

Chapter 42

An Amusing Incident with the Police

Somehow I must find space in this story to describe my brush with the police and how they thought I'd escaped from a hospital for the mentally ill – absolutely true! After the trauma of the last few chapters this will add some cheer and a few smiles.

Over the years, Rosalynde and I have explored many avenues in the field of complementary medicines and therapies and tried many of them. It was not in any way in competition with conventional medicine, which I have always acknowledged as playing the major role in my continued survival. We were more interested in anything that helped to boost the body's immune system, and general all round health to combat the debilitating and harmful side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Behind this, of course, was the hope that in doing so it might just help to stop the disease returning. Yoga, exercise, healthy eating, a balanced intake of vitamins, relaxation and meditation were some of these and probably the strangest of them all was Qi Gong; some people might describe it as the weirdest.

It is a special Chinese therapy and involves complicated body movements all designed to stimulate the body's energy field and help you to combat illness. Rosalynde and I attended a course and I concentrated, particularly on a special method of walking, which was developed to help people with cancer or who had survived cancer. If any reader saw the first television programme about me, "George and Geordie Proms", they might remember me talking about and demonstrating it in our garden. I had my leg pulled about it several times afterwards. I carried out this strange form of walking for three years for anything from one to two hours per day – outside in the fresh air and sunshine when possible. I even did it in Norway and France before skiing when it was freezing. Skiing time was too valuable to miss so I arose earlier than anyone else and did it before breakfast outside the hotel. I even did it around the swimming pool of the superb Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv, Israel. It was less embarrassing in France than Israel because the freezing, early morning conditions made sure I was the only idiot wandering around outside. The weather in Israel was different and even though I was at the pool, very early, I was soon being watched by early swimmers and with great curiosity. I saw and heard one Israeli tap his head and say to his gorgeous, bikini clad partner "He has to be a crazy Englishman!"

The walk is difficult to describe with words but I'll try to create a picture. It begins with facing the sun, brushing your hands from above your head down your body and breathing rhythmically and deeply as you do so. Then you begin to move forward swinging both arms from side to side as you set off. As you do this you breathe in quickly twice and then release the air slowly; this goes on every time you take a step. Your head turns to the right and left following the swinging of the arms. All in all, it is not a normal method of walking anywhere except on

your own when you can then relax and enjoy it. When I could do it this way it was fine but there were times when I could not avoid people and I would wince inwardly whenever I approached anyone.

One summer's weekend Rosalynde and I were staying at her sister's home in Scotby, a village near Carlisle and, of course, I had to do my Qi Gong. According to the Chinese therapist, who taught me, it was essential to do it every day. On the Sunday morning after we arrived, I set my travel alarm and rose about 6.00 am deciding to make a very early start before any of the village folk were out and about so I would not be noticed. It was a beautiful morning so I dressed in track-suit bottoms, t-shirt and trainers and crept quietly downstairs without disturbing anyone. Rosalynde was awake but said she would do her exercises in the garden at a more sensible time and snuggled down in bed.

I decided to have breakfast on my return and went to open the front door but couldn't find the key. I went to the back door but couldn't find that key either. So rather than wake Avril and George, her husband, I carefully climbed out of a window, pushing it to afterwards and set off. I hadn't intended Qi Gonging though the village and was going to walk to a farm lane which wended its way down to the River Eden. There and back was about four miles and very pleasant and probably completely deserted at this time of the morning. However, everywhere I looked the curtains were drawn and nobody was stirring so rather than waste half a mile I switched into the Qi Gong walk. The only time I had to stop was for a car at the A69 main road which joined the M6 just outside Scotby. It was only a solitary traveller and I was soon across and entering the lane to the River Eden.

As I "waddled" gracefully down the lane towards the first bend swinging my arms enthusiastically in time with my legs creating the strange mincing sort of step, which adds to embarrassment of being watched, I became conscious of a large police car (the jam sandwich type which we all recognize immediately) turn off the A69 into the Scotby road I had just left.

I remember thinking "I wonder where he's going so early on this lovely, peaceful Sunday morning", then promptly forgot about it.

About three or four minutes later I heard the sound of a car engine approaching from behind and swung over to the side of the lane to let it pass, assuming it was the farmer. Imagine my surprise when out of the corner of my eye, I saw the same police car slowly edge past me until the driver, whose window was down, drew level with me. It still hadn't dawned on me that I was the target because I just kept going, until the policeman said "Good morning, sir, are you alright?"

"Good morning", I replied, "Yes, I'm fine, thanks".

"What a friendly young man", I thought, still walking and swinging away. The penny still hadn't dropped and the policeman then said "Would you mind stopping for a moment, sir, so I can ask you a few questions?"

Thinking something must have happened in Scotby, which I might have witnessed, I stopped and turned to face him. I suddenly realized he was looking very uncomfortable and seemed unsure of what to say next so I smiled and waited.

"I'm sorry to have to stop you but we've received a complaint from someone in Scotby Village about a patient who has absconded from the Garlands Hospital,

which is nearby and the description I have been given fits you, I'm afraid". I knew from George and Avril that this hospital was for people who were mentally ill and the whole thing suddenly became clear – penetratingly clear. I couldn't help it at that point and just burst out laughing, which startled the policeman, so I hastily tried to "clear my name".

"Sorry, I didn't mean to laugh but I think you will see why when I explain", I said trying to look as normal as possible. I then proceeded to tell him more or less what I've just described in the last couple of pages. By the end, he too was smiling and we continued to chat about the situation, which he found amusing too.

"The person, who rang, was apparently quite upset at seeing you wandering through the village waving your arms and looking from side to side and was convinced you were out of your mind; I can imagine it will be talked about throughout the village by the end of the day".

"Unfortunately", he continued, "as it was an official complaint I have to go through the whole process and submit a report". He then asked where I was from and when I said Newcastle, he looked startled again until I told him where I was staying and why.

He took George and Avril's address, which I actually remembered after a moment's panic. Imagine what he would have thought or done if I had forgotten.

He left saying he thought the matter would go no further than submitting his report and with a smile and a wave he reversed back down the lane and that was the end of it or so I thought! I kept chuckling away to myself as I set off again down the lane to the river, thinking Rosalynde and Co would be amused when I told them about my "arrest" over breakfast.

About an hour later and without further incident I arrived back at the A69 and crossed over into the village. In defiance I walked in a true Qi Gong fashion back to the house and I couldn't help glancing at all the windows wondering who it was who had reported my "escape". I wondered what they thought if they recognized me as the reported "madman" and why I hadn't been escorted back to the "Garlands" by the police but there was no reaction from any of the houses.

I had quite a reception when I opened the door and stepped into the house. Everyone burst out laughing and I wondered how on earth they knew about my escapade. Rosalynde explained . . .

Apparently, with the sun streaming through the bedroom window she couldn't go back to sleep and decided to dress and do her exercises in the garden. She, too, had crept downstairs without disturbing anyone.

However, like me she couldn't find the front or back door keys and hadn't thought about climbing out of a window and started to do her exercises in the lounge. A short while later she heard a quiet tap on the front door and went to investigate thinking it was me. It is a frosted double glazed door and she could make out the outline of a man in a dark suit outside. Not wanting to wake anyone, she tried to speak through the glass explaining she couldn't find the key. The man must have understood her because he shouted "What about the back door?"

"I can't find that either", said Rosalynde beginning to feel rather foolish, and she tried to explain it wasn't her house and everyone else was asleep. The man

didn't seem to understand and began pointing to the ground. Rosalynde began to get suspicious and started to back away towards the telephone. Then the figure, she still hadn't realized it was a policeman, suddenly seemed to bend double and sink to the ground. Rosalynde stopped, fascinated at this and wondered what he was going to do next. Then the letterbox, which was right at the bottom of the door, opened and a voice said "Halloooo!"

Rosalynde had forgotten about the letterbox being so low because of the large area of double glazing and waited expectantly.

"Halloooo", again then "Sorry to bother you but I'm a policeman making some enquiries about a gentleman who says he's staying here". Two fingers appeared in the gap holding a police warrant card.

"Oh God, it's George, what's happened now?" was her first thought. She quickly knelt down on the floor and placing her head on the threshold, found herself staring into the perplexed eyes of my young policeman, who must have had his head on the single step to be able to peer through the other side of the letterbox.

"Do you have a Mr George Walker staying with you?" was the policeman's first question.

"Yes", replied Rosalynde, "he's my husband".

I can imagine the policeman, after seeing me, thinking "I'm not surprised they seem well matched for each other", but like a good officer, he nodded (side-ways) and continued the rather ludicrous conversation through the letterbox. Rosalynde at this point explained more carefully about the problem with the keys and had no idea where her sister, who was very security conscious, had hidden them.

"That's perfectly alright, madam" was the reply as though it was an everyday occurrence to question people six or so inches above the ground.

Fortunately, at that point, Avril, woken by the strange goings on, appeared on the scene in her dressing gown and after a quick explanation from Rosalynde, produced the key and opened the door as the policeman climbed stiffly to his feet and began brushing the dust off his knees and elbows, struggling at the same time to regain his dignity and bring a semblance of sanity to the situation. He was quickly invited in and after a cup of tea and slice of toast, during which time the whole story came out, the policeman closed his notebook, bade Rosalynde and Avril farewell and returned to his car probably wondering if it was going to continue being "one of those days!"

He then drove down the street, turned into the main road, saw me returning with my arms waving about, mounted the pavement in shock and ran over me before crashing into a garden wall, putting both of us in the Garlands Hospital (in adjacent beds) for a month; after which he stood trial for dangerous driving, lost his licence and was dismissed from the police force . . . only joking! I never saw him again but I bet he remembers me.

The whole episode took place in under an hour between 6 am and 7 am approximately. What a start to the day and who said "There's nothing funny about cancer!"?