

An Eulogy for Peter Glasby

Karl Karltenbach
and Jan Baker-Finch

Australia

August 10, 1954 - December 29, 2013

Peter was born on August 10, 1954 in India where he lived amongst the Khasi people who had a matriarchal way of life. He was the second of four boys who grew up in a Baptist Missionary outpost established by their parents Rex and Peggy Glasby. The boys all went to boarding school in the Himalayas located at 6500 feet above sea level. From the age of six Peter was in a boarding School in Darjeeling, with pupils from the adjacent Indian States of Manipur, Nagaland, Kerala, the Punjab, as well as surrounding countries such as Tibet, Bhutan, Thailand, Pakistan, even England and the United States. The Glasby family lived there until their 1966 return to Tasmania, Australia.

When he was twenty years old Peter met Anthroposophy in action and in its ever-evolving nature. From 1974 -1977 he lived in and contributed to the growth of Warrah Village, a curative educational community providing services for people with disabilities, There Peter met his future wife Rosemarie Scherer, who had arrived from Switzerland two years earlier. Together they formed a remarkable team. As house parents they cared for children and teenagers, and created works of art - such as marionette plays and wonderful glass windows for the festivals of the year - enriching the whole community. It was at Warrah that they married and started their family of four children; Gawaine, Aisleen, Aidan and Kyra. While still at Warrah, Peter also studied biology at Macquarie University, gaining the academic basis he then expanded through Anthroposophical spiritual scientific insights. He regularly participated in the open Tuesday lecture held at the Anthroposophical Society's Rooms in Sydney and soon became a member.

At the age of twenty-two Peter moved with his family to Switzerland, settling near the Goetheanum, where they extended their circle of friends and colleagues. In 1983 Peter joined the School of Spiritual Science, spiritually deepening his professional striving. In Dornach Peter studied and researched with co-workers under the leader of the Natural Science Section, Jochen Bockemühl. Soon he was attracted to the Waldorf Teacher Training in Kassel where the teaching methodology for sciences in the upper classes was a strong focus.

One could say that the two stations in which he had by now experienced Anthroposophy gave him the certainty as to what his professional initiative would become in Australia. He began to apply his Rosicrucian artistic, scientific thinking, feelings and deeds in pedagogical methodology, in chemistry, biology, and zoology. Peter could now unite his empirical sense perceptions, with his inspirational and intuitive ones. His ethical values were of a universal spirit, which lives in all modern spiritual people, independent of any organisational belief system, or organisational restrictions.

In the mid-1980s he returned to Australia and joined the teachers of the Mt Barker School near Adelaide where he instituted his major spiritual and pedagogical initiative. Over more than twenty-five years he focused on the high school levels of the Waldorf School curriculum. He established a worldwide network of colleagues and gained an overview of the strengths and weaknesses in the Waldorf School syllabus. Against a growing trend in Steiner High Schools of surrendering autonomy and complying with mainstream materialism in scientific teaching, Peter became a champion for maintaining the

spiritual imaginative depth in teaching. No subject was outside his spiritual horizon. He studied physics, chemistry, nuclear science, quantum physics, botany, biology, DNA theories, and strove to relate these to the life-giving spiritual forces in all realms of existence. He attracted and developed teachers for the Mt Barker School who could embody this ideal. Peter organised annual Teacher Training Seminars, and in addition to inspirational tutors from within Australia, he invited extraordinary key-note speakers from around the world, to name only two: Dr. Manfred von Mackensen from Kassel Pedagogical Institute for Waldorf Education, and Johannes Kühl from the Section for Natural Science in Dornach.

Together with his colleagues at Mt Barker, Peter established a strong tradition of Year 12 Major Projects, which became a recognised entry pathway to universities in Adelaide, where the students' enthusiasm and commitment to academic performance gained currency as a quality assurance for Mt Barker School. The Major Projects model inspired many Waldorf schools around Australia. Over more than two decades Peter led annual Class 10 surveying trips into the Flinders Ranges. In collaboration with the universities and government bodies, students created professional maps of as yet uncharted areas including sacred aboriginal sites.

Peter was truly a modern post-modernist, in as much as he represented the driving force of the global culture today, which is Science, both empirical and spiritual science. Alone or with Rosemarie he travelled several times to Maasai country near Nairobi in Africa on anthropological digs; he immersed himself in palaeontology; parallel to these empirical excavations he researched Spiritual Science in order to build bridges between the two disciplines. This endeavour led him to begin a doctoral thesis with Flinders University, which, due to his

overload of work, he could not complete.

Peter was continually building bridges from the Waldorf School movement to the Anthroposophical Society and the School of Spiritual Science. He served on government education bodies, representing Steiner Education and helping define state-wide curriculum standards. He was an active member of the Rudolf Steiner Schools Association and, in its new form, Steiner Education Australia.

At the close of 2010, Peter's long association with Mt Barker School, which was undergoing structural and cultural changes, came to an end. This was not a painless separation for those involved, but his departure liberated Peter, enabling him to spread his initiatives and impulse more widely. With Rosemarie, he made a new home in Samford Valley situated near Brisbane, and took up the role of Educational Administrator at Samford Valley Steiner School (SVSS). Here he worked tirelessly to inspire teachers and parents through his 'Living Anthroposophy'; to deepen the curriculum; to enrich the in-house culture and to connect the school with the world.

A year into his tenure at SVSS, at the age of 58, a new task was bestowed on him. In 2012 he and his close colleague Jan Baker-Finch were elected as Co-General Secretaries of the Anthroposophical Society in Australia.

Members of the Goetheanum Leadership have warmly acknowledged Peter's initiative and leadership over these two rich years. He is also dearly missed in the School of Spiritual Science in Australia where he was a First Class holder and a much-valued member of the coordinating group.

Within the context of the School, Peter was highly active as coordinator of the Pedagogical Section in Australia. Working with colleagues he established a regular newsletter, encouraged

the writing, translating, publishing and distribution of articles and books, and continued to deepen the pedagogical impulse. It was only last November, a month before his death that Peter, realising he could no longer carry this work, called a special Section meeting in Samford Valley Steiner School, and handed over this task to a new leader/coordinator, Peggy Day.

Peter was as a scientist, modern to the core; his life's path and work were for humanity; this was his spiritual dynamic karma on earth. It began in India, brought him to Australia, to Europe, Switzerland and Germany, to South America, to many countries in Asia, then to Africa and beyond. And all these travels were punctuated by return trips to his beloved India.

Peter had a great sense for form, which found expression not only in his fine landscape paintings but right down into giving form to groups when he was chairing meetings. However, as much as he loved form he loved movement, and no one was spared from running to keep up with him as he moved from one stage or task to the next. Peter also showed great power of discernment; his judgement as to what was right and wrong. In this he acted out of his innermost conscience.

Two decades ago Peter was diagnosed with a dormant thyroid cancer, and later with carcinoma, which flared up from time to time causing him uncomfortable pain. Nevertheless, he stoically increased his workload, his travelling both, to teach and for the Anthroposophical Society tasks. Twice annually he attended the General Secretaries' meetings in the Goetheanum, combining this work with visits to other places in Europe, always building relationships and exploring opportunities for collaboration. However, by mid-2013 the cancer had spread through his body and he realised that he had to begin to relinquish his tasks to other colleagues. He endured his last three

months only with the support of strong pain management.

Nine days before Peter Glasby crossed the Threshold to the spiritual world, he called Karl Kaltenbach and asked him to conduct his funeral. He said that the inevitable was now coming and that he would die shortly. When asked what he wished Karl to say he responded: *'Please let everybody know that I am deeply deeply grateful to friends and members of the Anthroposophical Society, through whom I could deepen my own knowledge and spiritual experiences in Anthroposophy.'*

During the ceremony in his daughter Kyra's garden, his poem¹⁶ was read out by Joanne Sarre. His article *The I knows itself*¹⁷ is so characteristic of Peter's striving and his relationship to all people he knew in his life that we would like to encourage you to read it again. Peter was an independent doer, a free personality and yet loyal to the core to his communities, to the societies he worked in.

Peter died at the age of 59, and we round this eulogy by describing Peter the Sailor. He was a skipper of two boats, one of which he sailed across the wide seas around Australia, Indonesia and the Indian Ocean. The other was his spiritual ship, which he is sailing beyond the horizon of our physical sense perception. He developed the skills to steer this ship through his study, his meditation practice and his teaching in the School of Spiritual Science, and it has taken him to the high seas of the spirit.

And finally we find the essence of his life. We remember fondly the love Peter had for all creatures small and great, from worms to tigers,

¹⁶ *The Journal for Anthroposophy in Australia*, Issue # 4, Summer 2013, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 2-7. Reprinted on pages 10-16 of this Journal, JWE 16.1.

from the wild to the tame, from children to the aged. He gave his love to his family, to all his colleagues. He gave his love to the further development of empirical and spiritual Science, to his spiritual Brothers and Sisters in the School of Spiritual Science and to people he knew world-wide, and we close here by sending him our thanks for the wonderful legacy he left us. It will keep our candles of enthusiasm burning for a long time to come. ❖

Karl Kaltenbach, General Secretary 1983 to 2000

Jan Baker-Finch, Co-General Secretary 2012

2 February, 2014

Peter Glasby †

August 10, 1954 – December 29, 2013

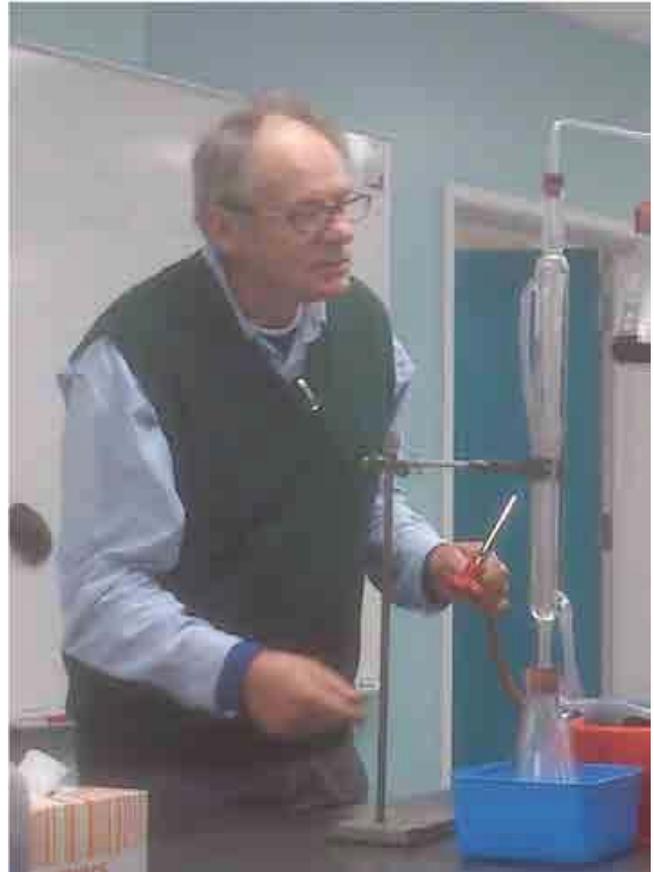
Johannes Kühl,

Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland

During his last visit to the Goetheanum—for the General Secretaries' meeting in November where he represented Australia—Pete Glasby left with the words: "If I'm optimistic I can say 'I look forward to seeing you again in April'—if I'm realistic, I have to say 'Farewell.'"

Ill with cancer, he approached the threshold and allowed his friends to accompany him soberly, lovingly, and freely.

In Peter Glasby one met a friendly adventurer (for instance, his teaching could take the form of a canoe trip); a highly educated scientist (he had left a university career as a palaeontologist to become a Waldorf teacher although he continued to work with universities); an independent and deep thinker willing to tackle uncomfortable questions in conversation - but still remain absolutely loyal; and finally, an infinitely loving and cheerful father who - with his wife Rosi - opened his home to many people.



As a Waldorf teacher he helped a number of schools in Australia and throughout Asia. He was a colleague of Manfred von Mackensen, Jochen Bockemühl, Georg Maier, and others in Europe whose approaches to Goethean science he was able to develop further in his teaching and his courses.

He brought his many qualities to his work for the School for Spiritual Science and the Anthroposophical Society. When asked what should be said at his "farewell party" he answered: "Please tell everyone I am deeply, deeply grateful to the friends and members of the Anthroposophical Society. They have continually enabled me...to deepen my spiritual experiences in anthroposophy." We gladly return this gratitude from the depths of our hearts. ❖