How’s Life in the Slow Lane?

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Chapter 1: Life In the Slow Lane

“How’s life in the slow lane?” rang out as a fellow Ph.D. candidate whizzed by me that beautiful warm spring day.

The loading dock doors clanged shut before I could refocus my thoughts from maintaining my balance to responding to the question.

This question has haunted my mind often since and deserves an answer. In answering this question, I do not wish to blame, embarrass, or hurt anyone; therefore, I will not use names. if you feel having names would help your understanding, please let me know, and I will consider telling you.

Before attempting to answer, I want to give you a fair chance to get to know me, and maybe you will not want to proceed past Chapter 1! That is all right with me.

It all started when my Mom and Dad Married in November. 14, 1942, and moved to Montreal, 650 miles from their parents and Dad. Dad, a new chemical engineer graduate, had accepted his first job.

July 1st1944, Canada Day, was even more exciting for Mom and Dad, they were going to have their first child any day now. On July 5th Mom enter a hospital and went through 1s4 hours of labour including the use of drugs and forceps.

On July 6th at 12:30 am I arrived somewhat bruised, battered, and in need of resuscitations. This was the start of a lifelong journey for Mom and Dad and, thanks to them, the same one I am still on.

I have been told that Mom and Dad were advised to put me in an institution and get on with their lives. They said ‘No he is our son; we will raise him’. Thanks, Mom and Dad.

I am not quite sure when the diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy was made.

Mom and Dad moved back to Ontario in 1946 and rented an upstairs apartment in Elmira. This was the first home I can remember. It had a long and narrow backyard that I loved crawling in the soft green grass. There was a white picket fence with a gait to our vegetable garden, where Mom and Dad would dig, plant, weed, and I would play in the mud, especially if I got hold of the hose!

My bedroom was a sunroom with windows on three sides. I spent many hours playing in the bright, warm sunlight. Coming down the long hall was our living room with an oversized green couch where Dad, Mom, and I would cuddle up and listen to CBC radio or some 78 records.

The extended family was important to us. A typical Sunday for us was Sunday School, church, either quick lunch at home or off to Brantford for lunch with Grandma and Grandpa, Dad’s parents, for lunch and always a chicken dinner with Grandma and Grandpa, Mom’s parents. To this day, I have chicken dinner on Sunday, but never as good as Grandma’s. Occasionally, we would visit another Grandma, who was the mother-in-law of my uncle, Dad’s deceased brother. As I write this, I am in tears, realizing the deep love and caring Dad had and showed to others and the gratitude that he passed on to me.

I developed an interest in electricity. I had an extension cord, a light socket with plugs on the sides, a trouble light with outlets but no metal guard, and a 25-foot cord. I was allowed to play with them as long as I left the wall plugs alone.

Easter Seals Camp Woodeden (opened 1946), overlooking the Thames River on the outskirts of London, situated on 107 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds, is a camp for Easter Seals kids in southwestern Ontario.

In the fall, winter, and spring of 1949, Woodeden became Canada's first residential treatment center for children with cerebral palsy. I attended Woodeden in the fall, winter, and spring of 1949 and 1950.

Woodeden was traumatic for this 4-5 lad. There is no question of the dedication of the staff and medical value, but only seeing Mom and Dad on Sundays for a few hours was hard. I did make good friends. several friendships lasted for many years.

In late August 1950, a meeting with the school principal was scheduled to see if I could start Grade One. Just before the appointment, I was out riding my tricycle and tipped over, hitting my head on the cement sidewalk. Dad was certainly not impressed to introduce his seven-year-old son, groggy with a goose egg on his forehead, to the principal. By some meretricious decision, I was accepted by the principal.

Chapter 2: Disability and the Slow Lane

Chapter 3 Meeting Jesus in the Slow Lane

I am 78 years old. I accepted Christ when I was 17. Incidentally, I have Cerebral Palsy, travel in a wheelchair, and live on my own with the help of attendants.

I was raised in the United Church of Canada. I attended Sunday School, taught Sunday school, helped as a leader in the cub scouts, and was an elder and session member. The church used the Lectionary, thus over about 28 years, I heard and was taught on every verse of the Bible about 4 or 5 times.

Around 1988, I became disillusioned with the local and national United Church and moved to the Mennonite Brethren Church. Here, I was introduced to the Jesus of everyday life and was baptized as an adult. In 2001, I joined a "church plant" of this church which happened because of a strong disagreement over the style of music. The new church was farther away from my home and transportation became a major issue. I became aware that human politics were taking precedence over Jesus' message.

7At Thanksgiving of 2005, I decided to attend a service at The Meeting House at the Galaxy Theatre about a block from my home. The welcome I received and the message I heard, Bruxy's "The Great Co-Mission," confirmed that I had found a "home." I was very cautious about getting involved because of my past experiences in churches, but I am glad and thankful that I did.

I have my Masters of Social Work (MSW) focusing on research and administration. The majority of my career has been in private practice as President of WRWoods Information Solutions Inc. focusing on using information in decision-making and database development in social services and social housing. The most important and relevant thing to The Meeting House is my God-given family, of which I am proud to say I am the Grandparic of 2 kids, 3 grandkids, and 4 great-grandkids!!

It began about 23 years ago when I was co-leading a 12 Step group and met a man who had been in prison for the sexual abuse of young girls. He was just completing his 5-year prison term in a halfway house. He tried to go back to his church, but the church put a condition that he was "never to talk about this again." He said, "No, I need support not to re-offend," and left the church. The church counseled his wife to divorce him, with his own father paying for the divorce! As part of the divorce agreement, he could have supervised visits with his sons, 6 and 9.

Our friendship developed outside of the group, and he asked me if I could supervise the visits with his boys, and I agreed if their mother agreed. The mother agreed, and for the next 10 years, I spent every other Saturday with him and his boys. We decided to build computers for the boys from parts of several old computers we had picked up at yard sales. As we were working awahe turned to me and said, "My dad and I never worked together like this." My response was, "Well, this one does." As we continued to chat, I learned that his mother had brain cancer when she was pregnant with him. The doctors could not start treatment until after he was born. It was too late, and she died when he was three months old. So, here we have a grieving widower raising the child that caused the death of his beloved wife and found it difficult to love and nurture his son. This man was looking for love from his victims. It was a very bad choice that created more loss, trial through prison, divorce, and family destruction, and I needed to give him what he desperately wanted and needed: someone to love him.

Today, he still cannot openly return that love, and that does hurt, but I know it is there. The rest of the family both accepted and returned my love. The love that our new family is built on is the love of Jesus. Yes, he and his ex-wife are now my kids. All of us love each other and serve God.

Chapter 4 “Have I Got a Family for You”

Chapter 5 Educating a Traveller in the Slow Lane

Chapter 6 A View of Government from the Slow Lane

Chapter 7 Looking Down the Slow Lane

Chapter 8 How Is Life in the Slow Lane?