

March 2003

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS EX-RESIDENTS AND STUDENTS SERVICES

The Courage "to Change"

I write this regular column for readers of the C-BERS newsletter against a backdrop of saturation media coverage on the war in Iraq. As so many of us watch and listen to the daily media coverage of the events unfolding in the Middle East, I'm sure there would be many who, like me, feel confused and uncertain about what sort of world awaits us all once this conflict is finally resolved.

In the current climate, many have taken to the streets to express their unqualified desire for peace. Many others endorse the use of force as a way of achieving peace. Still others are going about their daily lives, as best they can, hoping that the threat to peace will pass as quickly as possible.

In thinking about these issues, I have been reflecting on whether any parallels can be drawn between the troubles occurring on the global stage and those that threaten peace and harmony on the smaller scale...both in our everyday relationships with others and, perhaps more importantly, within ourselves.

At whatever its scale, the origins of conflict can usually be found in either a perceived immediate threat or a threat that occurred in the long distant past. Fear is a natural human response to feeling threatened. Where fear is coupled with a sense of powerlessness, it often progresses to anger, and eventually to hatred. When it comes to events that are long since gone, we may well ask – "who is really being hurt by this stored up anger and hatred?"

I am reminded of a well known prayer called the "Serenity Prayer" which is often quoted in self-help groups set up to support people who are struggling to

By C-BERS Chairperson, Maria Harries

overcome enormous challenges in their personal lives. This recipe for "personal peace" is conveyed in a simple, four line plea, as follows

"God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change
the courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference"

This newsletter features an account of the quest for personal peace of a C-BERS ex-resident which, I believe, illustrates the wisdom of this prayer more powerfully than anything I could say.

The story of Bill (not his real name) as told to C-BERS Counsellor Patrick Howard is a journey through counseling

in which Bill, who suffered overwhelming abuse as a child, came to realize that he could not change the events of the past, but that he could choose to no longer live with anger and hatred in the present. As he said "I've been angry for sixty years".

Bill had the courage to do something about changing the things that were within his power to change. The power that Bill claimed as an adult, which was denied him as a child, was to change the way in which he thought about himself, and his life, which, in turn, changed the way in which he related to others.

I hope that Bill's story is as inspiring to you as it is to me.

Perhaps it may even contain some wisdom for those whom we entrust to make decisions that will determine whether we live in peace or conflict at a global level.

Child Migrants' Memorial

The Commonwealth Government has said it will contribute up to \$100,000 towards any suitable proposals for memorials honouring former child migrants which are initiated by State Governments in 2002-2003. The Commonwealth funding offer is in response to Recommendation 32 of the Senate Report on Child Migration *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*

The WA Department of Community Development (DCD) intends to consult widely to develop a proposal which reflects the wishes of former Child Migrants living in this state.

The consultation process is based on the following questions:

1. **Do you want a memorial?**
2. **Where do you want a memorial?** (e.g. Fremantle, Perth, other suggestions)
3. **What type of memorial do you want?** (e.g. a plaque, statue/s, ship, mosaic etc – dependent on funding limit)
4. **Content of memorial – what do you want it to say?**

You can respond directly to the questions above or obtain an official questionnaire through C-BERS. Responses should be sent to Ms Alison Barber, 189 Royal Street, East Perth 6004. If you have any questions about the memorial, contact Alison on 08- 9222 2755 or email alisonb@dcd.wa.gov.au



**WE'RE OPEN
FOR BUSINESS**

**between 8.30 a.m.
and 4.30 p.m.
Monday to Friday**

ON STAFF

Administration

Manager— Mary Kearns
(Monday to Thursday)

Clinical Psychologist

Patrick Howard
(Monday, Tuesday)

Counsellors

Michael Anderson
(Tuesday, Wednesday,
Friday)

Sjoukje Tarbox

(Monday, half day
Wednesday, half day
Thursday)

Administration

Lorraine Hipkins
(Monday, Tuesday)

Sue Fullerton

(Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday)

**MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE**

Maria Harries

(Chairperson)

Dr Debra Rosser

George Horton

CONTACT

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C-BERS says Goodbye... and Good Luck

In mid-March of our much-loved friend and colleague, **Patrick Howard** embarks on a well-earned retirement.

Patrick joined C-BERS as a Clinical Psychologist in 1997 to provide counselling to former students of Christian Brothers' schools and subsequently to provide counselling to ex-residents on a two-day per week basis which he has done generously since then.

We are very sorry to say "Farewell" to Patrick as we're sure will be his many clients and friends made during his time at C-BERS. We wish you all the joys of retirement Patrick and thank you for your support and friendship over the years.



Catholic Migrant Centre launches brochure for former child migrants

Sr Flo O'Sullivan rsm reports on news from the Catholic Migrant Centre....

On Friday 21 February we had the launch of a new *Former Child Migrants Brochure*.

Special features of the celebration included the cutting of the ribbon which bound the brochures, and the cutting of the congratulatory cake by three of the former Child Migrant guests.

Special guests included Jean Costello, Maureen Trewin, Bridget Willers, Graham Galea, Robert Baker and Patrick Cannon, all Former Child Migrants, His Grace, Archbishop Barry Hickey, Sr Maura Kelleher of the Sisters of Mercy and Br Kevin Ryan of the Christian Brothers, each of whom graciously and sincerely contributed to the meaningfulness of the occasion.

All of these special guests reported that they enjoyed the occasion.

Sr Clare Breen from the Sisters of Nazareth sent her apologies and a letter expressing the Sisters' contribution to the program.

A reporter from the *Catholic Record* was present and an article and photos will be published shortly.

For a copy of the brochure phone 08-9221 1727.



*Pictured above are Sister Flo helping to "cut the celebratory cake" with Maureen Trewin and Bridget Willers while Patrick Cannon seems to have more important matters on his mind
Photo courtesy The Catholic Record)*

We Answer Your Questions About...

The Australian Migrant Travel Fund

Q: If I have had a trip funded by the British Child Migrant Travel Fund (through ISS) am I still eligible to apply for the Australian Travel Fund?

A: No – the Australian Travel Fund will not consider applications from those Child Migrants who have previously had a trip funded by the British government

Q: If I have had a C-BERS trip am I still eligible to apply for the Australian Travel Fund?

A: Yes – if you have visited relatives or your country of origin under C-BERS funded travel assistance, you are still eligible to apply for the Australian Travel Fund.

Q: What if I've had a trip before and I've met all my relatives am I still able to apply for the Australian Travel Fund to meet them again?

A: Yes, ISS advise that priority is given to those who haven't yet met relatives, but you are still eligible to apply to the Fund.

“The Courage to Change the Things We Can”

A Personal Reconciliation

by Patrick Howard in conjunction with “Bill”
(not his real name)

People who have suffered abuse in childhood very often carry through their adult lives the deep feelings of outrage and anger about what was done to them. Their reactions are totally justified, but sadly this often means that their lives are contaminated by negative feelings long after the abuse has ended and the perpetrators are dead. It is an insult to victims of abuse to blithely tell them that they should forget the past, drop their righteous anger and get on with their lives. To do this is an enormous challenge requiring great personal courage. This is one person's story.

Bill was prompted to seek counselling when a long-term relationship was on the verge of breaking down. He had been grossly abused in institutional care both in the UK and Australia. At sixteen he had vowed revenge against those who had abused him and this feeling was still very much alive when he finally felt ready to confront the problems in his life. His statement that “I've been angry for sixty years” summed up the situation.

After a profound dream a couple of years previously in which he had witnessed himself as both a victim and an aggressor, he had begun to reflect on the way he related to the people around him. In counseling he focused more closely on this and realised that in his teenage years he had actually adopted the style of the person who had most abused him. *“I applied his strategy myself because I knew it worked. I became violent. Everybody else was going to feel like a dog in the dirt as I had.”*

In adulthood Bill had largely abandoned raw physical violence. He lived a very moral life but still with a harsh and rigid approach. The legacy of his abuse experience made it extremely difficult to trust others or to open up in relationships. *“I keep people at bay...It protects my vulnerability to say ‘I don't need you.’”* And if a friend crossed him: *“I would sever the relationship, as if he was dead.”*

Bill sensed that his tough front was now costing him a great deal more than it was worth. And his very early memories told him it was at odds with his true nature. *“I was born to be a soft caring person with an easygoing personality.”* As the counselling work progressed, Bill came to the point where he realised: *“Basically I'm fed up with the sham.”* However he doubted that the personal style he had adopted in response to abuse could ever be changed. He saw it as a pattern stamped in metal and never to be erased.

Despite his doubts, Bill found the courage to start experimenting with different ways of dealing with people in the workplace, in social situations and in personal relationships. He worked at this over many months and people responded positively to his new approach. Many commented that he was much more relaxed and easy to be with. This encouraged him to push the boundaries further. As Bill reflected on his progress, he realised: *“My fear was I might not be able to handle the change. I might be more vulnerable.”*

He described how previously the very thought of rejection would have him cutting people off and driving them away before he had time to make any conscious choice.

Now he was training himself to watch his reactions to others and choose a response more to his liking before the old habits could take over. And on the odd occasion when the old pattern got the better of him for a moment, he would take steps to repair the damage as soon as possible. He was tuning in to others without being forever on the lookout for possible affronts. *“I listen to what a person says. There's a million things I could take umbrage with, but I choose not to.”*

During this period, Bill was also able to share, for the first time with a couple of key people, the truth of his childhood abuse experience and the emotional reactions he had been carrying for up to sixty years. *“I used to have in my mind this constant barrage of memories of being abused.”* He now found *“the turmoil in my mind is nowhere near what it was.”* The personal discipline which he had developed over the years was a great asset in his battle with negative thinking. He decided: *“You just have to change the way you think and think along a different line. An old negative idea comes into your mind and you say - ‘No! I won't think like that. I'll look at this positively.’”* In fact, this required a huge effort but, after some months of work, Bill was able to report that he had begun to feel *“at peace with myself and my surroundings.”*

These efforts set the stage for the most important step Bill would take in his work of self-healing. For years he had been writing an account of his early life, setting out in detail the injustices he had suffered. While this would be a faithful record of actual events, Bill realised that it was driven by hate and bitterness, emotions he no longer wanted to live with.

In a recent letter Bill recounts how *“an inaudible voice suggested I throw the manuscript away. I was experiencing freedom in my mind; I was changing, I no longer cared what happened so many years ago. I came to see that my childhood experience also developed character traits much needed in life: that I was looking not at the positives but at the negatives. When I finally threw away the manuscript my mind uncoiled like a released spring. I see things in a different light. At the moment my mind resembles an open doorway ablaze with light, without stain or smear.”*



MALTESE FORMER CHILD MIGRANTS

50th Anniversary REUNION 10 May 2003

A 50th Anniversary Dinner Reunion is being organised for Maltese Child Migrants who came to Fremantle on the *Sydney*, on 8 May 1953. You may remember that voyage included the Cammilleri brothers, the Mizzi brothers, the Shepherd brothers, George Beasley and John Attard (both dec'd) to name but a few.

Please contact Chris Sultana
08 9282 0697, email csultana@mft.wa.gov.au
or mobile 0401 160 407.

TARDUN OLD BOYS

75th Anniversary Reunion Late September 2003

The Tardun Old Boys Association will be holding a special reunion at the school this year to commemorate its 75th year. Everybody is welcome to attend and help celebrate this significant milestone. Further details will be posted to members over the next couple of months.

For more information, (or if you have ideas, or can offer assistance to help organise the reunion)

Contact Keith Spencer (President)
H: 08-9276 7073, W: 08-9330 9121
or mobile 0439 030 913.

WANTING CONTACT

Clontarf and Tardun:

Ross and Robert Martin, formerly of Boystown, Hobart, Tasmania (1949-53) would like to make contact with friends from those years who subsequently were placed in Clontarf and Tardun around 1954. They would particularly like to hear from: Michael Fitzmaurice, David Daley, George Kellegher, Bill McLaughlin, Gerry Evans, Paul Burke, Wesley Howells, Peter Carroll and John Merrigan. Ross can be contacted on Tel: 08-9593 1304.

Clontarf: Paddy Ward ("Peanuts") would like to hear from former Clontarf residents Michael Rankin and Patrick Strain. Please phone C-BERS for Paddy's contact details.

Clontarf: Bill McGrath would like to contact Gerald Whelton who was placed at Clontarf c.1947. Please advise GBERS if you can help.

Tardun: Patrick Travers "Paddy" would like very much to renew contact with friend Brian Deere. Please phone C-BERS for Paddy's telephone number.

FAREWELL

Recent Obituaries



Many of our readers will be saddened to hear of the death of Sister Rudolph who died on 29 January 2003 at Nazareth House, Cheltenham in the UK. The following tribute has been prepared by Joan Kerry, Australian Child Migrant Project Manager.

Many former Child Migrants will remember Sister Rudolph from Nazareth House, Swansea in the 1940s.

Born in Liverpool in 1909, she first became aware of children in orphanages when she and her young sisters would pass Christmas gifts through the railings of Nazareth House in Liverpool.

At the age of 25, she joined the sisters of Nazareth herself. Over the years, she also worked at Bala, Bexhill, Southend, and for a time in New Zealand. In later years, she looked after elderly people (many of whom were younger than she was) at Nazareth House, Cheltenham.

Sister Rudolph always felt that the practice of sending children to Australia was wrong.

She worried about children who had just come through the war years and how they were going to cope with a new life in a new country. She remembered one boy who ran away from the bus which was to take him away from Swansea. He climbed a tree but was dragged back and taken off screaming. She often wondered what happened to him and tried to find him years later.

Sister Rudolph regretted not being able to keep in touch with the children she had known. The sisters were allowed to write only one letter every six months, and of course they wrote home.

Sister Rudolph had a great sense of fun and humour.

Children from Bexhill remembered her playing cricket and, when bowled out, she would light-heartedly complain that "it wasn't fair" as she couldn't see properly past her wimple!!

Some former Child Migrants re-established contact with Sister Rudolph and kept in touch with her after having found her again. Many have visited her over the years. Her funeral was attended by former Nazareth House residents from far and wide.

Sister Rudolph was in good health until earlier this year when she caught flu, dying peacefully on 29 January 2003. She would have been 94 in April. She is dearly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing her.