



## Bangalore, India (en route to Los Angeles) 94

*In 1994, I was the CEO of World Vision Australia for five years. I had become increasingly focused on the knowledge gap between donors and the poor. The people who gave the donations and the people who received them lived in two worlds, with contrasting world views. I had come to believe, perhaps later than I should, that one of the important tasks for World Vision was to be a bridge over that gap.*

*I invited our CFO, Boyne Alley, and Marketing Director, John Rose, to see with me how our Indian colleagues were developing projects under the banner of “Area Development Project” which we just called “ADPs”.*

### Preface

Philip Hunt, former chief executive of World Vision Australia, writes about the travel experiences that came with the job description. As CEO of a major development aid organisation, he writes with a singular perspective, combining the humour and adventure of travel with deeper insights into a world that enables him to move from Melbourne to Matabeleland, from providence to poverty, from luxury to loss.

#### Monday, 7 February 1994

We slept like logs from Singapore to Madras for three hours and arrived feeling remarkably chirpy at around 4 am Madras time (already almost 9 am at home). Steven and John from the office faithfully waited and took us to the Sindoori Hotel. They gave me a room with a four-poster bed and two bathrooms. One bathroom was the regular variety. The other contained a shower, a sauna, and a raised Jacuzzi with a view through the windows across Madras rooftops. Pity I was only to be in the room for three hours. And I slept the whole time.

My Aussie colleague, Dr Ken Tracey, met me at breakfast, and John Rose, Director of Marketing at World Vision Australia, appeared soon after. Ten minutes before departure, John began to get anxious about the non-appearance of our remaining colleague, Boyne Alley, so John excused himself and rang Boyne’s room. Boyne was up and looking forward to his next leisurely hour “before he needed to go.” The time shift was easy to confuse because it contained a move to a half-hour time zone like Adelaide and a calculation for daylight saving. Boyne, a highly qualified accountant, felt he should be pretty good at this, even after no sleep for 24 hours, and spent many minutes re-checking the logic of his mental calculations. I admitted that I had cheated. I just waited until they had announced the local time on the plane and shifted my watch to the accurate half-hour accordingly.

Madras was full of people, mostly heading in towards town as we drove out. The press of people in India has a permanent impression on most visitors. There are people everywhere. Each concrete span in the footpath is a microcosm of human existence. An old man sits against a shopfront, rubbing his head. Two young mothers sit splay-legged with toddlers in their open laps. The mothers

talk contentedly, and their children play independently. Only Indian women in their beautiful saris can sit knees apart and still look elegant.

Men and women stand independently, waiting for a bus. The space between them is tight compared to my Western norms, but no one appears to feel invaded. A hundred people stand waiting for a bus that looks full when it pulls up. Beside them, another hundred stand waiting for another bus.

Small boys and girls in bright school uniforms wander in and out. They cross the road, the older children, usually girls, gripping the hands of the younger ones.

Huge buses, trucks, scooter-cabs, pedicabs, motorcycles, bicycles, and cars cram the road and flow along with the efficiency of rice custard being poured from a bowl. Pedestrians stroll across, relying on the drivers' manoeuvrability.

Horns blow. Gears crash. Engines growl. Horns blow some more.

A woman rides by on her motorcycle. One daughter sits on the petrol tank. The other rides pillion. Both little girls look down at the road, shielding their eyes from dust as if their mother has instructed them that it is naughty to look at the traffic.

Two men emerge from a tailor's shop doorway carrying a large sewing machine table. A young man carries a huge bundle of silk material into a Sari shop. A shopkeeper and a woman customer discuss the merits and value of a bunch of short fat bananas. A coconut vendor attacks a green coconut with a huge knife. Beside his shop is a small mountain of spent shells like the remains of a mortar battery. A tall, thin youth tries to interest passers-by in a pair of Ray-Bans. Two children hold the hands of a blind beggar and pull at the people's clothes on the street. They are a functioning, commercial begging team. I wonder if they are his children or merely business associates.

This pattern repeats. Each repetition has a minor variation. It builds into a fractal people-scape without end.

At the airport, we had to overcome the usual bureaucratic challenge for our flight to Bangalore. Ken's name was not showing in the computer. He had reconfirmed, and he had an Air-India stamp on the ticket to prove it. Nevertheless, intervention from the Check-In Manager was required to authorise his addition to a flight that was hardly more than half full.

Suratha, Sunderaj, and Vijayakumar were waiting for us in Bangalore. This time, they had hired a small bus, which was much more suitable for our purposes than the tiny Murati van we had had for my last visit the previous year.

Suddharta got off the bus as we approached, and I greeted him. I turned around, and a strange but familiar fellow approached me. He looked a bit familiar, and I knew I should recognise him. He said, "G'day," and the penny dropped that this was Mal Garvin. That I had completely forgotten that we were to meet him here was hardly forgivable despite the jetlag. Mal had come at my invitation. A few months earlier, we had been seated together at the Canberra Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast, an event only redeemed by the joy of sitting next to Mal. He seemed a little tired, and I asked him if accompanying us to see World Vision at work might brighten his calendar. Mal had arrived from

Bombay (after Colorado Springs and Boston) and looked as spaced out as anyone present. Fortunately, I recovered fast and introduced him to the others quickly.

Our first project visit was to the incongruously named Green Meadows SSW (Sponsorship Social Welfare) project, which was smack bang in the middle of urban Bangalore. This was a school-based project in which sponsorship funds were used to buy school uniforms, books, a health check, and a mid-day meal for the sponsored children.

It quickly became evident that the project was well run, providing tangible benefits to the children and had a high degree of local ownership.

That is if local ownership constitutes ownership by the project managers, a man named Noel since he was born on Christmas Day and his wife. She proved to be more articulate and firmer in her views than her husband, but she permitted him the forward position, at least until after the morning tea had been served.

This was their project. The local families played no other role in it. There was no parents' council, but Noel said, "They are busy people. They are not interested." I wondered.

It was a Christian school with obvious Christian content in the curriculum, including a compulsory summer vacation Bible School. "The parents know it is a Christian school," we heard. We were left to infer the unsaid—*So they could hardly object.*

We were told that the Christian schools had the best reputation for quality education. Many Muslims and others were calling their schools things like "Saint Paul's" and even employing headmasters with Christian names to fool people into thinking that their schools were Christian. Really?

Three grades were housed next door to Noel's house. About forty kids in Grades 8-10, the senior grades before university or technical college. I asked them some questions about what they had been studying, and a bright girl from the 10th grade told us, through the interpreter, that they had been studying Population in their Biology class.

I asked her what she had learned about Population, and she stood up and gave a short speech. It was a glowing performance. Precocious and innocent, graced with a self-conscious smile and eyes shyly averted from her imposing audience lined along the classroom front like a delegation of inspectors. In her face and manner, there was so much potential. So much intelligence. So much life.

Yet last year, only two of the school's graduates had job offers. The rest "went back home," Noel said. In other words, they had been educated for nothing. Well, maybe not for nothing. For some years, they could take comfort in the learning itself and the fact that institutions existed and were supported by overseas people, both of whom cared about kids. But was it enough?

The relevance of an education that prepared kids only to return to their parents' day-labouring world seemed in question.

We then went a kilometre or so to the primary school, where about a hundred kids came out into a small playground and sat patiently while I said something inane by way of a speech. We walked through their tiny classrooms. The largest, about the size of my study at home. But with 20-30 kids

desks crammed in it. A blackboard and a few faded magazine photos on the wall. A lot is being achieved with a little.

For the first time, I saw that Bangalore had a substantial shopping area. Missed it last year. Not that I was in a buying mood. But there were lots of silk shops. Boyne bought some silk scarves at about \$16 each. It did seem awfully cheap. But did I really need any? Did Boyne, for that matter?

After lunch, we stopped for a while to reconfirm our Air India tickets. It takes you as long to get reconfirmation as it does to fly in the plane! And then (witness Ken) it does not always make a difference.

Boyne asked of the bus, "Is this the World Vision vehicle?"

"No" I replied. "The World Vision vehicle out here is a motorcycle. That's all."

"In Vietnam, everyone seemed to have a new air-conditioned four-wheel drive", Boyne recalled.

"Ah, there is a correlation between the number of four-wheel drives and another variable," I informed him. "Can you tell me what the other variable might be?"

Boyne tried a few wrong ones. Then, he thought deeply for about ten minutes. Finally, he came up with the solution.

"There is a direct correlation between the number of new air-conditioned four-wheel drives and the number of non-Nationals on the staff."

"Correct."

We arrived at the *Guestline* hotel outside Bangalore and had a few hours to rest before a 7 p.m. briefing and dinner.

At dinner, the waiter took our drinks order. After a long delay and a signal from us for the menu, he returned to say that "the chef has produced something special for you" and presented the chef, who informed us that he had prepared roast beef.

Since I was in India and expecting to eat Indian food, which I had discovered I quite liked, I was a bit put out. It seemed to me that this restaurant had it the wrong way around. It was not the chef's prerogative to tell me what I was to eat.

I asked if the items on the menu were also available, and with some reluctance, the waiter admitted they were. Although it was possible that we misinterpreted what was happening, it looked like pressure to accept what they had pre-arranged. Sidhartha later agreed with this assessment, stating that the hotel has very low occupancy mid-week and is probably trying to keep costs down by having a limited menu.

Anyway, the others had roast beef, which certainly looked nice, and they reported that it was. A couple of us had Indian food, which was equally enjoyable.

I suspect the chef knew a few Aussies were coming in and tried to do something special for us. It's a pity I didn't appreciate his generosity.

## Tuesday, 8 February 1994

I slept quite well and arrived at 7.30 for breakfast to find all the others had arrived moments before. I had coffee and toast with vegemite (my own supply). The eggs looked unappetisingly runny, and the bacon Americanly crisp.

Sidarta, Surata, and Sunderaj arrived at 8, and we met together to enjoy Mal Garvin's devotions. They were powerful and deep. What a wonderfully inspired choice! He spoke pretty much nonstop for the hour, and the time just raced by. Wonderful.

The rest of the day was more familiar to me. We visited three villages in a process that Ken and I had designed and sold to Surata (so much that he owned it as his own idea, about which neither of us disabused him). The first village was one in which the ADP staff had had only limited contact. The second was one in which we had only been working for a month or two. The third had been going a year or two.

The process worked. We saw the development process in one day.

The first village was disorganised, and there was a sense of helplessness and despair about the future. The elders alone spoke to us while others stood in the background. An older woman made comments from some distance but was dismissed by the men as mentally unbalanced.

The second village seemed in better shape. First, a younger man was obviously working with the ADP worker. Older people still spoke, but others were involved. A welcome had been organised, and someone ran off to get mats for us to sit on. We were given a cut rose each as a welcome gift.

I proposed a "welcome" hypothesis. This suggested that the degree of community organisation and promise was directly correlated to the efficiency of their welcome to us.

Sure enough, the people were well prepared for us at the next village. Mats had been laid out in advance. A whole group of men, the "Youth organisation" which had assumed responsibility for village development, were present and organised in their best clothes to meet us, and garlands of flowers were prepared on a tray.

More significant than whether we were welcomed, of course, was that this village had a dream for its future and plans to work towards it. They had already built a new central water storage tank, using a Living Waters tank kit supplied by Ringwood Rotary Club in far-away Melbourne. They were working on a water pump and planned to install street drainage. More importantly, there was a sense of unity and hopefulness.



We were ferried around these villages in a small bus. The driver played music over the PA system as we went.

Back at the hotel at night, we again went through the bizarre routine of the pressure to order what the chef had prepared "especially for foreigners." This was one foreigner who did not want to eat fish. I can eat that anywhere in the world. And it wasn't even Friday. I wanted Tandoori Chicken, and

they were eventually happy to oblige. Never mind that my Tandoori Chicken cost less than half the foreigners' special. That is A\$3 rather than A\$6. Pretty cheap, however you looked at it.

Boyne did point out that I had valued the matter of principle as significant enough to argue about \$3. But I didn't argue with his economics. I didn't order the fish.

### **Wednesday, 9 February 1994**

After devotions, we set off for our last village visit. My theory about welcomes was affirmed as this village, one of the most advanced developmentally, had the flowers prepared, and the coconuts came with drinking straws!

We stayed about two hours, spending the first 40 minutes in a tiny room with about thirty people. It felt like the black hole of Calcutta, but it was further south. The room had a door and one window in the same wall, so there was no cross ventilation, and since a dozen people filled both orifices, no air was coming in anyway. Gradually, the oxygen in the room depleted, and the heat rose, but none of us expired.

Outside again, we walked around the village, looking at the practical things they had achieved. However, the most enduring achievement in these villages was the discovery of a developmental process that they could own and replicate. That is one of the keys.

Later, while discussing sponsorship funding for these communities, Ken said, "A key concept is that it is not the child sponsorship that looks after children in these communities; it is the development process that does this. Sponsorship is one way of funding development."

After this, we returned to the ADP office for lunch of bananas, grapes and tangerines. I had a *Thums Up*—a passable imitation of Coca-Cola, although it was let down by a Sarsaparilla aftertaste.

Then, at 2, we met with the project workers and discussed various things. There was a healthy debate about whether it would be right to fund a temple if that was what the people wanted. One position was that anything that built a relationship with the people was good. However, without exception, the actual project workers (as opposed to the office staff) said they would ask how this contributed to their development. Sidartha subtly pointed out that the same questions should apply to a request to build a Christian church building. Well, perhaps not too subtly.



There was a good discussion about the impact of child sponsorship on the process. The team seem to have this idea well under control. Ken cited a case in which some communities felt they had to accept what sponsors requested.

This led me to think that one of our problems here continues to be the lack of an integrated vision. The project workers do not see themselves as having a role in, let alone a responsibility for, the development of the donor.

When I visit a village, I have learned to ask how my visit impacts the development process, for good or ill.

In Australia, we need to ask how our marketing impacts the development process, for good or ill.

Likewise, in the field, they needed to ask how our project work impacts the donor's development process.

We need an integrated mindset that accepts that marketers have a responsibility for the development of the poor and that project workers have a responsibility for the development of the donor. Only when we accept this mutual responsibility will we find that our development processes are not distorted by each other.

Around four, we bussed back to the hotel. Mal and Boyne went on to Bangalore to shop for souvenirs while Ken, John and I stayed in.

This time we decided to humour the waiter and asked straight up, "And what's the special for tonight?" It was "mince in French bread", which turned out to be a very nice mince, pumpkin, cream cheese thing wrapped up in filo pastry, with boiled veggies on the side. He had made a brown gravy with mushrooms to pour over the whole thing, and it was quite delicious and definitely worth \$6. Boyne and Mal arrived just as we finished, so we stayed a little longer to see their trinkets. Boyne had bought three saris and a brass elephant about the size of a small wombat. Mal had bought some jewellery.

#### **Thursday, 10 February 1994**

Today was mostly travelling. We had breakfast at seven and left the hotel soon after. We caught the plane from Bangalore to Madras. It was an Airbus, and the flight was a little late, but it only took 45 minutes, and we had four hours before our next flight. We had mince samosas (little triangles of mildly curried mince inside fried pastry) and pseudo-coke (or lime juice and soda) and talked about this and that with Saeed, who had come to "debrief" with us.

We walked to the international terminal and checked in for the flight to Singapore on Air India. The terminal was only about ten years old then, but like much in India, it already looked decaying. They say that the roads are not made properly to ensure that there will be work for the road builders soon after. Everything here seems to have the same short-life character.

The executive lounge was run by Sheraton, and by contrast, it was very expensive and lavish with lovely comfy chairs, quite classy decor, and competent service. This typified India, too. The contrasts between ordinary life and the 5-star life of the very rich are much starker than in much of the world. You can see some wretched poverty and the most resplendent wealth in India. I have the privilege to touch them both. It's a privilege not to take lightly.

The flight to Singapore was an hour and a half late, but that was no real problem for us. A lack of flight attendants owing to an industrial dispute in Bombay or Delhi was the reason. Our Airbus had only four attendants, two women and a couple of aging male stewards. Usually, they have twelve. According to the captain, they did a good job and were "the only ones who were willing to come and

serve you.” When they ran out of chicken, I did not complain and happily enjoyed the lamb curry and rice. What a Trojan, eh?

### **Friday, 11 February 1994**

We booked into the Boulevard Hotel around midnight and agreed to meet in the coffee shop for breakfast at 8 am.

At 8.05, I arrived to find a slow line of about 100 Chinese people from a tour group or three waiting for the coffee shop. Mal, who had arrived at 7.55, had no trouble finding an empty place, but at 8, the swarms swarmed. Ken speculated about alternatives and finally convinced us to walk down to Scotts Road and have a hot croissant and espresso coffee at the Deli-France.

Back in Ken's room, we prepared for the two days' reflection and planning with an extended devotion from Mal. Here are my notes:

**Purpose**, community and values. All are needed for the human spirit. “It's amazing what people will put up with if there is a purpose in the pain.” There was something beautiful about the purpose in the eyes of these young men in the villages.

**Community** can be defined as the knowledge that the real “you” exists in the mind of another as a valued and respected individual. What a beautiful definition.

**Values**, meaning, dreams, vision. We have seen the dream in the young men's eyes. As we can engage our supporters at this level, we open the door to their transformation—the delicate work of self-limiting choices.

After devotions, we spent time sharing moments of discovery or significance from our three days in the projects. I talked about the girl who talked about India's population and the potential and life that was jumping out of her. And the realisation that within a year or two, it was probable that this would be snuffed out by early marriage in which she would become a chattel of her husband or return to an unfulfilled life at home in a society that can offer her no meaningful role. From this incident, we raised the relevant universal concepts of development. What are we educating kids for? Are we interested in providing an education or in real human transformation?

We went around the room, each sharing an incident and then spending 10-15 minutes discussing the meaning of these incidents.

It was an excellent process, from which a common view emerged of what we had experienced and its meaning for us.

We broke for lunch and shopping. Because rain threatened, John, Boyne and I went to the shops immediately. Only John had any special shopping list since he had broken his glasses in India. He had sat on them.

It was Day Two of Chinese New Year, so very few shops were open, but we found an optical shop, and John got a frame to fit his lenses. I'm not sure he did much of a deal since the frames cost \$250 SIN, which is about twice what the whole glasses would have cost at home. Even then, he ended up with frames that didn't sit on his nose right. He decided to go back the next day to try to sort it out.



We found the Mövenpick restaurant, which is part of a chain of Swiss restaurants that is a bit like Sizzlers. I had a terrible mushroom and fettuccine dish that looked nicer on the menu than on the plate. Large mushrooms were covered in breadcrumbs, and I think they had been boiled. They tasted OK, but mushroom is not a flavour I particularly enjoy when it is on its own. In association with other tastes, it is fine. I was a bit jealous of Boyne's decision to have Raclette. It looked lovely. Anyway, I made up for myself by having ice cream with hot fudge!

Back at the hotel around four, we worked until 8 on the key issues and made a good list of things to work on in some detail the next day.

In the evening, we all went to the Cantonese Restaurant in the hotel, and I ordered a few dishes for everyone. It was quite nice, but the menu seemed a bit limited. For dessert, I asked for “mat gwa sai mai lo,” sago with honeydew melon. They didn't have honeydew, but they had some orange melon, and it was very nice. It was better for our Western tastes than the usual hot and sweet Chinese desserts. Mal obviously wasn't in his element since he needed a fork and spoon.

### **Saturday, 12 February 1994**

During the night, at about 4 am, we were all woken by the fire alarm. At breakfast, I asked everyone what they did, and remarkably, we pretty much followed the same pattern. I put on the light, looked at my watch, groaned, walked to the door and looked out into the passage through the peephole, sniffing for smoke. The alarm stopped ringing while I was doing this, and a calm and velvety voice came from the middle of my room. Was it God? No, it was the muzak speaker through which the hotel was broadcasting information about the fire alarm. First, a male voice in Japanese (I knew God wasn't Japanese), then a female voice in Singaporean-accented English. “The Fire Alarm has sounded in the hotel. We are presently investigating. Please remain calm and stay in your room. Please wait for a further announcement.”

I looked out the window, could see no smoke, and thought I would take their advice since my room was only 10 metres from the fire escape on the end of the building (although I was on the 13th floor). I was sure I could crawl through smoke that far if I had to, thinking that this may rank as *famous last thoughts*.

I found my new moleskins and draped them over a chair to put on over my PJs if necessary (most of the other guys said they put their pants on right away). Then I got my computer and passport wallet and put them in my pants. Then I closed my suitcase in case the sprinklers went off.

Then I went back to bed.

After about 10 minutes, the same soporific, calm tones announced that the alarm was a false one and apologised for the interruption. Soon after, my pulse rate returned to normal, and I slept again.

We turned up at 7.30 for breakfast and shared news about the fire alarm. John's room did not play the messages, so perhaps he went off to sleep, although I thought it was good to know that someone was doing something about the alarm. We had no trouble getting into the coffee shop at that hour, but at eight, the queues were back.

After this, we went back to work, discussing the lifestyle and organisational culture implications of the ministry we had seen. We began to draw our Dream Map of this future organisation. It covered three large sheets of butcher's paper after a few encouraging hours.

We had a sandwich in the coffee shop and returned to complete the task by identifying jobs to be done, who would do them, and when they would be done. Finally, we prayed together and finished about four. Boyne goes to Melbourne, and Mal to Perth tonight. John and I are going to LA tomorrow, and Ken is going to India again.

After we finished our meetings in Singapore and Mal and Boyne had left, I shouted Ken and John dinner at the Tanglin Club (I think that is what it is called). It was a bit of the British Empire with a main restaurant called "The Churchill Room" dominated by the man's grim face looking down on the diners.

### **Sunday, 13 February 1994**

The flight from Singapore via Tokyo to Los Angeles didn't start well when we found no non-smoking seats. We made a bit of a fuss, and the supervisor came over and said she would try to allocate other non-smokers into a row at the front of the smoking section and sit us there, too. That meant we had smokers behind us, which wasn't too bad. She also said she would send a telex ahead to Tokyo and try to get us seats upstairs in the all-non-smoking section. If this was any airline other than Singapore Airlines, I might have believed this was an empty promise to get us out of her face. But when we got to Tokyo, they had our names on a board and new seats.

We got into L.A. at around midday, rather late because the plane had been originally delayed about an hour and a half in Singapore while we sat and stewed in the cabin. Some problem with the air conditioning.

A new freeway was open that bypassed Downtown LA, and the trip to the hotel in distant suburban Monrovia took around three-quarters of an hour. You'd never know there had been an earthquake here. Not a crack anywhere! It just demonstrates the distorting power of the media. I guess you can go up to the San Fernando Valley and see a bit of knocked-out freeway, but that's forty miles from here. What was that shuddering?

I went to the Fashion Park Mall and wandered about for an hour or so. They had gabardine suits for US\$150 with two pairs of pants, but I didn't buy one. Instead, I bought a chocolate milkshake. It was only \$4.25. Yikes!

"America's Funniest Home Videos" is on now. Familiar stuff.

I'm pooped. I'll order some soup from room service, then crash.

Happy Valentine's Day (tomorrow here, but today at home).

### **Monday, 14 February 1994**

The next morning, I walked along the stormwater channel by the hotel. It went under the roads and was fenced off. Indeed, the only way in or out seemed to be from the hotel car park. A large caravan park behind the hotel I'd never noticed before. It was full of transportables rather than mobile

caravans and looked like it had been established for some time. Some quite large trees among the sheds. Many of them looked unoccupied. Perhaps people go South for the winter? I thought this *was* South.

Then I returned and watched CBS TV from Lillehammer covering the Winter Olympics while eating breakfast in my room. I watched TV for over an hour while I potted about, and I am afraid it was pretty depressing. American television showed us where Australian television was heading. And it was a sad direction.

The TV coverage was a triumph of commentary over content. In 92 minutes of television that morning, I saw exactly 36 seconds of actual events: a single heat of the 500-metre speed skating with an American competing, naturally. Although that wasn't the problem—one expects American TV to concentrate on Americans—the problem was that news was defined as what commentators say, not what actually happened.

Thus, we had Joe Smith talking about Nancy Kerrigan, Connie Chung talking about Tonya Harding, Jack Luminous talking about Tommy Moe, who won the Gold Medal in the Downhill, Hilary Clinton talking about Norway, Jack Bloggs talking about Ice Hockey, and so on and on. Can you believe they had not yet shown the Gold Medal Downhill performance? I was expecting to see replay after replay of Tommy Moe's run. Not a second! Instead, every woman and her dog had been asked to make a comment about Tommy Moe's brilliant performances. The actual performance was not news.

The real stars were Harry Smith and Paula Zahn, who were the comperes of the CBS morning show. Not to mention the big fellow they continually crossed to in the main street of Lillehammer, who did 12-second colour pieces with everything from visiting US students without beds to Norwegian mountain men who eat funny sausages to Norwegian mothers with weird accents who ride sleds to do their shopping. It's all very interesting, but is it the Olympics?

The big man was Mark McEwan. He was interviewing a Norwegian (pronounced Norwegian) who was “playing ze muzic of our country” on his piano accordion and a man who was even bigger than Mark. The man was wearing a parka made from an even bigger brown bear, and a beard that rivalled Saint Nick, who was flipping pancakes in the main street for the tourists.

The ads were interesting. *People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.* It's an ad for a realtor!

The bell tolled, and it was time for me to descend in the elevator (*you're in America, Phil'*) and another day of work.

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