

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN: SUCCESS: IS THIS IT ?**

*Easier and Happy Times; Schoolhouse Happiness; Latihan and Testing; A Testing Session With Bapak; Worldly Success And Respect*

As the years passed, life at the Schoolhouse got easier. My children got older and, naturally-and helpfully! - became more independent. I could leave a (healthy!) snack ready for them on those nights when they were staying with me and this would tied them over until I arrived home about 5:30 ish. I could usually arrange my later nights around them and, if that was impossible, then arrangements were flexible enough for our evenings to be changed round. So we got into a routine that was to last in a quite settled way until the children grew up, really, and my daughter went off to University and my son went off to live with a partner and then off backpacking to Australia for a year! So, in spite of my initial fears I was to see my children grow up and I was to be closely involved in this. It was true, though, that when their mother left and our lives went their separate ways, my relationship with my children became less close. I became so busy with the never-ending jobs and demands on me that I never had as much time to play and relax with the children as before. This is still a sadness to me to this day.

Nevertheless, I do have many happy memories of these times: of long summer bike rides with my son , playing “frisbies” over and over with my daughter; there were weekends playing monopoly, laughing, talking and singing our heads off, warm, close times... Then there was that memorable time when my son brought, I think it was his first, girlfriend up to the house and she looked at me in absolute shock: she had been in my class a few years previously! I had been her teacher... What a laugh we all had!! I enjoyed decorating the house for Christmases and birthdays as well---like that time I arranged a disco for my daughter out of Christmas tree lights: a memorable because pathetic attempt on my part! It was taken in good part by all concerned, however. Then there was the day I bought my son a new bike and my daughter...a dwarf Dutch rabbit that we could leave running free in the back garden all day and then I could whistle him and he would come running out of his cover and we could put him back in his hutch for the night...I suppose looking back it gives me a lot of satisfaction to think that we kept our relationships going in this way for so long, even if we did lose some of the intimacy of our early years together.

*Schoolhouse Solitude- And Moments Of Real Happiness*

One of the most immediate pleasures of the Schoolhouse was the Solitude it gave me and, as time went on, those awful feelings of loneliness and rejection were relieved more and more (although, unfortunately, never completely) by feelings of real happiness. I can remember even at the beginning experiencing times of real “psychological freedom!” For example, there was that time when I drove back from seeing some friends of mine on a clear, bright, and big-mooned evening and, for once, instead of dreading coming home to an empty, lonely house I was just so relieved not to have the moodiness and silent aggression of my ex-wife to welcome me! I would particularly enjoy it when the house was tidied and clean and, at last, there were NO MORE jobs to do, AND there was NO clutter all over the place (!) and I could just enjoy sitting in the peaceful stillness. The absence of tension in the house was a novel and welcome experience (I was reminded-if I really needed a reminder-of just how bad things had got between my ex-wife and me!) I often appreciated the remoteness of the Schoolhouse: I could sit in my back garden hidden completely by bushes and trees, so that even when my friends came past, to go swimming or to play tennis on the courts next to me, they would not know I was there. I especially enjoyed doing my exercises in the warm, summer sunshine wearing only my boxer shorts (shh! don’t tell anyone!)

I remember many particular moments of real uplifting beauty during my time at the Schoolhouse. It was truly situated in a lovely part of the world so that I had many enchanting walks through the different, but all so equally beautiful, seasons. There were summers when my house would be surrounded by ripening, furry-headed barley fields that would sway like a huge, green sea in the wind; or by a landscape completely transformed by the startlingly brilliant yellow fields of rape stretching as far as the eyes could see. The views from my windows were always wide and expansive. In the winter the frosts and snow were particularly impressive. On one occasion, I wrote in my journal:

“I am over-wrapped on a bitterly cold morning but it is so beautiful that I cannot mind. The sky is large and light blue and the shiny white frost is so sharp that it comes right up to, and inside, the house: there is ice on the insides of my windows, just above the storage heater! There is a tremendous, huge, bright copper sun glowing through the stiff black trees...I watch fascinated as a white, moving mist forms in a hollow amongst the distant fields...”

Another time, I was completely alone in the house while outside there was a snowstorm so bad that I could not see the end of the drive! I felt like a hermit in some bleak mountain retreat; I felt stranded, so

completely alone it was scary! Yet when the snowstorm stopped the whole world outside my home was completely transformed into a sparkling, pure white desert. For days the snow was undisturbed as the schools were all closed. The only footsteps in the world seemed to be mine...

Spring and Autumn were equally beautiful. Bursts of Spring sunshine seemed to bring inner bursts of sunshine as well. After living for so long with so many dark, rainy and cold days, it was real joy to see and feel the Spring coming! Being so much in the heart of the country, I noticed these changes and the effects of the seasons far more than when I lived in the town. They never ceased to fascinate me.

So often the Schoolhouse seemed to be a real Retreat for me; a place where I could concentrate on my Quiet Times and my latihan. As the children grew, so my Solitude grew and, as my Solitude grew, so I was refreshed and inspired to make the best of my life. I wrote at the time:

“Solitude gives me the feeling of contact with Something within me that is felt and not seen and that gives me confidence and, very often, contentment, too. Honestly, I feel I learn more from this Solitude than from most people I see.”

“The stillness of the Schoolhouse welcomes me like a long-lost friend! My thoughts and feelings trickle along now like pleasant mountain streams-all I have to do is simply to watch them!”

“How often I experience morning inspirations ! I can wake up almost overwhelmed by the darkness of life...I sit quietly for awhile and experience a shower of positive feelings...the beauty of early morning quiet comes first. Then I feel surprised by feeling loved! I am surprised by it; it is such a good feeling! I need this because I have been so negative about myself, full of inadequacy and feeling so unlovable.”

Often these times would continue to give specific advice:

“ Early morning Quiet can revolutionize my feelings! It has happened again so that instead of being depressed about going back to school after this holiday, I suddenly think of a completely new plan for this coming week and this makes me feel excited and positive about going back: I am really looking forward to it now!”

Sometimes these Quiet Times led me again and again to feel the presence of my father, or others who were “dead”! Often, although I could not prove this, my feelings would be so sure that I just did not know what to think. On my birthday for example I suddenly had an upsurge of happiness as I felt the presence of my father and my spirit friends simply coming to wish me a “Happy Birthday”! The happiness and feeling of surety remained even in spite of my thoughts! On one other occasion, although I could not see or hear anything I was so convinced that my father was with me and it made me feel so happy that I wanted to tell everyone, even though I knew they would think me mad because I could do absolutely nothing to prove it- it was simply an overwhelmingly strong feeling! Not for the first time I felt celebratory. The thoughts that came with it were: “I feel like celebrating the end now of the psychological trauma of being on my own. It feels so right! It feels restful and peaceful and I am content with it.” There was also an intriguing time when my father came to me with a warning! He seemed anxious that I understood the true motives of a lady-friend whom he felt had designs on me –for all the wrong reasons! She was a very pretty lady who was also on her own, having been left with four young girls, all of whom I had taught. My father seemed anxious that I know that she was only interested in me as someone to “be a father to her girls and to clear out the drains!” I have no idea if this was true but as a result of “my father’s advice” I made sure the relationship never developed in that sort of way at all.

There were a couple of occasions when I felt sure that my Grandmother (who had “died” some time ago!) was with me. The first time I was overwhelmed by how young she looked! I remembered her as being a rather bad-tempered old woman. In fact, I never knew her, as a child, as being anything else but here she seemed to be anxious for me to see her in a different light. I now saw her as an energetic, young woman who clearly enjoyed life and who was a good organiser! I never knew any of this. I only knew her towards the end of her life when the struggle to bring up nine children on a low income had taken its toll. From now on I would see her more as a person in her own right- someone who was enjoying life and had plenty of energy for it and certainly not the grumpy old lady I had known! I was to “feel” her around quite a lot and often as someone who enjoyed the lighter side of life and, I think, this was something of an important reminder to me to do the same. After all, I had had something like three years in which I had seemed to have forgotten what it was like to have a good laugh at life!

Sometimes my Quiet times brought me some vivid images, which gave me a lot to think about. I remember being startled once by a large bird of prey staring at me from the window and I knew at once that this was how the “Holy Ghost” appeared to me! Oh dear, I would have preferred the gentle dove. Then there was that time when I “saw” this huge ant-eater-like creature making a mess all over my bedding! I knew he should not be there but he was so heavy that for all my pushing I could not move it. Then I understood this to be a sexual image: this creature, representing our instincts and particularly the sex instinct, could wreak havoc if not handled properly (easy to agree with!). And it was clear that you could not FORCE this creature into its place just by will-power. I realised the only way to move and control this creature was by “tempting” it away by offering it a titbit, or something pleasant that would cause it to go into its place willingly! Brute force would not work, something more subtle was needed. I began to understand something behind the idea in psychology of “sublimation” and the need to increase pleasure in constructive ways, if one was attempting to change a habit or “behaviour pattern” connected with the instincts...

There were, unfortunately, very few occasions at this time when my Quiet times were at all related to anyone else. On one I had an impression of my daughter being ill (later discovered to be true) and I found myself sending a “healing bird” over to her! It was a soft, white bird and I imagined it flying from me over to her hands! Whether it helped at all I do not know... The next occasion was more clearly and objectively confirmed when my ex-wife suddenly asked me one day whether I was “getting anything” about her being pregnant again! I wasn’t but as soon as she asked I found myself saying: “If you had a boy would you call it Jamie?” “Yes!” she said, “We have just chosen that name if it is a boy!” I then said that I felt she **was** pregnant and that she would have a boy this time. I also found myself giving her some advice on the need to change her life “in some important ways” The pregnancy was confirmed and a little boy was born a few weeks later but, alas, he was “still-born”. This was to mark the start of a very difficult time for my ex-wife...

There was one particularly interesting little experience at this time that was to intrigue me and again it was to be about unborn babies! I was out walking on the fields completely alone one day when I suddenly experienced the latihan strongly and, as I sang wholeheartedly across the wheat field, I heard myself singing about Steven being here! Steven, who on earth was Steven? I could not place anyone I knew by that name. Then I thought maybe this was the name of someone who was going to contact me soon, perhaps, as this came in the latihan, it was going to be a Subud

person? Really I had no idea. As the days passed I began to despair of this receiving having any relevance at all. Then it happened... My sister phoned me a week later to say that she and her husband had thought of a name for their coming baby: Steven, "if it was a boy!" I knew then that it would be a boy and that I could be as close to this boy as to another son (which I myself could never have now!)

### *The Latihan Is The Backbone Of My Life*

Through all this, the latihan was the backbone of my life. Each week I went twice, as recommended, to the "group" latihan and I had at least one at home on my own and many "spontaneous" latihans during my days at school, at home and everywhere. Not once did they interfere with whatever was going on in my life at the time and I am sure nobody else was ever aware of them. Unfortunately our "group" consisted of, first, just my neighbour and myself until we were joined by an architect and his wife who moved to the area from London and were already members. A few years later he died and his widow moved away and we were down to two again until, again, we were joined by a Subud couple from the North.

This seems to be the way it goes for many groups- some coming and going but just enough coming for the group to survive (generally!) The early members who came to us did not stay. One of them got married and moved off to China; another went off to "Furniture College" in London (and the first person he met there, quite by chance, was a Subud member and, immediately, he found a new friend for life!) In a way, my bearded "ex-copper" was the most interesting. Shortly after joining Subud his life changed completely. From living in a room with hardly any amenities and travelling about in the back of our estate car, he became a millionaire! His pottery was a great success and he seemed to corner the market in pots etc. made as characters from a famous children's book. They were a huge success and he could not make enough of them! Wherever you went, firstly over Suffolk and Essex, and then just about anywhere in the country, you would see these characters as vases, pencil pots and goodness knows what else. At one time we had them all over our house- they were the rejects that he had given to us!! Everybody seemed to love them. The result was we did not see much of our potter as he was travelling here, there and everywhere with his van full of more pots to sell- and sell them he obviously did! He also met a lovely lady whom I knew quite well and he "settled down" with her and her family. "Settled down" is perhaps not the best expression to apply to him, however, because, after some time, we heard all sorts of stories about him losing all his money and having to start again. I do not know how true they were

because I only saw him once more after that and that was years later. Then he made a point of ignoring me: such is the fragility of “friendship”- and this was from the same man who hugged me as a long-lost brother in my lounge a few years previously!

For myself, it became the most natural thing in the world to take my problems and difficulties to the latihan and in this way my life found some way forward. There were always demands and worries about my work but these were often solved at this time through my Quiet Times and, if not, I would simply bring them to testing. My life clearly went well when I had enough time for my Inner Life- i.e. enough time for “Quiet” and the good sense to test things I was not sure of. I was to make some huge omissions with this later but at this time I was at my most sensible. So I tested about all sorts of things and received real help from doing so. There was one particularly humorous (to other people at least!) example of this! On my 40<sup>th</sup>. birthday, there was some discussion with my children about my lack of fitness. “What do you mean?” said I confidently, “I bet you I could run round this school field with no sweat!” Everyone laughed. So off I went like a whippet! I had not got off the lawn in front of the house before I collapsed in agony: I had cartilage trouble! I had to go the doctor’s and afterwards I rang my sister, saying: “Thank you for the birthday money you sent me. Guess what I got with it? An elastic stocking and some painkillers!” However what happened next was that I was in real pain for what seemed like ages and two different doctors gave me conflicting advice: one said to keep exercising it, the other said to rest it! I really did not know what to do, so I kept going at school and waited for an improvement which never seemed to come. So I tested it and the latihan could not have been clearer: complete rest was needed. I stayed off school for a day or two and rested it as completely as I could. It seemed nothing short of miraculous that after about three weeks of sharp pain the thing just subsided completely and all was well again! No more bravado (or running!) from me for awhile!

One problem that my increased Solitude brought me was with my relationship with my “female companion”. Quite naturally, I suppose, she often felt unhappy about my being at the Schoolhouse when I could have been at hers with her family. I **was** often there but obviously not as often as she would have liked. It was, at times, clearly hard for her and we had some quite shaky times over it. Once or twice, in fact, I thought the relationship was going to end because of it. Naturally, I tested about this and received that it would not be right for me to buy her house and move in there (this was one of the many ideas that came up at the time but testing was always clear not to buy any home like this!) Fortunately, I

followed this testing. I also tested about the value of this Solitude for me: not to encourage this side of my life would be like having my mouth firmly shut with nothing of value to say. My neighbour received that it would be like my having a paralysed right arm. To continue without it would lead to my inner life deteriorating and my feelings becoming chaotic. I was not to give it up but rather it was to become a priority for me! My neighbour received that I should make some sort of “declaration” of this and I received this would be like my hoisting a flag on my castle! Each time I tested issues around this, I was left feeling inwardly lighter, clearer and always more accepting of my aloneness. I also received that I could not take too much of myself to her because that way would lead to “slavery and inner loss”. In other words, my living so much at the Schoolhouse was something “she would just have to accept” And, eventually, she did...

I often felt relaxed, peaceful, and even content after latihan so that I could write: “I am unmistakably happy. I am alone and grateful- grateful for the peace and comfort of my home now, for the “gift” of this house, for my having survived so much, for my health, for my job and even for my 15 years of marriage and 13 of fatherhood. Now I am grateful for my freedom and for the chance to be more myself! There is an inner sunshine as well as an outer one.”

### *Testing: Culture; Youth and Young People*

Sometimes the testing was about less personal things. One of the most memorable of these was testing about “Culture”. Testing defined it as “moving with the Power of God”! In the testing, I felt as if I was dancing in front of an audience and enjoying it (not something I would normally wish to do!) so it obviously had 2 aspects: a personal one, that was self-expressive in some way and thereby personally enjoyable, and a public one where it was observed and also enjoyed by other people (the “audience”). I felt in the testing that there were many “levels” to “Culture” and this included a sexual level! Was culture then something to do with the development, or again the “sublimation”, of the sexual instinct?! I did not know but it was clear that this instinct certainly had something to do with it (I did not investigate this aspect any further!) I saw, too, that one could bring “culture” into the world through the body- the way one dressed it, decorated it and even moved. I was- and am!- left with the idea that there was plenty to think about here and probably more to learn. Shall we test about this now, you and I?!



Another memorable test for me was about “Youth and Young People”. At this time, I wanted to see myself as a “wise older man” who could give advice to young people as a kind of teacher: quite wrong! It seemed what young people most needed, and looked for, was not the wisdom of the old but rather the warm feelings of acceptance and, most particularly, a sense of humour! I remembered this and dropped any idea of having any “teaching” role with the young people I knew; I simply tried to share some good feelings and humour with them. The result was that I grew to like many of these youngsters far more than before- they seemed much freer of any set ideas than many older people and this, along with having a good laugh with them, made them usually very good, and often challenging, company!

### *Testing With Bapak: A Highlight Of My Life*

It was at this time that I was to experience a session of testing in Bapak’s presence which was to be another of those peak Latihan experiences for me. It was one of those times when I was feeling pretty down. True, I was feeling like this less than before but, when they did occur, these low times could still be awful. This was one such time. News came round the groups that Bapak was in this country for an eye operation and would be giving a talk at Anugraha, so my friend and neighbour decided to go. When we arrived, the place looked packed. Where could we sit? Ahead of us there were tiers and tiers of people going right up to the back walls. Then I happened to notice a row of completely empty seats right at the front: just to the left of the stage where Bapak would be sitting! They looked as if they were reserved and probably that was why there was, as yet, no-one sitting there. But I looked carefully down the line and I could see no sign-so we sat there, quite expecting someone to come along and shift us. No-one did! So we had a prime seat...Soon Bapak appeared and I was shocked at how frail he looked! He had become an old man, leaning heavily on a stick as he slowly walked across the stage to his chair. The whole place became reverentially quiet...The talk began. Suddenly the years seemed to fall from Bapak: he seemed to be young again, animated and energised. Early in the talk he called for 3 or 4 men helpers to come in front of him for some testing. I looked at the wide open space in front of us and it looked so inviting! Alas, my friend and I were too slow and the big space was soon filled. The testing was about things that did not make much sense to me (“Where is above? Where is below?” etc.) so I was not too disappointed at having missed that. Then Bapak called for some more men helpers and this time, even though we held back and were indecisive, it felt as if others were prevented from coming forward! It was as if the space was reserved out there for us! So there we were: the

two of us with 2 or 3 other men standing ready to begin the latihan in front of Bapak!

“Relax...” he said, “Don’t begin yet, be ready. Don’t worry about your friends; don’t look at your friends (the thought had just crossed my mind: “Where was my friend? Shall I keep an eye on him?”!) Don’t think...just relax in yourself. Ready...Now if you are in difficulties in your life, how do you feel?” Yes, this was very relevant to me...I felt weighed down and dark with difficulties! “Now receive: How is it if you have no need for anything other than to worship Almighty God?” This was a tremendous receiving! I felt an absolutely delicious, very pleasurable receiving as if I had not have a care in the world: I wanted it to go on and on! “Yes,” said Bapak, “This is truly guidance from Almighty God. There is no need for you to go to the sea (a favourite place for me when I needed a wider perspective on my life) or to the forests and mountains like a lot of people in India and in Indonesia do (this was my idea of spirituality again: withdrawal from the world. I was always being reminded of this by my latihan and here it was again!) You don’t need to do that. It is enough for you to live in your houses and to feel close to your families. The Power of God is everywhere. Receive again: Because it is not always God’s will that you receive difficulties in your life, receive how it is when you are in a state of well-being and healthy and happy...” This was a wonderful receiving: one of almost overwhelming happiness and joy!. “If you feel,” continued Bapak, “about the condition of the world, it seems very difficult; it seems there is no way out for us except to experience suffering and burdens. But you should always remember that where there is sadness there is also happiness; and you should remember where it is that there is something to make you happy. It is not just by turning on the T.V. (!) that you can make yourself happy; within yourself you have something which can also make you happy. (By now I was convinced that Bapak was talking directly to me- these were so much my concerns!) It is in the latihan that you can really understand the breadth and enormity of God’s power. It is there you can achieve inner satisfaction. Then once more Bapak said: “How is it if everything you need is supplied and all your wishes fulfilled?” Again my latihan took off into real joy! “And if you have a feeling of happiness,” said Bapak, “you should laugh.” At this I determined not to laugh: no-one was going to tell me when to laugh. Unfortunately this huge wish to laugh appeared in my stomach! I resisted it; I even bit my lips to do so...but it did not work... so... I laughed as “restrainedly” as I could. “Go on,” said Bapak at that point: “Laugh!” And I did for what seemed like ages. Then it seemed to subside. “No,” said Bapak, “More!” Then it really happened! My laughter flew and gushed out of me...all restraint left me! Soon my laughter filled the

whole huge room and then I could hear the audience beginning to join in: a ripple here and then more from the other side of the hall...and then it seemed as if the whole room was laughing its head off! It was so wonderfully happy that I did not want to stop it or even quieten it. Wow, what an experience- and it seemed to go on forever!! This was a tremendous experience for me: I will never be able to forget it. In a time of sadness that had weighed me down on the whole journey to this talk, I had experienced a happiness that was more complete than I could have imagined and it had come about simply through the power of this strange phenomenon called the latihan. “What you have witnessed here today ,” continued Bapak, “represents only a small part of God’s power. For God is almighty, and it is God who possesses the universe. So have no doubts, have no fear because this is really the time that God has willed His power, should be close to man. And you must return this favour by always staying close to the Power of God... And if the membership has this understanding, then Subud will be very strong, and can become an example to the whole of mankind as to how people can live in peace together.” Yes, for the moment I could not doubt it...As you may imagine our journey back home was filled with great excitement and happiness. And so it was for days afterwards; yes, a welcome relief from those all too familiar feelings of negativity that still sometimes plagued my life even now. I just had to remember in the future not to go outside myself when I was feeling low (not to turn any old rubbish on the T.V. in the hope of this relieving these feelings, e.g.) but to turn instead to the latihan. But why was this to prove to be so difficult? Was my trust so low? My conviction so poor? Or was it that the wordliness of my life, the pressure of outer things, was to be too strong for me at times? I suppose the thing was to keep trying...I can see now that I did not always try enough and there were to be times of incredible stupidity in the future when I left the latihan out of my life at important times and this was soon to get me into an unbelievably awful mess...Not yet, though...

Interestingly, many years later my partner and I were at a Subud meeting, or “Congress”) in Yorkshire and my partner was in a “working party” where a lady mentioned to the whole group that she had once been at a testing session with Bapak and she could not forget it because there was this chap there who tested with Bapak and laughed so much in his latihan that the everyone there joined in! It was a truly happy and remarkable time! So it was not just me who remembered it all those years later!

*Difficulties Begin At School: A Successful Ofsted Inspection*

At this time my Inner Life seemed to be both strong and relevant to my whole life. And, fortunately, and perhaps because of this, my Outer life was also going well at the same time. True, there were problems with my relationship and some sadness about the lack of the intimacy I had known previously with my children. But both relationships were still intact and that was something, I suppose. I was putting a lot of myself into my work and still enjoying most of the teaching I was doing: I still felt I was getting some good advice on what to do with the children from my Inner times and I felt the results were generally good. Increasingly, though, as a Head I was being pulled more and more away from direct contact with the children, even as a “teaching Head”, as so much of my time was being taken over by reading and dealing with Government and Local initiatives and, also, with more and more adults from outside the classroom who were now getting more involved in schools. There were more Governors than ever before being given a few hours training (if they took it up) and being encouraged to be more “active” in schools (the bit they seemed to like the most!) and this meant a lot more of the Head’s time was having to be given to explaining things to people who often had only a little understanding of modern education. Usually these were well-meaning people wishing to support the school and help it to improve but sometimes their ideas of what this meant were not always in line with the thinking of the professionals actually running the schools in its day to day aspects. As my Headship progressed I was to spend more and more time informing about, and discussing, educational matters with these people, both informally and formally at more and more time-consuming meetings. As time went on there were more and more “visitors”: advisors, advisory teachers, adults from the ever-growing number of “support agencies” as well as others so that sometimes it seemed there were more adults than children in school! They certainly threatened to take up too much of my time! At first, this was both interesting and rather novel but after awhile it got to be repetitive and rather tiring for me. I began to dread the election of a new Governing Body, for example, because that could mean having to “train” a whole new group of adults in the issues around modern school life!

Probably, the most dreaded “visitors” into schools are the Ofsted inspectors who come for varying lengths of time to inspect, and publicly report, on standards of teaching and learning in schools. My school was one of the first to be inspected in this way. I can still remember the day I received the brown envelope containing the news: I was opening the post just before rehearsing for the Christmas play! Anyone connected with Primary schools will know what a stressful time of the year this is anyway as teachers turn into playwrights, scenery designers and builders,

directors and producers, entertainers and goodness knows what else. I decided not to tell my staff the news until all events of the term were over and they had had a chance to rest a bit, so I had to keep the news to myself for several weeks. This was difficult in itself but to make matters worse I found myself suddenly feeling SOLELY and PERSONALLY responsible for everything in the school. One minute I would be writing up plans for what seemed like everything (Was this policy up to date? What about that scheme of work? etc. etc.); the next I was walking round the school re-doing displays or endlessly tidying them etc.etc. I could not believe how stressful I found the whole thing. Wherever I looked I saw things to do- hours and hours of work!

Testing got me on an even keel by re-assuring me that things in the school were basically good. All I had to do was to take an hour a week away from distraction and simply plan what we, as a staff, should do in order to prepare for the Inspection. This I did faithfully in the lead up to the Inspection and, I guess, in this way the whole of the school was reviewed in varying amounts of detail or depth. In this way I thought the whole thing became more manageable, although it was not until later that I realised this was stressful enough for my staff. One said to me after the Inspection: “We hated it when you had your hour. We never knew what you were going to come up with next!” We had one particular shaky moment when a member of staff came back from a Course that had been run by “an Ofsted Inspector”. She was worried that, because his expectations of schools were so high, if we got him on our inspecting team, then “we had had it!” Then the letter arrived telling us the name of our Lead Inspector and guess who it was? Of course, the very man! When I announced this as quietly as I could to the member of staff concerned, she simply burst out crying! I tested everything I could think of to do with this inspection: “How I should be with the Inspectors...in my teaching in front of them etc.” When the Inspection week came I felt as prepared as I could be. Unfortunately, everyone was very nervous- you never really know how children, especially young children, are going to react at any time, let alone a time so strange as this! I had two inspectors observing me teach at times; at other times one would leave my classroom as another came in! And this was the same for all members of staff. Everyone was “quizzed” about the school, including the caretaker, secretary, dinner-ladies, even “helping mums” in the classrooms. We felt it was the most intense and stressful week of our teaching lives and, we had to agree, a thoroughly professional job was done by our Inspection Team. (Unfortunately, I know that has not been every school’s experience.)

This Inspection was to be the highlight and the climax of my teaching life. Never before had my colleagues and I been praised so publicly! As Head, of course, I received most of the praise. One morning, just after the Inspection, I walked into the staff room and found a huge bottle of Champagne and a bouquet of flowers waiting for all the staff- the Chair of Governors had got in early to surprise us! There was a special note for me, which made me feel great: it was so complimentary! Eventually the Inspector's Report was published and it made very happy reading for us. The school was described as:

“A successful and effective school with overall high standards provided by effective leadership and management”

“Children were well cared for and the school effectively promoted the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.”

“Across the subjects the pupils in many cases were achieving beyond national expectations.”

“The staff are hard working, professional and well liked by the children.”

“The school is happy and busy with a real family atmosphere. It is the centre of village life.”

In the weeks after the Inspection I even felt a bit like a celebrity! I was asked to help other schools prepare for their inspections; I gave talks to groups of Heads and others about the experience and I was generally recognised at all the Head's meetings and courses that I attended for sometime afterwards. Yes, I felt successful and proud of my school! Professionally, I was being publicly declared to be...**A SUCCESS!**

### *Worldly Success*

This feeling stayed with me for several months. During this time also I was to experience some of the other trappings of success, which only a few years ago I would have deemed most unlikely, if not impossible. For the first time in my life I had more money than I needed. Having two children to bring up and a house to run on one teacher's wage did not leave much over for life's little luxuries! As a Head I was now earning more money than before and, as my children became more independent, so I could spend more of it on myself. For the first time in my life I brought a brand new car for myself! And it was to be the first of several I was to buy. The thing that most surprised me about this, and my more

affluent lifestyle generally, was how much more respect I got from the people around me suddenly. People who had not bothered to talk to me previously would now make a point of coming over to introduce themselves at meetings or at social gatherings!

I was also able to holiday abroad now. Over the next few years, my partner and I were able to cruise the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, holiday in Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. All were memorable holidays. In Portugal I lived for a short while with what used to be called “the jet set”: endless darkly suntanned all over bodies, water skiing and “just” parading in their immorally expensive sunglasses and with their “posey”, but equally expensive, fashion accessories! I loved watching them but was not at all unhappy that I could not be a member of their “exclusive club”! And the beaches: virtually no space on them at all, just masses of colourful beach umbrellas and, again, the brownest of brown bodies in every space there was! Wow, the rocks...I had never seen such red rock before, standing burningly against the bluest of blue skies! And it was so hot...my poor daughter was so sensitive to the heat that she had to go out FULLY-CLOTHED: covered head to foot, with no skin dared to be showing. She looked like Paddington Bear with a huge floppy hat on-the only person in the world who was not almost completely bare! She looked like an alien in this beautiful place.

My favourite place of all was...Switzerland. The first time I saw those sky-touching mountains and expansive lush valleys, I could hardly believe it. And as you walked but a few paces, so the scenery seemed to change dramatically: new, and equally captivating, views of silvery grey, snow capped mountains or huge sweet smelling pine trees or hay scented valleys were constantly surprising me. Wherever I walked, and sometimes I walked and climbed **all day**, I was in a permanent state of delight! I wrote home to a friend: “Nothing has prepared me for this place! It is like the latihan externalised!” What I meant by this was that Switzerland seemed to have those real latihan qualities of surprise and drama, amounting to awe and a real sense of wonder! I looked at wooden chalets in the distant valleys that looked as small as Lego houses from my viewpoint up on the mountains; I stood in the valleys smelling the unforgettable scent of Alpine flowers and newly mown hay, looking up at almost sky-filling masses of rock, grey for three quarters of their build, then stunningly white and snow capped at the top; I watched waterfalls glistening down the sides of these snowy giants, sometimes as distant, thin silver lines, sometimes close up as roaring masses of deafening water; I watched the green caterpillar-like trains travel across the fresh

green valleys then to climb the huge peaks, making their way for the umpteenth time to the near summit of the majestic Jungfrau, where I built a snowman with some Japanese tourists and had a snow fight with them (the language barrier mattered not at all when faced with such playful joy!); I walked all day, sometimes seeing no-one, and often forgetting the complaints of tired, overworked muscles- until journey's end when they would suddenly rebel and force themselves onto my attention!

Switzerland taught me that I knew little, really, about this world I had been in for so long. Its drama and surprising beauty was there to be discovered and how fortunate I felt for having been given a glimpse of this. I also learnt how to walk economically down steep mountain slopes- oh yes, the bouncy, long-strided "walk" might look hilarious to the observer (seeming to come from the Ministry of Funny Walks!) but I found it to be surprisingly comfortable and speedy! On climbing these self-same slopes I learnt it was most important to find one's own stride and speed and stick with that, no matter what. Any attempt to imitate the people around you was foolish, leaving you quickly exhausted and slow-moving. The message is: find your own natural pace and stick to it. When I did that I was able to keep going far longer and with far less tiredness. When I attempted to keep up with the pace of my long-legged companion, I quickly gasped for air and looked inept. It took me several days to learn this but when I did I walked further and for longer than my companion instead of as it had been before: the very opposite of this! I see this as a message not just for the mountains but for life...

Often during these years I looked back on my life with some disbelief: so much had happened since my wife had left me and I could see now that a lot of it was clearly for the better. I had my own house and had at last got it to be reasonably comfortable; I was not completely alone; I still had frequent contact with my children; I had a very interesting Inner Life and had seen the real value of the Latihan and testing and of Quiet Times, particularly in Solitude; and most of all, I had achieved real and tangible success at school and in my material life. I had a lot to be grateful for.

And then the Outer once again took a lead in my life when my son announced that he and his partner were being made homeless and were desperate for somewhere to live. The most obvious solution seemed to be for me to go and live with my partner, at least for awhile, and the two of them should take on the Schoolhouse for an "unspecified time". So, I was now to leave the Schoolhouse...