

On the Settlement in 1990 we recorded the death of Rev'd Selwyn Reynolds, an original Brother. We include a tribute to him by his friend and neighbour Dorothy Sinclair, who gives an insight into this remarkable man's character.

Tribute to "A Brother"

by Dorothy  
Sinclair,  
Resident

It was just before Christmas 1974 and a north-windy, gusty day when I moved into one of the newly-built bed sitter cottages in the Settlement. A faithful friend was there before me, sweeping the debris from the front porch. Several other newcomers arrived the same day and there was quite a stir going on. The house closest to me was empty and I had been told that Father Selwyn Reynolds, one of the original Brothers who had studied under Father Tucker was to be the occupant.



Revd Selwyn Reynolds  
as a young man

"Oh dear", I was thinking "I hope he won't be too solemn!". But I need not have worried, for as my friend had already assured me, I found he had a great sense of humour, although he was a very shy and modest person. Indeed it was not long after we had settled in that Elli Grein, who lived at the other end of our street declared that she could hear us laughing from her place! The fact that he could laugh so heartily was remarkable, as he had spent most of his life in poor health; he really was a very sick man when he came here to retire. He had experienced unemployment at the time of the depression and he describes in the book "All in Good Spirit", how he came into the Brotherhood as a worker. "My Mother knew the Tucker family" he wrote, "as she was the same age as Gerard Tucker.

She wrote a letter to him saying that I was stagnating because of the Depression - was there a job for me? He had just brought the Brotherhood from Adamstown to Melbourne.

It was 1934 and just before my 21st birthday. He wrote back saying there were no paid jobs but he might be able to give me five shillings a week pocket money to do a few jobs at St. Mary's in Fitzroy Street, where he had set up a rooming house for unemployed single men. I had my 21st birthday without any celebrations, in a sleep out in the garden behind St. Mary's. It was called Bishops Court because the Bishop of Riverina used to park there whenever he came to Melbourne.

My jobs were packing newspapers for recycling at Austral Paper Products. We got a penny-halfpenny a pound for them. Other jobs were washing the clothes for Father Tucker's Theological School members at St. Peter's, Eastern Hill and cooking for the Brotherhood. I was always shopping and banking the little money that came in.

I also went to Theological Studies at St. Pauls Cathedral to study Church History, and then after a year joined other students at St. Peter's at Father Tucker's invitation. Only the dole kept me going - it was the dominant factor of the age. The other students were paid for by their parents....."

In spite of all the hardships which marred his youthful days, Selwyn managed to win two scholarships, matriculated from Wesley College, studied for the Priesthood and served in Country Parishes before ill health forced him to retire. After travelling such a hard and daunting road, Father Selwyn earned for himself a reputation for erudition, not only on Theological, Literary and Historical subjects but on practical matters too. In fact, whatever our problem was, we, his neighbours, would come to him about them and he would always have an answer. indeed, he was often affectionately referred to as 'Mr Fixit'!

I remember one of the things he successfully 'fixed' was a new roof for the chapel and it was all done so quietly, very few people knew about it. Another of his achievements was when he edited and produced the Settlement News on an old roneo machine in his cottage and organised a team of people to collate the pages by hand and distribute the copies free to all residents. "Those were the days," and I remember what fun it was to be part of it all.

His own contributions were always interesting and enlivening, especially the article entitled "Tuckers Folly" which he wrote at our request and which describes with amusing detail how Father Tucker, with very little money in the 'Kitty' decided to buy this block of land at Carrum Downs for a village settlement.

At the memorial service held in our Hall on 22nd January, a large congregation assembled to honour him. There were many people from different places and backgrounds. Those from the Parishes where he had served as a Priest spoke of him with deep affection. We were especially pleased that Archbishop Peter Hollingworth, who was on holiday, was able to be there to pay tribute to Selwyn. He referred to Selwyn as a quiet man with a great deal to give and he remarked that we should take time to listen to the quiet people as they are often those with the most to give.

Those of us who have enjoyed Selwyn's company and have learned much from listening to him, are feeling that with his passing, the end of an era has come. May this quiet man, who had known so much hardship in his life but learned so much through it all, be at peace now as he enters into the joy of his Lord."

D.V.S