

How I got into Show Biz



A COFFEE BREAK BOOK
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by
JOHN



Getting the best out of life?
You can do what I have done, and even better!
Life is for living, so trust in the Lord and **Go, Go, Go!**
I can do all things through Christ that can strengthen me.
(Phil. ch4:v13)

How I got into Show Biz

by John

When I was ten years old, I liked to listen to all the hit tunes on the radio. I would tap my foot to the music, and most times I would get up and dance around. It seemed to be something inside of me that gets me going. If there was any suggestion of any one getting up and entertaining at school or friends in the country, I would be the first one up.

I sang in the Princess Carnival at school, and at night they had a concert when the parents came along. I put my name down for the concert and on the night, I soaked in the bath for an hour and practised my songs. Then I got all dressed up in my best clothes, collar and tie ready for the concert. One of my favourite songs was "Chattanooga Choo-Choo". My family were always embarrassed about things that my brother and I did. So they said

“Do you think you can handle this concert thing?”
Why yes!! But they said “We don’t think you can sing very well. You will end up by making a fool of yourself.” They put doubts in my mind. I knew that when you sing, you can’t tell yourself how you sound, so you are relying on others to tell you. So guess what? I didn’t perform that night. I still learnt all the songs in the Boomerang Song Book. On a Saturday morning, while lying in bed, my brother and I would have a competition by taking turns in



singing the songs, to see who knew the most. But I still had it in me to get up and have a go.

It was not until after I was married and was about 36 years of age, that I met a friend that was a ventriloquist. Prior to that I had a puppet theatre, and I thought that ventriloquist doll was a better idea, just put it into a case and away you go. My father and mother-in-law made me a ventriloquist



doll which was a bunny rabbit with light up eyes. I knew I was not a ventriloquist, so I thought I would put a microphone inside the doll, attached to a tape recorder, but with taped programmes. So all I had to do was to answer “Yes” or “No”. And, when the doll was finished I found that I could talk without moving my lips. Watch my lips! I practised on friends that would visit from time to time for about a year. Poor friends! My first public performance was at a kindergarten. What I liked about it was that I could enjoy my singing through the doll. If it did not sound so good, the people would blame the doll.

Eventually, I wanted to get a Cheeky Boy Doll. One day I was looking through the Yellow Pages under Magic Society. After ringing them, they put me in touch with a chap who had a Cheeky Boy Doll. And that night, after visiting him, he agreed to sell me his doll. It became a different ball game now. After lots of practice with my new doll, I did hundreds of programmes all over New Zealand. It takes years to build up confidence, and to entertain in front of an audience. One day in a show I lost it. Normally I feel nervous about 5 minutes before I start performing, but I’m all right when I go on stage. But this day, nerves struck me as I went on stage, and I broke down in the middle of the performance. OH WHAT A PERFORMANCE. So after that I sold

the Cheeky Boy and bought a bandsaw with the money, to make wooden toys.

After a couple of years, I still had the feeling of get up and go. I met a friend that I had not seen for years. We talked for a long time, and through the conversation, found that he was a professional ventriloquist. He also was a magician and singer. His doll was called Benny. He had a manager who booked all the programmes for him. He entertained all through New Zealand and Australia, and was





also on TV, being in shows with great performers. Singers and ventriloquists suffer sometimes with their vocal chords, through overwork. So he had retired from show business. He told me that one day, while waiting for an attendant to serve him for petrol, he put Benny in the driver's seat and when the attendant arrived BENNY SAID "FILL IT UP PLEASE." Another time, he took Benny into a barber shop to get his hair cut, the next thing a reporter arrived and it was on the news. Benny was the best. You could not get a better Cheeky Boy anywhere else in the world. He was a

Devonport doll made in England. My friend became a ventriloquist when very young, and his parents bought the doll new while in England, as a surprise for him. Two weeks later I talked to my wife Dawn about getting another Cheeky Boy for our programmes. So I rang my friend and asked him that should he hear of anybody who has a Cheeky Boy for sale, to please let me know. About a week later he rang me, and said that because of type of the programmes we were doing, all for no charge, he would sell us his doll. BOY!! I WAS ON CLOUD NINE. What a blessing! So I bought Benny, and renamed him Cliff Richard Jr.





Performing at the Michael Fowler Centre

Cliff even wrote to Cliff Richard in England to become a member of his fan club. My friend was an angel in disguise, and later became a believer. He coached me and gave me good training with the doll. After that, Dawn and I did 4160 programmes in 40 years: in rest homes, in schools and in the Michael Fowler Centre. We had about 15 write-ups around the country, lots of them were front page news items. We were asked to perform at clubs, birthday parties, and on special occasions.

Our son was an A-grade mechanic, and made sure our car was 100 percent roadworthy for our trips around the country. Our daughter was a designer and dressmaker and made some lovely outfits for our



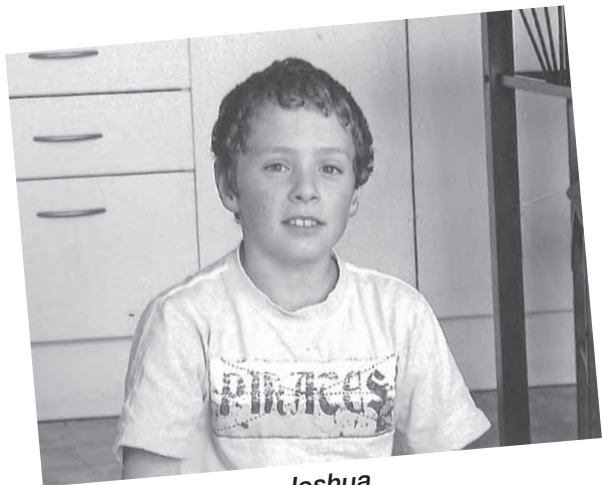
entertaining. Matching lovely yellow outfits, pink, and also silver outfits that glittered, and all had matching ties. Sometimes I dressed up in a boater hat and striped jacket. My cousin in Westport, who was a music teacher, said my singing was well in tune, and later, another music teacher said the same. So singing became a part of our act.

We thrilled the folks in the rest homes - singing, dancing, changing our voices, and even giving the older folk a big hug. All they want is to be loved. We learned to make animals out of balloons. My wife Dawn was a big part of the programme, giving me encouragement, reading articles out of magazines about life in the old days. We told jokes, and were known for a very high standard of clean cut programmes. One day we went to a private hospital to entertain, and as we walked in the door we couldn't believe our eyes, for there was our

friend sitting in a chair. We had not seen him for years and had wondered where he was. Now at last we had found him but he was not looking good, as he was suffering badly from nerves. Eventually it had caught up with him, performing in front of thousands of people, not feeling it at the time, but later it takes its toll. We needed to pray for him. He was pleased to see us and we greeted each other. I brought Cliff out and let him hold him. There he was with Cliff on his lap, it was too much - tears were running down his face. Now here I was, come to entertain a pro and the others at the home. The best audiences are the biggest ones, you know you can do it, but they can not, so you are one ahead of them. But here was a situation where he was a pro and I might be one, one day? It all went well, and I passed the test, and got the nod.

We have a grandson named Joshua. He is very bright and has a wonderful personality. If some day he is interested, I would like to teach him the art of being a ventriloquist and carry on the tradition.

In our programmes we witness that we are believers, and always gave the audience words of encouragement. We believe God was in it from the beginning, a bit like Moses, "nothing in my hand I bring, only to thy cross I cling". We were nothing, and God gave us all these talents to do jobs for



Joshua

Him. And we have been blessed by it over and over again. To be a ventriloquist there is only one rule, talk without moving your lips. Everything in this world can be used for good or bad. We used Cliff for good. The next rule is, look into a mirror and practice talking without moving your lips. You can't do this often enough. In life everybody makes a point in dressing up well: taking a shower, brushing your hair, and looking wonderful on the outside.

But what about the inside, how does that look? You cannot look in a mirror too much, to be a ventriloquist. The Bible is a mirror, and we can't

look into it too much, to see what we are like inside. The Bible says in Romans 3 v 23: "... all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God." 1 John 1 v 7 says: "... the blood of the Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." Psalm 51 v 7: "... wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." What is your performance like in front of God? Have you passed the test and got the nod? Jesus said in Revelation 3 v 20: "Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in [and clean you up on the inside]..." This is a promise from God. There is nothing you can do – Jesus has done it all. Just believe and ask Jesus into your heart, and confess all wrongdoings.

Nothing in the world is free. In Australia I paid \$1.50 for "free" air for my car tyres. My wife Dawn and I have made the Coffee Break books free for your enjoyment.



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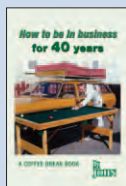
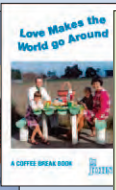
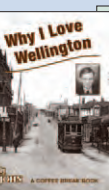
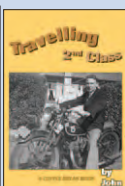
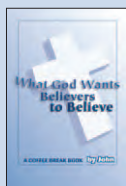
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