

*The Life and Labours
of
Tom Anderson*



by Olive Borland

Foreword

When I first came to minister in the Autumn of 1984 to the Bellasis Congregation - which had been amalgamated with Cavan, Drumkeeran and Crooghan (Killeshandra) as a Home Mission Union - one of the first faces I noted with a smile was that of Mr. Tom Anderson, and that smile was a source of encouragement to the entire flock to which Tom became Clerk of Session and caring elder until his death in May 2005. He seldom complained but was more often inclined to speak constructively; he lived out the counsel of Paul to the Christians at Ephesus; “Let no unwelcome conversation come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up, according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph. 4 v. 29). I cherish the motto of Romans 12 v. 12 “Be Joyful in hope; patient in affliction; faithful in prayer.” Tom depicted that kind of spirit to the very end of his earthly days. His personal relationship with the Lord shone through continually, and his prayer for Christians was always that of Paul’s in 1st. Thess. 5 v’s 23 & 24 “May God Himself, the God of Peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.” As his minister for nigh twenty one years, I can testify that my ministry was often pillared by Tom’s humble obedience to the counsel that Paul gave to Church members in 1st Thessalonians 5 v. 12 & 13, “Now we ask, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.” I have experienced prayerful love and practical support continuously from Tom, and this is the gift of God to me since my ministry began in these parts, and for a which I offer up heartfelt thanks and praise, as I write this brief forward in honour of God’s humble and smiling servant among us, who is now gone on ahead of us to Glory. Ever remembered for his love, friendship and godly example to the flock, and to his minister.

Rev. G. Jean Mackarel
July 2005

The Life and Labours of Tom Anderson

It is with a sense of sadness and loss, yet with pride and pleasure that I recall and record the life of my uncle Tom Anderson of Kiffa House, Ballyjamesduff, Co Cavan, who passed into the presence of his Saviour and Lord on Sat. the 28th May 2005 after having spent almost nine weeks in hospital.

Tom was born on the 28th October. 1916 the second of seven brothers and two sisters to William and Tillie Anderson of Glencross, Rathmullan, Co. Donegal.

I recall a few stories from Uncle Tom's childhood spent on the farm near Rathmullan. Tom having been left to mind his younger brother Wilbert on one occasion came running to tell his mother that "*wee wobby* is away down the burn/stream," and that, during a time of flood. Thankfully she was able to rescue him.

The second story Uncle Tom related to our family at the time of my father's death while his brother Fred was present. Apparently Fred was very ill as a baby and the doctor attending told my grandmother that there was nothing more he could do to aid his recovery. The worried mother left her 10 year old son Tom to mind his brother for a few minutes while she took food to the men that were working in a field nearby. When uncle Tom got granny out of the house he went over to the cot and prayed, "God if you save Fred's life you can take mine." I am glad to tell that God did save uncle Fred's life, he still lives to-day and praise God he has served the Lord throughout his life, he and his wife auntie Margaret opened and ran a refuge for the homeless in Birmingham for many years and although now in poor health, he is a wonderful intercessor before the throne of God on behalf of all our family for which I am very grateful and I know blessed by his prayer on our behalf.

Uncle Tom went on to tell us how he himself came to trust in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and at this point I would like to tell you that a couple of days after uncle Tom's death. I believe the Lord put the desire in my heart to write his story which I started to do from my memories of the things he told me, only then to my surprise and delight on going through a few of the abundance of notes, bible studies and little jottings he had written, I came across this part of his testimony.

Tom's controversy with the Lord

My parents were born again Christians before my birth. They taught me the Bible stories, including Jesus' birth, life, work, death, resurrection and ascension. I believed all they told me. I know they loved me and sought to guide me in the right way. I was taught the same truths in church, Sunday school and day school. I could answer the 'Shorter Catechism' with proofs for which I got the prize of a Bible.

I left school and went to serve my time as a shop assistant on the 3rd Sept. 1931 in R. J. Campbell's shop in Ramelton. (Uncle Tom worked there for two years prior to my father going to the same shop and working for 50 years.)

Although a Presbyterian, I attended a Gospel Mission (Gospel meaning Good News) in a Methodist Church in Rathmullan on Sunday the 12th June 1932, but what I was hearing was not Good News to me. The message I heard was that I was a sinner on my way to hell. I resented the accusation and began a controversy with the Lord: putting forward all my beliefs and how I sought to obey what I had been taught; if that was not enough, what was? This continued from Sunday until Wednesday when I went back to the mission with my fellow workers.

Apparently this was a beautiful day and no customers came into the shop between lunch time and six o'clock. According to uncle Tom's verbal account at that time the shop did not close until seven o'clock, but on that day the boss who was a very good man but very strict came in and said, "Boys, the farmers must all be out enjoying this good day and I think you should be out enjoying it too."

The workers could not believe their ears, this was unheard of, one said, "What will we do with the time" and uncle Tom suggested, "I will race you to the mission in Rathmullan."

All agreed to the suggestion and headed off on their bicycles. When they reached the Church it was filled to the second seat from the front.

When the preacher started to speak it was as if all I had debated was given to the Judge and the Clerk of the Court was reading the finding and verdict. All my good deeds showed I was building myself up on my own strength and because I didn't accept what was offered, I was an unbeliever. The verdict, "He that believeth not is condemned already". John 3v 18. I was making up my mind, if this is what religion is going to mean I didn't want any of it. I was arguing that I obeyed my parents and my boss, I didn't do anything wrong, I was not a sinner and didn't see the need to be "born again". I vowed I would go out and not return to the mission or go back to church ever again.

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: Isaiah 64 v 6 Uncle Tom's mind was now in turmoil, what right had this person to speak like this, who gave him the right to say he was condemned?

The closing prayer was being prayed as I made my decision, when it ended, the second person on the platform came and pointed at me and said, "God says, my Spirit shall not always strive with thee," Genesis. 6 v 3

That was the crucial blow, I couldn't rise from my seat as my pals went out past me, and the preachers went to the door to shake hands with the congregation as they departed. One returned and asked me why I had waited, I told him my story and said, "I'm condemned already".

The preacher began, "Your elder brother went to the judge to get your release but the judge said the sentence is irrevocable", but then your brother asked, "Could not he be accepted as a substitute?". "Not unless you are related and have no sin of your own" said the judge. "I am his elder brother and I have no sin, I will die for him and you can let him go free" your brother replied.

*The preacher now explained, "God is that judge, His Son Jesus has died in your place and God is willing to accept Jesus' sacrificial death as atonement for your sin. Are you ready **now** to accept Jesus as your Saviour"? I said, "If I don't, I won't get out of here to-night".*

I then prayed and received Jesus as my Saviour and as I was leaving six people were coming back into the Church, three of them my brothers, my sister was also saved at the children's meeting on the 15th of June.

I left with my mind still in turmoil, my pals had waited, as we cycled back the eight miles to our place of work where I also lodged; nobody spoke for a long time then one said, "He must have learned a few more stories in there to-night but he is not going to tell us until to-morrow". I was challenged and said, "I received Jesus as my Saviour to-night and you won't hear any more 'stories' from me". My mind cleared immediately and I knew I was born again.

Uncle Tom now realised that Christianity is not about head belief or keeping a lot of rules. He like everyone who personally puts their trust in Jesus Christ found that it is about having a relationship with their living Saviour.



Still a Problem Within

I was now hungry for the Word of God, the Bible, I rejoiced in what I read, but when asked to teach Sunday school later I realised I still had a problem within. My old nature, the cause of sinning was still there, uncle Tom told me that he knew he could not live as God expected him to in his own strength. One day I heard a message, I could be delivered from that old nature, that evening I sought the Lord and He sanctified me wholly. 1 Thess. 5 v 23 & 24 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it, and 1 John 1 v 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Shortly after, seeking to find out what it meant to be sanctified, having spent the afternoon studying Romans 6. (Where it states how our Lord Jesus Christ died to break the power of sin in our lives, so we are no longer to live in sin v. 11 states, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.") I went to the Mission Hall, where the Faith Mission superintendent and his wife were to come to speak, but because the lady was ill and had to go into hospital, the superintendent missed the train and I was asked to speak. I spoke on the passage I was studying in Romans and at the close of the meeting I was asked to speak in the Methodist Church on the following Sunday.

Soon people in the shop began to see a change in me and they came seeking how they too could trust Jesus as Saviour.

This is where uncle Tom's written testimony ends, but along with the testimony he had typed out the following hymn and the chorus from another. I believe he wanted them to be part of his testimony and I think they sum up perfectly his relationship with his Lord...

I'm a pilgrim bound for glory;
I'm a pilgrim going home;
Come and hear me tell my story,
All that love the Saviour come.

I love Jesus, Hallelujah!
I love Jesus, yes, I do!
I love Jesus, He's my Saviour,
Jesus smiles and loves me too.

I will tell you what induced me,
For the better land to start,
'Twas the Saviour's loving kindness
Overcame and won my heart.

Faint and weary then He brought me,
To the fountain of His love
Showed me how His blood had bought me,
Sealed my pardon from above.

When I started on my journey,
Many said I'd faint and fail;
But my Saviour's ever with me,
And through Him I shall prevail.

Soon my journey will be ended,
Soon my Lord will come again;
Then, together with the ransomed,
I will praise His glorious name

AND

One Day When Heaven Was Filled With His Praises.

CHORUS

Living He loved me, Dying He saved me,
Buried He carried my sins far away,
Rising He justified, freely, forever;
One day He's coming, O glorious day.

Uncle Tom's belief in God was like that of St. Paul who wrote, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 2nd Tim. 1 v12, and, There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 1Cor. 10 v 13. Uncle Tom believed that when God cleansed he did a good job, but he also knew that Satan was still able to tempt us as humans, therefore it was necessary as St. Paul stated in Ephesians 6 v 11 – 18, to , put on the whole armour of God and keep every part firmly in place like a soldier in a war, we need to know how to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God and the shield of faith to fight the fiery darts of the wicked one. He also stated that, if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John 2 v 1. and If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1 v 9

You may ask how I know all that is stated here, I heard him talk of these truths many times, the last time being two days before he had to go to hospital.

The Revelation of God's Grace

Around the table after my father's death, more than sixty years after trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, uncle Tom's face shone as he told of how the peace of God filled his heart and the joy of the Spirit of God flooded his soul.

Now it is my privilege to be able to report that he was still praising his Saviour until his death at 88 years of age when he died last Saturday the 28th May 2005

While it is wonderful that uncle Tom was "saved" or "born again" on that night 72 years ago, that is only part of the story and I think the remainder shows the power, mercy and grace of Almighty God.



God's Grace to Family Members

As uncle Tom has stated when he was leaving the church on that Sunday night he met six others including his three brothers going back in to talk to the missionaries. Now, these same three brothers had gone to be with the Lord and uncle Tom was emotional, but he was also filled with praise and wonder at how the Lord had worked in their lives. I know he felt that their story was part of his story. It was also very meaningful for us who heard him that day because, although we knew that both Uncle Tom and my father had trusted the Lord Jesus as Saviour when they were young boys, we did not know the whole story and as you will see, none of the three brothers would have had time to consider their spiritual welfare before their departure from this world.

One was uncle Tom's eldest brother, uncle Nat, who went to live and work in Birmingham, England. Uncle Harry and uncle Fred joined him there. (Uncle Harry and his wife auntie Ruby both served in the R.A.F. (Royal Air Force) during the war. Uncle Tom had a picture of them both in uniform on their wedding day taken in his garden at Kiffa where they spent their honeymoon.) Uncle Nat was a lovely man and a wonderful character, he sought to live his faith in a very practical way, helping everyone he could in his neighbourhood, sharing the fruits of his labours in the garden etc. His sister described him as someone who would give away the shirt off his back. His family remember him as a very caring, loving father, noted for his sense of humour. His unexpected death was a great shock for the family, he was just 71 when he died, his body was found in his garden, where he had suffered a fatal heart attack.

The second of the six was uncle Wilbert, he was the farmer who stayed and worked hard on the home farm in Glencross. As well as doing all he could for his family and his church, I believe he sought to serve the Lord until his unexpected death when he was 74 years of age.

It was silage making time and his grandson who was leading the silage from the field into the silage pit, came into the house to have his tea and uncle Wilbert decided he would bring the next load in from the field. He drove to the field, backed the tractor into the trailer, got out to attach the hydraulic pipe and sadly the weight of the trailer pulled the tractor back on top of him. He died in a very short time.

That was a very sad and difficult time for the family.

The third person to return to the church on that night was my father. His name was David; he was about 14 years old. He lived his life serving his Lord in every way he could, he became a Sunday school teacher and Clerk of Session in the eldership of Fannet Presbyterian Church, Kerrykeel, Co. Donegal. He was a very kind, thoughtful, helpful, hard working person who endeavoured to help all who knew him. He did all in his power to teach my brother and I the necessity of loving, following and serving the Lord. He died very unexpectedly at the age of 77.

He and my mother lived about two miles from our home where he visited several times almost every day after his retirement. He was always willing to lend a helping hand in any way he could... he loved and was dearly loved by our children.

The only time he didn't visit daily was when his own sheep were lambing. On Friday night the 14th March 1997, during his lambing season, he did not feel well. I had flu and our daughter Rema who is a nurse was home for the weekend and she took him to see the doctor on Saturday. She went with him into the surgery and was satisfied with the doctor's examination. The doctor suspected he had a hiatus hernia.

Coming home in the car my father said, "The doctor thinks it is not my heart anyway". He still insisted on doing his work during the following week and on the Saturday morning got up around 7.30 am, put the key in the door, made tea and toast. My mother did not get up quite as early. Their bedroom was next door to the living room and when she did get up it was to find him sitting dead on the couch while the tea pot was still warm on the table

The scripture text on his calendar that day read.

Who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver us: in whom we trust that he will still deliver us. 2 Corinthians 1v10

Then it went on to read.

Christ on the cross, answers to God for my sins and saves me. Christ on the throne pleads my cause before His Father and keeps me. Christ in the air will mean my being caught up, when He takes me to be forever with Himself. Glory to His name.

My aunt Alice also trusted the Lord at the same mission as a little girl of eight years of age. She too remained in close fellowship with the Lord and served Him in her quiet, gentle and graceful way, encouraging and teaching her family in the things of God and giving support to the work within her church.

Questions that only God can answer

1. Who put the thought in the mind and heart of R. J. Campbell to allow his staff to leave their work early on that night so many years before?

2. If uncle Tom had not stayed behind on that night, would his brothers have had the courage to return to that church?

3. Had my uncles or my father been depending on getting right with God just before their death what story would I be writing to-day?

I hope any who are in the Lord's service will be encouraged in their work by reading the difference this one night of mission made on not just one family, but on an entire family circle where the seed sown on that night is still bearing fruit two generations later.

Stepping into the Unknown

After serving his time in Campbell's shop in Ramelton, uncle Tom went to work as a shop assistant in Omagh and with the same firm to Drumquin, Co Tyrone. From there he went to work in Maguiresbridge, Co. Fermanagh, where he met and fell in love with the sister of his boss, she had also yielded her life to the will of God and she later went to study at Emmanuel Bible College in Birkenhead, England.

It was around this time that uncle Tom went to work at a Christian book shop in Bangor, while there he too felt the call of God to go to bible college.

They got engaged and both were seeking the will of God for their future when she had an accident and fell down the stairs at the college, hit her head and died in a very short time. Uncle Tom, who was now back working in Ireland, was unable to go and see her as it was war time and because they were not married he was not allowed to travel to England. After sixty years he still spoke of her with great affection and sadness, but resigned to the will of God, he told me with pride how she had led a number of people to the Lord as result of her accident.

Prior to her death she wrote,

“The Lord is more precious to me day by day and oh I just pray that this mind of mine may be able to take in all these great lessons He has for me.”

On victory she wrote and underlined,

” Now thanks be unto God who always leads us forth to triumph with the anointed One and diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place. When you are forgotten, neglected or purposely set at naught and you smile inwardly glorying in the insult or the oversight because thereby counted to suffer with Christ – **that** is victory. When you are content with any food, raiment, climate, society, solicitude or interruption by the will of God – **that** is victory.. When death and life are both alike to you through Christ and to do His perfect will, you delight not in one more than the other – **that** is victory. For through Him you may become able to say, “Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death. The perfect victory is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and then to triumph over ones self. “

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Romans 8 v 37.

“His Will”.

His will is best though all our plans it breaks,
His heart is love, He never makes mistakes,
Why then be fearful, why be so dismayed?
When He is near to comfort and to aid.

His word is sure, His promises are true,
Wait then on God, He shall thy strength renew,
Rest thou content where're His hand may lead,
With heavenly manna He thy soul shall feed.

His way leads on to golden city bright,
Where suns ne'er set, where never cometh night
To that blest City we journey day by day,
Where we shall prove His will was best away.

His will, His word, His way is always best,
May we in quiet confidence just rest,
And let Him choose and plan for us below,
So shall we prove the joy He can bestow.

I don't know whether these writings were authored by her or another, but how meaningful they were to become.

What an amazing testimony to leave for one so young, I believe she was in her early twenties. I am sure her death must have been a very difficult and sad experience for my uncle and for all in the Bible College. Coming to terms with God's purpose in taking to Himself such a wonderful young life, with so much potential and apparent ability to share the Gospel with others, in what appeared to be such an untimely and tragic way must have caused much pain and soul searching.

She also wrote in a previous letter of another student who had also died.

"Oh, our hearts are sad to think of this dear young life only 20 years to be taken away so suddenly. He was found lying on the road near the school unconscious and no one knows how it happened, His name was Parker and he was called to China. I don't think anyone lived closer to the Lord than he did."

Bible School and Work with the Irish Evangelistic Band

Uncle Tom spent a very happy time studying at Barry School of Evangelism in Wales between January 1939 and the end of college term 1941. Christmas 1939 he wrote in his diary, "Happy end to a happy year", and he again recorded on 25th December 1940 although by now air raids were almost a nightly occurrence, "Very happy in the Lord". During his time at the college, he worked on the beach, on the docks with sailors from around the world, as well as taking meetings in many places.

But on completion of his studies he felt that God was calling him back to Ireland, where he began to work with the I.E.B. (Irish Evangelistic Band) in Co. Cavan. It was while working here that his sad bereavement took place.

He first heard about the I. E. B, when his mother sent a newspaper cutting to him about the work, to which he was later accepted.

On the day before he had to go to hospital, he again spoke to me about his experiences at that time. Apparently he and a fellow worker called Bob Graham had a mission near to Bellasis Church, he later became part of that church family and his remains are now buried there at his request. I know that this church and its people

held a very special place in his heart. On uncle Tom and Mr. Graham's first Sunday to the area in 1941 the minister of that church was ill and was unable to preach, Arrangements were being made to bring ministers down from Belfast during his illness, which would mean visiting speakers would have to get a train from Belfast to Cavan town, then a taxi to the church, stay overnight, then return the following day. On hearing of the situation a minister who had attended their gospel and prayer meetings in another area, suggested to presbytery that it was not necessary to cause such an inconvenience and expense when there were two preachers already working in the area.

He told of good numbers attending the missions at that time with many people trusting the Lord for salvation. He spoke of full nights being spent in prayer for the work. I recall with thankfulness attending prayer meetings that were held on a regular basis in his home when I was a child.

I know there are people ministering in our churches to-day because they heard and responded to the faithful preaching of the Word of God at that time.

Marriage

After a time while working with the I.E.B, he missioned at Kiffa House, Ballyjamesduff, where he met and later married May Kennedy. She too loved the Lord and together they served God in her home congregation of Ballyjamesduff Presbyterian Church, where she was organist and he became a committee member, In 1974 he was ordained as a member of session, he was also a Sunday school teacher until that church closed and the congregation was amalgamated with Bellasis where he served the Lord faithfully as Clerk of Session.

Although Uncle Tom preached in many places over the following years and attended I.E.B., Faith Mission and Gospel meetings in Cavan, Monaghan and Fermanagh, he now also farmed the land at Auntie May's family home at Kiffa, where her sister Leah also lived. They had cattle, sheep and pigs, with Auntie May specialising in pigs.

Many Memories

As a family we spent many good holidays in Kiffa where there was always a great welcome for all. My father, Samuel and I would help uncle Tom with hay or whatever job was on hand and my mother helped in the house so that the work would get finished quickly and then we all went on family outings to Dublin, Tara, Butlins Holiday Camp, Shannon Airport or Athlone.

We were all deeply saddened when Leah died in 1974, and then with auntie May in failing health and uncle Tom not keeping well himself, they decided to sell the farm in 1985 to their neighbours who remained their very good and faithful friends, who I am glad to say kept a watchful and caring eye on uncle Tom, which was greatly appreciated by the family, as we all lived so far away..

Uncle Tom was admitted to hospital around the time of auntie May's death and it was discovered his blood count was seriously low, necessitating a blood transfusion which helped him greatly. The donated blood of another made a vast improvement, it gave him back colour in his cheeks, sparkle in his life and strength in his body that was visible to all who met him, in a similar way to that evidenced by others when the blood of Christ was applied by faith to his soul so many years before.

In December 1986 Auntie May too went to be with the Lord. Prior to her death she was in bed for some time and a neighbour who visited her often and the nurse who attend her during her illness, told me at the time of uncle Tom's death of being able to hear her singing praises to the Lord from outside, even before they entered the house.

On the day of her death when uncle Tom entered her room he found her sitting up in bed, taking off her nightdress, something she had not been able to do for a long time.

He asked her what she was doing and she said that she was preparing for death, she wanted him to give her the nightdress that she had in the drawer saying that when the nurse came he was to tell the nurse not to wash her anymore, she was washed in the blood of the Lamb and did not need any more earthly washing.

They then began to talk of who she would meet in heaven, the Saviour, the Old Testament prophets and family members who had died trusting in the Lord.

Shortly before she died, although she had never spoken in tongues before, she now began to sing, apparently she sang from five until seven o'clock in a language unknown to uncle Tom.

The last piece she sang was as printed below:

Under the burden of guilt and care

Under the burden of guilt and care,
Many a spirit is grieving,
Who in the joy of the Lord might share,
Life everlasting receiving

Bearing our burden of guilt, there came
One who is strong to deliver,
Bringing to men, through His wondrous name,
Life “more abundant” for ever.

Burdened one, why will you longer bear
Sorrows from which He releases?
Open your heart, and rejoicing share,
Life “more abundant” in Jesus.

Leaving the mountain, the streamlet grows,
Flooding the vale with a river;
So, from the hill of the Cross, there flows
Life “more abundant” forever.

Oh, for the floods on the thirsty land!
Oh, for a mighty revival!
Oh, for a sanctified, fearless band,
Ready to hail its arrival.

Chorus

Life! Life! Eternal life!
Jesus alone is the giver!
Life! Life! Abundant life!
Glory to Jesus for ever!

Each chorus she sang in English and uncle Tom was able to sing along with her.
It was a very special and meaningful time for them.

Donegal Revisited

While auntie May was unwell, uncle Tom had not been able to visit Donegal very often for a few years. Now he was able to come at least a couple of times each year. He usually stayed with my parents until my mother took unwell, sometime after my father's death, he then stayed with auntie Jean. He always spent Christmas Day with our family and he continued to come after my parents died. Not only I but our children grew very close to him over the years. He always went with auntie Jean to her daughter Jennifer's home on Boxing Day. He loved to get around the extended family circle during these visits and kept a keen interest in all including the family members in England and the Isle of Man.

Farming

When farming uncle Tom was the first person in the area to make silage, much to the disgust of local farmers. Some thought he was just putting good hay to loss. On the day prior to his admission to hospital for the last time he again told me the story of a neighbour who at that time ran out of feed for his animals during the winter. He came to see if uncle Tom had any feed to spare. My uncle took him to the silage pit and questioned whether there would be sufficient for both of them. An agreement was made about a price and that neighbour led silage from uncle Tom's pit (to the best of my recollection) for six weeks and both had sufficient. He said he thought that was a miracle because the following year he cut the same amount of silage, had the same number of animals and there was just enough for his own animals.

Macra

The farming community played a big part in uncle Tom's life for many years. He was greatly involved with the Macra, taking a group of young men to visit his brother's farm in the Isle of Man on one occasion. He maintained he was the one who came up with the idea of the Green Cert. Course. Suggesting, that they could work part-time at home and study while getting a small payment for doing so, there was very little training available for anyone on the land at that time. I know he was treasurer of the local Fane Valley Co-operative for a time. I think it was because of his involvement with the farming organisations and having first hand experience of their many problems that he also took an interest in politics and stood as a candidate for Fine Gael on one occasion. Apparently he was close to being elected but did not stand for election again. It was nice to see a guard of honour formed by both organisations at his funeral. He also was appointed as a Peace Commissioner.

Modes of Transportation

Uncle Tom talked of leaving Rathmullan on a ferry across Lough Swilly to Fahan, getting the train to Derry, buying a bicycle and cycling all the way to Cavan. In his early days he cycled everywhere he needed to go. In latter days he had a Fiat Punto car that he drove as if it were a Ferrari.

A time of trial

Around seven years ago he had to have another blood transfusion, this time after being discharged from hospital he came to stay with my mother for six weeks, my father having died previously. He did not tell anybody but both legs filled with fluid and became very swollen. He returned to Cavan, his legs turned black and one burst above the ankle, he later told me that above the opening it dried out like a prune. I think he was like many of his generation who did not trouble the doctor unless they were dying.

Suffering was nothing new to him. In 1938 at the age of 22 he had ringworm on his face, he was hospitalised for seven weeks. A couple of remedies had been tried before that but to no avail. Apparently he could not shave and there was no medication that could help. He told me a nurse would come into his room every morning with a jug of boiling water in which she immersed cloths and then applied the them to his face. His beard had to be plucked from his face with tweezers. The process had to be continued for some time after he was discharged from hospital.

Now after enduring this problem with his legs for some time he came back to Donegal and asked me for Aloe Vera Gelly. He had heard me say it was good for burns, cuts and wounds, but he did not tell me why he wanted it. After returning to Cavan he used it for a time, then one night his leg was very painful, he sat on the side of the bed, pulled up the leg of his pyjamas, to see above the blackness, his leg was as red as a tomato. He told me he questioned whether or not he would contact the doctor. But in his mind was someone known to him who had both legs amputated because of a similar problem. He decided against, saying, "If I ring the doctor I am for Navan hospital for the chop." Anyhow he had a book to write. I am sure he prayed much that night, but after a few hours he said the redness started to disperse downwards and the dried out area started to crack open like ice. After a few hours he had a bath. He said it was as if he had put treacle into the water. He later showed me his leg when

it was healed, but the blackness never completely cleared.

He continued doing his daily routine, cooking, washing, shopping, attending most meetings within driving distance and of course gardening which he loved. It was evident because he always had a beautiful array of flowers and strawberries. In June of last year when cutting a bush he got a thorn jag in his leg, and sad to say, although the nurse attended to it a couple of times a week it eventually got very badly infected.

God Promised - Who Also Will Do It

“God Promised - Who Also Will Do It” is the title of the booklet that uncle Tom wrote and had printed in 2001. I think it was quite an achievement for an 85 year old. I believe his reason for wanting to do it was because he observed many people who had accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour, but was saddened to see that many were living very weak Christian lives, weakened by their sinful nature, as he had been, unaware that God could give them His power through the Holy Spirit to live for Him. He found that God required His followers to live holy lives, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” (1Peter 1. 16) in other words God required us to be sanctified, just as everything that was used in the temple had to be sanctified, if we were to be used by Him.

I believe the Holy Spirit gave me a very practical illustration of why this is necessary at a point when I too was questioning this same matter. I was setting the dining room table for a special dinner party when I noticed a fingerprint on a water glass, as I cleaned the glass the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, “Yes, you will clean the glass to set it down to a human being, but neither will I use a dirty vessel”.

In giving his life fully and completely to God, uncle Tom had come to know that Jesus’ words were true when He said “I have come that you may have life and have it in all its fullness”. John 10. 10.

Hospitalisation

Although we visited uncle Tom and did all we could this past couple of years he still remained and wanted to remain very independent. He continued to do everything for himself up until two days before going to hospital.

He was a man who never complained (not enough for his own good) but always trusted.

One day, his neighbour Doreen who was always looking out for him, rang me to say she was very concerned. I immediately phoned to see how he was and for the first time he said “bad” and that he would have to go to the doctor.

When I arrived later that day I found that he could only move around very slowly and with great difficulty. He had been to the doctor but because he had an appointment at the hospital on Friday and as this was Monday the doctor gave him antibiotics to tide him over.

I wanted him to come to stay with us in Donegal but he said Cavan was his home. Having spent over sixty years there he knew people no matter where he went and he would like to stay there. We spent two good days together, he was very alert mentally and glad of the company. We talked about everything including quite a lot of what I have now written.

When going to bed the first night I read a poem that was on the mantelpiece in the bedroom, I am sure I read it before but had not remembered what it said. I thought the words were very appropriate and I decided I would give it to uncle Tom on Thursday prior to him going to see the doctors in hospital on Friday It reads:

“He Careth, Yes! He Careth”

”Be not therefore anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself.”

Matthew 6 v 14.

“Casting (or rolling) all your anxiety upon Him, because He careth for you.”

Peter 5 v 7.

“He careth, Yes, He careth!”
There’s One who cares for thee
“Let not thy heart be troubled”
Whate’er thy portion be:
In love He hath appointed
For thee, He knows what’s best,
In His unerring wisdom
Thou may’st calmly rest

“He careth” in the darkness
As well as in the light,

When shadows gather round thee,
And veil Him from thy sight:
When treasured hopes are shattered
And earthly joys grow dim,
He knows thy disappointment,
He careth, - turn to Him
“He careth, Yes! He careth!”
Amid each seeming ill,
When cherished plans are broken
Trust thou His perfect will:
“Tis His skilled hand that weaveth
The threads in the design,
Which He has planned and purposed
For your life and for mine.

“He careth, Yes! He careth!”
Oh rest thee in His love:
“Let not thy heart be troubled”
There’s One who cares above.

F.B.

After spending a good day together on Tuesday I asked him what time he wanted to go to bed. He said he usually liked to be in his room by about twelve o’clock. He moved very slowly to the downstairs bathroom just after midnight and because I had changed sheets and pillows on his bed that day I wanted to see him settled for the night before I would retire myself. Because I thought he was doing his personal hygiene I left him for some time but when he had not emerged by almost 1am, I got concerned and asked if he was alright. He said, “No, I think you had better come in.” I found that he was unable to get to his feet. Because of how he was during the day I thought that when he got his feet under him and with help he would be alright.

I did not know until he told me the next day that he had felt fine while he was in the kitchen but when he went towards the bathroom he knew that something was badly wrong with his legs. Anyhow with my help he emerged from the bathroom, supporting himself on the other side with a chair, door handle and hallstand, he managed until he was on the fourth step of the stairs, then he dropped with both knees unto that step and he could not move in any direction. He was holding on

tightly to the banister and he began to shake. It was now almost 1.30am, I could not move from behind him to get my mobile phone in my coat pocket on the hallstand. I feared he might take a heart attack or a stroke, I audibly said “Lord please give me strength, wisdom and knowledge to know what to do.” By now my legs were beginning to go numb and I said uncle Tom, “You are going to have to allow yourself to come backwards onto me down the stairs”. Although he was afraid he was going to fall I got him to catch the upright rails with his right hand, then release his grip on the banister and gradually ease himself until I was able to lay his head and shoulders on the floor. I then got cushions under his head while I rang a next door neighbour and for an ambulance. Thankfully both came very quickly and he was safely taken to hospital.

My reason for telling this in detail will become apparent when you reread the previous poem remembering that I had laid it aside the day before and by now it was almost 2.00 am. Please reread them now.

God's Providence

When I picked it up and reread this poem on my return from the hospital at five thirty am after seeing Uncle Tom settled. It spoke of the providence of our God. In the dictionary providence is explained as God's foreseeing protection of his creatures. One thing I wondered at when uncle Tom and I were earlier on the stairs was why was I not shaking? While I was anxious for my uncle, how come I was calm? I was even more surprised when I now read the other writings on the mantelpiece.

The first read,

I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me. *Ezra.7. 25*

The Good hand of my God. *Nehemiah 2. 8*

“He moves with ease on life's dark road,
Who leans upon the grace of God.”

The second piece read,

My Peace I give unto you. *John 14. 27*

My strength is made perfect in weakness. *2 Corinthians 12. 9.*

You can imagine how felt when I read these words at 5.30 am after the happenings and questionings of the earlier hours. I read on.

Perfect peace in times of danger,
Peace that tells us He is near:
Perfect strength in hours of weakness,
Perfect love that casts our fear.

I had been questioning earlier why uncle Tom should have this happen to him and now read the third piece.

Then shall I know...
Not till the loom is silent
And the shutters cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why
The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

The question I now ask is, were these happenings necessary for uncle Tom, for me, or perhaps for you?

The Morning After

When I went to visit uncle Tom in the hospital the morning after, it was full to overflowing and he was still lying on a trolley, (I had counted nine people on trolley's lying in the darkened corridors during the night and the A & E was also full to capacity). His first words were, "I don't think I will be back in Kiffa again", but I could tell that he was at peace, perhaps relieved and I believed resigned to the will of God.

I shared with him all I had read during the night and we both agreed that God indeed had been our strength and help in time of trouble.

The Valley ahead

Uncle Tom now had almost nine weeks of weakness, restlessness and even times of frustration as even more infections attacked his body while being moved from hospital, to nursing home, to hospital. At this point I would like to thank the nurses, doctors and hospital staff who were good and kind to him during his illness, and all who visited and did all they could for him during this time.

Although now in a weakened state his mind was still very active and still very much on the things of God. One visitor inquired about his whereabouts from a nurse one day to be told “that’s the boy that is down there trying to save us.”

On another occasion when my husband Eric and I were present a lady from his church came to visit, by now he was not making conversation but would clearly answer if someone spoke to him. I asked him, did he see he had a visitor, as he was lying with his eyes closed he said, “Oh yes.” On trying to get him to interact with her I said, “She wants you to get well and get back to church,” he said, “When I go back to Ballis, I will go back in a different form and that won’t be until the Lord Jesus Christ calls and his timing will be perfect.” He then with his eyes still closed went on to preach a 10 minute sermon, word and theology perfect, it was a very special time and I was just sorry we did not have a tape recorder. I think the main points he made were, that no one would be in heaven unless they repented of sin and accepted Jesus Christ, the Son of God as Saviour, nothing else would be acceptable to God. He went on to say that it did not matter who we are, what we are, what age, colour, creed, nationality, whether poor or rich. Yet all who repented and trusted in Jesus will be accepted by God through faith in His Son.

We had a few other occasions to pray and do daily Bible readings with him. From he went into hospital he was not able to read for himself, in fact, all earthly activity seemed to be left aside. He who had been so very independent now became very dependant on the nurses and so it continued until he passed into the presence of his Lord on the 28th May 2005.



God's Perfect Timing

We were not to know just how perfect God's timing was to be. Uncle Tom died on Saturday 28th and was buried on Sunday 30th uncle Tom's sister Auntie Jean had to be in Scotland on the Wednesday. His minister Rev. Mrs. Jean Mackarel had to be in England the following weekend. His close friends and neighbours George and Doreen Wilton had their 40th wedding anniversary the following weekend. His nephew David who is a member of Parliament in the Isle of Man was able to come for the funeral because it was a Bank Holiday and Parliament was not in session and there was just one seat on the only flight from the island. Both my brother's family and our family had a function we needed to help with at our Church the following week and our son was getting married in England the week after.

Reading and Study

Although I knew that my uncle was an avid reader it wasn't until we were sorting out his effects that I really understood the extent of his reading and study. I knew that he always carried a bible in his pocket and I saw him take it out and read from it on many occasions, but it wasn't until I placed that open bible in his coffin prior to his burial that I realised the full extent of his study. In fact when the neighbouring Roman Catholic priest came to pay his respects, he asked what was so special on the particular page where I had opened it. He was amazed when I flicked the book from back to front and front to back to discover that it was underlined in every page throughout the entire book. That was just one of several bibles as well as other study books, not to mention hundreds of writings, bible studies and notes found. I believe that uncle Tom did not worship the written word, but he worshipped the one who was the Word of God made flesh and dwelt among us. He read, lived, studied and practiced what he believed to be the Will of God for mankind.

A Few Words of Appreciation

It was nice to be able to put faces to the names of so many of uncle Tom's friends who we felt we knew because we had heard about them so many times over the years. Yet we did not have the opportunity to meet many of them until they came to his home to pay their last respects at the time of his death. It was also nice to hear of their memories and their words of appreciation for friendships shared. I, on behalf of all our family would like to thank all who visited uncle Tom in hospital, and all who came to the house or to the funeral.

We are indebted to Rev. Mackarel for her faithfulness at the time of uncle Tom's illness and for the memorable funeral service. We offer our sincere appreciation. I know that uncle Tom much appreciated Rev. Mackarel's ministry and dedication to all she endeavoured to do in the Lord's service. It was nice to hear her call him "The Encourager".

Conclusion

I know that prior to his death uncle Tom questioned if he had done all he could for his Lord and Master, I hope in some small way, my putting his testimony on paper will help to complete the work he sought to do and perhaps with God's help draw even one soul to the Saviour whom he loved and served.

I believe that this story is about a man who was faithful to his God, but I know that it is also a story about our God who was faithful to this man.

Tom Anderson trusted the Lord Jesus as Saviour at 16 years of age and died still trusting his Lord at 88 years of age.

His was a life lived with little thought for things of monetary value but it was a life rich in the things that matter.



Proceeds to Bellasis Church, Co. Cavan

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