

27 February 2006

Dear Lawrence

I attended the day hospice last Wednesday and whilst there, I drafted something for you and brought it home for Keith to type – a third attempt. Imagine my surprise when I arrived home to find that you had written to us. Thank you for such a lovely card and for writing so simply yet profoundly. We are both grateful.

I am sorry I have 'missed the boat' for getting a message to you for your retirement meeting(s). We tried, but there were too many frustrations. What follows is what I would have liked to have been read on your retirement occasion.

On hearing of the retirement of Colonel Laurence Hay, I felt that his ride into the sunrise with Margaret to his beloved New Zealand merited some words from me amongst those of his many other colleagues and friends.

With Laurence retiring and leaving the United Kingdom, my immediate thought was 'How will IHQ survive without him and his qualities as a descendant of the Scottish Clan of Hay.'

If you read the history of the Hay clan, you will find that they were the movers and shakers of each generation. They were a determined, strong minded lot, with a will to achieve their goals. These qualities, but well sanctified and blessed, are also evident in Laurence, though in a much more Christ like way.

One of the many privileges I have experienced in my service as a Salvation Army officer has been to serve alongside Laurence. I am sure he must have initially wondered at my appointment as his assistant secretary to what was then the Advisory Council to the General, later to become the General's Consultative Council, and the International Management Council. But the partnership worked. Every day we worked together I learnt more about living in the light of the Holy Spirit, for Laurence is a man of holiness, discipline, integrity, thoroughness, patience...and all these in addition to those distinctive Hay Clan qualities to which I have already referred.

In my early days as an assistant to Laurence I was grateful for his guidance and especially his patience. As time went on, we shared conversations at a very deep level which helped me in my personal Christian pilgrimage. His wisdom and perception were always evident.

I am especially grateful to him for the way he affirmed me and Keith in our respective roles. One always 'walked tall' after a conversation with Laurence.

Laurence must be one of the few people who can make the minutes of meetings into literary masterpieces. This was an art I never mastered, and on the one occasion I was required to take minutes of a meeting of the International Management Council, they hit the cutting room floor! (But not in Laurence's office!) Laurence was master of his art and was able to make even the most tedious discussions sound rivetting.

We shall always be grateful to Laurence for introducing us to the sights and sounds of Hong Kong in 1995 when we first met. We were in Hong Kong for the International Conference of Leaders with the theme 'Partners in Mission'. That was really the start of our partnership. Later, whilst serving in partnership at IHQ, he was to introduce me to the beautiful song 'Here is love vast as the ocean.' This song has remained special for us both.

So dear Laurence and Margaret, it is time to put the cursor on the 'shut down' message for the last time at IHQ and get out your walking shoes for tramping the hills and plains of your beloved New Zealand. May God walk with you every step of the way through the years of your retirement.

All grace and joy be yours. And we pray that same blessing for Michael, Jeremy, Susannah and Mary.

Greetings from Keith and me.
We send our love in the lord.

Pauline