

## Notes for Geoff's Jesus Memorial

GCH's long, rich and productive life, combined with a gift for storytelling, afforded him many autobiographical opportunities to talk about his experiences. I want to use some of his own words in what follows.

One such essay is titled **Recollections and Reflections of an Australian Patriot and a Cambridge Economist**. Geographically, Australia and Cambridge have been the main poles of his life's compass.

Geoff grew up in Melbourne, where he studied economics with teachers trained in the Cambridge tradition, came to Cambridge in 1955 newly married to Joan (the constant star in his life), with a fellowship at Kings (Keynes's college, of course). Over the next 25 years, Geoff and Joan spent most of their time in Adelaide, where he became a professor, also playing for the Adelaide Cricket Club and captaining the Adelaide University Football Club [Australian Rules Football]. There were brief stints in Cambridge where Geoff was the first-ever teaching Fellow in Economics at Trinity Hall, and then as a visiting Fellow at Clare Hall. He and Joan returned to Adelaide in 1973, thinking it would be for good.

But then, in 1981, as Geoff never tired of saying, **Jesus called** – a Fellowship at Jesus and Lectureship in Economics. Geoff noted, "Joan, with her usual great selflessness, and I selfishly, accepted." That was a new start of 28 years at Cambridge in the Faculty of Economics and at Jesus, including 4 years as President.

**We are all here because Jesus is calling one more time**, to honour Geoff Harcourt's memory and celebrate his life, which means celebrating Geoff and Joan's life together.

## HONOURS

Let's start with honour. The honours bestowed upon Geoff were grounded in his contributions to economic theory and the history of economics. His work had both quality and quantity. On quantity, one of his colleagues noted that "GCH writes faster than mortals like me can read."

It would take most of my allotted time to list all of the honours. What stands out is the range of communities celebrating his scholarship – the country of Australia, associations of Australian

economists and academics, worldwide societies in the history of economics, and heterodox associations of Post Keynesians, Sraffians, Institutionalists and Evolutionary Economists. The awards recognize not only academic excellence, but also a scholarly life well-lived. A defining feature of Geoff Harcourt's work and life is his generosity – helping so many, influencing many more, and shaping, coalescing and connecting disparate scholarly communities.

I was one of those he influenced and supported.

This book – *Some Cambridge Controversies in the Theory of Capital* – Geoff's most famous scholarly contribution – changed his academic life.

This book (my original copy) is how I was introduced to Geoff. This book also changed **my** life.

In mid 1970s I was a graduate student at Stanford, taking a course taught by Professor Donald Harris. Don previously taught at the University of the West Indies, and was “discovered” by Joan Robinson on one of her trips to developing countries. A fine scholar, these days he is also known as the father of US vice president Kamala Harris.

We were assigned this new book by G.C. Harcourt. His book spoke to me in a language I could understand, about ideas that seemed important, and with a passion that was inspiring.

I first met Geoff the person in 1980 when he was visiting Toronto. We began corresponding, with me struggling to decipher his atrocious handwriting on blue onionskin letters. Our interests began converging, he sponsored me as a visiting fellow at Clare Hall, and we began working together. Over years, our relationship evolved from unknown author, to mentor-mentee to colleagues, collaborators and friends. Our families have also visited and grown close, most recently when my wife Susan and I visited Geoff and Joan in Sydney just before COVID.

What is remarkable about my story is how **unremarkable** it is. Geoff befriended, encouraged, supported, championed, .... Literally thousands of students and colleagues over his career.

This is one of the ways Geoff lives on – through people whose lives he touched. At reception, or other events, please go up to someone you don't know and ask "what is your favourite Geoff Harcourt story." Our memories honour him.

## **CELEBRATIONS**

The multitudes of students, colleagues and collaborators have, in turn, celebrated the man.

Here is just one of many celebrations. Philip Arestis and Malcom Sawyer planned a one-volume *Festschrift* in honour of GCH's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. But so many friends, colleagues, students and ex-students wanted to contribute that one volume expanded to two volumes. Even this proved not to be enough. Peter Kreisler and Claudio Sardoni (both former students, Claudio also becoming a son-in-law) organized a third volume, with 30 more papers, all from Harcourt students. They noted that "There are not many university teachers who in the course of their career have attracted so much admiration, respect and affection as Geoff has, nor have inspired as many students to take up the challenge of an academic career."

## **LIFE**

In celebrating Geoff's life, Cambridge, and Joan Harcourt, his wife of almost 67 years, are intertwined. Here in the Jesus Fellows' garden they celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries.

Anyone who knew Geoff knew that Geoff Harcourt's life was Geoff and Joan Harcourt's life. They have four children – Wendy, Robert, Tim and Rebecca. Geoff was always so proud of who they had become, and what they accomplished. Wendy (with Claudio) and Rebecca are here today.

While Joan made Geoff's academic life possible, raising and shepherding 4 young children all around the world, Joan is extraordinary in her own right. After her mother told her "it would not be possible for you to go to University as it is more important for your brothers to have that opportunity" she graduated from University of Melbourne, trained and worked as a librarian, and taught English literature. While pregnant with Rebecca, her youngest, she ran as a candidate for the Australian Labour Party for the Upper House of the South Australian Parliament.

In her 50s, back in Cambridge, Joan began a new career as a counselor and therapist. She trained as a Body Psychotherapist and then for 7 years with Marion Woodman, a Jungian psychoanalyst. Joan went on to lead workshops for the Marion Woodman Foundation. Just as Joan supported Geoff, Geoff supported Joan. He always described her, as the Choir sang so beautifully in the hymn, as going from strength to strength.

Geoff and Joan shared interests both in people and in politics. The title of another of Geoff's autobiographical essays is another giveaway: "Political Economy, Politics and Religion: Intertwined and Indissoluble Passions." He said the purpose of political economy is

To make the world a better place for ordinary men and women, to produce a more just and equitable society. In order to do that, you have to understand how particular societies work and where the pockets of power are, and how you can either alter those or work within them and produce desirable results for ordinary people, not just for people who have the power. I see economics as very much a moral as well as a social science and very much a handmaiden to progressive thought.

In Adelaide in the late 1960s, Geoff and Joan were both active in the Anti-Viet Nam War Campaign, and therefore were harassed. As Joan tells the story, "We learned each evening to turn the phone down, put a note on the door saying that we hadn't ordered concrete, or manure, or taxis." They both stuck their necks out for what they believed, and for others.

Which brings me to this book. This is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of Geoff's Cambridge Controversies book, just published by Cambridge University Press. I want to read two brief passages. The first is the forward.

### **Foreword**

While Geoff Harcourt was renowned for his generosity and support of others, this new edition of the 1972 book that became part of his identity was important to him. After signing the publishing contract, he was able to read the afterwords and see the manuscript for copyediting. His Preface to this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition was the last thing he wrote. Regrettably, Geoff died on 7 December 2021, before publication. He missed the experience you now have of holding the book in your hands, but took great pleasure in knowing that you, his family and others would have that experience.

Geoff's preface ended with this.

In 2022 Joan and I shall have been married for sixty-seven years. Her love, selflessness and support have been constants for all those years. It is with immense gratitude that I dedicate the second edition to her.

He loved, and he was loved.

In July 1996, a few years before retiring, Geoff gave a lecture in Lady Mitchell Hall about Cambridge contributions to economics. He ended, and I will end, with this reflection about his life as a Cambridge economist from down under:

I am a fortunate person because I have been a student of the Cambridge tradition. I have taught it, most of the people about whom I have written ... were my teachers and then my colleagues and my friends. So, it has been my good fortune also to work in the Cambridge tradition. I have brought .. peculiarly Australian contributions as well, because of the mentors I had in Australia, most of whom came out of the Cambridge tradition. Therefore, you see, you have before you a fulfilled person who has tried to do something to preserve the Cambridge tradition and who is going to play cricket for the Jesus College Long Vacation High Table side this afternoon. On a glorious summer day, what more could anybody ask for?

For Joan, Wendy, Rebecca, Robert and Tim, I can't imagine your loss. Thank you for sharing your Geoff with us. He has made all of us so much more.