



part one

TAPESTRY

OF

TRUTHS

HELEN My Father - My Mother

THE DEVELOPMENT The Preparation - The Business - The
Fallout - The Profession

CHARITABLE MISSION Religion - Mission - Abundance -
Investment - The Sceptics

HUMANITARIAN WORK Emergency Relief - Where Angels
Fear to Tread - The Violence - The Fear - Immortality - A Name

*OPPOSITE Lake Qatar, Afghanistan - A dining area in a
cafe where you lounge around and have your eats on these
exquisite threads, in the middle of a war zone. The beauty
of this culture is disclosed to the world in general as only
rubble and battle is portrayed globally as being the nature of
Afghanistan.*







HELEN
My Father
My Mother

“I’d hold the sack open for Dad and he’d filled it with ragwort and blackberries. About two weeks before he died I dreamed that I was there with the bag, but Dad was missing. I was eleven years old.”

LEFT Cambodia.

MY FATHER

THERE WAS CLEARLY A POLICEMAN driving our car, with my mother beside him, as the car made the steady turn up the hill towards the school. I turned to the teacher,

“My daddy’s died.”

“Helen, don’t be silly. You do your work and I’ll go and talk to your mum.”

I watched the policeman and my mother enter the building and kept a steady eye on them talking in the hallway. I was soon called out of class and of course I was right. My father had a tragic death in a train accident. I have always had this insight, this ability to assess, process and conclude rapidly. Our brains are quick to react but that sometimes clouds the reality. However, my brain cogs slow down and I can think cognitively and rationally. The reality of my prior dream was immediately clear.

BELOW Gorakhpur - Cerebral Palsy and helping learning to walk, with love and pride from her father and community.



My intuition helped in that minute but not in the long term, not once the loss of, and longing for, my father recurred constantly, and for years.

Sadly after my father’s death life converted to a difficult, lonely, explosive, contentious environment. Dad’s death hastened Mum falling inside her sanity. She was depressed. Through endurance, her irrational behaviour gave me the ability to evaluate and assess situations way beyond my existence’s experiences. Perhaps one could consider this unusual development was a silver lining of one of the ‘rabbit clouds’ to Dad’s death for it was this composure under fire that has steered me to my greatest achievements. However it took me years to recognise and acknowledge this proficiency.

MY DAD WAS A MARVELLOUS FATHER to me and to my brothers Maurice and Danny. He was caring to the community and sought out

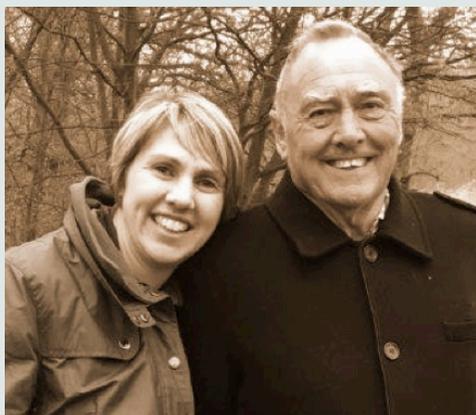
BELOW 2016 Bolivia - Supported by his dad and being hearing tested for hearing aids. He’s listening, and he hears something!



those less fortunate. I would accompany him on monthly visits while he bathed an old drunk, trimmed the chap's toenails and got him upright. Several days a week he visited another old man confined to his bed to shave him. This was amongst many other quiet kindnesses he showed.

Acts of kindness define us. After Dad's death, for quite a few summers, a farmer up the road taught me to fly fish in the Gorge's Ohinemuri River. I didn't catch much at all I think, but I deeply valued the serenity, the magical motion of fly-fishing and the act of kind humanity. At my father's funeral mourners were packed inside the church, outside on the church grounds and lined way down the street. He was a railway linesman but in his soul he was the richest man I know – and it wasn't because he was an important community figure. He had simply touched so many lives with compassionate humanity.

BELOW BOTH IMAGES Pete's a wonderful father to The Girls - Karen below, Kirsty right.



My father was warm-spirited and generous without fanfare, and mostly like the man I married. Surviving ten years of a fatherless and fearful subsistence my self-esteem and confidence were obliterated. My husband Pete brought me back to life.

I SO WISH KIRSTY AND KAREN had known Dad. Kirsty is a little like him which is a warm reminiscence of a father I utterly adored, whereas Karen is just like Pete. As long as she's alive Pete will never die!

Pete? My other very special man.

*“Empathy is the feeling.
Compassion is the doing.
My father applied both, and
tutored my pathway.”*



MY MOTHER



ABOVE Burundi - The women were digging foundations for a Health Clinic, and bubby was resting in the wheelbarrow while mum was digging.

MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER SETTLED in the Catlins, Coastal South Otago, from England. Unaccountably the family of seven children up-sticks to Whangarei. Curiously, my mother herself then up-sticks to Paeroa, no mean feat for a young and unmarried woman in those times. She worked in a maternity hospital in Paeroa. We have no idea what training she had, how she got there or why she even went. Grandfather died when I was two and Grandma, a woman of strong verve, died when she was 82.

There were days and days when my mother wouldn't get out of bed but if a visitor called in, astonishingly she'd be up, dressed and charming. Other times we'd put an ottoman across the doorway to stop her running away. Maurice had left home but Danny and I were united to help her, and to help our own situation,

"Mum, get up, we're taking you to the doctor."
At the surgery she'd patronise us to the GP,

"Oh the children are being silly, there's nothing wrong with me." She was a pillar of Victorian high moral ground, was righteous and puritanical. The latter is ironical because seemingly she wasn't. Material surfaced that, when we were children, she was cited as the co-respondent in another couple's divorce proceedings. Such things were 'advertised' in the newspaper in those days. Was this awful for her to live with? Throughout her internal hell and external charm she was the pinnacle of compassionate community care for such committees as the local school, Women's Division of Federated Farmers, and was a regular church go-er. However, after 'The Truth' newspaper's public notice I wonder now if that's why she attended church at Waihi and not Paeroa.

UNKNOWN TO ME IN MY YOUTH, my mother's mental ill-health was obvious to the community, a reality I've only recently uncovered: through a nursing friend and a series of someone-who-knew-someone-who-knew our KarangahakeValley neighbours the filtered tale was,

"I remember pulling Helen's mother out of the river."

My mother couldn't swim. My mother's torment was such that she was adept at suicidal threats. She was a big lady and equally terrifying wielding a knife,

"Helen!" as the knife was stabbed into the air around me, "If you don't get those peaches done, I'm going to kill you, then kill myself." Horrific and inescapable blackmail. We were children and it was the only home we had. In my developing world's field work, my mind is

alert to a machete, to bribery, to corruption and attuned to a time when life was danger, 'Get yourself out of this one Helen.'

MY MOTHER'S MENTAL ILL-HEALTH was an eager impetus for my nursing training. My reasoning being, if I had knowledge then I could be an effective carer, and source appropriate treatment for my mother. However, one doctor's prognosis was,

"If she hurts someone then we can get treatment for her." Danny was at home with our mother for a year when I left for nursing. After that year or so, we both shared the upkeep of her on our days off. A gall bladder problem was a catalyst for recognition of her intense needs. She had surgery in Tauranga Hospital, where I was nursing. I had requested she be there inasmuch that I could keep a vigilant watch on her. She had ten day's recuperation and while I was on night shift during those ten days her surgeon, a lovely, outstanding Christian guy came to the Ward and talked with me,

"Helen, something has affected your mother's mind, possibly the anesthetic and she is behaving quite unusually."

"I'm sorry, but 'Meet My Mother'. That's how she is and has mostly been since Dad's death. It's never been recognised or diagnosed and nor would anybody ever listen but clearly she's mentally sick."

"Leave it with me Helen." Through his instigation she was placed in the Psychiatric Ward for four weeks, two of which she was totally out for the count. From that management began better times. The psychiatrists felt the isolation of Karangahake Gorge was detrimental to her safety and she

was given a state house in Tauranga and later shifted into a pensioner's flat.

2009 Philippines ' An Hungarian psychiatrist and his ophthalmologist wife came to the Philippines after the Tsunami and he headed up the work of Mental Health in CBM. I attended his farewell speech where he talked about the fact that we all come to our work as wounded people, not only the clients with disabilities. It is only as we recognise our wounds that we can help others. Afterwards I mentioned reading something similar in Henri Nouwen's books of which he and his wife are great fans. They asked me to join them for dinner and we had such a lovely time chatting. I do hope he stays on in the work with CBM...'

MY MOTHER DIED in 1983 aged 62, tragically too early as in those last years she achieved health and enjoyment from life. I'm grateful that she and I had that time. There's beauty to the heartaches, if you want to look for it. My mother's illness shaped my life – magnificently. All mothers, be what they are, shape us.

PETE *'My mother didn't shape me!'*

"Yes she did! You're a workaholic...She shaped you well!"

PETE *'Well then, at least I could tell your mother she had the best son-in-law in the world...that stretched her sense of humour a little bit.'*

In just one generation my tragically bizarre childhood is justified today as I joyfully, and with pride, watch the beautiful mums my daughters are to my grandchildren. My daughters' mothering is uniquely guiding and loving, distinctively in their own ways.

PAGES TO FOLLOW *Images of unconditional mothering...*





ABOVE Goma, Congo - A mother and child presenting at a feeding centre. The child was severely malnourished.

LEFT Haiti - A mother's devotion. Cerebral Palsy can be a birth defect or as a result of negligent birth care.





ABOVE Chester-i-Sharif - We were meeting a gentleman, just as a meet and greet, who was part of a WV programme. A mum was there and I just couldn't resist cuddling her beautifully swaddled little baby.

Look at the love, care and devotion to that child.

LEFT Chester-i-Sharif - Swaddling practice.





ABOVE Bangladesh - Wee new borns brought into a clinic for assessment. I was asked to listen to this baby's heart murmur, held by mum.

LEFT Burundi - A child being given intravenous fluids in a clinic. Diarrhea is so treatable and yet it kills nearly 1.8 million children per year globally.





ABOVE Atfaluna (see Appendix) - Joy for her, and for her mother.

LEFT India - Community clinics, CBM funded, Central India. The daughter had lost her leg in an accident and is awaiting treatment with her mother.

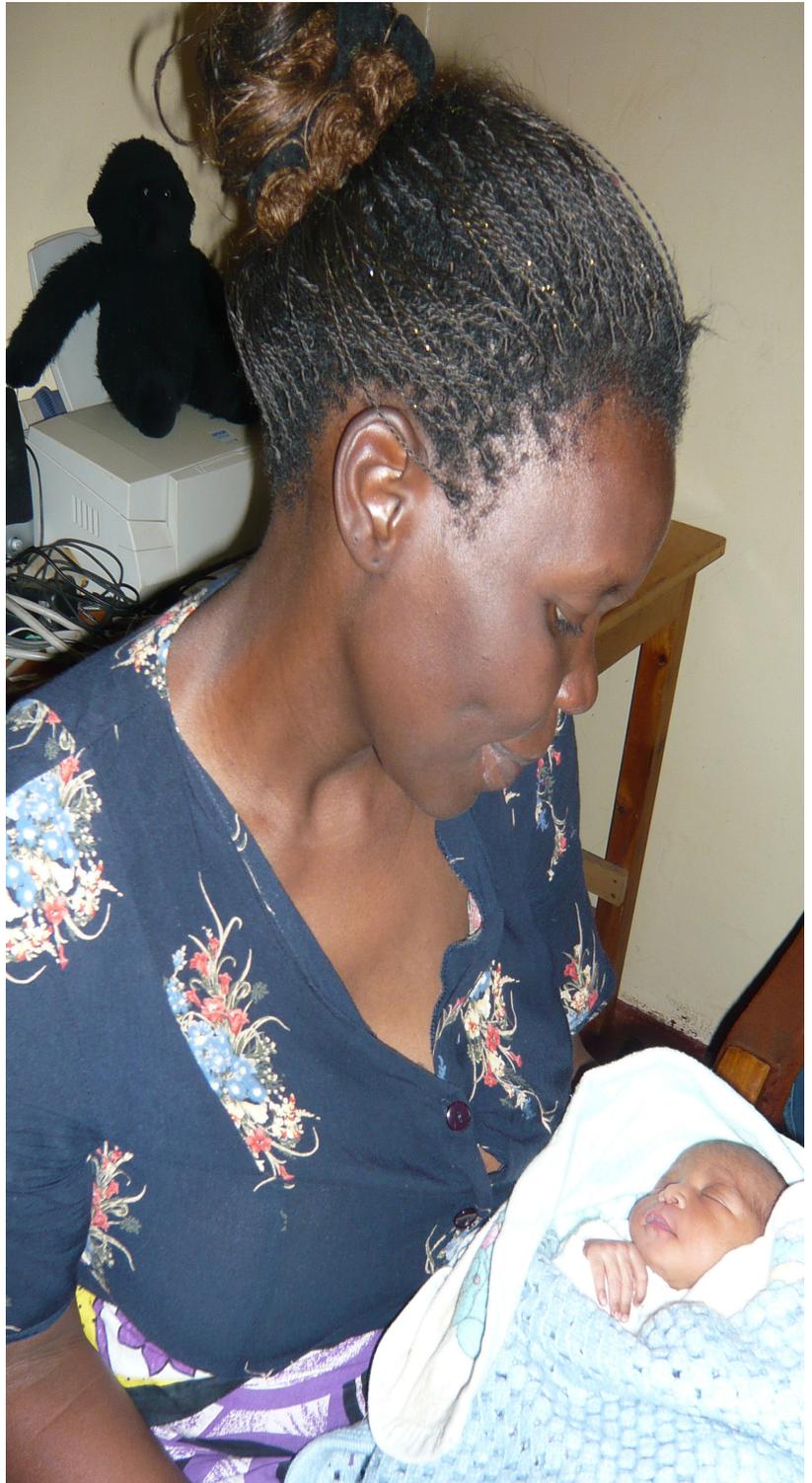
THERE'S THAT INFINITESIMAL MOMENT when my eyes meet those of the mother that espouses that a mother's love is universal. We all want the same good health and bounty for our children and our hearts are generally broken at some stage to achieve it. That mother's love makes the crazy interminable quest for quality of life in the developing world re-worthy of striving for.

“Losing the soul of a parent shapes you as much as losing the life of a parent. I’d lost the essence of a mother.”

In just one life-time, my childhood dreams for a loving and bountiful environment shaped my reality, through mission, for children most at risk, ensuring in some quantifiable measure that I could deliver hope to ease their suffering.

From dreams, to mission, to reality, for The Children.

RIGHT Nairobi - While I was visiting the pastor he was called to the slum to a lady with labour complications. The baby was breach and the mother was struggling. I was scared of the dire circumstances but with great relief, delivered the baby. We got mother and baby off to hospital, and I wiped a bead from my brow!





ABOVE Mabinti - Beautiful embroidery and bead work by Grace, uncovering a new life during Fistula (see Appendix) surgery rehabilitation.

MY MOTHER WAS A BEAUTIFUL EMBROIDERER and became a tutor for the Tauranga Embroidery Guild. Her expertise and finesse was an important part of my life when my father was alive. After so many traumatic ensuing years, it was a beautiful end of her life to instruct and educate others in her creative art form.

“My love and confusion, my respect and disregard, my beauty and brokenness for my mother are intricate threads woven in a complex tapestry for perpetuity.”
