

Funeral Service
for
The Reverend
Stanley Robert Langdon

born. Sept 24 1906

died. Sun Mar 13, 1994

Directors: W.D.Rose and Son

Cheltenham 584 2222 (Mr Ray Marsh)

This ceremony: Monday March 21, 1994 at 10 am

at

The Church of Christ

Chesterville Rd and Nepean Highway

Cheltenham (Rev Marilyn Hilton 580 9662)

then the Boyd Chapel at the Necropolis, Springvale, 11.45 am

Next of Kin: **Robert Jnr** (Son) **Christine** and **Daniel** Ph:

798 2697, 015 365 476

(Predeceased by **Pat** (wife) and **Marie** (Daughter))

Celebrants:

Rev. Frank Elmore: 803 8227

Dally Messenger 547 6992, Pager 132222 No 351972

Walter Gherardin: 888 8183

ORDER OF SERVICE

1. Rev Marilyn Hilton: Welcome to the Cheltenham Church of Christ.

2. Rev Francis Elmore:

(a) Call to worship. Acknowledge Marilyn's Welcome - Thanks for the hospitality of the Church.

(b) " Sharing the service with me this morning is Mr Dally Messenger, a long standing friend of Bob Langdon. Mr Messenger was especially helpful and supportive when Bob's daughter, Marie, died some years ago - conducting the service and ministering support to the family... "

(c) Together Dally and I welcome you to this service, and greet you in the name of the Lord

(d) Scripture sentences.

3: Mr Dally Messenger:

Hymn 324 - This was one of Bob' most loved hymns - Rock of Ages - **WE WILL SING VERSES 1 AND 4 ONLY.**

4. Mr Dally Messenger:

THE READINGS

(a). The first reading was written by the Rev Bob Langdon himself during his time at the Gordon Homes. It is a statement of hope and faith in young people.

I BELIEVE that youth is the greatest potential of every nation — for good or ill

I BELIEVE that the quality of a nation's youth will decide the destiny of it people

I BELIEVE that the high visions of youth are of God and that through youth he leads humanity onwards

I BELIEVE that although youth may seem to fail, every effort of high endeavour brings our generation nearer to the kingdom of God.

I BELIEVE in the richness of living, the reward of adventure, the unconquerable nature of the human spirit — and these I find in youth.

(b) The next reading is taken from the second letter of Paul to Timothy. It is the great Apostle's final farewell and, with due reverence, it could be Bob's. I read verses 4- 6a and 22.

*The time of my departure has come.
I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.*

From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

The Lord be with your spirit, grace be with you.

(c) From John 14. 1 - 6 and 27

Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so would I have told that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will take you to myself, so that where I am there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.

Thomas said to him 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

Jesus said to him 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

5. Rev Francis Elmore:

(a) The Homily: The divine promise in John 14.

(b) Assurance of our prayers for the family and dear ones.

6: Mr Dally Messenger:

THE EULOGY

(a) Mr Dally Messenger

It is quite impossible to do justice to this remarkable man's life in a ceremony such as this. I will simply put the briefest outline on record. His considerable and almost immeasurable achievements will be on the record on many churches and places in Great Britain and Australia, but the real record is written in the hearts of men, the men and women whom he loved and ministered to, many of whom are here today. I can only then attempt the briefest chronology and perhaps a few irresistible remarks.

Stanley Robert Langdon was born in Exeter in Devon on September 24, 1906.

His father was a cabinet maker, a skill and a trade which the young Robert inherited and learned from his father.

As a young man he was a brilliant soccer player. As a schoolboy he represented England. Later on he played for Aston Villa, a team that has been in the news lately for another Australian connection. Aston Villa encouraged him to study, he did a course in engineering somewhere along the line, and a special course in sound insulation. This latter skill took him to contracts throughout Europe and perhaps the Middle East.

The British Government recruited the young Stanley Robert to report on troop movements and similar. So Bob became a spy at an early age. He rode a motorbike and when he need money to study for the ministry, he raced his motorbike for cash prizes. So you are getting the picture.

He was not even 24 and already he is a tradesman, an engineer, a soccer layer, a motorbike racer, and a spy!

By the time he was 24 he was a probationary Minister of Religion — a Methodist or Congregational Clergyman and, as I read the records, the relationship was so close between both denominations that in the context of the wide brown land there was hardly any distinction.

To be chosen for Australia Bob had to organise references, and even at this young age he was commended for his fine preaching ability, his influence over and love for young people, and for particularly good work in the slum areas.

Bob came to Australia as one of a group of enthusiastic young clergy. The year was 1928.

In his records there is a letter from a pioneer clergyman named William Taylor, who in his 84th year (on Feb 25, 1928) wrote a letter of welcome to the young men. Full of enthusiasm for his Australian ministry the old man admonished the new boys

"take the advice of an old man, — one who knows — and never worry about pleasant appointments, and big stipends, and great opportunities..." He went on to recommend that they bend their back in the service of the Lord. The words went deep into the soul of Bob Langdon.

The records show he exercised his Christian ministry in Katoomba and Blackheath in the Blue Mountains of NSW, out west in Kyogle and Wilcannia, and down in the Sydney city's industrial Bankstown area.

To exercise his ministry in the outback Bob flew a plane, a Tiger Moth. He went from place to place and on one occasion he crashed it. He couldn't get his seat belt off quick enough, the plane caught fire, and Bob was seriously burned. He was taken from Wilcannia to Sydney Hospital where he had to have an extensive recovery period.

In all of these places where he was a clergyman, he became renowned for his many skills, both intellectual and practical, his love of youth and his selfless and generous hard work.

In 1935 he took leave from the ministry and set himself up in business as Langdon's Motors in Macquarie St Parramatta, an outer suburb of Sydney - a street and a suburb I know well because it was in that very street I started in my first job.

Why, you ask, would such a dedicated tiller in the Lord's vineyard suddenly seek leave? A sentence in a kept letter revealed that the reason was money — not money for himself, but to look after his parents back in England who needed his financial support.

After a few years the financial crisis must have passed and Bob returned to the Ministry, but not without an important life change — one which took place in that same Macquarie Street, Parramatta.

One day Bob spied this attractive young lady he had had his eye on walking on the other side of the street. So he stealthily crossed over, gained on her, and gave her the old "Going my way by any chance" line.

The young lady was Maisie Sara McCurley, known all her life as Pat, and, three weeks later, they were married at the Wesley Chapel in Castlereagh St Sydney. It was the 16th October 1937, by David Hughes a Methodist Minister. How's that for a fast worker? It was the beginning of a long loving and mutually supportive relationship which lasted until Pat's death in 1975. Another quick aside. His name was Stan and we called him Bob and her name was Maisie and we called her Pat — work that one out!

Back in the ministry Bob and Pat became a team. There were two children born to the marriage — Marie and, later on, Robert. Marie, a beautiful daughter and sister and person, a wonderful teacher, died suddenly on September 14, 1990. I had the sad privilege of officiating at her funeral service. Robert, at whose marriage to Christine, I officiated some ten years ago, you all know.

But back to the chronology. Bob gave himself to many wonderful movements and causes and now we find ourselves in the early years of the Second Great War and Bob is in Queensland working for the YMCA, one of the great organisations of Christian pastoral history in this country. A most revealing document is report by one of its high officials at the time, one Commissioner Jack Manning, who wrote of Bob in his report to Headquarters dated the 7th June 1942.

"Langdon is too valuable a man to lose. We must watch our step. Others are after him. He is a man of parts, knows the motor trade, has an air pilot's ticket, knows the outback of

Australia through missionary work there, is a minister, an organiser of high ability, and a man who everywhere draws men to him by his quiet unassuming sincerity. I like him very much."

Strangely to us now, the YMCA was part of the war machine. Bob somehow made the transition into the regular army and saw active service in New Guinea. The family has stories, though we cannot document them at the moment, that Bob rose to the rank of Colonel, and on one occasion when all the officers in his section had been killed, he had to lead the remaining soldiers in the warfare.

Bob didn't speak about the war years much but enough was said for us to understand that it was a time of horror and indescribable tragedy for him. Paradoxically, Bob wrote a history of the YMCA during those years, which I hope one day will be published or at least preserved in the National Archives.

The end of the war saw Bob in Japan during the occupation by General MacArthur. For the next two years or so Bob worked for the YMCA there.

When he returned to Australia he continued to work for the Y and then the National Fitness Council until he took on the job of Superintendent of the Gordon Homes.

Although, as you can now conclude to this point, Bob lived more lives than the proverbial cat, the family's focus, and this company's memory will be centred on the achievement in which all Bob's skills, and love, and family life came together — The Gordon homes for Boys and Girls. They were situated in Hihett and his achievements there, not only in buildings and debts and management and finance, but especially and above all in and with people, are a legend. But almost everyone here is far more qualified than me to talk about this period so, in the first place, I will now call on Mr Robert Langdon, to speak about his father and these times.

(b) Mr Robert Langdon Junior

My father was man who had unshakeable faith and belief in God and the existence of a future life. With this belief and love for the church he has stood behind many pulpits where he had the congregation hanging on his every word. Therefore,

why this church in which to say our final farewell?

I confess it is my choice. I chose this place because it is the church that has many happy memories for me. It is where mum, Marie, dad and I attended services together. It is where the members of my other family, the Gordon Homes, worshipped from time to time. I can also recall on at least one occasion my father standing in this very position as a guest preacher. It is a choice that dad approved of.

My father travelled many thousands of miles and was involved in many different projects, but in 1952 I believe he reached the destination he had been searching for many years, the Gordon Homes. This was the happiest of times for dad. It was a time when the Langdon family became part of the Gordon Homes and Gordon Homes became part of the Langdons.

It was a time in which I had many brothers to grow up with. Many of them are here today. Dad believed these were the best years of his life. In 1973 his wonderful work at the Gordon homes was recognised when he was awarded the British Empire medal. In the past I had only taken a casual interest in the Honour awards but on the morning of the honours list being published in 1973, I picked up the paper and went straight to the Honours List and there it was, "S.R.Langdon BEM for valuable service given to underprivileged children."

I was the proudest son you could ever imagine. I recall vividly the day mum, Marie and I stood and watched with a great deal of emotion and pride, his receiving of the medal at Government House, Melbourne. That medal hangs in a place of honour on his coffin today.

It has been many years since dad retired as superintendent of the Gordon Homes owing to ill health, but the Gordon years were always close to his heart.

In 1992 through the efforts of Gary and Raylene Hicks a reunion of past Gordon Boys Girls and Staff was organised to coincide with Dad's 85th birthday — cake and all.

How appropriate that he could have all of his family around for this 85th birthday.

He has often since referred to this day as one of the happiest of his life — one which made his Gordon work all worthwhile.

Dad recently remarked that he hoped there would be

other reunions — at least for another 25 years!

In 1980, I left these fair shores and went to live in America for five years where I was fortunate to meet and fall in love with a lovely lady, Chris, and her very young son, Daniel. We all returned to Australia in 1985 where we stayed with Dad and Marie for a short period of time. The friendship and love that Dad and Marie quickly developed with Chris and Daniel was lovely to see and it was in their house that Chris and I were married. The same house we live in today.

With the sudden and very sad passing of my sister Marie, dad asked us would we move in with him. It was the only sensible thing to do. We all needed each other's support to get over Marie's passing.

There were changes made to the house. There were changes made by all of us to accommodate this new arrangement — an arrangement that turned out to be a very happy time.

It was period in which we shared a great deal of laughter. Dad had a wonderful sense of humour. My wife Chris and dad developed a very special relationship — always kidding each other. There was hardly an evening that went by without them having a gentle dig at each other. There were oftentimes when dad would introduce Chris and, after the introduction he would say in a surprised tone of voice, "She's American you know, but we really don't hold that against her."

From the beginning Dad and Daniel seemed to have special bond between them. The young pupil and his mentor. It seemed to be perfectly natural.

The last thing dad ever wrote was to Daniel instructing him how to do enamelling on jewellery. In the past three years I had the opportunity of getting to know and share my father's life all over again. We have lived under the same roof, shared the same dreams, worked hard together increased the love and respect for each other. I realise I not only had a wonderful father, but a friend and a great mate.

In January this year we found out that Dad had acute leukemia and that at his age it was untreatable . It was great shock to all of us and it was not long before dad had to be admitted to hospital. The first one being Dandenong and District.

It was here a very special even took place. My daughter, his granddaughter, Michelle, whom he hadn't seen for a long

time, visited. They spent some time together, catching up on each other's lives. This time meant a great deal to dad. Dad returned home but this was short lived. He had to go back to hospital — South Eastern Private and later, the Alfred. The medical staff could do no more and Dad had a burning desire to come home.

Arrangements were made to make things as comfortable as possible and Dad once again came home. Because of the love and the wonderful nursing given by Chris, dad was able to be home with us for another two weeks.

I remember sitting by his bed one evening. Suddenly he grabbed me by the wrist and said. "You know, Ben, that Chris of yours is a wonderful lady."

Dad and Chris at the end of the day always said to each other. "I love you".

Beryl Calnan, dad's secretary at the Gordon during all his years and a very close friend is now retired and living at Port Macquarie with her family. On hearing of dad's illness Beryl came to Melbourne to visit him. This meeting took place at home. It turned out to be dad's last night in his house. . Beryl and Dad talked for some time that evening about many things.

In a recent telephone conversation with Beryl she told me that dad said to her that he had no fear of death, he just wished he could stay around to teach Daniel for a little longer.

There have been many special times with Dad over the years. I would like to share with all of you, his friends, my friends, one of those special moments. We had been working together all day in the yard. At the end of the day I was relaxing with a beer, which I have been known to do occasionally, and dad joined me carrying a picture frame which contained a prayer. He explained that he had had this prayer for many years and that he had strived to live his life accordingly . He gave it to me to look after. It goes like this.

Let me live , O Mighty Master,
Such a life as man should know,
Testing Triumph and disaster,
Joy and not too much of woe,
Let me run the gamut over;
Let me fight, and love and laugh

And when I'm beneath the clover,
Let this be my Epitaph:

'Here lies one who took his chances
In the busy world of men.
Battled luck and circumstances,
Fought and fell and fought again.
Won sometimes but did no crowing,
Lost sometimes but did not wail,
Took his beating, kept on going,
Never let his courage fail.
He was fallible and human,
Therefore loved and understood
Both his fellow men and women,
Whether good or not so good.
Kept his spirits undiminished:
Never false to any friend;
Played the game until it finished;
Lived a sportsman to the end.

I would like to acknowledge some special people for their love and support. My wonderful wife, and son Daniel, Dr Hastings, dad's friend, the people from Palliative Care, the hospital nursing staff, one of whom told me that dad was a very special person, Chris's mother and father and family in America for their many supportive phone calls. To my UK and Canadian relatives.

For the support of special friends — Peter Freshwater, Bev and Bill Savage — the sash you see today on dad's coffin was made with a lot of love by Bev. To two loving Airedale dogs, Jazz and Jock, for their many wet kisses. To Rev Frank, Dally and Walter; to the pallbearers and those in the guard of honour.

And finally a very special thanks to all of you here today for showing your respect to a very special human being, my father Bob Langdon.

(c) Mr Walter Gherardin, President of the Gordon Homes

Forty two years ago this month, March 1952, Bob Langdon with his wife Pat and their children Marie & Robert arrived at the almost brand new post-War Gordon Boys Cottage Homes in Highett.

Officially opened in 1951 Bob inherited a rough and almost treeless 9.5 acre property with three large stark concrete buildings and an extended family of 24 boys.

And so commenced a life that it would seem all his previous wide-ranging training, activities and experience had been but the preparation for this his greatest challenge and achievement-to be a parent to his own and the countless members of The Gordon Family.

Bob believed that a home is made by providing warm-hearted understanding, and that it involved more than the physical requirements of roof and walls, food and material comfort.

By providing devotion, affection and a sense of security and belonging he established the environment to enable individual development of character and talents and the priceless value of loyalty and comradeship.

And so as the years progressed, so did Bob & Pat's bigger-than usual family both in numbers, challenges and achievements.

"The Chief" as Bob was affectionately called by the Boys had a hands-on approach. He launched all manner of self-help and fundraising activities to assist in replenishing the larder and the near-empty coffers of the Homes. The diversity of the projects were boundless.

As well as these practical advantages Bob saw these activities as essential exercises in providing training, team work and the joy and bond of achievement.

In the wider community Bob sought and inspired the practical assistance of many groups and individuals, he encouraged and participated in closer working relationships with kindred agencies and more importantly stimulated the Committee of Management to broadening the work of the Homes.

He brought in toddlers, the baby brothers of boys already or coming into residence-and he became increasingly frustrated that the Homes could not accommodate sisters of the boys, often in other institutions and sometimes even unknown

to their brothers,

In time a separate working boys Hostel, and a secondary students' hostel were established and the fulfilment of a long cherished wish--The Chapel of the Boy.

Later a trial family Group Home was established which prepared the way for the complete change-over to the scattered family homes fulfilling his ambition for

Bob always found inspiration in the dedicated work of General Charles Gordon with homeless and destitute children who, some 160 years ago, put his Christian faith into practical action to assist the poor, the sick and particularly the young in Gravesend.

Bob's labours of love were recognised by the award of the British Empire medal and expressed beautifully in two recent tributes from old boys of the Gordon family-

"your remarkable kindness is intricately entwined in the childhood memories of many.... You were there in our childhood years when no-one else cared. You will remain in our hearts for ever."

And as you would expect his association didn't cease there-for into adulthood, marriage and parenthood many sought and benefited from the counselling, interest and love of Bob and Pat.

There are not many who during their lifetime can say that they have met a great man--a greatness that unites wide experience, total dedication, compassion, determination, modesty and great faith in his fellow man and the God he served. To all who knew and worked with Stanley Robert Langdon, "The Chief" or Bob, we have had that privilege.

(d) Mr Dally Messenger

In the 23 years since Bob retired from the Gordon Homes due to ill health, one would tend to think that he had moved into the quiet scene of rural tranquillity.

Not so. I had the pleasure of working with him as a spare part in the services roster when the Rev Frank Elmore opened the chapel at Haileybury for regular Sunday services. I particularly remember his interest in the Oxford movement and

his ecumencial spirit, his tolerance and his broadness of mind.

Bob experienced immeasurable sadness on the death of his wife, Pat, in 1975 and later on the unexpected death of his wonderful daughter, Marie.

So Bob still continued working within his community and his family, until January when he took ill and even until last Sunday when he died.

He died, as the Bible would say, full of years, a life incredibly full of experiences and quite immeasurable achievements.

Now the Rev Bob Langdon has passed on the lives of all who were touched by him, befriended by him and loved by him must be diminished.

7. Rev Francis Elmore:

(a) Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

8. Mr Dally Messenger

(a) Announcements: **All are welcome back at Kimberley, Chapel Road, Keysborough for refreshments after the ceremony.**

After this service we will all proceed to the Boyd Chapel at the Springvale Necropolis for the final part of this ceremony.

(b) We will now all sing Hymn No. 34.
Now Thank we all our God

9. Rev Francis Elmore:

Benediction

At the Crematorium

10. Rev Francis Elmore:

Introductory words (brief)

Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

11. Mr Dally Messenger

Committal (Please stand)

(That man is a Success

*That man is a success
who has lived well,
laughed often and loved much;
who has gained the respect
of intelligent men
and the love of children;
who has filled his niche
and accomplished his task;
who leaves the world better
than he found it,
who has never lacked appreciation
of earth's beauty
or failed to express it;
who looked for the best in others
and gave the best he had.)*

Tenderly and reverently we commit the body of our friend Bob to the purifying fire, grateful for the life that has been lived; and for all that life has meant to us.

We are glad that Bob lived
We are glad that we saw his face
And felt the pressure of his hand.
We cherish the memory of his words,
his generosity, his love for children,
his love for his wife
and all his family,
We cherish the memory of his deeds and character.
We cherish his friendship
And most of all, his love.

We should resolve at moments like these that while we live we will strive to make our living too of real worth and carry on the goodness Bob extended to others.

In the consciousness of work well done and a life well lived death in the deepest sense can have no sting.

Ubi est mors victoria tua?

Ubi est mors stimulus tuus?

O Death where is thy victory?

O Death where is they sting?

We now leave Bob in peace. With respect we bid him farewell. Thus thinking of him let us leave this place in quietness of spirit, conscious of his love and friendship to us, and live this way toward each other.

12. Rev Francis Elmore:
Benediction