

# INTOUCH

ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

# WAM

## Wounded Warriors by Peter Iliyn

Every now and then I meet up with a person wounded by someone when they were in YWAM. Usually it's been a leader, wounded and insecure *themselves*, that has caused the hurt.

I wish I could say, that during my 20 years with YWAM, I had not come across an insecure leader who was more interested in being 'ministered to' by his position, than in 'ministering to' others. No organization - YWAM included - is immune from weak and insecure leaders.

I learned from my dad how to respond to those who have been wounded. He was Sunday school superintendent and I was youth leader in our church. One day when I was 16, he told me how he had recently been attacked by a lady at a church member meeting. She stood up and publicly dismantled his character, saying he was the worst Sunday school superintendent the church had ever seen; his department was in total disarray; he wasn't a good organizer; and he was a terrible leader. She had been really angry and went on to point out other major flaws in his character.

To my amazement, instead of jumping to his feet and defending himself - everyone in the room knew she had falsely accused him - instead of pointing out some of her many weaknesses, my father told me quite matter-of-factly, that he thanked her for her willingness to show him a few of his blind spots. Then he asked her and the congregation to forgive him for two other mistakes she forgot to mention.

Had my dad counter-attacked this lady, only one thing would have been accomplished; the enemy would have left the hall satisfied. Instead, two weeks later she came literally crawling on her hands and

knees asking forgiveness, which was gladly given.

James and John the disciples, asked Jesus to grant them chief places in His Kingdom (Mark 10:35-45). When the others heard about it, they were indignant because they wanted the positions for themselves. Jesus reminded them that their leadership had to be marked by servanthood, by being willing NOT 'to be ministered unto...' As leaders in the body of Christ, we hardly realize how much sin and failure, hurt and discontent, discord and unhappiness, come from our desire to 'be ministered unto.'

As I said, YWAM isn't immune from insecure leaders. I know there are former staff and students who left our mission hurt by the insensitive reaction of an insecure leader, or leaders. I am deeply sorry if this has happened to you. I want to humbly ask for your forgiveness.

Jesus came to serve, not to *be* served. I'm committed to being that kind of leader, and to encourage servant leadership throughout our whole mission.



*Peter is YWAM's North American Director, and lives in Salem, Oregon with his wife Luba and their four children.*

## Conflict by Jim Stier

One of the greatest impediments to reaching the unreached, is our all-too-common failure to handle conflicts and live together in peace. Because of contaminated relationships, we see people become embittered, judgmental, unbelieving, discouraged and finally quitting the pursuit of their high calling.

We must learn to deal with conflict without practicing the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21). Here are three issues that those who serve - or have served - in YWAM must deal with.

**Distrust** - Too many of us draw negative conclusions about people's motives. I guess we think God has given us the gift of weed-puller in His Kingdom, something Jesus warned us against (Mt 13:24-43).

**Arbitrary or selfish use of authority** - Team leadership will help protect us from this. Leaders must realize they are truly the servants of all. They are not to use people as fodder for their own visions, but to serve the dreams of those who are working with them. They must be willing to hear those who disagree with them.

**Control** - This is the big issue in situations of conflict. Are we willing to love people we can't control? People seldom confess openly to this desire for control. They will hide behind accusations and sophisticated justifications as to their own hurt. They will even mask selfish struggles as a campaign of truth against error, with an attitude of religious superiority. None of this brings healing. What brings healing

**Conflict** continued on page 4

From the last *InTouch*, I have received – and responded to – scores of letters, faxes and e-mails, most of them addressing the issues of pain and conflict that were raised. Some are positive, some are plaintive and some are not pretty. Almost all touched my heart deeply. It seems only right that you too, should feel the pulse of this body we call *YWAM Associates*. I have agonized over whether to include names with some of the less 'pretty' letters. I feel that more harm than good might result from their inclusion, so some names have been omitted. *Ed*

# Pain & Perseverance

## **FORGIVENESS**

"Yes, I am moving in forgiveness. I thank God that I have had the best pastoral care possible. I do not carry the pain of my (DTS), just the memory. Manipulation and control by immature leaders characterized my DTS. I have found that YWAM is not the same worldwide. It is in forgiveness that I have found the freedom to move, and move on, though I will say that (my YWAM experience) immobilized and de-skilled me for a while. I do pray that YWAM's grievance system will become effective."

*Name Withheld*

## **NO LONGER PART OF MY LIFE**

"In one sense, YWAM is no longer part of my life. In another sense, it always will be. I have such mixed emotions as I reflect on my YWAM experience... In my day-to-day 'life after YWAM,' I don't have to face these troubling issues and emotions, that is, until *InTouch* arrives. Most of your issues lean toward the upbeat and positive things - as they should – however most of the YWAM people I know, share the feelings of ambiguity that I have. In your latest issue I was greatly relieved and encouraged to read other similar testimonies. We don't always like to be honest with some of the painful or difficult ramifications of a mission experience. Thank you for being 'real' and 'in touch.'"

*Tammy (Bumsted) De Ruyter*

## **WE SAY...**

"In my YWAM experience... *we say we stress intimacy, but in practice we value*

*performance over relationship... we say just forgive and move on, yet we do not call people to be accountable for their actions. My wife and I have been through pain. In my (early) denial of things that occurred on our base, in my fear of man, in my being so loyal to my leaders, in telling her just to forgive, in all of these I failed to heed her discernment. We were separated for four months because I was so thick-headed. Today we are doing fine... Thank you for your ministry to YWAM alumni like us. God is faithful to use *InTouch* to bring love and healing."*

*Name Withheld*

## **FLOWING OR BUMPING**

"The other day I realized that the greatest mission force in the world today, just MAY well be what you have come to call 'YWAM Associates.' This is a vast resource of 'ex' missionary types who flowed (or bumped) through the schools, and they are out doing it. Were YWAM to fold today, that force will remain in effect for some generations... and would continue to effect ineffable changes across the globe, sort of like a preservative."

*Mary Somers*

## **SUNNY LETTERS**

"Are there any wounded out there? Oh yes, yes, yes! Is there no one else like me? The latest *InTouch* stirred my heart up - I always used to know what to expect - sunny letters from people who obviously had a great time in YWAM. I went to DTS where most of the leaders were younger in

the faith than me, and where the authority of these leaders was beyond question. Just because. Coming from a missionary family, I was exposed for the first time to the devastating effects of the 'you-shall-follow-me-because-I-am-a-leader' fallacy. But, of course, nothing is ever all black. I still remember the incredibly rich relationships that formed in such a short time. The teaching was great, and the outreach was one of the most interesting and challenging experiences of my life. It's these positive things that I try to keep uppermost. God's body has many damaged cells, and we ignore the damage at our own peril, for we are all part of the body. I thank God for all the things I learnt through my painful DTS – He truly does work all things together for good, to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose. Recognizing that some were hurt cannot harm YWAM – it can only make it stronger."

*Name Withheld*

## **VERY ANGRY**

"I have struggled for a few days with writing this letter. When I read your editorial in the last *InTouch*, I found myself getting very angry. You said you were looking for pain... what, to put it bluntly, do you hope to do with my pain? I was with YWAM for more than ten years, I learned many good things, and YWAM allowed me to be involved in ministry projects which were new for us in urban missions. I greatly, greatly appreciate YWAM's taking risks with me, and allowing me to do what I

probably would not have been able to do in other mission agencies. But I guess my biggest frustration is not just at having a very bad experience with one leader, (there is still pain and anger in me), but at the sense that regardless of what my wife, myself or others directly involved with the situation said, no one would listen to us... causing many others pain in the course of the next year and a half. These are my honest thoughts..."

*Name Withheld*

### **YWAM KID**

"When I read letters talking about wonderful YWAM experiences, and how it's been the best time in people's lives, I heave a big sigh. My DTS was not like that at all; in fact it was a hard time in my life. I became a YWAM kid in grade six and really looked forward to my own DTS. By that time I was engaged, so we picked a base that seemed most likely to cope with an engaged couple. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Communication with staff and students was difficult, our leader was often unavailable and not in lectures and we felt that no one took the time to get to know who we really were. We were put in a box (good or bad). On outreach, we were told by our leaders that the general public should not know that we even had a relationship, let alone that we were engaged. That hurt a lot. The school leader said to us all that she was sorry that she hadn't put much effort into the school. It was great to have this said, but we have been working through our pain since then.

Now we're married and have a beautiful child. We still have close links with YWAM and have been on staff of a couple of DTSs close by. The wonderful leaders here have helped heal our wounds and we know God's faithfulness. I guess I just wish that our DTS could have been a bit better, a bit more like the one I looked forward to as a kid. Thank you for *InTouch*, it makes us feel more appreciated than we ever did when actually in YWAM."

*Name Withheld*

### **EXPELLED**

"My family and I are some of the silent wounded. (Some years ago), my husband, my children and myself were 'expelled' from (name of base). I have borne the part I played and have confessed my guilt in the

circumstances. With the direction of the Holy Spirit I have endeavored to make restitution whenever possible. I have repented and sought forgiveness from those who were directly involved. I was young and ignorant, also, in my knowledge of God's Word. I violated certain principles. I was wrong! My husband, tender in faith at the time, was deeply wounded. You said you were 'looking for pain.' I believe there is a community of ex-YWAM servers out there who have never had their questions answered. Misunderstandings have never been dealt with. Restitution still needs to be put in place. It is with this motivation that I write. It is my side of the story."

*Name Withheld*

(There is much more to this story - I have tried to give the 'essence' of the pain expressed in a three-page letter. Ed)

### **SOME SHORTIES**

"Enjoyed the last *InTouch* – Donna's passion for Jesus and Peter playing Attorney, offering up the Council of Reference as a sacrificial offering to all disgruntled former YWAMers!!"

*Mike Jones, England*

"To all who leave YWAM: do not isolate yourself. Talk, write, deal with it. It's taken me two years to adjust because I went 'cold turkey.' Don't."

*Renata Sherwin, South Africa*

"Appreciated your transparency in sharing the letters of hurting YWAMers. May the Lord use this as a vehicle of healing..."

*Patti Broome, USA*

"Sometimes we do feel out in limbo, lost and forgotten. His call to me is still to missions, but I am awaiting the details. And thank you for helping me keep perspective that I am still part of the big picture."

*Samantha, USA*

"Just completed university (three years out of YWAM), high school teacher training is next. The basic stuff I was taught while in the mission has been invaluable, as I have been confronted with many views in conflict with my faith. Receiving *InTouch* is a great reminder of the faithfulness I experienced with YWAM, and it encourages me to keep going, often arriving just as I am going through a difficult time."

*Merv Ellis, New Zealand*

"I just received *InTouch* #23... I almost cried when you thanked me. I guess I didn't feel appreciated. It has helped to heal the hurt and to feel there are more like me out there. Could I please have some back issues?"

*Judy Eckberg Robertson, USA*

"The YWAM experience was the best adventure I had in life. The lifestyle I was taught never ended when I left YWAM Salem... till now."

*Rachel Hui-Hing, Singapore*

"I have no idea who was responsible for me receiving *InTouch*... My SOE in Denmark (1975), was a significant, formative time in my Christian life, and helped to provide a base of biblical teaching and worldview which has been a solid foundation."

*Bruce Porteous, UK*

## **Profound & Pithy**

It's not the things that happen to us that affect us; it's *our perception* of those things.

*Stephen Covey*

Trust is for when you're in the dark.

If talk is cheap and silence is golden, some of us should shut up – and get rich!

The worker is more important than the work.

*Jean Darnall*

The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there.

*Henri Nouwen in The Wounded Healer*

## **Renewal Camps**

*Some comments from a recent Camp...*

"Best thing that happened to us since our honeymoon!"

"I reveled at being in the flexibility of YWAM – seeing God set His agenda for our meetings."

"There was so much fun, and also such depth and sincerity; a wonderful combination we desperately need in the Kingdom."

*For future Renewal Camps, see the enclosed insert*

## Donna's Corner

As I read some of the letters from those who are hurting, I literally wept. I said, "Father, what can we do?"

And He said to me, "Love them and let them know you understand and care. There's nothing else you can do but pray for them and trust Me. I can give understanding and revelation to those who are hurting – and to those who hurt them. Time is short, and I want all My children to be effective for My Kingdom. So they must give their hurts and disappointments to Me."

Read Philippians 3:7-16 and meditate on vs 13b-14, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead... press on."

YWAM Associates is a ministry; you are part of us and are called to minister wherever God has placed you. It is important that you know your place in ministry, and that you encourage others, never competing or comparing.

Isaiah 61 & 62 have become chapters that God has asked our little staff of six to meditate on for 1997. You, as a former YWAMer, are included in this. Ponder these passages and let me know what God says to you personally through them, and what He's saying to us.

Remember what Dean Sherman says; "Walking in forgiveness is spiritual warfare." Remember too what Jesus said, "Love..."

It covers a multitude of sins.



What was the year? 1948, 49 or 50?

**Conflict** continued from page 1

is giving up on self-justification; not trying to establish blame; confessing wrong attitudes; forgiving; learning to trust again; moving on. These bring healing.

When we can't get along, our efforts are blunted and we lose valuable people. We spend our time fixing things instead of achieving our goals. The unreached remain in darkness.

Many who read this are currently involved in ugly conflict. Can you go to God now and confess your part? Can you confess to others involved, opening a path of open communication with them? Can you forgive, ridding yourself of bitterness and accusation in your heart?

We're called to reconcile the world to God. First we must be reconciled to one another.



*Jim Stier is the President of YWAM, and this article is excerpted from International YWAMer, a 16-page magazine published three times a year. For a free copy, write to: BOX 26479, Colorado Springs, CO 80936, USA. One year subscription \$7 (\$5 within USA).*

## ...and Finally, a Few Words from Ed

Putting together this edition of *InTouch* has been a special challenge. Due to circumstances beyond my control ('control,' now there's a nasty word!), I was late getting down to the task; and when I finally did, our great layout man Mark Lee, and our wonderful printshop were both breathing heavily down my neck. Deadlines, don't you love 'em?

As I was saying... there was this special challenge: how to distill the essence from the heaps of letters I have received over the past three months, and to place before you a fair and balanced representation of what readers are saying. And to do this without bending and manipulating and coloring things *my* way; or trying to present things in a way that would be pleasing and palatable to everybody, ruffling no one's feathers.

Conflict, wounded warriors, insecure and immature leaders, manipulation and control: we've been sailing into some difficult and somewhat uncharted waters. Someone said to me recently, "You'd better be careful, you're opening up a can of worms." Well, let me tell you about worms.

Last year I started a compost for my vegetable garden. (Donna has the mistaken notion that it's also for her roses!) Into the bin went all our fruit and vegetable leftovers and a few other things, including a couple of dozen earthworms. In the summer, the compost pile grew quickly and started to smell. Bad. So bad that certain people threatened to get rid of it. Sanity prevailed, and through the year the bin filled up.

Just the other day, I went to check on my compost. Digging down a few inches I discovered a rich, dark soil-like mixture. And worms, thousands of them! For the past several months, those little pink wigglers had eaten and multiplied, multiplied and eaten their way through all our stinking, rotten garbage. What is left is odorless and nutritious soil, and when spread on my garden will help to produce succulent, fresh vegetables this summer.

So you see, letting the worms out can be a good thing. The rubbish and smell disappear, and what is left is clean and pure.

Oh yes! Donna's roses will probably benefit from my compost.

Looking ahead, I have the sense that in the next edition of *InTouch*, we'll be sailing on a different course than these last two. How would you feel about that?



What was the year? 1949, 50 or 51?