

## Chapter 5

### *THE PEARL OF THE ORIENT*

Hong Kong, the "pearl of the Orient" lived up to its name. From the moment we arrived at KaiTak airport, we fell in love with its colours and smells, noise and people. Anne shopped in its street markets, often late at night, with no fear, and I enjoyed its sporting facilities with tennis twice a week and swimming at the Forces Club.

We soon found ourselves involved in the Christian life of the community. I had the privilege of friendship with Jackie Pullinger at the time when she was just beginning the work that had such an impact among the drug addicts of Hong Kong. It was with her that I went into the 'walled city' of Kowloon and experienced a Bible class in 'the dragon's den'.

Each month Anne and I would trek across the countryside to an orphanage where we would tell stories about Jesus, followed by chicken's foot soup and boiled rice. I sang in a Chinese choir, even daring to take solo parts in an Easter cantata ... in Cantonese !

John Bechtel had been a missionary in Hong Kong since before the 2nd WW. He had developed a printing office and had pastored the Waterloo Road Alliance Church. He was now retired and his son John Jr. was overseeing the work plus several rooftop schools. The senior Bechtel was not retired from serving the Lord, however, as each week the living room of his home would hold up to thirty British military personnel for a Bible study. Among these would be a dozen or so Nepalese soldiers, Ghurkas, known for their bravery and held in high esteem by their comrades. It was my privilege each week to teach this study, sometimes alternating with a dear old lady who had served the Lord in China before the Japanese invasion.

Little did I realise that our being in Hong Kong, and being part of this Bible Study group, would have a profound impact on our future! Another one of God's divine appointments!

During this time we again applied for visas to enter Canada though teaching posts were not being advertised outside the country any more. Instead, I received a letter from the Superintendent of Schools for San Francisco. His nephew had visited our home in Hong Kong while on 'rest & recreation' leave from the battlefield in VietNam and, on returning home, had asked his uncle to invite me to teach in California. He wrote that, should we ever arrive in San Francisco, he would do his best to find me a position. Therefore, in the summer of 1969 we were set to fly to the west coast of the United States, but a government change of policy in the corridors of Westminster changed all that. It had been policy that all British service personnel could be funded for the total costs of finding their own ways 'home' from any foreign field. That meant that we could travel to any place and be funded the given costs of returning to the United Kingdom. In this way our total costs to San Francisco or Canada would be met. In May of 1969, due to escalating military costs, the policy was changed so that all personnel had to be repatriated by military plane, with no cash payments. As we could not afford a speculative visit to California or western Canada, having no job guaranteed, our plans came to another halt. Another door closed! Another disappointment!

I hurriedly applied for teaching posts in Great Britain, knowing that, if I obtained evidence of three 'refusals' the British Army would cover my salary for one term, ie; up to the new year. The refusals came in and we flew back to Wales and family.

When the new school term started we were staying at Anne's parents' home while our own home was being vacated by the tenants who had lived in it while we were overseas.

The lady in the offices of the Glamorgan Education Board answered my questions simply.

"Yes, it will be all right for your daughters to remain out of school for the two weeks it would take to move back to your home."

"No, they do not have to register there and then have to transfer in two weeks time."

I was just about to put the phone down when she asked me a surprising question.

"Excuse me, sir. Is it possible that your name is Mr Evans, Gareth Evans from Hong Kong ?"

When I answered her, still wondering how she knew my name, she told me that if I went to Ogmores Grammar School, a job would be waiting for me.

Ogmores Grammar was a highly regarded school at the head of one of the valleys running north from our home. Its most famous son was Lynn 'the leap' Davies, world record holder in the long jump until Bob Beamon flew through the sky in the rarified air of Mexico City in the Olympics of 1968. The sidewalks in Nantymoel, Lynn's home village, were painted in different colours, each measuring the exact length of his record jump.

It would take just fifteen minutes for me to drive there every day, once we were back 'home' in the little bungalow we had bought just after our wedding.