

When the Dew Drop In Centre hit Miramar



A COFFEE BREAK BOOK

**by
JOHN**

The Dew Drop In Centre hit Miramar 1986–1998



A place of happy memories

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My family were all tradesmen. My father was a bricklayer, my mother was a dressmaker, my brother was a fitter and turner, and I was a joiner. Mum and Dad were wise when they encouraged my brother to take an apprenticeship. He chose engineering, and when it came to my turn I chose joinery. They said later, when we had served our time, we might like to work at something different, but we still had our trade to come back to.

From a young age I always wanted to work in a shop, and the dream of my life was to later have my own shop. When I was 8 years old, I thought it was time to go into business in shop work. It was not quite what I had dreamed of, but it was a start. The saying goes that all good things start at home.

In those days we did not have television. After tea we went through to the lounge and listened to the radio. It was exciting. At 7pm we tuned into our serial "Fred and Maggie", and at 9pm we listened

to “Dad and Dave from Snake Gully.” While the family were gathered together, I could see prospects. So I asked Mum if I could borrow her ironing board, which was just a piece of board, which Mum had bought for 3/- (shillings) from Booth’s Timber Merchant. I got the OK. I rested the board on two stools, now I was in business. Dad smoked, so I bought Greys Tobacco, wax matches and tissue papers, all on special. For Mum I would buy tinned peas, tinned fruit, baked beans, and many other things for the kitchen. I added a one penny profit on each article, and managed to convince Mum and Dad that it helped me with my adding up at school. Business was good, so I opened my shop every night except Sunday. I was made. No GST, no rent, no phone, no insurance, no staff. I was the Boss over nobody. Just a little cost, for the wear and tear of the ironing board.

As I grew up I served my time as a joiner, but the dream of owning my own shop was still in the back of my mind. Dairies seemed to intrigue me, but the early start deterred me. Time went on and I worked in other shops. I prayed about it, but when I would inquire about empty shops the rent was always too high.

One rainy winter's night, I was driving home from work. The rain was very heavy and the wipers were flicking back and forward, clearing the screen. All of a sudden the beam of the car lights shone on an empty shop. Just then I felt an urge to stop and take a closer look. I pulled into the pavement and parked the car. When I got out and took a closer look, I could see great prospects. Then my heart sank, when I thought of another high rent. There was a house just down a driveway separate to the shop. By now my heart was beating quite fast. Will I go in? There was a little light in the window, by now my knees were giving way, I was nervous. The thought came again, "Will I go in? Will the owner be angry about me coming so late?" But the Lord's voice inside me said "GO". Knock! Knock! Knock! It seemed ages. I was just about to leave when the door squeaked open. I was scared, then a man appeared with a most welcome smile, bidding me to come in out of the rain, and warm myself by the fire. We chatted for a while, then with a gentle voice asked why I had come? I explained to him that I had worked in shops, but my wife and I felt led to start up an Op Shop and Drop In Centre. OH! You have come about the shop? We have had lots of people inquiring about the shop, we thought that

\$80 a week was a reasonable rent, but we did not feel happy with any of the applicants, up until now. As we talked he seemed very interested in what we wanted to do, for the older folk and the young. He was a caring person that wanted to help the people in the community. At this stage I told him that I would like to go home and talk to my wife about the shop. So I went home and the next night we both went together to meet the owner. As we talked, I told him that I was a joiner and could do maintenance on the building. He said that we could have the shop, at \$50 a week, starting from the time we opened the shop. But after 12 years the rent never went over \$75 a week.

The owner of the shop, and my wife and I became very close friends, and over the twelve years that we had the shop, he and his family came to the Lord. Opening the shop was a special stage in our life, and it was exciting, family and friends gathered round and shared the excitement, as things started to happen in the shop, which had been closed for some time. We had no fittings, nowhere to hang clothes that people donated, the owner gave us a lot of timber that we could use, to make a platform to display things in the windows. A very special

friend of ours donated racks for clothing, a counter to wrap the goods on, and a table. Some kind person donated a till to put the money in, someone else donated a microwave; then the owner's daughter gave us a tea-maker, which we could also make coffee, milo and soup for the winter.

People worked around the clock so we would be ready for opening. Friends and family worked on signwriting, and laying carpet etc, all to be ready for Opening Day, which was the 10th June, 1986. There was a photo and write-up in the local paper. The building could not have been planned better for what we wanted to do. It had actually been two shops. The door that opened to the public went into an area which we were able to put racks of clothes on the side wall, furniture in the middle, and house items on the other wall. There was another door opening into the other part of the shop, which became the Drop In Centre. Behind that, there was another little room where we displayed books. On the back wall of that room we cut a doorway through, to make the outside toilet into an inside toilet. We were able to get permission from the Health Department to sell confectionery and groceries. We had a fridge-freezer donated to us, from

which we could sell ice-creams and pies. The condition was that everything had to be pre-wrapped.

People came from all over Wellington, and were welcomed by old time music inside and outside the shop. Our main attraction was that people could come in, get a free cup of tea and have a chat, and always go out with a bargain. We had a cooler with soft drinks that was used regularly in the summer months. Bus drivers would pop in and say “ John put the jug on, we are just going to the terminus, and be back again in 5 minutes for a cuppa”. For the convenience of the public we sold the Evening Post, and the Trade and Exchange.

We had a dear friend that lived about 500 metres from the shop, and he always popped in to get his paper and a cuppa, and a chat. Later he became very ill, and had not been out for some time. Finally when he did go out, he headed for the Dew Drop In Centre. The first day he walked 100 metres, he felt quite weak, so he returned home. Each day he would try to walk a bit further, till eventually he got to the Dew Drop In Centre. When he arrived he wore a big smile of achievement. Everybody gave him a warm welcome, and said “Come on and have

a cup of tea, and have a chat". Another old chap came in each day to have his lunch there, and enjoy the friendship. We called him "The Colonel", as he always wore a beret.

We had a television and videotape player in the Dew Drop In Centre, we also had a library of christian videos that we lent out, and it was well used. In the window of the shop we had a book, which had little verses printed out in black felt pen, such as "Death is not a full stop, it is only a coma". Each day people would look for the new verse. Even though we always wanted our own shop, we felt that this shop really belonged to the people of Miramar, and we put a sign in the window to that effect. It was somewhere where people could come, and call their own, and stay as long as they liked. When we talked to people in the shop, they were right behind what we were doing, and would have liked to have done the same, but never had the opportunity.

Quite a lot of people asked if they could help in the shop, so we set up a roster, and each one had a job to do. We taught the younger folk how to run the shop; and later they were able to get a job, which

they had never been able to do before. There was a lady who lived in the Salvation Army Bridge Haven home, she would come down every day, and worked in the shop for two or three years. This gave her a new outlook on life.

One chap, who had been in and out of trouble, came to us, and we taught him how to run the shop. He seemed to shape up well, so we gave him the chance of a lifetime to look after the shop while we were away for a week. When we got back, we found that we had a toll (phone) bill for \$500. First thing we did was put a toll bar on the phone.

Things didn't look good, and at one stage we thought we might have to close the shop. But God had other ideas. About a week later a man came into the shop, he said that his brother used to shop here regularly, and told us the sad news that his brother had passed away. In his will, he had left all his furniture in his flat to the Dew Drop In Centre. In the twelve years that we had the shop, this had never happened before. With the sale of his furniture we were able to pay off the toll bill. The chap who had been looking after the shop decided to move up to the Kapiti area. We met him a couple

of years later; he and his family were attending a church, and were now following the Lord and working for the church. We forgave whoever ran the toll bill up, and the Lord blessed us for it.

We had a marvellous till, but one day it would not open, and when it did, it would not close. Someone, with some kiwi know-how, was able to attach a piece of wire to the back of the till, by-passing the works, and by a little pull and a tug, it would open. This was security at its best.

We had a sign advertising The Dew Drop In Centre, on our car. The money we made from donated goods went to charitable organisations. People came from all over, the rich, the poor, the man that slept in his car, all came to the Centre for a cuppa, and something to eat. The famous that hit the headlines, the crew from the oil tankers at Miramar Wharf, all came in to relax with a cuppa. There was the postie, milkman, taxicab driver and even the bus drivers, from time to time. There was something for everyone at the Dew Drop In Centre.

Some people would ask for advice about problems that they had. Some people wanted to know more

about God, so we were always there to help. The Bible tells us, we are made in the image of God. We are all nearer to God than we realise, Who gives us air to breathe, and keeps our hearts beating 24 hours a day. We are only a heartbeat away from death. We are made from mental, physical, and spiritual. If one of these is missing, we are not complete. Without spiritual, we are like a car without a steering wheel, no way of steering our lives. People say all I want to do is study, and they are happy, but along the way of life there is a void. They feel not complete. Same as physical, all people want to do, is play sport, they are happy for a time, then there is a void, they feel not complete. Entertainer Cliff Richard felt happy as long as he was on the stage singing. But in the dressing room later, felt there was something missing in his life, there was a void. He realised that he needed the spiritual, and got right with God. Then felt a point of direction in his life, and peace.

Spiritual means eternal life with God, through Jesus Christ. We are all too great a miracle to just fade away.

THINK ABOUT IT!!



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Go, Go, Go!

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