



# A PERIPATETIC LIFE

REMINISCENCES ON AN ECLECTIC LIFETIME

BY  
RAYMOND WALLEY



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Back cover: A village in the Hijāz Mountains, Saudi Arabia.

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Particular thanks are due to my wife Pennie for proof reading the several versions this book has undergone and her many suggestions for improving the book's readability.

In the unlikely event that this book generates profits, they will be donated to cancer research.





Born in March 1943, Raymond grew up in Birmingham, initially in a slum tenement in Lozells but later moving to what was then a leafy suburb.

Leaving school with no qualifications other than a certificate in cycling proficiency he has however learned much and held many different and varied positions in an eventful and

multi faceted life.

Diagnosed with terminal Prostate cancer in 2015 at the age of 72, he decided to write about his very eclectic life and describe many of the fascinating and varied events he has experienced. These range from being a soldier to bankruptcy to single parent to university lecturer to name a few.





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## **Forward.**

By Joe Adams

When Raymond asked me to write the foreword for his book, entitled *A Peripatetic Life – Reminiscences on an Eclectic Lifetime*, one of my first thoughts was that a homonym for 'foreword' could have been an equally accurate title – as in 'Forward!' In his life, Raymond has always been moving forward to the next challenge, forward to the next learning opportunity, forward to the next good restaurant, forward to the next interesting country.

But the title he has chosen also very accurately sums up the writer. 'Peripatetic' means 'travelling around to different places, usually due to working in more than one place,' and 'eclectic' means 'deriving ideas, style, or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources'. These two words define the man in a very precise way.

I first met Raymond Walley back in 1986 when I was Managing Director of Encyclopaedia Britannica, when he assisted us in improving our recruiting and retention through his company's excellent psychometric instruments. But – as you will discover from the pages within – there is very, very much more to Raymond Walley than his psychometrics expertise.

Indeed, Raymond has had such a multiplicity of careers, interests and activities that I am reminded of a quote I heard from a minister once. When asked by a member of the congregation, 'Do you believe in life after death?' the minister replied, 'I'm not sure about that, but I certainly do believe in life after birth!' Raymond certainly has led an extraordinary and fulsome life during his 73+ years. He has been resourceful, diverse in his activities, worked in an incredible number of sectors and his courage, resourcefulness and imagination have all been remarkable.

Having thoroughly enjoyed reading Raymond's book, a quote springs to mind from James Allen, as it seems to me to exemplify the style and essence of this most unique individual: "Man is buffeted by circumstances so long as he believes himself to be the creature of outside conditions, but when he realises that he is a creative power and that he may command the hidden soil and seeds of his being out of which circumstances grow, he then becomes the rightful master of himself".

From model trains to psychometric analysis, from Istanbul to Saudi Arabia, Raymond Walley has truly been master of his fate and captain of his soul. He was an excellent colleague who has become a true friend, and it is an honour for me to have been asked to write the foreword to this most fascinating autobiography.

Joe Adams, Croydon, 2016.



## **Prologue.**

Why did I write this?

On the afternoon of Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2015, my Oncologist told me that I had an advanced, inoperable and aggressive form of Prostate Cancer (Gleason 4+5), which had spread to the bones and lymph nodes. I was seventy two years old, still possessed all my own teeth and had always been very fit and active my whole life. Apart from a lacerated ankle about age fourteen, a hernia operation at eighteen and the skilful repair of a smashed talus bone in my ankle in Saudi Arabia in my thirties, I had been very much a stranger to hospitals and illness, so this was a great shock.

However, I found myself objectively discussing, questioning and assessing whatever future still lay before me, surprisingly unafraid. Whichever way one viewed it, it was still a death sentence; it clearly was the time to review my life and decide upon what were my real priorities for the future.

My Doctors assure me that I can look forward to another three to five years. The treatment appears to be holding the disease at bay, indeed recent MRI and CT scans have shown that the cancers have shrunk somewhat but Prostate Cancer is adept at mutating and will

eventually find a way round the current treatment. The team at Eastbourne District General Hospital are excellent and tell me that they have other treatments they can try so perhaps I may yet die of natural causes, who knows?

I have lived, I think, an unusually varied life, done all manner of things; some of them very stupid, travelled, seen a great deal and worked in many, varied jobs and environments. Some of the things I have done include: being a soldier, shop keeper, bankrupt, butler/cook, single parent, hire car driver, published author in the arenas of philately, psychometrics and model railways; a salesman, psychometric expert, university lecturer, professional model maker, company secretary and director of several companies.

The cliché “A rolling stone gathers no moss” comes to mind and, if moss be a synonym for money, then I have gathered very little but it was enough to ward off the poverty from which I sprang.

Looking back, though there were a few times of great sadness and loss, I have had a wonderful life rich in experience and learning, met and benefited from knowing many fascinating people, married eventually the love of my life and made a few true friends. For what more could a man ask?

It occurred to me that others (if only my children and grandchildren) may find interest in reading about what I have done in my seventy plus years on the planet. Therefore, I decided to disinter and research all the papers, photographs and documents that have survived the years and write as honest an account of my life as I can

remember, including the times I made decisions or acted in ways that proved less than optimal.

There are two views I suppose on what follows. Either, it could serve as a warning to young people to plan their futures better than I and attain some solid qualifications early on.

Or it can be seen as an object lesson that achievement and fame (or infamy) can be had by anyone willing to study widely, learn from their experiences and see mistakes as just another way of gaining knowledge. Which reminds me of an amusing quote: "I have learned so much from my mistakes that I am thinking about making some more". I think the world needs both types, but you, dear reader, can decide for yourself.

Raymond Walley, Little Common, Bexhill on Sea, 2016.

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## Chapter 1 - The Beginning.

*Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate in one hand and martini in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn-out and screaming WOW, what a ride! Hunter S Thompson.*

I was the first born of five children and the first grandson in both families on Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1943 at around twenty past one in the morning in a private nursing home in Birchfield, Birmingham. How my family could have afforded this is something I have often wondered about but my research suggests that before the NHS was formed in 1948, this was the norm. So perhaps the costs were not particularly onerous. Carol came along in 1945, Trevor in 1946 and Stephen arrived in 1949; Hazel arrived seventeen years after me in 1960.

My Father, William Henry Walley, known as Bill to his legions of friends but always as Harry to my Mother, was a soldier in the Pioneer Corps when he married her. He came originally from Middlewich in Cheshire. He had been a salt worker, according to his marriage certificate, at the large salt factory that was still in operation when I

used to go up there for holidays as a child; frequently trespassing on its internal railway much to the annoyance of the engine drivers. He was illegitimate but unusually for that era, his Mother kept him despite the probable social opprobrium.

The stigmatization of illegitimacy was a Victorian invention as prior to Victoria's reign illegitimacy was not something noteworthy; illegitimate children were absorbed into their family and their mothers not ostracized. At the time of my Father's birth, his Mother was a domestic servant and if, as seems the case, she continued in that employ she must have worked for an unusually humane employer for the times. My Father never knew his Father because his Mother refused to divulge his name.

My Great, Great Grandfather, John Thomas Whalley, according to the census records married in 1893 one Elizabeth Hancock and they had six children. However, Elizabeth had already produced six children, five of whom survived infancy and took her family name of Hancock, while still living in her parents' home. Details of the father of the first six children are unknown. My Grandmother possessed a very strong character that she may well have inherited from this ancestor.

My Mother, Rosa May Dicks but always-called Masie, married my Father in 1942. She was a young good looking woman of determination and as would have been said at that time, to have 'ideas above her station'. She was devoted to her Harry.

I suppose, he must have been stationed close by in the Army for them to have met but I never asked the question when either of them were alive. I used to think that she could talk for England; verbally incontinent would describe her well. However, she had a pretty and petite younger sister, Betty, who emigrated to Australia with her husband John. Many years later, they visited Pennie and I when we lived in Wimbledon and I realized that, in comparison to her sister Betty, my Mother was relatively reticent. I do not think that John or we uttered more than a few dozen words the whole evening.

I found when investigating the family tree many years later that my Mother's origins were of peasant farm labourers in Lincolnshire while my Father's was similar but from Cheshire. She though, was born in Chatham where her Father was in the Army, in married quarters but when he and my maternal Grandmother (always called Nan) had one too many children he had to leave the Army and went to work for one of the railway companies in Birmingham.

I do not remember him; he died when I was very young allegedly according to my Nan, from eating undercooked sausages, though my sister Carol maintains it was due to illness caused by being gassed in the Great War, perhaps the sausages were the trigger. I do remember though that I was not allowed to go to his funeral.

My Mother's Mother (Nan) made my Father promise never to take Masie away from Birmingham as a condition of marrying her and he kept his word. I have always

thought it sad that this son of the country had to spend the rest of his life in a dirty, crowded city. He loved country life so much that he would spend his holidays (when I was young) working on the farms that existed just outside the then city limits; however, another reason may well have been the money, which was always short.

I remember going with my Mother to watch him play football a few times when I was small but I think he had to give it up due to a problem with his leg. He loved football and boxing and I think I must have disappointed him for I loathed most sports, and do still, aptly referred to as 'organized violence' by my good friend Ron Dards.

Where my Mother and I lived after I was born I do not remember but probably at Nan's in Kingsland Road, Kingstanding a Birmingham suburb. We must then have moved to Lozells an inner city district in Birmingham, before my Father was demobilized because I remember him coming home on leave and leaning his rifle against the wall by the fire in our tenement. The rifle was enormous viewed through the eyes of a toddler; it was much taller than I was.

We lived in a tenement in Clifford Street, Lozells; a set of three rooms on the top floor. It was a mean, working class and impoverished area. However, not everyone who lived in the area was poor; some of the shopkeepers had whole houses just for their family and a woman who used to give me treats lived in a house that she owned near the ice-cream parlour. We stayed at Clifford Street until I was nine years old. Nearby was a park where lurked a truculent and bad tempered Park Keeper and a Victorian



school where my early education was started. We had gas lighting and a coal fire, the coal had to be hauled three floors up many flights of stairs and we all slept in one room.

I do not think that my Father ever went overseas whilst in the Army, he was not really fit due to an injury he had received when young that was treated in Manchester Infirmary and caused the bones in his leg to be diseased (his word). I know that he spent some considerable time after we moved to Hay Mills, much to his great annoyance, incapacitated due to this problem but it must have been resolved to some extent because he never suffered from it after that as far as I know.

I remember the ceiling in the sitting room of our tenement collapsing with a crash onto the tea table, dust and plaster everywhere; my Mother did not panic but simply got us out of the room as quickly as possible. I suppose it must have been fixed at some point but I do not remember it, though it is equally likely to have remained that way until we moved away. The lavatory was of course outside, three stories down.

We spent a family Christmas at Nan's when I was four or five and I remember waking up on Christmas morning to find the world silent and covered in a deep layer of white stuff that the grownups called snow, it was enchanting looking out from the bedroom window to see all the houses down the hill hidden and the world an undulating sea of white. Playing in the snow among my cousins was fun but the cold eventually won and I escaped back to the warmth of Nan's kitchen. I inherited from my Father Reynaud's syndrome, a relatively common

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RAYMOND WALLEY'S LIFE HAS BEEN EXTRAORDINARY IN MANY WAYS. IN HIS SEVENTY PLUS YEARS ON THE PLANET HE HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY: A SALESMAN, RAILWAYMAN, SOLDIER, SINGLE PARENT, SHOPKEEPER, BANKRUPT, BUTLER/COOK, PSYCHOMETRIC EXPERT, UNIVERSITY LECTURER AND PROFESSIONAL MODEL MAKER AMONG MANY OCCUPATIONS.

NOW UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH FROM PROSTRATE CANCER HE HAS DECIDED TO WRITE ABOUT HIS VARIED EXPERIENCES AND TELL THE FASCINATING STORY OF HIS EVENTFUL LIFE.

