

## Glancing Back and Forth

George Blaker, Ockley, Surrey, England

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On thinking back, after 25 years, to the first few days and weeks of the creation of the Network I find myself remembering, with the utmost affection and respect, the sterling qualities of the founders. One inevitably compares the hopes and aspirations of that time with the achievements and further hopes and ambitions of the Network now. At that time, in 1973, we sought to engage the interest of scientists and medical people at the top of their professions. This was because we felt that somehow we needed to bring home to their younger and less experienced colleagues the absolute necessity for a majority of people in general to understand that without a transition from our evolving but materialistically based culture to a broader spiritually inspired understanding of the world and its inhabitants the new, just, fair, sustainable and peaceful world order that should succeed us could not become established.

We took the view that the Churches could not bring about this change because, despite the best intentions of many individuals within them, they were immovably shackled to a fixed past in a moving world that could only leave them behind. Perhaps if we had been contemplating the same situation 20 years later we might have thought that instead of the Churches perhaps the football or tennis or film stars or pop musicians, or all of them together, might have done it through the large popular following they enjoy. But in the conditions of 1973 we thought that scientists and doctors would be a better bet! It would be to them, as we saw it, that people would turn for credible explanations of why the human and world conditions were as they were.

**So it seemed to us that a large measure of responsibility for moving public opinion forward would lie with the leaders of the scientific and medical communities, whether they realised it or not.** Because of their achievements in their own academic and research fields it would be to the outspoken opinions of such thinkers that their more junior colleagues would pay serious attention. It was therefore men and women of that calibre whom we sought to enrol.

That describes why we tried to find highly accomplished people to share our vision. But we also wanted to attract anyone, whether recognised in the world as accomplished or not, who felt inspired by the need for a spiritual understanding of life. We also thought that might help us to avoid becoming elitist so far as we could. Hence, too, membership at first by invitation only.

At another level there was a third group of people with whom we wanted to make contact. That group was the young who had not yet or had only recently passed through University or early job training, so as to offer them the opportunity of hearing about more comprehensive theories relating to the nature of the world that we knew they would not normally encounter in the course of their formal education. We believed they would readily recognise that the currently acceptable view that the world and all things in it were the random, purposeless result of gigantic physical forces was based on unspoken and usually unrecognised assumptions of a restricted character for which there was no proof that was not itself based on those same limiting assumptions. We wanted them to hear and think about the argument that a wider and less restricting view of life was both reasonable and

possible. We wanted them to consider this before long years of training within the narrower system had closed their minds to anything freer and more comprehensive, as seemed to us to have happened to a rather large number of our contemporaries.

Our wish to engage with the young was put into effect by means of the <sup>3</sup>Wider Horizons<sup>2</sup> project. This was a week-long residential course for 18 to 25 year olds, limited for logistic reasons to 12 men and women each year. It was held first at Sidmouth, then often at Emerson College, with one exceptionally fruitful week on the island of Iona. In its early days <sup>3</sup>Wider Horizons<sup>2</sup> was extremely successful. No particular philosophy or world view was taught, but participants were addressed by 6 or 7 Network members and other invited speakers, each giving, for one evening and one morning, their own views about the nature of life and the world and the place of humanity within it. The <sup>3</sup>students<sup>2</sup> had full freedom to question the speakers as much as they liked, and to make their own contributions.

Many of the participants were thrilled with this. Some of the ideas they heard expressed for the first time harmonised with their own intuitive thinking and it seemed like a wonderful release. Some are still Network members. Many lasting friendships grew up among them and most of those friendships are still intact today. I know of at least three marriages that were contracted between people who attended the course and met there for the first time. All those marriages are still going strong today.

The founders who embarked on all this included Sir Kelvin Spencer, Dr. Patrick Shackleton and, a month or so later, Dr. Peter Leggett. There were others too who were around and active in those early stages, some of whom are still with us, such as Geoffrey Leytham and Max Payne. Kelvin Spencer, some years earlier, had been Chief Scientist at the Ministry of Power, as it was then called. He had been deeply involved in all matters relating to nuclear science. Next was Patrick Shackleton, whose last job was as Dean of Postgraduate Medical Studies at the University of Southampton. He suffered badly from a bereavement and from cancer, from which he died less than four years later, but who nevertheless took a leading part in arranging the first <sup>3</sup>Wider Horizons<sup>2</sup> courses. Peter Leggett joined the group while he was still Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey, and, with Kelvin, we became very good friends, a result that seems to occur often within the Network. We all felt deeply the need to change the dominant intellectual attitude reigning in the world and were acutely conscious of the powerless inability of a handful of people on their own to bring about such a huge change. The fact that the motive was a spiritual one made it more difficult in the sense that few people, so far, would understand that or know what it meant a goodness that is learned individually from experience and knowledge; but at the same time it was made easier by the knowledge of the help and support that Spirit would draw to itself from the universal source. Its timetable might be longer than we could appreciate. It might take a hundred years or more, though we hoped that something useful could be achieved in about 15 years. In the light of the continuing advance of evolution we could not foresee any time when the efforts of the Network would no longer be needed. We recognised that our project was a long term one, but also that it required an immediate start to be made.

We pondered sometimes on what it was that had brought us together, and we could not ascribe it to coincidence. We felt driven to the conclusion that there was a deliberate planned purpose behind it. In my vocabulary that meant inspiration by that strong benevolent power, working in all of us, that supports and encourages us when we are doing things that are truly beneficial to other people, or to the world or planet as a whole, but

does not support or encourage us when we are doing something that is intended to or will have the effect of inflating the ego or doing damage in other ways.

Holding such views it became natural to me to see purpose rather than coincidence in many incidents that kept occurring in life, and I mean in all life, not only connected with the Network, though the Network had its full share of such events. I think of that voice on the telephone that said to me: <sup>3</sup>You do not know me. My name is Andrew Glazewski. I am a Polish Priest. I have heard what you are trying to do with science and if I have got it right I know of someone else who is trying to do exactly the same thing, but in medicine. He is Patrick Shackleton and his phone number is Š..<sup>2</sup> Then he gave the same phone message to Patrick, with my phone number.

That was the first I had ever heard of either Andrew Glazewski or Patrick Shackleton. Patrick and I got together and after a whole day<sup>1</sup>s discussion we were in agreement that we were both wanting to do the same thing. We decided that it would be ridiculous to go into competition with each other and that we had to work together. From the moment that decision was taken things that had held fire for both of us suddenly began to happen. A few weeks later the Network was born. A clear case, I thought, of constructive guidance; and there were to be other such synchronicities.

Without spending too much time on it we searched for more superficial factors that might have caused us to arrive at very similar or indeed identical conclusions about life. Our backgrounds and upbringing, education and life histories were all so utterly different that it seemed all the more remarkable and significant that journeys along such diverse routes should land us all, toward the end, in a place from which we saw the same view of the world. We hoped that, with so many different ways of climbing the spiritual mountain, the similarity of views meant that we were arriving somewhat nearer the tope nearer, at least, than the place from which we began.

We had also learned that there are innumerable ways of scaling that mountain and that each of them merits respect from all the others. As opinions about the nature of life are not necessarily dependent on conclusions we are offered from within our contemporary culture, and as every life history is different, it follows that every final view adopted is almost certain to be unique. All the more remarkable, therefore, when these unique journeys finally arrive at the same place. This again seemed to point to a guiding hand or directing power, especially as the last and enduring landscape is a beautiful one. So the founders wanted to discover and to bring together all people, but especially those from scientific and medical disciplines, who could accept that the systems in which they had been trained for many years were not as watertight and foolproof or as comprehensive and accurate as their instructors seemed to assume, but were underpinned by hidden assumptions that were wide open to challenge though this limitation was not recognised. We wanted to find those talented individuals who could accept that the section of reality that we measure and weigh is not the whole of reality, and most probably not even the major part of it. We sought trained minds bold enough to pursue the search for truth wherever the quest for it might lead.

I find it encouraging to look back at those 25 years and see the little group of our five original and at first rather hesitant members and to compare them with the 2000 members in more than 50 countries and many hundreds of associates that we have now, and all the activity and exchange of thinking that has occurred in that time. Has that thinking meant any

advance? How far are the founders<sup>1</sup> aspirations and ambitions still valid today? Has progress been made towards fulfilling them? The three founders I have mentioned above have now all passed on into what all of them would have expected to find was an active and conscious life, probably more active and more widely conscious in another dimension, free of course from the physical body but still very much themselves, with a continuing sense of self. As time and experience built up they would expect that sense of self to become gradually more aware of the meaning and implications of the unity of all life. They would still be, at first, in a condition to which the whole of their past existence had brought them, and they would still find themselves with unimagined prospects slowly opening up before them.

If they were still in their earthly form now they would have been pleased to see, in the Network literature, such statements as the following, just to quote a few examples.

"The Network is still undergoing a period of organic growth and must remain flexible in its outlook."

"The Network has an important role to play in the next millennium as science gains an understanding of the true spiritual nature of mankind and becomes more integrated with many of the systems of ancient wisdom."

"The spiritual being of the Chair is an important factor in sounding the spiritual note of the Network."

References to "the radiant spiritual heart of the Network."

"We have an ambitious visions We believe that this vision can transcend currently acceptable limits of scientific enquiry and lead to a fuller flowering of the human spirit."

The smiles of approval from our three imagined observers as they read those words will be moderated by just a hint of the reminder that we have a very long way to go yet. But it seems that on the whole we are keeping our faces turned towards the Sun and will be able to continue our journey forward in an atmosphere of goodwill and confidence.

*George Blaker is President of the Scientific & Medical Network.*