

# Get Up and Go

## 43 Short Stories by Ray Young

### 1. The Touch of the Master's Hand

Fictional

As I was walking along a river's bank on a hot sunny day, I looked to my left and in a field of long tall grass I saw what looked like a tumbled down old hut. My curiosity got the better of me. I just had to look in this now abandoned hut. My eyes almost popped out of my head: there it was, an old Morris Minor 1000 wood framed traveller car, and it had the split window screen. For people who know about cars this was a vintage dream!

I realised that with the help of a good friend I could get it out on a low-loader. Having found the owner of it, he told me if I wanted it I could have it: I can tell you, my heart was beating fast and I could almost cry with excitement.

Dave took one look at it and said, "You are nuts mate, it will take ages to put it right." My reply was, "Just watch what I can do with the old girl!"

The car was secured on the low loader, we were on our way to my workshop. I started right away, stripping everything off the body until it was only the shell left. Rust holes in the sub frame, and the floor and wings, sure it was going to take time and a lot of love for the old girl. A friend of mine who was a welder and platter did the most amazing job for me. "Thanks a bundle, Kev, you are a great mate!"

It was all down to me now. I sanded down the wood and varnished the frame, putting protective tape on the wood I sprayed the shell with two coats of undercoat in grey. Next three coats of original black paint, the old girl was coming alive right there before me.

Kev came to have a look at her. His mouth opened wide when he saw her; "You are a master craftsman" he said as he shook my hand. Kev gave me a hand to put the engine and gear box in again, the prop shaft was then connected up. "Fancy a Beer?" I asked Kev. "Not half, mate" he said.

After about four days when all the paint was dry I sprayed two coats of heavy duty clear lacquer on it. Under the workshop lights she no longer looked an old girl, she shone like a new car. In fact, she took on a new life. I put all the dashboard instruments back again. Next came the leather seats, all having been treated with special leather oil and smelling as new leather seats should. I buffed up the front and rear bumpers to get rid of any small specks of rust. The hubcaps were next and the head light trims. The tyres were replaced by new ones; the exhaust pipe was also replaced with a new chrome sleeve on the end. The windows were sparkling

also, she would have been the pride of any vintage car show. When Kev saw her he said to me, "The touch of the Master's Hand!"

The moral of this story.

If we are like the old car feeling weighed down by our sin and feeling abandoned, and no good for anything, let's get down on our knees and ask Jesus to forgive us, for everything we have said or done. That's why he died for us and gave his life for us on the cross. Let's give our life to him, he will forgive us, he loves us all! He wants to be our heavenly father and we his children! So give him your heart and spend forever with him in heaven. May our Lord and Saviour bless you!

Just Ray

## 2. The Tale of the Little Puffer Engine

Fictional

At the end of a branch line was a large engine shed where all the engines were kept for the night. They were serviced and repaired when needed. They were big engines and looked in very good condition; their paint work shone and was polished to a high standard.

In the far corner stood a little engine. He was nothing to look at. In fact he looked a bit scruffy to say the least. All the other engines would laugh at him and say "What good is he? He's far too small to pull a heavy load."

The little engine felt so dejected and downright sad. No one took any notice of him.

Early each morning, just as the light was breaking, the drivers and stokers would come into the engine shed to get all the engines ready for another day's work. They made sure the boilers were full of water and the stoker would shovel plenty of coal into the fire box. The stoker would light a fuel soaked rag and throw it into the fire box to start the fire, the driver would watch the boiler pressure gauge till it reached the right temperature and maintained it. When the fire was going well it was time to get moving and on the rails ready for another day's work.

The little engine said to himself, "No one wants to fire me up." Just then a driver and stoker came over to him. They said, "We had better fire him up or he will rust away." The stoker filled his fire box right up with coal and filled his boiler with water. He lit a fuel soaked rag and threw it into the fire box.

In a short time the fire was going well. The driver watched the boiler pressure gauge until it reached the right temperature.

The little engine could not believe this was happening to him. The driver hitched the heavy coal wagons to him with a full load of coal. The driver said to the stoker, "Let's see what he can do now."

In a very short time, the little engine was going well, pulling his heavy load along a level straight line. But just up ahead they came to a steep gradient. The little engine was feeling the strain now, but kept saying to himself, "Yes I can, yes I can." As he started climbing the gradient he was getting slower so the stoker shovelled more and more coal into the fire box.

By now he was struggling a bit. He was determined not to give up at any cost. He said all the more, "Yes I can, yes I can." At last, he reached he reached the top of the gradient. Coming down he was picking up speed. The driver had to apply the brakes for a time but now he said to himself "I knew I could, I knew I could."

When they got back to the engine shed, they both said to him "Well done little fellow!" That night when all the engines were back in the shed, the word went round about the little engine. They could not stop congratulating him. They never made fun of him again!

The moral of this story.

When people talk about you or say you cannot do anything right, don't believe them. Each one of us has skills of some sort. Believe in yourself and prove them wrong. Your skill or gift may be a help to a neighbour in need. Remember, "One good turn deserves another!"

Just Ray

### 3. How to Become an Anti Wimp

Factual

While I was sitting in my chair in my flat a short time ago, the pain and discomfort in my left leg was making me feel so sorry for myself. I gave myself a good talking to: what right had I to feel this way? When brave young fit men are sent out to fight in battle fields in foreign lands. Many of them have arms and legs blown off by land mines; others have lost their sight, while others have sustained brain damage by shell shock and such like. They come home again broken in body, with lives not what they were.

I once had an encounter with a man in a wheel chair who had no legs at all. No way was I going to pass him by. While I was talking to him, he told me about what had happened to him. He was on patrol when he stepped on a hidden land mine. I can tell you, it was all I could do to hold my tears back! I can never pass by anyone like that, ever. They give their young lives for us and people like us. So in comparison to my little pain and discomfort it makes me feel so humble. I no longer feel a great wimp.

Remember the story of the Good Samaritan. He stopped to help the man and cared for him.

When you meet someone like my friend, don't pass by as if he does not matter. Thank him for his brave action. A friendly smile could make his day! And no, you are not a wimp. Let him see someone cares, and a little prayer could make all the difference to him! I know the Lord will bless you for this!

The moral of this story.

Don't let's get so wrapped up in our lives and what is going on that we develop a tunnel vision and are not aware of the needs of others. Can I encourage you to be like the good Samaritan and stop. Talk with them, offer help where it is needed? I can tell you the Lord will bless you ten-fold, of that I am sure!

Just Ray

## 4. Going the Extra Mile

Fictional

I lived and worked in a metropolis. The pace of city life was somewhat in top gear. I rushed here and there and never had time to stop and relax. Being in the motor trade I had to look well-dressed at all times and be polite to the clients even when they appeared to be boring nerds. I could tell when they came into the showroom, showing off all their bling and diamond rings and Rolex watches. The way they looked at you, I'm sure they wanted you to jump to attention. I never did!

Well, after some years of this, I decided to make a move to find a place in the country. I visited a well-known estate agent. As I looked at what was on offer, I found a cottage that would be just right for me.

In less than a month I settled into my dream cottage. In no time at all, the friendly folks of this little village made me feel very welcome. The post master and his wife who ran the little general store said "Welcome to our little village."

They asked me where my cottage was. When I told them, they said "That was the old vicarage." They told me the old parson died six months ago. "He was a grand old boy: we all thought well of him. He now rests in peace next to the church."

As we were talking, an old man came into the store.

"Good morning, Jeff" the post master said. "Meet our new neighbour who lives in the old parsonage."

The old man turned to me. "How-do, friend."

I watched him as he placed his shopping trolley inside the door. He shuffled off round the little store picking things he needed, but there were items on the top shelf he could not quite reach.

I came up to him and said, "Let me help you, Jeff."

He gave me a smile.

"I'm not as good as I was a few years ago," he said, "but I get by."

The shop keeper's wife told me he was the head gardener at the big house just outside the village, Lord Blandford's place. His lordship gave him a little cottage on the estate rent-free.

I helped Jeff to load up his trolley. Then he went up to the counter to pay his bill.

"How far do you have to go?" I asked him.

"Just about a mile," he replied.

"OK let's go together, Jeff."

"You don't have to do this."

"I want to do it," I said. "I will pull the trolley and you can hang onto my arm if that will help you."

When we arrived at the cottage it did not look bad outside but when I went inside it was quite run down and not altogether tidy. The smell was almost over-powering, but at least he did not mind it.

I asked Jeff, "Is there anything else I could do for you while I am here?"

"Could you fetch two logs for my fire? They are stacked at the back of the house."

Jeff said to me, "Take this short cut back to the village. Go through my back gate and the path is to your left. If you meet any of the estate workers just tell them you have been to Jeff's place; they will be OK with that."

When I got back to the village store, the post master thanked me for doing that for Jeff.

"It's nothing at all," I said.

The moral of this story.

Let's be helpful to those who are less blessed than ourselves. Jesus said, if we do it for people like Jeff, we are doing it as unto him! Until the next time, enjoy this little story, and I hope the Lord will bless you all if you do it unto him!

Just Ray

## 5. Bengie the Faithful Sheep Dog

Fictional

As I was taking one of my rambles on my own down country lanes that took my fancy, I came upon a bridle path. As it was to my left, I made my way towards a two bar stile. I climbed over it, and there was the most breath-taking view I have ever seen. The rolling hills in the far distance and tall trees in sporadic clumps gave shade to a flock of sheep while others were contented to graze on the rich green grass. Despite the hot morning, the sun beat down on them.

My mind went right to the composer Johann Sebastian Bach's music, "Sheep may safely graze."

I just stood there with my heart beating fast. I looked up to the sky and with tears in my eyes I cried "This is the creation of the master creator."

I walked on down this track and came to a remote little farm. The farmer's wife was sitting on a bench with two collie dogs. They ran up to me barking, with their tails wagging frantically.

She called out to me, "It's OK, they won't harm you: they just want to be patted. Would you like a drink?" she asked me.

"Thank you very much," I said.

I sat under the shade of a large tree. She brought out a flagon of home-made cider.

"Have a sip of this. It's our own brew we make in our barn."

Both of the dogs were looking at me. I could almost imagine what they were thinking: "It's alright for you mate, you are enjoying your drink. We want another pat."

I asked the farmer's wife, "Are they the only two dogs you have?"

"No," she replied, "we have one more but he is retired now. Good old Bengie – you could trust him with your life. Come and meet him," she said.

We walked behind the farm house and into the annexe with wide clear glass windows that looked out on the fields of grazing sheep. There was old Bengie lying on a comfortable doggy mattress, his head resting on his paws.

I bent down on my knees and looked at his tired old face. He looked at me with eyes that were glazed now, eyes that were once sharp and bright.

She said, "He cannot walk any more. His legs will not take his weight now."

I gently stroked his head and said, "Bengie I am so pleased to meet you."

I can tell you, I had a lump in my throat as big as a rock, and my eyes filled with tears.

"We sometimes put his mat on a wheelbarrow and take him out in the fields to be near the sheep, although he cannot see them too well now, and can only faintly hear them as his hearing has almost gone."

I thanked her for the time she had let me spend with them. As I made my way back down the track again with tears still in my eyes, I looked up to the sky and prayed, "O Lord, thank you for this wonderful landscape I am so privileged to enjoy, and my time spent with old Bengie and the wonderful farmer's wife."

The moral of this story.

We may have worked for many years serving our Lord and given our all for his praise and glory, but now we must take things a bit easily. And when the Lord takes us home to be with him for ever, he will welcome us with the greeting, "Well done my good and faithful servant."

Well it's just me again – Ray

I want you to enjoy this story, so can I suggest you sit in a comfortable chair in a relaxed state of mind. Let your imagination transport you to this country lane and behold the panoramic view I encountered. Also to meet old Bengie, the sheep dog. Enjoy.



## 6. The Rebirth of the V-W Camper Van

Fictional

I was sitting at home in the flat one night when my phone rang. At first I was not too sure who it was. I had to think who I was talking to.

“It’s me, Phil, your old mate. It’s been a long time since we had a chat. Myself and Jill and the kids are moving down to Cornwall in a week or so. Remember I have an old V-W camper van in my garage I am not taking with me, so I knew you fancied my old girl. How about if I let you have her for a grand, if that’s OK with you?”

I almost screamed down the phone “Yes, yes mate. She will do for me. Beside all this are you still going to that church you like – what’s its name, the Elim or something like that? Well never mind, get the V-W van over to me. I cannot wait to make a start on it.”

“Well all the best mate, and keep strong in the faith.”

Phil arrived with the van on a low loader the next day. He helped me to get it on my hydraulic ramp. I was now standing underneath it and was pleased to see no rust on the floor of it. The paint work had seen better days but over all she was looking good.

I lowered it back on the floor again and took all the windows out, then covered the frames with heavy duty brown paper. The next job would be a big one. I sanded the whole van down with a power sander. Having blown all the dust off I washed it down by hand.

I took a little break while she was drying out. I heard someone ring the door bell. It was another mate, Bill.

“What are you working on now?” he asked me.

“You must see this, mate. You will not believe your eyes.”

Bill’s mouth opened, his eyes almost popping out of his head.

“You jammy beggar, you have all the luck.”

“Do you want a brew? You can make the tea while I get my under paint ready. I’m sorry to hear about Phil going. We are going to miss him. I made time for him. He kept on to me to give my life to God. I used to say, ‘When I get round to it. I am enjoying my life at the moment.’ He said to me, ‘Now is as good a time as any and you could have a better life in Jesus.’”

“Do you know, you and Phil should have started vicars anonymous.”

“We keep on praying for you, Bill, and will carry on till we have you in the fold. Well, I have to get on: this paint work will not wait.”

It did not take long to spray the whole van in light grey. It would take about four hours for it to dry with my industrial heat on full power. I then had to rub it down by hand. It was done with lots of love for the girl. She would rise like the phoenix and become something of beauty again with the help of the master’s hand. The upper half would be in royal blue, with the lower part in blinding white. Each colour

would have three coats in a gloss finish. Then the final coat would be a hard industrial lacquer. The inside of the van needed a good valet, not much more than that.

My heart was pounding as the old girl was taking on a new life again in front of me. With all the windows now back in place again, she was worth her weight in gold. The only thing I added to the rear bumper was sensor lights that would tell the driver how close he was to an obstacle.

I rang Bill. "Come and see what the old girl looks like now."

When he saw her, he was speechless. The hub caps sparkled. The workshop lights showed her off so well.

The moral of this story.

When we give our sad old lives to him he will transform us into a life worth living, so don't be like my mate Bill. Why leave it till tomorrow? Do it today. Jesus never promised we won't have difficult times, but this I know: he will be at our side and never leave us alone. I pray this story will help you and bless you!

Just Ray

## 7. The Leader of the Pack

Fictional

In a small well-known village not far from the Surrey hills, a group of bikers, all friends, girls and guys, loved to ride in the hills and other places of interest on a Sunday morning. They were not in any way connected to the Hells Angels.

The leader of the pack, his name was Fang. When he laughed, he had two fang-like teeth, one each side of his mouth, hence his name. He had his own used car showroom. As far as I know, he did rather well.

As for the girls, Jo had her own beauty parlour. Now she was a living doll. A few of the guys were round her like bees round a honey pot! She would say to them, "I am not ready for a fellow yet. I'll let you know when. I prefer my bike better."

At the moment, they all got on well and had a lot of laughs together. Then they had the most tragic news come to them. Fang was hit by a speeding car driver who did not stop. When the police and paramedics arrived, Fang was dead. His bike was a total write-off.

We all hoped the police would find the driver who did this to Fang. His or her car must have extensive damage to it so it should not be too hard to find it.

We asked Fang's mum and dad if we could ride in front of the hearse. We would ride two by two. On the day we did just that. We also had a police rider in front of us.

We were making our way to Randall's Park crematorium. We all knew Fang would love this mark of respect to him. His family was in the limousine with a police rider behind them. All went as well as any funeral could go.

We all rode out to a quiet part of the Surrey Hills and let our emotions take over. We cried and hugged each other and that bonded us together more than ever!

We needed a new leader, so about a week later we all talked about how to go about this painful decision. It started off well, who would make a good leader, but some of the guys were getting a bit argumentative as to who it should be.

Jo, bless her, said "Let's take a vote on this and whoever gets the most votes will be our new leader." She always talks sense, that girl.

Well now, most of the votes fell in favour of Phil, a very good choice as he is very experienced and knows his way around the country-side. Both he and his girl friend Jill will give our pack a very good image.

We have a new rider with us now, his name is Ray. He seems to be a likeable guy. He rides a 600cc Harley Davidson. The chrome work shines and the silver paint work is something else. He told us he is a Christian and goes to a very lively evangelical church in Knaphill.

"Don't worry," he said, "I will not be preaching to you all. How about if we all rode up on our bikes? You would be very welcome on Sunday at 10 a.m. It might be a shock for the vicar and congregation! It would be a bit different with us all in our leathers. After the service we could all go for a ride! I've got to tell you, he is a very with it vicar."

Well, I hope you will enjoy my story again.

The moral of this story.

No matter what group or groups we belong to, let our light shine for Jesus and pray for them that they will give their lives to him. So till the next time, may the Lord bless you all.

Just Ray

## 8. Tyson the Rat Vs The Ginger Tom Cat

Fictional

Tyson was the king rat and ruled over all the other rats in the area he thought he owned.

He was no push-over. He would take on anyone that would dare challenge him.

They lived in a woodland glade. Food was no problem to them as there was an allotment nearby. A daily visit without being seen was quite an adventure for them.

One day, Tyson was on his own. All was going well until he came face to face with a rather big ginger tom cat. They looked at each other eyeball to eyeball.

The tom cat said to Tyson, "I am going to have you, mate."

Tyson said to him, "You have no chance of that old boy."

The tom crouched down, ready for an attack on Tyson. He made advances towards Tyson, who stayed still until the cat was almost near enough to strike. He stuck out his left paw in the hope that Tyson would run away, but Tyson ran in circles round his left side. As the cat tried to get him, Tyson stopped and ran circles from the right now.

The tom tried again to hit out at Tyson, but he became so confused.

Tyson was now at the back of the tom. He could not miss this chance. He lunged at the tom's tail and sank his sharp teeth in it.

With a loud screech, the tom ran off for his life. Tyson called after him, "I told you I was no push-over."

Just then some of the other rats joined Tyson for a good tuck-in. That was one of many feasts they had. Their favourite vegetables were the tomatoes, carrots and leeks.

While they were at the allotment, Tyson said to the other rats, "We have had a good meal, so now let's take a look around a bit and see if there are any more good places we can find food. Be very quiet now in case anyone is around."

As they were walking around, who should they meet but the ginger tom cat. He stopped and took one look at all the rats and thought, "I am not taking all that lot on." As he looked at Tyson, he backed off a bit.

"Come for more of the same trouble?" Tyson asked him.

At that, the cat turned around and ran for the safe shelter of a garden shed that was open.

Having found more delicious food they could take on a later date, the rats made their way home again. Tyson said to the little pack, "Now listen to me. I will not be with you forever to defend you so you must toughen up or that ginger tom will have you all for ready meals, so watch him at all times."

It was a pleasant summer evening in the woodland glade and everyone was enjoying their fruit and veg spoils. Suddenly one of the younger rats called for Tyson to come quickly. The ginger tom and a big black cat were making their way towards the glade.

Tyson picked a big young rat and said to him, "Come with me: they want a fight, let's give it to them."

The tom and his mate stopped and looked at Tyson and his mate. Tyson said, "You take the black one, and I will take the tom. When I say go, rush them. OK?"

In no time at all, the tom was on his back. Tyson was all over him. The young rat had the black cat on his side and pinned him down. There was ginger fur and black fur flying everywhere. The fight only lasted two minutes or so. Tyson and his mate were heroes of the day. As for the cats, they were never seen again!

The moral of this story.

When we come up against a problem that would seem to overwhelm us, we get in a state of fear and don't know how we will manage. It's then we tell the Lord about it and leave it with him. Remember how David killed Goliath. He was a servant of the Lord. As Goliath fell to the ground his last thought must have been, 'I cannot believe it – nothing has ever entered my head like this before!' Then David cut his head off. The Lord said he would never leave us in times of trouble.

Till the next time, Just Ray

## 9. God's Panoramic Landscape

Factual

Many years ago while my spiritual life was in a bad way, in fact it was almost nil, I took a drive to the Devil's Punch Bowl at Hindhead. It was a beautiful Sunday morning. The sun was high in the sky. As I was making my way up the A3 I felt so at one with nature. This was better than sitting in a wooden pew getting bored with some rambling preacher who did not know how to stop before the entire congregation fell asleep. Somehow, I can never see this will ever happen at Holy Trinity Knaphill or St. Saviour's at Brookwood.

Oh dear, I am rambling now, so I must get on with it.

I always love a challenge, so I was determined to go down the bowl's steep side rather than take the path. All was going well until I almost lost my footing. I was not too far from the bottom now.

I was enjoying the breath-taking view when I heard the sound of running water. I just had to find out where it was coming from and sure enough, it was a stream cascading over some large rocks.

I was sitting about two metres from it, spell bound, when I thought I saw the bushes move in front of me and suddenly a large roe deer with her baby came up to this stream for a drink.

I sat there motionless. I was holding my breath so much I thought that I would pass out. I don't think I will ever see anything like that again!

After they had their drink, they looked at me. I could almost see the colour of their eyes. I hope they thought I was part of the scenery. They turned and went into the bushes again.

I made my way to this little stream and put my hand into the clear cold water and had a drink myself. I sat by the water and looked up to the sky, and with a bit of emotion I said, "Oh Lord, I know I am not where I should be, and forgive me, I need your help."

I continued on a bit more until I reached the bottom of the bowl. Looking back up the bowl, it seemed a long way up. Rather than going back the same way, I crossed the bowl and started to climb up the other side.

At last, I reached the top. By now I was breathing quite a bit, but it is a walk I will long remember, seeing the deer and the sun glistening on the clear water.

Well, I have been on a roller coaster in my life, but remember what Jesus said; "I will never leave you, ever." I have since given my whole life to him, and I've never been so stable or blessed in my life like it is now.

### The moral of this story.

When we see what man has done to God's beautiful world, it's not changes for the better, it's through greed, selfishness and moral decay. Let us who are Christians hold up the light of Christ and let our lives shine for him. Pray for friends and neighbours that they will find Jesus through our testimonies. May our Lord bless you all. We are going through a very hard time now! Till the next one. Just Ray

## 10. The Good Life

Factual

I cannot remember what year it was but there was a comedy serial that ran for some time, Tom and Barbara. They gave up city life for a simple life in the suburb of the city, to be self-sufficient. They had a house that would do the job for them. They turned their fairly large garden into a holding and removed all the grass. Tom made a large vegetable garden with all sorts of home grown greens etc. He made a hen house with plenty of space, room for them to run about in. Next he constructed a pen for his ducks with a little pond for them to enjoy. Strawberry beds were then laid out. They had all that was needed to make a good life.

Tom and Barbara struggled at first but the more they persevered the better it became for them.

The neighbor next door came round to make fun of them both. Gerry said to them, "You will not make this work now or ever."

Tom's quick response was, "Yes we will, mate. Just you wait and see over the next months."

All the garden was doing very well. Tom made sure he sprayed the correct feed the plants needed. Even Gerry had to admit Tom was right.

Barbara said, "If you stop taking the Mickey, we might give you some of our veggies for your Sunday lunch."

The only problem was, when it rained for days, the ground became quite muddy, so it was off with the trainers and on with the green Wellington boots. Sometimes Tom and Barbara almost got stuck in the mud and they would laugh a lot about it.

The news got around about the good life, as they were now known.

Well now we have our own Good Life living in Woking, 'Tom and Barbara'. They have made their back garden lawn into twelve square metres of veg patch. Tom hurt his back slightly preparing the ground, but with a little rest he's doing OK now. So with the next harvest festival, who knows, we may see some prize vegetables on show, or fruit. So I can wish them all success with their good life project. So well done Tom and Barbara!

The moral of this story.

If you have a gift or talent don't keep it to yourself; share it with our church family, because you could be a blessing to someone in need. Remember what Jesus said, "If you do it to one of the least, you are doing it as unto me." So get the knitting needles out and put them to work! How about embroidery. A nice patch quilt that someone could appreciate. "As you do it unto me." God bless every one of my family at H/T.

Till the next one. Just Ray



## 11. How Green is the Grass over There

Factual

A number of years ago when I was a lot fitter than I am now, I would get on my bike and take a long ride, sometimes as much as thirty miles. My racing days were at an end by then, so my pace was quite comfortable.

One time when I was on my own I just had the feeling that another rider was catching me up. I looked behind me and was surprised to see Tony Doyal the one time Olympic rider. I am not obliged to say what team he rode in, but it was one that was well known.

He came along beside me. "How are you doing, Ray? Still on the racing circuit?" he asked me.

"Not any more," I said. "I just ride to keep fit. I'll take on thirty miles or there about. How about you?"

"This is one of my training rides today. About fifty miles will do for me. See you again some time," and with that he took off like a bullet. Well, my excuse is that he is younger than me, but what a rider!

I made my way from Chertsey to Runnymede to Windsor and then on to Cookham, just bypassing Maidenhead. I know that area well having raced there a number of times. It was time to stop for elevenses, a nice mug of coffee and an over-sized sausage roll.

The lady who served me from her mobile tea bar said to me, "Have you come far, love?" When I told her I had cycled from the other side of Woking, her remark was "You're a fit looking lad." With a cheeky grin, I said, "You're not bad yourself."

She asked me, "Are you from Scotland?" With a big smile she said "All you Scots are just the same, good but cheeky."

I looked across the large park and I could see the grass was rich green, so I made my way with my bike to a large tree, resting it by the tree. I sat down on this lush grass and enjoyed my snack. The sun was high in the sky and it was lovely and hot. I dozed off for a time. Had it not been that I had come so far I would have stayed a bit longer.

I made my way back the way I had come. Well almost: there are a few quiet side roads that I know of, so with no need to rush home, a steady pace, and time to look around me at the beautiful green fields on both sides of the road, I could only think that this was God's own handiwork.

Eventually home again, and not feeling too bad. I think we are privileged to live in such a good part of Surrey, don't you?

The moral of this story.

We all take everything for granted at times, myself as well. Let's stop and think, this did not just happen. The sun, stars, the beauty around us, let's turn our eyes heavenwards and thank the master designer, give him the thanks and praise he well deserves. So the next time you go walking or cycling, just remember to thank him!

Till the next one, God bless and keep you safe, just Ray.

## 12. What is it Worth?

Fictional

Des is a wheeler dealer, a bit like Delboy was. He would sell his grandmother if he could make a profit out of her. Perhaps she could be a scullery maid in a big house or something like that!

One day a friend of his called on him and said to Des, "What do you think of this goblet? It's slightly large with two handles. I don't know what it might be used for."

Des took one look at it and he knew straight away what it was. He said to his friend, "This is a loving cup. It's got history. This was used by two lovers who were deeply in love. They held one handle each and drank wine or some other drink out of it together."

Des asked, "Where did you get it from?"

"From a car boot sale. It cost me just a fiver," he told Des.

With his hands almost shaking, Des could not believe his luck. "What do you want for it?" He asked. "I will double your money. How about a tenner?"

"OK." His friend thought that was a good deal. He was no way as smart as Des. He knew this was worth a lot more than just a tenner.

Des did his research in antiques and found out there was a limited number. Des knew this would make big money.

Well, Des went on making considerable amounts of money and deals. There was no end to his wheeling and dealing. To say that he was very blinded by money and wealth is an under-statement. He drove a Mazarati Sports Saloon. If you asked him, was he happy with now with wealth, he was honest enough to tell you, "When I did not have this kind of money, I was happy then."

A certain charity contacted him for a donation for very sick children with terminal cancer. Unbelievably Des made a feeble excuse such as the car was costing him too much to run, he had big bills to pay, overheads to attend to. The truth is he did not want to part with his money. If Delboy had been in contact with him while all this was taking place, I am sure he would have said, "Well done old son!"

We have heard it said that money and great wealth do not bring happiness.

The moral of this story.

Money and wealth can achieve so much to help good causes and benefit the less well off. Remember when the rich young man approached Jesus and asked him, what can I do to 'inherit eternal life,' he was told to sell everything he had and give everything to the poor. For him that was more than he could ever do.

What if we had to face the same challenge. How would we react? Let's pray about it and say, "Thy will be done, Lord." Our eternal treasure is waiting in heaven for us where moth or rust cannot destroy.

Love to all my family. Just Ray

## 13. The Limpet that Could not be Moved

Factual

I was the young people's leader in a Pentecostal church in Dundee, Scotland. We had a good number in our youth group. The lads had various interests, but our pastor loved fishing, and sometimes he would take us on the ferry and go across the river Tay to the Fife coast on a Saturday.

We all had lines and sinkers and nets. The girls, well they just did girly things. "Boring."

Green wellies on and waterproof coats, we were ready for lots of fun, not forgetting our packed lunch and drinks!

Pastor knew the right place to catch fair sized flounders. We did OK. When the tide went out, it left large and small pools. We would clamber over the wet rock and explore them to see what was in them. Pastor would say to us, "Dip your nets in carefully and see what you can find."

Crouched over the pools, looking into the water, it was amazing. Little wriggling things and small crabs, small fish darting about. If we did not know what they were, pastor would tell us all about them. He seemed to know everything! When we went on fishing trips with him, he was more like a dad to all of us!

In the larger pools we could see the limpets. Some were quite large. If we put our hand in the water it was very cold, and if we tried to move them off the rocks it was impossible. They were stuck on very tight to the face of the rocks.

We had our fish in our bags while we had our lunch on the dry rocks near the beach. To us, it was a great adventure, with the pastor as one of the lads! He would tell us why the limpets were stuck so fast to the rocks. It was their security. No fish or crabs could ever pull them off the rocks to eat them. He would tell us how we could be secure in the Lord: no matter what may befall us, he is our rock.

We all got back on the ferry again and landed back in Dundee once more. Mum would cook the fish and we enjoyed them.

The next day in church we would tell the girls about our great day out fishing. They had been taken out to the big park nearby by a young lady in the church. They went into the wild part of the park among the long grass and bushes to look for insects and butterflies. She was a lepidopterist. We lads could not think of anything more boring than crawling in long grass and shrubs looking for creepy-crawlies. Sorry Paule and Diane, everyone to their own! I am only joking!

The moral of this story.

No matter how long or short we have had Jesus in our lives, it's imperative that we cling onto our Lord and saviour. It's only in him we have our security when we experience some difficulties and trials in our lives. Jesus said he would never leave us on our own. He is right by our side always. I trust this will help in such times, and the prayers of our church family will lift you up!

Just Ray

## 14. All Creatures Grunt and Small

Fictional

There was a small farm in Somerset owned and run by a farmer named John and his wife Sue, along with their two sons, Robert and Peter. It was a successful enterprise. Both the boys belonged to the Young Farmers organization.

Life was busy on the farm, with much to look after. They had a Massey Ferguson tractor to plough the fields, but Robbie as he liked to be called, the old faithful Clydesdale horse, was often used for ploughing the fields. He and Samson worked well together. John said the furrows were much straighter when Samson was pulling.

John and Sue looked after the farm animals. Sue had her hands full with the pigs. Her favourite was big Bertha, the old fat sow. John was more interested in the smaller animals. They were so much easier: chickens, geese, ducks, they did not grunt or smell like the pigs, especially big Bertha.

All was going well for a time until Robbie told his mum and dad and Peter that a change of career was what he wanted. They could not believe it and tried to talk him out of it, but he was determined to go to London and get a better job and enjoy the glitzy life-style on offer.

He sold his car and with the money he went on a train to London. He shared a flat with two other guys and found a job as a barrow boy in Covent Garden Market, but he only kept that for a few weeks. He fell in with some low-life guys who soon had him on strong drugs.

His money was now all gone, and his flat. He was sleeping rough in doorways and any other places he could find, cold and hungry, with no friend except the druggies, until one night the Salvation Army saw him and found a place in one of their hostels. They managed to find out he was from Somerset. All he wanted was to get back home again if they would let him.

They contacted his family and asked if he could come back home again? His mother, broken hearted and sobbing over the phone, said "Please bring my boy home again."

A Salvation Army officer offered to drive him all the way to Somerset. When they arrived back at the farm, his mother just hugged him with tears streaming down her face and no condemnation in her heart at all. Her boy was home again.

Unlike the older brother in the Bible, his brother and father put their arms around him and cried with him.

With the army officer seated at the head of the table, he said, "Can I pray for you all?" That night the whole family gave their lives to Jesus! The following day, the Salvation Army officer left for London with a big bag of goodies from the farm!

The moral of this story.

No matter how long we have known the Lord, we must always be vigilant for the enemy of our souls is never off duty and is out to bring us down. But we have a powerful Lord who has defeated him. The Lord bless every one of my Holy Trinity family and Saint Saviours. We all have a commission from Jesus to go out and lead the lost to him.

PS. No-one knows better than me how it feels to be away from the Lord. Twelve years, and I never thought there was any way back. But he forgave me, and now I am back home to stay! Just Ray

## 15. The Cat who Thought he was a Dog

Fictional – Children – Any Age

Alex and his wife Helen and two young boys Tim and Sam lived in a very nice house in Knaphill.

Tim and Sam said to their Dad, “Can we please have a little dog?”

At first, Dad was not sure about this. The boys turned to Mum and almost pleaded with her, “O Mum, can we please have a little dog?”

Helen went over to Alex and whispered in his ear, “Darling, it’s not a big deal, OK?”

Dad looked at the boys and said, “On one condition. You will look after it.”

With lots of hugs and smiles the deal was done.

The next day they all got into the car, with Dad driving. In the back seats, the boys were so excited. Dad knew of a kennel in Longcross, Chobham.

When they got out of the car, a lady came over to them and said, “Can I help you?”

They all followed her to the pens where the dogs were, with so much noise it was almost deafening.

“We thought a little Jack Russel would be just right for the boys.”

“Come and look at the puppies. We have just what you are looking for. Take your time to choose one,” she told the boys. Then Tim saw one he liked, and with much excitement Sam agreed, “Yes, I like that one as well.”

The lady brought a little white one out of the pen for the boys to hold. Not only was it white, it had a beautiful light brown patch over its left eye and a little brown tail.

“Yes,” said the boys together, “we want that one.”

What other name could they call him than Patch?

The lady told Alex and Helen that all the dogs had had the correct vaccination and were inspected by the vet regularly. Helen then asked the lady, “Do you keep cats as well?”

Alex knew when he was out-numbered, so Helen and the lady went off to see the cats. After a little time, they came back with a beautiful tortoise shell coloured young cat. An old lady who could not look after him any more had him taken into the cattery. He too had had his vaccination. He was OK with dogs, as he had also lived with the old lady’s dog.

With the bill now paid, they all left for home. The boys could not wait to play with Patch in the back garden, playing with balls and rubber bones and other toys.

Helen called the cat Toby. It was not long before he was sitting on Helen’s lap. He loved being stroked, purr – r – r – ing so contentedly.

After a few weeks, Toby thought to himself, I don’t want to be a lap cat all my life. I want to go out and play with the dog and the boys. So that’s just what he did, chasing the ball and chewing on the rubber bone and the other toys.

Poor Helen had lost her lap cat now, but she did not mind too much as he was still her cat. Alex and the boys would walk Patch on the common, and guess who would be there also? Yes, Helen would be there, walking Toby with his own little harness on an extended lead. So the next time you are walking your dog on the common, look out for the Clarkson family. Helen will be walking Toby and Dad and the boys will be with Patch!

Till the next time, take care, and I might have another tale to tell. So there you go: The Cat who thought he was a Dog!

Just Ray

## 16. The Little Guy who had a Wheely Good Time

Fictional (age 9+)

John, who was a paper boy in a local newsagents in Knaphill, had a second hand bike. It was OK to get him around delivering his papers. He would set his alarm clock for 7-00 a.m. and he made sure he was never late for his round. Summer time was alright for him, but winter time was a bit of a challenge, but nevertheless he was reliable. What he wanted most was a racing bike, so with his pay and any extra money he could get, he saved up.

On his birthday, Mum and Dad would give him twenty pounds. They knew he wanted a light weight racing bike.

As time went on, his money in his savings account became bigger. He would ask his Dad, "Can I wash your car and vacuum it out for you?" With a big smile, Dad would say, "Go on then!" With a cheeky grin, John said "It will cost you a fiver, Dad!"

Well at long last, with a little help from Mum and Dad he had a good amount to get the bike he wanted. Both he and Dad went into the well known cycle shop in Woking. He told the assistant what he was looking for. In a short time he was measured up for the right frame for him.

He looked around, then settled on a Claude Butler aluminium light weight bike. It was almost impossible for John to hold the tears back. Now he needed lycra shorts, and a flash cycle shirt, not forgetting the appropriate shoes, and last but not least, a good fitting helmet.

Looking full length in the mirror, he saw a ready-to-go racing man.

He was told to go with Dad while the cycle mechanic checked the bike over to see that everything was working OK. They went back to collect the bike. The paint was shiny white with light blue stripes.

The assistant told John about a well-known racing club that he raced in at Guildford.

"They will welcome you, as they encourage young riders like you to get into racing."

When John and Dad got home again with his bike, Mum was delighted for him. A short time later, he made contact with the Guildford club and spoke to the youth coach.

His Dad went with him and his new bike. It was good news for John. He started training almost straight away. His first time trial was a ten mile, which is a standard course. The riders went off at ten minute intervals. He did not do too badly for his first race. He was not last, and it inspired him to train a bit harder to do better in each race.

His coach was building his confidence, and kept telling him to "dig in deep," and that he had the potential of being a good rider.

As the season went on, he had a few wins to his name. His Mum and Dad came out to the races to be a support to him. At times his Mum would get quite excited and shout out loudly, "Come on, son, keep it going – this one is yours!"

Both his parents were so proud of him now that he was winning medals and trophies, but his Mum could be an embarrassment at times. When he won anything, she would give him a motherly hug and



plant a big smacker on his cheek, while his mates would laugh at him. Well, we all know how a Mum can be when her boy does well.

So there we have it. No matter what sport you are good at, watch out for your mother's over-enthusiasm, while Dad would pat him on the back and say, "Well done, son".

Till I can write you another one, keep doing well.

"I know you are pleased for me, Mum, but not in front of my mates, please!"

Just Ray

## 17. Little Titch and Lofty

Fictional (age 7+)

Ron and Phil were two competitive brothers in no matter what they did. Titch was the smaller of the two while Lofty was head and shoulders above him. Mum was good at tennis. Dad in his youth was a long distance runner and did very well for himself. Both the boys decided to be like Dad and take up running. Dad was going to be their coach as long as they were determined to put everything into it. Dad told them about his hero Roger Bannister, the four minute mile man!

Both the brothers, give them credit, did work at their training, and they got a lot of encouragement from Dad. As time went on, timing improved considerably for them. Dad felt he could not help any more.

Titch was just under five feet tall, and Lofty was five foot nine, so their Dad found a running club that would be just right for them. The junior coach met them and Dad to see how they might do in the club. The coach said, "I know you, Dad, you were my coach when I was about their age. I will do for them what you did for me."

Well now, as the season went on, the lads improved at quite a rate. The coach entered them for a number of races and both ran well enough to pick up a few medals.

As it was a mixed club, the girls were competitive also in their races. Off the track, the two runners fancied a couple of the girls and would meet them in Woking's coffee bars at the week end. They all knew they must not overdo it: their weight was all important to them. Jane was a little bit taller than Titch, but nevertheless they would hold hands as they walked through Woking.

Phil fell in love with a beautiful tall blonde. Her name was Jill. When they held hands, Phil would give her hand a gentle squeeze three times. It was their secret code that only they knew. He was telling her "I love you." She would turn and give him a wink and a gorgeous smile. He knew he had cracked it.

With a lot of hard training and encouragement, the boys did very well. Mum and Dad came out to watch them and cheer them on, and who else would cheer them on? Of course, the girl friends. When the girl friends were racing, the boys would be shouting the loudest for them!

Phil moved on to the senior ratings while Titch did not mind being in the junior ratings.

The moral of the story is :

Whatever sport you are good at, make sure you work hard at it and the results will follow. Don't forget when you are walking out with the girl friend the three hand squeeze!!

Till the next one, enjoy. Just Ray

## 18. Does He or Does He Not?

Factual

I originate from Dundee in Scotland. Being a Scotsman, I felt it was so right to wear my national dress, the kilt. You never say "I like your skirt" to a Scotsman. You will get a look that would kill, and at best he would hit you over the head with a frozen haggis.

When I came to England I would wear the kilt on special occasions like Remembrance Day. One time when Pastor Grew was the vicar, I asked if I could lay a large poppy wreath for all Scottish regiments who gave their lives in the war. Pastor said, "That would be very commendable."

As well as me, Tony Hayes-Allen laid a wreath. I said to Tony, "When we have both laid wreaths, let's both turn and face each other, as a mark of respect to you and the fallen. Let's salute each other."

This we did!

On another occasion, Norma and I were going up to Mansfield near Nottingham to spend a weekend with my mother. I was the driver and felt that a little break would be OK. We stopped at Northampton services for a coffee and something to eat. As we were coming out of the restaurant, two large coaches pulled in to the services. I reckon they were thirty-two seaters. As it was, I was wearing my full Scottish dress. By now a number of Indian ladies had emerged in their very bright classical saris. They were stunning.

I said to Norma, "I would love a photograph taken with them."

"No, you can't do that," she said.

I walked over to them. "I would love to have a photograph taken with some of you!"

One of the ladies asked her husband if that would be alright. With a big smile, he said, "That's OK!"

With two ladies on each side of me and lots of smiles, it was not just one but quite a few photos that were taken. It was like a photo shoot.

They were going on to Nottingham for a big Indian wedding. I have to say, they were something else! I was allowed to give them a little kiss on their cheeks. That made my weekend I can tell you!

Norma said to me, "You can be so embarrassing at times!"

Well, I had to give her one – where else but on the lips?

It turned out to be quite a good weekend.

The sad part of this story is that I no longer have my kilt as I put on too much weight and gave it away.

With a big wink, I remember that it was a great weekend.

Well till my next one, enjoy.

Just Ray

PS. I am bound by Scottish tradition never to tell, does he or does he not? (Norma knew).

## 19. The Old Violin in a Junk Shop

Fictional

This is a story about a musician, who in his youth played the violin in some well known orchestras in the south of England. His musical training began in a music college under a famous composer and conductor known world-wide. The college was not far from Leatherhead in Surrey. He graduated with full degrees on the violin.

It did not take long before he was a member of some well known orchestras. His performance went from strength to strength, and over the years he was head-hunted by many conductors. A number of elegant young ladies had him in their sights but to no avail. He was too single minded for his music: hence he remained a single man all his life.

He eventually stopped playing in public and became a composer for the violin, with great success. By the time he reached his late eighties he was not up to much and would just want to sleep most of the time in his chair.

His house was a bit of a mess with manuscripts all on the table top and piles of them all on the floor. He could hardly move around. The kitchen – you would not want to have a drink or meal in there.

His family would visit him once in a blue moon but he could not care less about that. Then one day they called on him, but it was too late. He was sitting in his chair. They thought he was asleep. Yes, he was asleep alright.

When they came to clear the house it was a major job. To them it was all junk. His old violin was in a corner of the lounge covered with heavy dust and in a very sorry state. It was badly scratched and all the strings were broken and the finger board was in a very bad way.

Having got rid of all the paper work, they took the violin to a junk shop.

Some time later a young girl and her dad saw it in the window of the shop. They went in and spoke to the shop keeper to enquire how much he wanted for the violin.

“What do you want that old thing for? Just take it away. I was going to break it up for firewood,” he told the father.

After many months of restoration and care the violin looked like new again. His daughter had violin lessons and she plays it in the school orchestra now!

The moral of this story is:

Sometimes we can feel like the old violin. We face difficulties and trials in life and we feel almost worn out. It's then we need the touch of the master craftsman to restore us and make us something of value again. Talk to the craftsman Jesus. He can and will restore us and our lives will resound in beautiful chords in praise to him.

Just Ray

PS. Let me remind you again – please please leave me in the background. I am just the writer. I want you to be blessed by the stories.

## 20. The Sound of Silence

Factual

My change in music has been out of all recognition for some time now. Whilst I still like jazz and a good swinging number, it is predominantly classical music now along with devotional worship songs.

I do love Beautiful Name Jesus. It has great meaning for me, and when our praise band plays that song it just melts me, and it's so soul cleansing for me. When pastor asks us to pause for a moment that is very precious to me, and as he invites the Holy Spirit to come into us, that's when I know this is the right place for me to be!

Well, let's get back to my story.

It was some time ago that I drove to Newlands Corner. Having parked my car in the car park, I made my way down the steep hill. I found a place on my own. The sun was quite bright and the view across the valley was spectacular. A small village was in view as well.

I was sitting there. I could hear the depth of the silence, if you know what I mean? I lay back on the grass and looking up to the blue sky I saw that two red kites were gliding on the thermals. It was just fascinating watching them. It was almost as if they were dancing with one another.

I walked across the road to the little café and had a snack. I walked back to the car park again. By this time, a large number of motor bikers were parked up in a long line.

I drove down to the little village and found a place to park my car. The church in the village was open and I went inside to have a look. It was cold with some dim lights and a large candle alight on the centre of the altar, with two smaller candles on each side of the large one.

I was the only person in there, as I sat in one of the pews in silent contemplation.

A gentleman approached me and asked was I a visitor? I replied yes I was, and he said, "I am the verger here."

He went on to tell me a bit of the history of the church. Now I don't know if he was on board or what, but I have heard shorter sermons.

I told him I was C of E and our church was in Knaphill. He asked me, could we pray together. "That's OK by me," I said.

I don't know whether he had missed his morning prayers but he sure was making up for it now.

"Perhaps we could meet again some time." I thought to myself, if you pray that long I don't think it will be that soon!

As I was driving home, I thought, well the first part of the morning went well, that deep silence I encountered on my own and the two kites.

Just a thought.

It's good for us to spend silent moments with our Lord at times. Let's listen to what he has to say to us, although it's a two way conversation and much blessing can be had! But beware of the verger at the church (take a packed lunch with you!)

Just Ray

## 21. Ir Ya No Proud to be Scots, Man?

Factual

I was born in Dundee. My mother was widowed very young in life with three kids, myself and two sisters. We were not outright poor but it was a struggle for mum. Somehow we got by.

My mum and my sisters attended an Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church in town. Our pastor was a first class preacher and teacher. I was now in my teens, and was appointed a young people's leader. We had a good number in church.

Some years later, our pastor left to take charge of a church in Ilkeston in Derbyshire. Our new pastor was American. Straight away, we all felt, this is not going to work, but I said to everyone, "Give him a chance and see what he can do." But all along, I felt that he just loved himself. His wife Dorothy, she was OK and soon got involved in many more church matters.

At one point the pastor said, "My sister-in-law is coming to stay for a week. Could you find the time to show her around Dundee?"

"OK, I can do that," I said.

Well, when I met her in church on Sunday morning, the only thing I could say was wow! We sat together, quite close. I never wanted a service to end so much; I just wanted to talk with her on her own.

She was a bit shy at first. "My name is Norma," she said, "and you are Ray, I have been told."

I tell you, I could not take my eyes off her. Mum and my sisters were watching us from the other side of the church.

Charles said to Norma, "This is Ray. He will be taking care of you this week."

I knew what it was like to be walking on air! What a week it was. By the third day we were holding hands.

All too soon it was time for her to go back home again. I asked her, "Can I write to you?" With a beautiful smile she said, "Yes please!"

I have never written so many love letters in my life. My mum would tease me about the amount of letters I received. I just knew I had cracked it.

About three months later, I was in New Haw, Surrey. Norma met me at West Byfleet station. She ran towards me and gave me a big hug. The train guard was standing on the platform with his green flag in his hand and the whistle in his mouth. He took it out and with a wink to me he said, "Good luck, mate."

Now, jumping ahead a bit, Norma and I were married in the Congregational Church at Farnham. I was only twenty-one and Norma was twenty-three. I kept telling her she had a toy boy.

We went to Whitstable for our honeymoon. One day we were walking along the sea front when I saw a Scotsman with his wife. He had a kilt on. I went up to him and said, "Don't you feel out of place with a kilt on?"

He was a big guy. He gave me a look which could have killed me.

“Ir ya ashamed to be a Scotsman?”

“No,” I said to him.

“Then tak your breeks off and put on a kilt!”

Norma could not stop giggling. The tears were running down her face. But that was the encouragement I needed.

Not long after we got home again, we went to Windsor and just opposite the castle in a kilt makers, I was fitted up with a Gordon Highlanders kilt with the tweed jacket, the long woolen white socks, the tartan tie, a leather sporran with the tassels, a skendew dagger, black brogue shoes, and the broad leather belt with the big silver buckle.

Norma loved me wearing it on special occasions. With the Glen Garry on my head with the Scottish silver thistle in it, at last I was her ‘wee Scottish laddie,’ and I was a right proud Jock. The only thing is I canna play the bagpipes – what a disgrace to Scotland – and I dina like whiskey of any sort either!

Just Ray

## 22. D-N-S Did not Start. D-N-F Did not Finish.

### Factual

They are two words no competitive racing cyclist wants on their racing record. The latter one can be not too bad. It could be because of mechanical failure of some sort or a puncture or, at worst, an accident. But never just give up because you have had enough. Cycle clubs have no time for wimps. And if you want to move on to another club and have D-N-F on your record, just stay at home and take up knitting.

Cycle racing can be and is a hard sport. While I was the young riders' coach, I was not at all a dragon. They had to train hard for me to get the results we wanted. On Monday nights we would get on the rollers, on the pedals, do press ups: my lads and one girl wanted to be the best they could be.

Sunday morning was the club ride out. That could be fifteen to twenty miles. We stopped for elevenses at a tea shop or coffee bar. Sausage rolls went down very well. Half an hour was the max; then we were on our way.

One of the lads fancied Helen 'rotten.' They would ride together at the back of our group. I could see something was going on with them. I told them to keep their minds on the ride. "What you do in your own time is up to you." As I took my place in front again, I had to laugh to myself. That brought back interesting memories for me!

I had a young guy in our group. He was a bit mouthy, and all the older riders told me he would never do any good. I told them, "I know a good rider when I see one." Sebastian went on to ride in a professional team in the Tour of Britain, and went to France in a professional team in the Tour De France.

As for myself, I had a bad crash while racing a number of years ago and damaged my left leg. That ended my racing career. Now I cannot walk without the aid of a walking stick. I could get all bitter about that, but no, I just get on with my life and thank the Lord I am still here to serve him! And no, I don't have a D-N-S or a D-N-F to my name!

### The moral of this story.

Some people have a D-N-S when it comes to faith. It could be because they never wanted Jesus in their lives. They did not want to know him, or their lives were too full of other worldly things. Other people started off well, but along the way they couldn't handle the difficulties and trials they may have had in their lives. Instead of letting the Lord help them, they just gave up and could not finish the course we have to take until he calls us home to be with him forever. The prize will never be theirs.

Till the next one, may the Lord bless you and keep you!

Just Ray



## 23. Cyril the Squirrel and Nutkins

Fictional

I have always enjoyed a long walk in woodlands and glades when the sun breaks through the tops of the trees. We have mighty oak trees and the very tall pine trees that almost touch the clouds. It's so very quiet and peaceful. It's then I feel closer to the master creator than anywhere else. I lift my eyes and with much felt praise from my heart, I thank you, my heavenly father.

It was on one such walk that a grey squirrel was sitting upright just ahead of me. He was enjoying an acorn. I could tell that by the way he was eating it. I stood very still, and could not take my eyes off him. Having finished that one, he was looking around for another one. He ran into the ferns to see if there were any more.

While he was gone, I found a handful, so I walked to the spot where he had been and put the acorns in a little pile. I knelt down on a soft heap of dead leaves to see what would happen next. I did not have to wait long. He returned to see the acorns, and he was not alone. A smaller squirrel was with him. Cyril had, as I thought, brought one of his brood. I called him or her Nutkins.

I carried on with my walk with a bit of a smile. I never thought that I would see anything like that again.

I came to a bit of a clearing in the trees. The sun was quite warm by now. I saw a half of a tree that had been chain-sawed down so I sat on it and enjoyed my sandwich and nice hot drink from my flask. The sky was light blue with a number of white fluffy clouds drifting by. I could not be in a better place for a restful and restoring stop. I thought about the garden of Eden. Just the two of them. No landscape could be better designed than that, yet they managed to screw it up for themselves and future generations to come.

Well, as I was sitting there, a lady came walking along with her dog and said, "What a peaceful place this is. Do you mind if I join you on this tree trunk?"

"Not at all," I replied. "Please do."

I told her about my time with Cyril the squirrel and Nutkins. She laughed and said, "I have squirrels in my garden also. I must try and give them names as well. The only thing is they take food I put out for the birds."

Just then, as we were looking across the open space, a roe deer came out of the trees and stopped and I thought he might be looking at us. Her dog Jack gave a loud bark.

"You naughty boy!" she said to him, "no dog biscuits for you when we get home again!"

"I am so sorry about that," she said to me.

"Well, he's only doing what dogs do," I replied.

We wished each other good day and went our own ways.

Well, now I have some good memories of that day, Cyril the squirrel and Nutkins and a fleeting glance of a roe deer. I hope you have fun as I did when you are walking the dog, pastor.

Till the next one, keep safe.

Just Ray

## 24. One Boy and his Dog

Fictional

Alan and his mum and dog lived in a gorgeous thatched cottage in a little west country village. Mum is a keen gardener. If you could just see her garden with all its flower beds and borders full of floral shrubs and hollyhocks, with plenty of flowers that bees and butterflies just loved.

Dad was a blacksmith, repairing all sorts of things, not forgetting horseshoes.

The one thing Alan wanted most was a dog. Not just any dog, but a Welsh Collie. So his dad and mum said, "If you get one, it will be you who will look after it. OK?"

"Of course I will," said to them.

Now as it happened, the local vet had his practice right in the middle of the village. Mr. Harrington was his name. In fact, he was the vet for the county. Alan and his dad had chatted about getting a Collie. The vet said, "Leave it to me. I know a breeder who specializes in Welsh Collies. I will get back to you quite soon."

In less than a week, Alan had his Welsh Collie dog. A one year old male, he was all cleared by the vet. He was called Shep. Alan and Shep spent every moment together, so much so that Shep had his own little bed in Alan's bedroom. They went for walks in the woods and they spent a lot of time playing in the little river that ran not far from his house.

The school bus picked Alan up outside his house every morning and dropped him home again each afternoon. Shep got to know when the bus was due. He would be sitting at the front gate waiting for Alan to get off the bus. He would jump up, his little tail wagging like it would almost fall off, and bark like mad.

Alan had an old-fashioned galvanized bath that he would give Shep a bath in once a week with mild shampoo and wash him down with warm water. He then dried Shep with a large bath towel and with his mum's hair dryer. He would run his fingers through Shep's coat until it was dry. Alan would then brush Shep all over. This made Mum and Dad laugh. "You going to show him off now?"

Shep had the best food. Chicken, rabbit, and lots of doggy treats. The villagers would remark how well Shep looked.

The annual show was here again. Alan spent a lot of time getting Shep in a prestigious position. When the judges made their final decision, who do you think took the old rosette? Shep of course, and Alan was awarded a silver cup. As the old saying goes, Every dog has his day.

I hope you kids enjoyed my little tale. Till the next time.

Just Ray

## 25. The Odd One Out

Fictional (any age)

Steve came from a large family. He was one of three brothers. He had two older sisters. None of them took any notice of him. He was always on his own. The rest of his brothers and sisters just did what teenagers do: go out with friends, go to parties, meet up with other young people in coffee bars.

Steve would rather stay at home. He was content to read books especially about aircraft. He would watch documentaries, and wanted to know how aircraft were made and what speed they would fly at. He just loved the Farnborough Air Shows. He would not miss one. How I would love to be a pilot in one of the jets, he thought to himself.

While there, he had a chance to talk with a retired pilot. He told him about his interest in all sorts of aircraft.

“What you need, my lad, is to join up with the R.A.F. Junior Cadets. I know the man who can help you. He’s my kid brother.”

The man took Steve to meet Alan his brother.

“This young man is mad about aircraft, jets, etc.”

In no time at all Steve was in R.A.F. blue uniform. He was now a cadet. Of all the cadets, Steve excelled more than the others.

When he was old enough to sign up with the R.A.F. his father went with him for the interview. The recruitment sergeant was so impressed with him, he said to Steve, “You are just the kind of young man we want for the R.A.F.”

Steve was posted to a well-known R.A.F. base in Kent where he started his career as an aircraft engineer, working on jet engines, and building the jets also. Steve was no longer a loner or the odd one out. He found a place in life and a job that fulfilled his ambition to be the best that he could be. He was working on Spitfires and Hocker Hunters. He fitted in with the rest of the team and was a popular guy. With lots of hard work and a high standard he set for himself, you could say he had it made.

The base commander was so proud of his team that their reward for each engineer was to have a flight in a Spitfire with a professional pilot. When it came to Steve’s turn, he could hardly wait. Now dressed in flying gear, he climbed up the small ladder to take his seat behind the pilot. Belts tight, wind shield now closed, the pilot said, “Let’s do it.”

The engine in full thrust took off. It was a straight climb up till they reached maximum height. They flew over the runway several times. Steve looked down. It was so unreal to him.

The pilot said, “We are now going to fly upside down and do victory rolls.”

All too soon, it was time to land again. As they touched down again and the jet came to a halt, Steve was almost bursting with excitement. With a handshake, he thanked the pilot.

A day never to be forgotten!

The moral of this story.

If you, young man or young lady, have an ambition to do a life-changing thing or a career, work hard at it and don't be put off. You too can be like Steve!!

Till my next one. Just Ray

## 26. A Whale of a Time

Fictional

Simon was the son of a rather wealthy diamond merchant named Justin. Both he and his wife lived in a large riverside house in Henley on Thames. Justin ran his business from home. His office was large and ornate to say the least.

Simon was educated at Eton College and did rather well for himself. His mother Miranda was a top dress designer in Knightsbridge. Her clientele could range from well-known stars to the upper class ladies. No room for the denim brigade there, tut tut.

At the bottom of their front lawn, a large sea-going luxury yacht was moored.

The family decided to take a holiday in Vancouver, so they flew with a well-known airline as planned. They were all excited at the thought of going whale watching. With long lens cameras and other equipment they might need, this was going to be a holiday they would long remember.

They arrived at their destination, and a limousine and driver was waiting at the airport for them. He took them to their hotel.

Justin spoke to the manager and asked how he could hire a boat and skipper to take them whale watching. "We could do that for you and your family," he told Justin.

The next day they were picked up and taken to a boat that had been booked for them. The skipper told them, "You will see plenty of whales and that's for sure."

Now on board the boat and making good pace, in no time at all the boat was followed by not one but a large number of whales. The skipper cut the engine to almost stop so that they could take photographs. He told them, "I have a bucket of fish here. Throw them some fish. They will, come right up to the boat. Watch for the babies, or calves as they are better known."

One mother came alongside the boat and they could almost touch her.

The skipper said to them, "Put these water-proof coats on for when she has had enough fish, she will turn her back to us and lift her tail high and bring it down again with a big splash, and you will get wet. It's her way of saying thanks for the fish."

And that's just what she did. The skipper revved up the engine and they made their way to where more whales could be seen. By now, the bucket was empty, so they stayed a little longer to take some more photos, and then made their way back to the harbour.

They enjoyed the rest of their holiday, visiting places of interest. All too soon it was time to go back home again. Yes, it was a holiday to remember for all of them.

As for the family yacht, it was just a means of getting to France or Spain to top up the wine cellar, for when they hosted a dinner party, the wine cellar took a bit of a hammering.

How the other half live. The old saying is true - it's not what you know but who you know ! For the rest of us, we will just have to do whale watching on the telly.

P.S. About the denim brigade, I am only joking. Honest! I know you will forgive me. Well, I cannot lose all my fans at this time in my career!

Till the next one. I will try not to be so judgmental. Ha – ha!

Just Ray

## 27. A Fishy Tale of Olly and Molly

Fictional (any age) (you're gonna like this one)

Jordie was the only son of a crofter and his wife. The wife's name was Flora and her husband's name was Hughy. They all lived in a wee but-and-benn on the estate of Lord and Lady Munrow. Their house was rather a big one: a bit rambling for just three of them.

Hughy was his lordship's gillie and looked after the large salmon lake and the deer farm while Flora's job was to manage the six servants in Blair Atholl House

Jordie would help his dad in the salmon lake and the deer farm sometimes, but most of the time he was in the wee school run by the minister's wife and the head teacher. There were only twelve pupils in the school, boys and girls.

One weekend Lord Munrow came riding up to the salmon lake to see if everything was in order. As he dismounted, he called out to Hughy the gillie and Jordie his son. "I have two abandoned otter pups that her ladyship found near the wee burn that runs at the bottom of my back lawn. I don't want them anywhere near the salmon lake. Could you find a good home for them?" He asked.

Right away Jordie said, "I will have them my Lord."

No sooner said than done. Hughy and Jordie carried one each back home.

Now the burn ran past the but-and-ben, so Jordie and his dad put a strong net across the burn and made sure it was secure. They walked along the bank about a third of a mile and put another strong net across the burn and secured it tight. One otter was a boy, the other was a girl. With a big grin, Jordie said "I will call them Olly and Molly."

When they got home again and told Flora about the two otters, she had to laugh and said, "You two are daft."

One of the estate workers went fishing in a large lake down the road from where the McPhersons lived. He would tak back a number of alive fish for Olly and Molly. Jordie wid pit them into the burn between the two nets so that they would learn to catch fish fir themselves.

Every Sunday morning at nine a.m. a single bell would ring oot fa the wee kirk. It was a Scottish Presbyterian one. My lord and lady Munrow would be in attendance and expected all the locals to be there as well. As the minister came from behind the black curtain and made his way to the pulpit, everyone stood up to sing the first hymn. The organist was ready to play, but the organ was so old it needed a man to pump up the bellows to get it going. If he didna get his timing right, it sounded like a cat being strangled.

When it was time for the sermon, the minister didna ken when ta stop his boring monotonous voice. His lordship would look at his pocket watch and catch the eye of the minister. That was enough to let the old boy know enough was enough!

When the service was over, it was straight doon to the Stag and Hounds for a well-deserved drink.

Back home again, a wooden barrel of water and live fish were ready for Jordie to feed Olly and Molly. As time went on, they pit on a bit of weight.

So there you have it, the tale of two otters. I hope you can understand my Scottish language? Till my next one, enjoy.

Just Ray.

PS If you need an interpreter, just give me a ring. I might be able to help you!



## 28. Watching and Swimming with the Dolphins

Fictional

Paul and Anna belonged to a club that trained and encouraged their members to swim off shore in pairs. Never alone, in case anyone experienced difficulties.

The club had their own boat with a diving platform at the rear of the boat, as the club was located in a popular part of Tenby. It was a good location to see bottle-nosed dolphins at four miles off shore. At the height of the season, pods of dolphins were regularly seen.

The club also had a contract with a tourist boat that would take club members where and when they wanted to see the dolphins at play. It would appear that enjoyment is had by both the dolphins and their contact with humans.

Paul and Anna are also professionally trained life guards and especially in summer tourist times, families and their children just love to be in the water.

A safe distance from the beach there are floating marker flags that tell families they must not go beyond: swimming up to the flags is their limit. Paul and Anna sit in large chairs, with binoculars in their hands. They cannot take their eyes off the beach for a moment. As always there are some who try and push their luck and swim past the flags, and immediately the life guards with a loud hailer in their hands call out in 'no uncertain way' for them to get back to the safety zone again. Either Paul or Anna will go and tell them "if you do that again, you will not be allowed to swim any more."

Further along the coast is Kidwelly with another good beach. It has been known for the dolphins to be seen playing and leaping out of the water quite close in Carmarthen Bay.

The tourist boat was always in demand to take trips for miles out to see the dolphins and their calves jumping out of the water to the great delight of all on board. The skipper would stop so that photographs could be taken. The trips lasted about forty-five minutes.

When they got back to the harbour again, there would be quite a long line of people waiting to get on board and they wanted to see the dolphins.

Well, it was inevitable that the gift shop was a busy little place to visit, what with blow up dolphins and little toy ones, not forgetting the post cards of dolphins. The ice cream parlour was doing quite well. The fair sized tea room was a must; you could get anything you wanted until you were quite full.

So there you have it. The next time you and the family are in the West country for a holiday, call into the club. You will get a good welcome from Paul and Anna. They could kit you out with a wet suit and flippers; they will show you how to snorkel as well. They will take you out in the club boat and you can swim with the dolphins.

Till my next tale. Enjoy this one.

Just Ray

## 29. The Centenarian Wing Commander Flies Again

Fictional

Retired Wing Commander Harold Stubbs and his wife and their two daughters moved from Knightsbridge London to a place called Robinswood Hill just outside Gloucester. Caroline was named after her mother and Helen was named after the commander's mother. It was a large spacious house set in its own grounds.

There was a country park quite near the house. The girls would walk the family dog there, a chocolate brown Lab named Badder after the famous RAF pilot.

It was a short drive to the city of Gloucester, to which the family would often go.

The commander had two sisters who lived not too far from them in a place called Siddington just outside Cirencester. Aunty Julie and Aunty Jo. They would visit the Stubbs now and again.

It did not take the commander long to hear about a private flying club nearby. Of course he heard this from the landlord of his local pub The Golden Crown where in no time at all he was given his own seat and table. The locals loved to get him talking about his time in the RAF. The landlord told him, "My brother is a member there."

Having been introduced to the president of the club, he was going to be an asset to the club.

"I am Wing Commander Stubbs; I am one hundred years old, and I still have all my marbles and I am a fit old boy. I want to fly for one last time before the good Lord calls my number. Have you got a vintage crate?" he asked, with a wink

"We certainly do," the president said. "It's my own. It's a two seater Tiger Moth."

Harold asked, "When did the old girl go up last?"

"I fly her once a month," the president told him. "It would be a great privilege for me to let you take her up. I want to be with you when you fly her. I insist on that."

Harold said, "three old kites in God's space."

When Harold got home the family asked "how did you get on?"

When he told them he was going to fly again, with one voice they said "You are mad. At your age? You can't do this, father." But there was no way of stopping him. He was going for it!

Young Caroline rang her aunty Julie and Aunty Jo to ask if they could talk him out of it, but they told her, when their brother made up his mind about something, he would go ahead and do it. "Please let us know when he will fly. We want to be there also."

On the day of the flight, the whole family was at the airfield to see him fly. The Tiger Moth was on the runway with the President with all his leathers, goggles on and leather gloves. Next Commander Stubbs came out of the clubhouse similarly dressed in all his leathers. They climbed into the aircraft, the commander in the cockpit and the President seated behind him. With a puff of smoke and the prop spinning at almost full revs and the brakes now off, the Tiger Moth was picking up speed. The old girl

lifted off the runway. They were now gaining height till they leveled out at about three miles up. The Tiger Moth flew right over the runway and banked both to the left and to the right.

About forty minutes later, the Tiger approached the runway again and came to a halt. When they got out of the aircraft and walked towards the family, there were tears of joy and a few hugs. The Commander had taken his last flight. He said he would do it and he did it, big time!

I hope you enjoyed this tale. Till my next one.

Just Ray

PS. When Harold gets to heaven, he will not be walking the streets but flying with the angels!

## 30. The Little Motor Boat that Needed some T – L – C

Fictional

As I was taking a walk along the bank of the river Wey, just enjoying it, I happened to look to my right and in a rough garden I saw a little motor boat that had seen better days. As I stopped to have a better look, I saw the owner was in the garden. I called out to him, “is that your boat by any chance?”

He walked towards me. “Why do you want to know, mate?”

“I like the look of it,” I said. “How long has it been there?” Long grass and weeds were growing all around it.

“About three years now,” he told me.

“Can I take a closer look at it?” I enquired. “I might be interested in buying it off you.”

He opened the back door of the garden and let me in. I had to pull some long grass away from it. I found it to be in good order, although the paint work needed renewing, but I did not find that was going to be any trouble for me. The two seats were in a very bad condition so I would replace them.

He told me it had a two litre marine engine in it.

“Why has it been there for so long?” I asked.

“Her indoors walked out on me and went off with another geezer.”

Looking at him, I could well believe it. He looked like Compo from Last of the Summer Wine.

“How much do you want for it..? Two hundred pounds? It’s in a bad state. I will give you one and a half and no more. I will give you cash in your hand.”

After a few moments, he said OK and shook my hand.

I noticed a boat trailer for it. “That is part of the deal.”

“OK.”

“I will be right back with my car and the cash.”

When I brought a good friend Terry with me, the old guy said “Who is he?”

I told him Terry would help get the boat on the trailer. We managed to get the boat on the trailer and secured it. I gave the man the cash and we were on our way home again. When we got back to Terry’s yard, we put two strong slings under the boat and lifted it off with his hydraulic lift. She was now clear of the trailer, so I gave her a powerful hose down to see what she looked like with all that dirt and filth off. She looked not too bad.

Terry was watching me. “This job is going to be a push-over mate.”

We looked at her under side. It was as water tight as ever it was. Terry lowered the boat onto a cradle. He said to me, “You have had a right result there, mate. When you have re-furbished it, are you going to sell it on?”

“Not on your life, mate. She is my baby now!”

I ordered two litres of light grey undercoat and four litres of sky blue marine paint. While I was waiting for this to be delivered, Terry had an in-depth look at the engine. He called me over to the boat.

“I have great news for you, son. This engine is running like a sewing machine.”

As soon as the paint arrived I was spraying on the undercoat, and the sky blue right after. It took a few days for the paint to dry. Terry said to me, “I have the right seats for the boat, and a single one for you. I can raise it so you can have a clear view ahead.”

I named my new boat Blue Beard. When everything was completed, she looked show-room class. I applied for a license to take her on the water. The license came the next day. Terry and I took her to Thames Ditton. Now she was in the water, I can tell you, I almost cried. She looked so stunning.

We took our first trip from Thames Ditton to Windsor. She glided along with a new wheel and all the dials giving the right readings. I was the proudest pilot on the river that day, I can tell you!

Till my next one.

Just Ray

## 31. Gee is a Hand will ya mate

Fictional

Bert and his wife Mary and their one son Peter were moving into a wee hoose that they had just bought. They come doon fa Dundee in Scotland. The big international removal van brought all their belongings doon to Snowhill, a quiet west country setting.

As the driver and his mate were off-loading the van, a heavy wardrobe was a bit too much for them. Just at that moment a local man was walking towards the van. The driver said, "Excuse me, could you give me a wee hand with heavy wardrobe, mate?"

"Of course I will."

So with that, they managed to get it into the hoose.

"Ta, mate, that wiz so kind of you."

"Who is moving into this house?" he asked.

"A wee family fa Dundee Scotland," he told him. "They're no bad people" he said, and just with that, the family pulled up in their car.

"Welcome to our little village. I am your next door neighbour. I am Bill, and my wife is named Jill. I tell you what, give it about an hour then you all come in to have something to drink and eat with our family."

So sure enough, that's what took place. Peter met Tim and the two boys went oot ta the garden. Half way doon the garden wiz a large aviary with lots of budgies flying about, all different colours.

"My Dad and I breed them."

Peter was just knocked out by it all.

The adults were getting on very well. Bill asked Bert what he did for a living. "I am a gardener," he said, "so I will have to find a job."

Bill said, "I am the head gardener at the Snowhill Manor. I will ask his lordship if you could work with me in the gardens. I am sure he will say yes!"

"Ta very much. Ya didna have to da this fir me."

"When his Lordship hears the broad Scottish language, he will never say no. His family come from Scotland!"

Mary told Jill that she had had her own tea room in Dundee. Jill said, "I have my own tea shop as well. During the tourist time I could do with someone to help me run my little tea room."

With both jobs taken care of, and Peter registered at the local school, Jill dropped the boys off at school and picked them up again in the afternoon, so life was looking good all round for everyone. Bert got the job as a gardener at the Snowhill manor and was doing very well.

In the mean time, Mary said to Bert, "it would be nice if we could find a little church we could go to."

Bert told Mary, "I saw a wee kirk doon the road fa here."

Bill told Bert, "My son Tim goes there. It's a Free Evangelical Church. Lots of young people go there. I think Tim only goes there because quite a few nice girls attend it."

Bert said to Mary, "We will go there next Sunday morning and see what it's like." So they all went down, and Peter went with them.

The minister was a Scotsman as well. He gave them a big welcome. It was a lively place, that was for sure. The people were so friendly to them. Bert and Mary enjoyed it so much. Bert said to Mary, "This wee kirk will do us just fine."

It didna tak long before they were made members. Tim and Peter got on with all the youth, and the girls of course. Bert and his family fitted into village life well. Mary worked well with Jill in the tea room. Life could not get any better for them!

The moral of this story.

If you give your life to him, and an important part of your life, he will bless you. Remember the Bible said, love the Lord with all your heart and soul and he will love you with endless love.

Just Ray

PS An interpreter can be provided!

## 32. Deer-Deer Thee and Me

Fictional

My name is Ray and my wife is Sue. We run a very successful deer farm somewhere in the New Forest. We have two Scottish stags and they are large fit boys - they are our breeding stock, and thirty healthy does and in the breeding season no other farm can get near to us.

Of all the fawns, we have the one we like the most. It's Bright Eyes. She has the biggest eyes, which take our attention, dark and sharp!

Sue put her and her mum in a compound of their own. I am not allowed to look after them. They are Sue's love. But the father is my one; powerful strong shoulders with a stiff neck that carries a proud head, eight point antlers. He is my Hercules.

Sue teases me and tells me "If you performed as well as him, we could have had a breeding programme as well!" I just shrug it off with a wink and a smile. You cannot win them all! She loves me in her very own way.

Well, getting back to Bright Eyes, Sue goes all gaga when she is with her. I am sure that the little darling knows she is spoilt, and enjoys it.

We open the farm for visitors. They bring the kids to see and feed the deer. One time, we had a family from the USA. The father said, with a Texas drawl, "Is that guy for sale?"

"No way," was my reply, "He is mine, and when his days are over, I am going to get a good taxidermist to stuff him and mount him on a plinth and he will stand in my study."

We breed our deer and sell them to other deer parks or private owners. All our deer are tested and have regular visits from our own vets to make sure they are OK.

Sue wants to exhibit Bright Eyes in the next country show, and we are sure she will win a gold rosette. Sue will groom her to a very high standard.

When I go into the compound to change her bedding for her and her mum with new straw, she comes up to me and nuzzles her head on my leg as if to say thank you.

So the next time you go with your family to the New Forest, the deer are so used to people now that if they come up to you to feed them, stay very still and they may take food from your hand.

Till my next tale. I hope you enjoy this one

Just Ray



### 33. Terry the Tortoise and Pedro the Angora Rabbit

Fictional

Jill and Alan lived with their mum and dad in a very picturesque thatched cottage in a little west country village called Chapel Allerton. Their parents were newly retired ornithologist lecturers from London. They just wanted a quiet life for themselves and the two teens.

Alan wants to be like his mum and get his degree in ornithology, while Jill wants to be a vet for small animals, and hopes to find a veterinary practice that will take her on.

Dad helped to construct an aviary with a bird house attached, with several nesting boxes for Alan's six parakeets. Alan helped Jill build a rabbit hutch with quite a long run all wired off, and inside there is a nice house for Terry the tortoise.

The family soon made friends with the locals and they meet them in the local pub, The Wheat Sheaf. They were invited to join the community social club and are now members.

We all agree that this life beats the hustle and bustle of London life any time. Alan now has a job with a park warden and comes in contact with all sorts of birds. His boss gives him lots of encouragement to study and work hard for his degree. His new friends love to come round and see the parakeets. He takes one friend at a time into the aviary to get closer to the birds. He is now known as The Bird Man.

Jill spends a lot of her time grooming and shampooing Pedro. His long ears and fluffy fur, or should that be hair?

Terry gets his attention as well, what with getting his nails cut and his treats of greens and a bit of fruit.

When the days get shorter and the nights a bit cooler, Pedro and Terry have their warm little beds in Jill's bedroom. Alan has installed a little warm heater for his parakeets in the bird house in winter, and a little dull light so it's not all dark inside.

Well, the good news is that Alan passed his finals with distinction and honours and now has the degree he wanted for a good career in ornithology. Jill has also achieved distinction and honours and she too has the degree that will make her the vet she wants to be. She is now a partner in the veterinary practice where she did her training.

Mum and Dad are so proud of them both and said that as a reward for their successes, they could have anything they wanted. Jill chose a female Angora rabbit, to keep Pedro company. Alan chose a Red Kite Falcon chick to train to fly and retrieve at his command.

Well, till my next one. I hope you liked this one as well!

Just Ray

## 34. Well I Never

Fictional

There was a little group of young lads who knew each other over a number of years. They all had different hobbies of one kind or another. Some were into models, building aircraft, cars, mechanical toys. They required a reasonable standard of skills, so much so that they decided to form their own little workshop.

The father of one of the lads said to them, "You could use my workshop as long as you don't damage my many tools."

The workshop was well lit and bench drills were available, hand saws, chisels, everything they needed. Two of the lads were working on radio controlled aircraft. In fact, they were building a full scale model of the Concorde so they could fly it on a small hill at Chobham Common. Quite a few men did just that.

Two more were building model racing cars, radio controlled. They could race them on an old disused part of Wisley Airfield. Two others were into racing yachts that they could take to Frensham Small Pond. What a sight in full white sails on a sunny day!

The boy's father popped his head into the workshop to see how things were going. He was just gob-smacked to see a whole team of enthusiastic lads enjoying themselves. The only words he could say were "Well I never."

Word was getting around about the workshop. People were bringing all sorts of things to be repaired, but the most surprising thing of all was a large model of the Mayflower ship an elderly lady brought to the workshop, to ask the lads if they could repair it for her? She told them her father had built it some years ago but it was in a very bad state now. The rigging was broken, the figure head of a lady was no longer on the prow of the ship. Some of the sails were loose and hanging down from the rigging.

Two of the lads who were into boat repairs took a long look at it and said, "Yes, we can repair it for you but it will take a bit of time."

"Please do what you can," she said.

The two lads stripped all the rigging down and the masts as well. They repainted the whole ship and put the figure head back on the prow again and re-varnished the whole ship. They had a new name plate in brass mounted on both sides of the ship – Mayflower. Having replaced the masts again, it was a very delicate job to put the rigging and sails back. The lads were so dedicated to do a great job for this lovely lady.

The job was now completed. It was time to call the lady to let her know her ship was ready. Before she arrived, the whole team and the boy's father were gathered to welcome her. When she looked at The Mayflower, she burst into tears and cried uncontrollably and shaking. She hugged the two boys. What else could she do? She gave them a sum of money for whatever charity they chose. The local newspaper covered the event and they went from strength to strength. A happy day for everyone all round.

Till my next one.

(PS I think this is my best one yet.)

Just Ray.

## 35. Robby the Big Shire Horse

Fictional

Robby was a big shire horse and was seen every day with his dray man as they made their way from a well known brewery in the East end of London. As they made their way over the cobbled stones with the sound of Robby's clop-clopping steel horse shoes and the rumbling of the steel rims on the wheels it was a joy to see.

The cart had six large beer barrels to deliver to the local pubs; The Nag's Head was the first drop. Napper was Robby's dray man and they worked well together. Napper always made sure Robby's mane was platted with a colourful bow and the brass plating on the harness shone polished bright. His tail was brushed to perfection. There were three more heavy horses but Robby was the pride of the brewery.

At the last pub drop, the landlord made sure Robby had his bag of oats and a pint on the house for Napper!

At the stables, Robby had fresh bedding every night. Napper made sure his horse was well looked after.

Once a year, the brewery would sponsor a local show. All sorts would be there, from cars to steam engines. You name it, they had it. And what about the beer tent? That was a must.

Then there was the parade ring where people could show off their pets, large and small. But who do you think stole the show? Robby. Who else!

The night before the show, Napper spent hours grooming Robby, brushing his coat and even down to making sure the white hair that covered his hooves was washed and combed, and his hooves were polished.

Napper's wife said to him, "You spend more time with that blooming horse than with me!" So with a wink, Napper said to her, "Well never mind, luv, when I get back from the show I will plait your hair tonight."

Six months later, Napper fell seriously ill and passed away. The director of the brewery told his manager no-one would take Robby over.

On the day of Napper's funeral, his coffin was placed on a cart and Robby pulled his master to the local cemetery at a solemn pace, with all the management and staff behind. Robby's head was down: it was as if he knew something was wrong.

After it was all over, Robby was retired to a private farm that looked after retired race horses and such like. On one visit there, the director went to see how he was doing. Robby was standing motionless in a field head down taking no notice of the other horses. The proprietor said, "We cannot motivate him. He has a broken spirit."

It is said animals have no feelings. How wrong can you be?

As I was writing this, a tear ran down my face and onto the paperwork. My heart went out to Robby. Yes I feel the creator has given animals emotions as well. I hope you agree.

Till my next one.

Just Ray

PS The Scottish tale of Greyfriars Bobby has just come to my mind, about a little dog that never left his master's grave unattended until he himself died there!

## 36. The Laird's Deer Stalker

Fictional (any age)

Angus was the laird's game keeper on a large Scottish estate in the North West Highlands. His reputation went on ahead of him: that is why the laird wanted Angus as his game keeper. He formerly was the game keeper for Lord Argyll, but his lordship had him doing other jobs as well, as his driver when required. He had Angus as a handyman and expected him to do other jobs too. It was all too much for Angus as he was a first class game keeper but was paid no more for doing the other jobs.

He was told by a good friend of his that the laird was looking for a good game keeper, so Angus applied for this position, and after the interview, the laird took him on.

The laird told Angus, "You will be my game keeper only. I have other skivvies to do the other jobs for me. We will work closely together, breeding my deer and keeping them in a healthy condition, OK?"

Angus told his lordship he had another job. The only reply was, "You can go now."

Within less than six months, the herd was in first class order, and Angus had a pay rise. Angus had his own flat in the right wing of the house. The laird's daughter Kirstie took a fancy to this good-looking young Scot. She told Angus, "My father thinks a lot of you and you could have it made here."

Kirstie is her father's secretary. It did not take her long before she and Angus became an item.

One night at dinner the laird and his wife were sitting opposite Kirstie and Angus. Kirstie's mother said with a wink, "You two are getting on well with each other." Both of them blushed.

On the quiet, the laird said to Angus, "If you want to marry our Kirstie, you will have to prove you will make a good son-in-law." With a big smile he said, "Welcome aboard."

The herd is doing well. At this time of year they are loose in the woods, to roam about at will. Angus has to look about the woods to make sure they are safe. Kirstie sometimes goes with him and we know why: she just likes cuddles when no one is around!

A little later, when they were in the flat one time, Angus turned to Kirstie and asked her "Will you marry me, darling?"

She gave him such a hug that he could not move. "Yes, of course I will." And with that she planted a big kiss on him.

Now they had to go and see her mum and dad to get their permission to marry. No problem there, then!

The wedding was fixed for a month later. Invitations were sent out to both families. The day and date were set in a little church on the estate and a local minister was to take the service. A Mr MacPherson had the honour. All went well, and as a wedding gift for Angus and Kirstie, the laird made them recipients of the whole estate and the deer farm when the parents were gone. What a future they had in front of them.

Well, till my next one. I hope you will enjoy this one. A little feedback on my tales will encourage me to keep writing. Thanks fans!

Just Ray

## 37. Recombobulate or Recombobulation

Fictional

On a beautiful sunny day I was walking along by the banks of a fast flowing little stream. I was on my own, enjoying it, when I saw a Dipper. Now I am not an ornithologist in any way. This little bird was standing on a fallen log that lay on the other side of the stream. I was fascinated watching this little guy bobbing up and down to the fast flow of the water. I reckoned he was just doing his early morning work-out. In other words, he was 'bobulating'.

Now at this time of lockdown it can be a real pain to us all, so I can recommend that like him we can do a bit of bobulating at home.

Stand up with your hand on the back of a chair. Hold on to it and start bobulating with the whole family and the dog as well. Get him or her to sit on their back legs with their paws out in front of them. To make it interesting, play a recording of Land of Hope and Glory and you can recombobulate together like they do at the Last Night of the Proms in the Albert Hall. I bet you will get lots of fun and laughter, and if you have been eating too much in lockdown you will get some of that fat off.

Just like this one I heard. A husband looks at his wife when she was getting ready for bed. "I love you darling, but you have more rolls than Sainsbury's."

If this is too naughty for you, I will have to do more confession, but with your sense of humour, pastor, I am sure it will be OK!

So let's keep recombobulating and keep safe everyone!

Till my next one.

Just Ray

## 38. Who is 'Just Ray'?

Factual

I have had it on my mind and heart for some time, I wanted to let people and especially new folks to Holy Trinity Church and Saint Saviours Church know who is 'Just Ray'?

Since I have been restored back to the Lord again approximately three years now, I have made quite a progress in my faith and grounding in my spiritual life, house group, Bible study etc. And most of all the Lord has blessed me with my gift or talent in writing. I have been asked, why just Ray?

Having met my good friend and brother Dean, he has been an inspiration to me. I can tell you he will be a very good vicar, but when he is ordained he will then become Pastor Dean. I was brought up to respect the ordained vicars, etc. Dean in return has told me that I have been an inspiration to him in my spiritual growth, but I replied, "I am just Ray."

My background was in the Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church in Dundee, Scotland. It's a long story, but I met my darling Norma when she paid a visit to Dundee. I took one look at her and went "Wow". So I became the Rev. Norman Bandy's Son-in-law.

Now some in-laws can be a blessing or a pain, but Mum and Dad, I had no bother at all. In fact, Mum would tell folks "He is not only my Son-in-law, he is my son."

We moved around a bit. Dad was a pastor in Farnham. Then we moved to New Haw, then finally to Woking, then Dad retired. They were members of the New Life Church Old Woking.

Well, getting back to me, I was a young people's leader for a time. When Norma and I came to live in Knaphill, we both attended the Holy Trinity C of E, but I should explain, I did, but Norma for whatever reason lost interest in church life. Pastor Grew was then the church vicar.

After a while, I dropped out of church life myself for at least twelve years. I had the most unbelievable encounter with Jesus anyone could have! I am now restored and have never been in such a place of peace and blessing, and what a Christian family I now have.

I could never be able to preach or be a leader in any way, but I am a writer and have somewhat of a gift that the Lord has blessed me with, but I could not do it without my great friend David Pennant. We just make a great team together, and all I want is just to be a blessing through my stories to help others. I just want the Lord to be glorified and praised, and as for me, I am 'Just Ray' doing what I feel the Lord wants me to do!!

So there you have it, that's who I am.

Just Ray

## 39. Up and Away

Fictional

Bob and Jan decided to have an adventurous holiday in the Lake District one year, rather than another seaside, boring, beach-packed holiday. Fish and chips, ice cream and all that yuk!

They had packed the camper van the day before so they could set off early, not forgetting Bonzo the black Lab. He is two years old.

After a long drive, they arrived at their camp site at Skelwith Bridge. After a well-deserved meal they took Bonzo for a little walk. It did not take long before he had some new doggie friends.

Now Bob was a retired marine in the army, so he was a fit guy and used to long walks. Jan said to him, "This is a holiday for us to enjoy, not a route march. OK?"

Bob just laughed. "Just as you say darling."

After a good night's rest and breakfast over, it was now time to be off.

"Windermere Lake is not too far from our camp site," Jan said. "Let's have a trip on a steam boat today."

"Yes, why not," Bob replied.

Jan said to Bonzo, "Let's go on the boat." He looked at them, his tail wagging like mad.

It was so peaceful, just chugging across the lake. Bonzo was standing on his back legs with his two front ones on the side of the boat. He gave a little bark now and again, he was enjoying it so much.

They then went on the Haverthwaite Railway for a short ride. The other visitors were making a fuss of Bonzo. He just loved it!

They spent the rest of the day just relaxing. That beats Brighton any time!

The next day, Bob took Bonzo for a long walk on Hawk's Head Hill. Jan waited for them to get back again. Then they took the car to Hawk's Head and visited the museum and other places of interest.

Jan said, "We must go and see the cottage of Beatrice Potter, the well known children's author.

A lady met them there and took them round the cottage and garden. It was still as it was when Beatrice lived there. The gardeners have planted all the same plants as she loved. There were visitors from all over the world who come to see this famous cottage and garden. Jan was so excited about their visit as she read the books all about the animals when she was a little girl.

It was now time to find a little tea room and have a coffee and jam scones with lots of clotted cream on them. They made sure Bonzo had one as well. They were sitting at a little table outside the tea room. One mouthful and Bonzo's scone was gone. With eyes almost pleading for another one he watched as Bob and Jan enjoyed theirs. "No more for you!" Jan said to him.

They were all walking through the little village when Jan disappeared. Bob said to Bonzo, "I know where she has gone." Sure enough, she was in the gift shop!



All too soon the holiday was over and they were on their long way home again. It would be a holiday to remember. I hope this one will bring back memories for you as well!

Just Ray

## 40. The Call of Nature

Fictional (for the pure of mind only!)

I have been interested in nature and wild life since my youth – animals, birds (the flying kind), fish etc. so I decided to take a walk in the woods at dusk in my home land, Scotland. I packed my back pack with ground sheet, extra warm jumpers and a small torch and of course a good snack and something to drink. So there I was on my wild safari.

The woods were within two minutes of my home. Being on my own I took care that I was going to be safe.

While I was walking deeper into the wood, in the short distance I heard the hooting of an owl. As it was not too dark yet, head light on, the hooting was getting louder. I was walking as quiet as I could. Soon I came to the tree where the owl was. I had my little pocket nature book in my hand. I spotted the owl – it was a Tawny Owl.

I knelt down on the woodland floor and a short distance away I heard another owl hooting. It could be his or her other half.

Suddenly, I heard a rustling in fallen leaves and snapping of twigs. My heart almost leapt out of my mouth. I thought there was someone else there. By now it was quite dark. I shone my torch and two bright eyes were looking at me. There, right in front of me, was a full sized deer. It was so near I could almost have touched it. It turned around and ran off. I made my way on what seemed to be a track. I was now prepared for anything that might come out of the wood.

Feeling a bit hungry, I now found a large tree trunk that had been cut down at some point. I sat on it and enjoyed my little snack and a hot coffee from my flask.

I thought I heard a snuffling sound behind me. With a bit of trepidation, I crept to where the sound was coming from. In a matter of a few feet, a wild boar was rooting around for something to eat. It's been a number of years since the wild boar was introduced back into Scottish woods and forests again.

In the light of my torch, I could see he or she was quite a size, and the two tusks one each side of the snout could render a bad wound if they charged at you with any speed. I backed up slowly and as carefully as I could so as not to disturb him.

As time went on, dawn was beginning to break and the dawn chorus was now well on the way. As I made my way along a narrow track I spotted a Kestrel hovering in part of a clearing. Suddenly he dived right down and he or she had something in its beak.

The pheasants were calling to one another some little distance from me.

Well, it was time for me to make my way home again. Just as I was almost out of the wood, I looked up to the clear sky and there were two sky larks a bit above me. I stopped to hear their melodious songs.

Would I do another night safari and enjoy nature's call? Yes I would. When you are this close to nature and wild life, I find it gives you such peace, and you leave all the hassle behind you.

Enjoy the Creator's creation. Not only does he look after the birds and wild life, he takes care of us, his creation!

Till my next one.

Just Ray

## 41. The Day in the Life of a Country Vet

Fictitious

Alan had had a vet's practice in Portsmouth for a number of years. Carol was a district nurse with the NHS. Although they liked where they lived, they wanted a place a bit quieter. They thought about somewhere in the New Forest as they were both very much outdoor people. So they had a weekend looking around.

The weather was just right for them. As they were driving around, they were taken with a little place called Timsbury not too far from Romsey. Not far from Timsbury was a sign for Sir Harold Hillier Gardens. They were very impressed with the layout. Should they move here, it could be a peaceful place to visit. They enjoyed a cup of coffee and home baked cakes in a quaint little tea room.

While they were there, they told the lady they were thinking of buying a house and as he was a vet, they needed a place big enough to set up a vet's practice. She told them The Old Vicarage was still up for sale, and we could do with a good vet here!

Well, within three weeks they bought it and in no time at all the practice was up and running. The word soon got around that a vet was now in the village. From day one he had three patients. The first one, an old lady, brought her dog as his nails needed clipping. Then another brought her cat in with a poorly left eye.

A little lad came in with a cat box. He asked the vet, "Me ferret can't walk proper can you help him mister Herriot?"

"Well, let's have a look at him. What's your name, lad?"

"Paul," the lad said.

"Alright Paul, hold him on the table while I take a look at him."

After a short inspection, the vet said "He has a thorn in his right paw. Hold him tight now while I take it out... Right he will be OK now."

The little lad said "how much will that be mister Herriot? Me mum will come and pay you."

"That's alright, it's my first day as the vet, so there is no charge today," he said.

After dinner, Alan and Carol walked down to the local pub, the Hen and Chicks. When they went inside, the landlord and his wife gave a friendly welcome. "Whatever you're drinking, it's on the house" they said. The pub was not full, but everyone was pleased to see them.

In the corner was a tall cage with a brightly coloured Macaw Parrot in it. "That's Rambo," the landlord said. "I think his claws may need clipping a bit."

Alan said, "Bring him down to the practice tomorrow and I will sort him out for you."

The landlord said, "I had better put a bit of tape on his beak – he don't half swear. It's not us who got him swearing, it's all this lot got him going."

Alan said, "Don't worry, I will put ear muffs on!"

Alan's practice took off well, so much so that Carol gave up her job as a nurse to help Alan in the surgery. Now they are a major part of the community. So now he will see "All Creatures Grunt and Smell!!"

I hope you will enjoy this one and it makes you laugh.

Just Ray

PS If you have a parrot or a cockatiel that embarrasses you with things they come out with, and the vicar should visit you, just teach them this little saying – "The Lord bless you, vicar"!

## 42. Up, Up and Away

Fictional

Tim was always attracted by things you could fly in even when he was still a small boy. His mother and sister just did girly things. How very bo-o-oring! Tim's father was a fighter pilot in the RAF, flying Hunter Hawks and such like. He would tell Tim of the great times when he and the boys were on training flights and fly pasts on special occasions. Queen's Birthday, or Head of State visiting the UK.

Tim loved to tell his little mates, "My dad was a fighter pilot. How about that? Wow!"

They would go to air shows. The night before the show Tim would not get much sleep he was so excited. He would tell people, "My dad flew Hunter Hawks. He was a top gun pilot!"

Dad was somewhat embarrassed and said to Tim, "Don't tell everyone." But Tim was so proud of his dad.

It was Tim's birthday, and his dad hired a small Piper Comanche plane at Fair Oaks Airfield. Dad said to Tim, "Let's take a ride in the car somewhere." When they arrived at Fair Oaks and Dad told him, "We are flying now," Tim burst into tears and gave his dad a big hug.

The manager of the booking office asked Tim's dad to sign the contract paper work, handed over the keys and took them to the waiting plane. Tim told him, "My dad was a fighter pilot you know!" With a big smile, the manager said, "We know all about your dad."

In no time at all, the little plane was on the runway waiting for clearance for take-off. The control tower said, "You are now ready for take-off." In less than a minute the plane lifted clear of the runway and they were on their way.

"We have four hours of flight, so we will fly down over Brighton, then turn our way inland over the Hampshire countryside and back home again."

Tim was so excited. Looking down at all the country-side and motorways they flew over, he asked "What speed are we doing Dad?"

His dad said, "We are doing about two hundred mph," with a big smile as he looked at Tim.

"What's that big place down there?" Tim asked his dad.

"That's Chobham Common," he told Tim. They were flying so high that Tim said, "All the people look like ants down there."

A voice came from the control tower. "Back 150 degrees to your left and line up with the runway. Over and out." They were descending steadily, and the landing line was now in full view. The engine was now coming slower as Dad touched down with just a little bump.

"Oh Dad, you are the greatest pilot ever," Tim said.

A marshall guided the little plane into a parking bay and Dad cut the engine as a small ladder was brought next to the door. They were now standing on firm ground again. With tears in his eyes, Tim gave Dad a big hug and said "I love you so much, Dad."

"And I love you son just as much!" Dad said.

Well there you go, another of my tales! Till the next one, keep well and safe!

Just Ray

## 43. It's a Load of Hot Air

Fictional

Peter has had a thing about going up in a hot air balloon for some time. Just to see one drifting along on a summer's day, crossing the countryside, with four or five people in the basket, and to hear the sound of the gas and flames inflating the enormous balloon would get his enthusiasm going.

He found a company that runs balloon flights across both south East and south West countryside. Having consulted the booking officer, he made a booking for a flight over the South Downs countryside.

The company had to make sure he was fit and well enough to take flight with them. The flight would start off at Wilton near Salisbury, then proceed to Shaftesbury, then over Blandford St. Mary, then towards Ferndown, flying over Ringwood then cross country to Wilton again.

As it was Peter's birthday, his girl friend came along to enjoy the flight also.

All the while, the pilot gave them very interesting comments on each place they flew over. The wind changed a bit to North West, so the pilot said, "We will touch down in Hurdcott, just the other side of Salisbury. That will be no bother as the company's people carrier will come and get us.

The Pilot said to Peter, "It's your birthday today. We could drop you and your girl friend off in Salisbury for a bit of time there."

Now Peter had been with Alison for almost two years, so now was the right time to ask her, "Will you please marry me?" With a big smile and a big hug she said "yes, darling, please."

While looking round at so many interesting places and enjoying a great day out, they found a well-known jewellery shop.

"Let's find an engagement ring for my princess."

As they were looking around, a lady assistant came up to them and asked, "Can I help you?"

With smiles all over their faces, they informed her that they were to be engaged this very day. Linda's choice was a single blue sapphire stone, and Peter's was a single diamond ring. The lady called the manager over and explained what had taken place. With wishes of congratulations, they placed the rings on each other's fingers.

When they arrived back at their new home in Knaphill in Surrey, their parents were overwhelmed with joy for them. It was planned that they would be married in Holy Trinity Church Knaphill later in the year, by the Rev. Neil Hobson, and ably assisted by Pastor Julie Levett.

Their day began with a hot air balloon flight, and now they will be flying for the rest of their lives, God willing.

Till my next one.

Just Ray

P.S. If you take a hot air balloon flight, it might be more than just a load of hot air – you don't know how it could end up! You might have married your princess or you might do so in the very near future!!



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