny and Stuart were still at home but within a few days, they brought Jenny in **as well... she had contracted Paratyphoid** and was put in a cot in a ward, downstairs. That made four

out of the five of us in hospital, so I was able to go upstairs to see Peter and **downstairs to see Jenny. And there's a rule with Paratyphoid. You have to** have a certain number of days with a normal temperature, without a spike, before they will discharge you from hospital. So the days went on and on. The one that I remember the most was the day when the nurse told me that Jenny had climbed out of her cot and **washed her hair in the toilet. She'd even given herself a huge** black eye.

Peter ended up staying in hospital for a month and his knee and wrist began to heal. His left eyesight and hearing were still affected and half of his face was paralysed. The doctors thought he needed to see a top neurosurgeon, in Australia or the UK, to see if they could save his sight. So I went to Delhi to organize our passports, and suddenly everything was arranged. They sent Peter to Delhi in an ambulance and then we were on a German plane to Australia (a Lufthansa). They **carried him in, on a stretcher. I hadn't even been able to say goodbye to the staff** and our friends in Mussoorie.



The Allen School

They were hard times. And now, it's been fifty years since that plane flight back to Australia. I remember landing in Darwin and the plane was to be fumigated, so one of the attendants took Jenny and Chester off the plane... but Peter and I couldn't get off, so we were fumigated as well. An ambulance met us at Sydney and we **were taken straight to the hospital. Of course, Peter recovered, although he didn't** regain sight in one eye or hearing in one ear. And we were never able to return to **India. Fifty years later, I'm still sad about some things, leaving so much behind** in India, without notice and Roger is buried there. But I can see that God has a plan. **We thought we would stay in India for at least another seven years. We'd been** there for six, working at the school, and we imagined it would continue. But the Lord could see more than we could see. And Romans 8:28 is true. He is in control. He works for our good, all of the time. And He helps us to bear it.

At the beginning of 1964, Peter was appointed to a teaching position in Australia, at Pittwater High School. He taught there and at other schools for 23 years and never ever had a sick day. During those years, many of the students at the schools came to the Lord through his ministry. And so often, people would hear our story and want to know why God allows it. I don't know. **But I do know that He is in** control, that He sees more than we do and that He always encourages us and shows **us glimpses of His mercy. And that's all I need to know. Sometimes we see more,** much later, in another twenty years, or so. But not always. **For me, it's been fifty**

years and I can see more things now, than I did back then. I'm so thankful that Peter has lived to see long life, as the Psalm says. He will be 86 next month. And now I see that, for some reason, we had finished our work in India. The Lord had other good plans, and a reason... and I don't need to know the reasons. I need to know Him, and trust Him.

This was as told to Naomi Reed who wrote the story for me. My grateful thanks to her.

Helen Kidd

