

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by - PETER HAYES - 2001 Churchill Fellow

To study Service-Learning in Secondary Schools

This report can be viewed at : www.norbert.wa.edu.au/staff/staff_principal.asp

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**PROJECT:** Service-Learning in Secondary Schools**AUTHOR:** Peter Hayes
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The author is Principal of a Catholic Secondary co-educational High School of 720 students situated in a suburb of Perth, Western Australia.

1.1 Service-Learning Definition

Service-Learning is a method by which people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised service activities accompanied by a structured reflection process.

eg. A student spends 1 hour each Tuesday evening helping a recent immigrant learn English.

eg. A student goes on a weekend camp as a “buddy” to a teenager with Multiple Sclerosis.

1.2 Project Description

The author spent 2 months visiting North American Secondary schools which have well developed Service-Learning programs. The aim was to ascertain the ingredients in an effective Service-Learning program and to identify implementation strategies for schools starting a Service-Learning program.

1.3 Research Methodology

The author visited 15 schools, spending between one and five days in each school. The contents of this report arise from

- observations by the author
- conversations with Service Directors
- conversations with high school students
- observing classes
- reading of reflection papers written by students
- reading of relevant articles and books
- the author’s attendance at a 4 day national Conference of Service Directors from Jesuit Secondary Schools.

1.4 Ingredients of an Effective Service-Learning Program

- A passionate Service Director who is given the time and resources to do justice to the role.
- Strong support for Service-Learning from the leadership of the school.
- A student committee which has a real say in the service program.
- The rationale for the Service-Learning Program is clearly articulated and related to the school’s mission statement.
- Strong support from parents and the local community.
- Service achievements are celebrated in ritual, and individual students’ efforts acknowledged in public.
- Post-Service reflection is a high priority.

1.5 Implementation Strategies for Schools Starting a Service-Learning Program

- Appoint an enthusiastic Service Director.
- Get teachers on-side.
- Give students a meaningful leadership role.
- Use very local agencies to build local community support.
- Acknowledge student achievement and efforts in the Service area.
- Initiate an Immersion project within the first 2 years.
- Public support from the school administration is essential.
- Emphasise the reflection process.

1.6 Sharing the Insights

The author intends to share the above insights with the Australian community via:

- publishing this report on the internet.
- offering to conduct conference sessions for gatherings of educationalists.
- offering this report for publishing in an educational journal.

2 PROGRAM

At the commencement of my study tour I was delighted to secure a position at the 4 day National Conference of Service Directors in Jesuit Secondary Schools. It was really inspiring to experience their passion, enthusiasm and obvious dedication to promoting growth in their students. Given that I was scheduled to visit the schools of some of the Conference participants, this early contact at the Conference was invaluable in establishing a friendly working relationship.

Visits, ranging in duration from 1 day to 5 days, were made to 14 schools and 2 universities.

Schools

Mountainbrook High	(Birmingham, Alabama)
Mary Star of the Sea	(San Pedro, California)
St Ignatius	(San Francisco, California)
Bellamine Prep	(San Jose, California)
John Carroll High School	(Birmingham, Alabama)
Jesuit High	(New Orleans, Louisiana)
Ben Franklin High School	(New Orleans, Louisiana)
Notre Dame Academy	(Green Bay, Wisconsin)
Archmere Academy	(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
Episcopal Academy	(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
Fordham Prep	(New York)
Fairfield Prep	(Fairfield, Connecticut)
Boston College High	(Boston, Massachusetts)

Universities

Fairfield University	(Fairfield, Connecticut)
St Norbert College	(Green Bay, Wisconsin)

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The author visited 16 sites, spending between one and five days in each. The contents of this report arise from:

- observations by the author
- conversations with Service Directors
- conversations with high school students
- observing classes
- reading of reflection papers written by students
- reading of relevant articles and books
- the author's attendance at a 4 day national Conference of Jesuit Service Directors from Secondary Schools.

4 ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

4.1 Service-Learning Defined

Service-Learning is a method by which people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised service activities. Service-Learning is not the same as Community Service, which simply means "volunteering done in the community". A typical Community Service program might involve students in tutoring primary school students or serving meals at a soup kitchen. Service-Learning, however, blends both service and learning goals – it has a strong reflective component resulting in student learning and personal growth. Structured time is provided for a young person to think, talk and write about what he/she did and saw during the service activity.

It is helpful to distinguish between academic Service-Learning and co-curricular Service-Learning. Academic Service-Learning occurs when the service occurs as an integral part of an academic class; eg. students serving a meal in a soup kitchen and doing structured classroom activities involving critical thinking about related issues such as welfare policy and social justice. The service is the text of the course. Co-curricular Service-Learning exists when the preparation and reflection occur outside of academic classes. In this report it is this latter definition which is meant by the term “Service-Learning”.

Schools which make Service compulsory often distinguish between “Direct” and “Indirect” Service. “Direct” involves personal contact with the person being served. eg. Tutoring, mentoring, visiting the elderly. Examples of “Indirect” Service are food drives, fundraisers, environmental clean-ups, etc. Some schools require students to do a mix of direct and indirect. eg. One school asks Year 11 students to do 50 hours of service, at least 35 of which must be direct.

4.2 Components of a Service-Learning Program

In almost all schools visited, the students performed the service outside of school hours and usually were responsible for organising their own transport.

Activities which schools incorporate into their Service-Learning programs include

- One-off Projects
eg. food drive or clean-up a local swamp
- Immersion Experience in a different culture
eg. spend 2 weeks of school holidays in East Timor tutoring disadvantaged children.
- Urban Plunge
A small group stay the weekend in a homeless shelter in an inner city disadvantaged area.
- Camps
Students spend a few days on a camp as a “buddy” for a child with a physical or mental disability.
- Home-based Service
Over a 3 week period a student does 15 hours service in the home neighbourhood, helping pensioners, etc. This type of service is suitable for younger teenagers eg. 13 years.
- School-based Service
Students volunteer to help as Canteen servers, bookshop helpers, tutoring younger students in reading, coaching younger students in sport, assisting in the library, being ushers on parent evenings etc.
- Service at off-campus agencies
This is the most common form of service experience. A student might spend one hour each Wednesday afternoon chatting to pensioners in an aged persons hostel.
- Service connected to a course of study
In Archmere Academy students can choose the Service elective as part of their Theology course. A normal theology course is 4 lessons per week – the service elective is only one lesson per week, but in lieu the student commits to 2 hours each week outside class time at an agency. The one class per week is used for preparation and reflection, ensuring that the students experiences are processed.

4.3 Should Service be Compulsory?

There is an interesting debate over whether a school should make service compulsory. Some states (eg. Maryland) mandate Community Service as a condition for high school graduation. Some schools, usually those with a Christian rationale driving their service program, do the same. In both cases the graduation requirement is a powerful motivator, since a student will not be accepted into a University without school graduation.

In speaking to students in schools where service was compulsory I asked year 12 students their opinion. They believed it should be compulsory, because they acknowledged that their service experience had been such a growing experience for them as humans; without the compulsion factor they would never have undertaken service.

In Australia it would seem much more difficult to enforce “compulsory service” and many would challenge such on philosophical grounds. In some schools where service is voluntary I was greatly reassured by the fact that 70% of students volunteered. Thus it seems it is possible to build a culture of service in a school; teenagers have the generosity to respond to challenging invitations to serve others.

5 **IMPACT OF SERVICE-LEARNING**

5.1 Research Findings

Over the past 20 years there has been a significant amount of research on the impact of Service-Learning on a student’s learning and growth.

Billig’s (2000) research identified the following positive outcomes from high quality Service-Learning programs.

- Service-Learning has a positive effect on the personal development of youths.
- Service-Learning has a positive effect on students’ interpersonal development and the ability to relate to culturally diverse groups.
- Service-Learning helps develop students’ sense of civic and social responsibility and their citizenship skills.
- Service-Learning provides an avenue for students to become active, positive contributors to society.
- Service-Learning results in greater mutual respect between teachers and students.
- Service-Learning improves overall school climate.
- Service-Learning leads to more positive perception of schools and youths on the part of community members.

Harris’ (2001) Doctoral Research reported the following positive student outcomes of the programs studied.

- Students feel that they are making a difference in the community.
- Students have an opportunity to develop leadership qualities.
- Improved student attendance, involvement in school and attitude about school.
- Students have developed an enthusiasm for learning.
- Students have been empowered to address community needs, by designing, developing and implementing service learning activities.
- Students have developed an interest in current events linked to environmental and natural resources themes.
- Students have demonstrated their ability to reflect on service learning activities through writing and presentation of multimedia programs.
- High school students can become positive role models for younger elementary school students.

- Some students have been able to move away from gang activities into a more positive, successful and contributing lifestyle.
- Students feel better about themselves and experience increased self-esteem.
- Students are more hopeful about the future. They can more easily see a future for themselves.

5.2 Citizenship – for charity or change?

As noted in the above research findings, Service-Learning can foster a sense of civic duty which can be oriented towards charity (which tends to perpetuate the status quo), or they can be oriented toward developing skills for change and social reconstruction.

Rashoff and Sundeen (1999) concluded that

“Religious school students, in particular, are the most likely to work toward social change, primarily due to religious ethics and their incorporation into their service activities.” (p. 103).

5.3 Christian Schools’ View

Several of the schools visited by this author were private schools with a Christian ethos. Their rationale for a Service-Learning dimension – the gospel imperative

“Whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.” Matthew Chapter 25 V.49

The following question was put to the Service-Learning directors in these schools.

“Do adolescents in your Service-Learning program make the connection between faith and service?”

The responses were varied.

One Director believes it is a matter of “readiness”. Prior to the service experience he says his students didn’t want to know about the school’s rationale or the gospel imperative for Service-Learning; but after the service experience they are ready to make the connection between faith and service – it is a matter of “acting oneself into a way of thinking” rather than “thinking oneself into a way of acting”.

A second Director tells the following story.

“In taking a few students to a soup kitchen I noticed an ex-student in the food preparation area. I immediately recognised him as one of our disaffected/marginalised lads – I presumed he was there to work off a court order following some misdemeanour... I approached him and inquired.

‘Why are you here?’

He replied ‘I don’t know ... I did service here while at school, and I kept coming back.’”

This Service Director concluded that it was more important that the young man was there than his being able to articulate the reasons why.

The words of Pascal come to mind:

“The heart has reasons that reason doesn’t know”.

Perhaps ultimately it is a mystery – even Jesus’ disciples, who had the benefit of Jesus’ constant company, instruction and example, took a long time to “see”....

6 **INGREDIENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM**

Many of the factors listed below indicate that the stakeholders and school leadership regard Service-Learning as integral to the educational enterprise, and value it highly.

6.1 Program Director

The program Director is passionate about the ability of Service-Learning to transform students, relates well with adolescents, is credible in the eyes of teaching staff and displays highly developed interpersonal skills when relating to parents and agencies.

The Director needs an appropriate time allocation; many US schools had a full-time Director, others had 2 or 3 teachers who shared the time allocation. Schools adopting the latter model saw benefit in this team approach.

6.2 Resources and Profile

Ideally the Service Directors office is located in a student market-place eg. adjacent to the canteen where students pass by each day. Students then see service requests on the noticeboards, drop in to chat with the Service Director etc. An annexe which is the “student office” helps students take ownership of aspects of the service program. Thought-provoking art pieces and posters can set up a great “atmosphere of challenge” in the Service Director’s office.

The Service Director reports directly to senior leadership of the school on a regular basis. At Fairfield University the Director reports to the University President – this is a powerful symbolic message about how valued Service-Learning is regarded.

Air-time to promote Service-Learning activities is readily given at school assemblies and staff meetings.

The Service-Learning budget allocation is generous; in some schools a bus or van is provided exclusively for transporting students to and from service sites.

6.3 Rationale for Service-Learning

The school has developed and articulated a rationale for Service-Learning and embedded this in its publications. This rationale should connect with the school’s Mission statement.

When new students enrol they perceive that “serving is part of what we do at this school”.

6.4 Local Community Support

High quality service programs have built local Community support. The local community recognises the school as a “service school” and approaches the school for help on projects. At a school in San Francisco the enrolment waitlist is 4 times the size of the entry cohort – parents fight to get their sons/daughters enrolled because they want them to experience the compulsory service program; the introduction of the Service Program has transformed the culture of this school.

6.5 Agencies

The Service is age appropriate, meets real community needs and occurs in existing agencies, not ones created by the school. Care is taken to select the most suitable sites, building on existing school relationships with agencies. The Service Director fosters a close relationship with the agencies, responds quickly to contact from the agency, and is prepared to withdraw a student from an agency without penalising that agency.

6.6 Student Voice

There is a student committee which has a real voice in deciding which service projects the school adopts, and takes responsibility for aspects of the program.

6.7 Acknowledge and Celebrate

Students efforts are acknowledged in public forums like assemblies and Presentation Nights. Certificates, awards and medals are presented to students to acknowledge service contributions. If students are about to embark on a particularly challenging project like an overseas immersion, a “commissioning ceremony” is held to wish them well. When parents are present at such events, the community support for Service-Learning is fostered.

6.8 Reflection

Ensuring that the student engages in quality reflection is so critical, and is also one of the most challenging aspects. The reflection looks back on the implications of the service activities to evaluate or sort out what was good or bad, enlightening or confusing, to determine what the student gained, lost or achieved, and then attaching the insight to future actions or wider contexts. Some schools attach the service to a course of study in the weekly timetable, thereby ensuring that weekly reflection can occur in a group context. Journalling and writing “reflection papers” are other popular strategies.

Reflection ties into the vision and mission of the school, ensuring that service is seen as one outflow of school identity.

6.9 Teacher Support

Most teachers understand the benefits of the Service-Learning program and actively support it. Periodically teachers do service themselves, often joining students (and their parents) on a project.

6.10 Learn from Others

Good Service Programs are aware of successful models in other schools, glean new ideas and adapt them to their own environment. The Service Directors network facilitates this continuous improvement.

7 **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

For schools about to set-up a Service-Learning program, the following suggestions are offered; these are additional to the suggestions listed above in section 6.

- 7.1 Begin in a small, quality controlled way, and let the program grow organically. Audit the current service activities in the school, affirm these, and build on them.
- 7.2 Get the outstanding student leaders and sporting heroes involved in service, and then get them to share their experiences at school assemblies.
- 7.3 When hiring new teaching staff, appoint those who have an understanding of and commitment to the Service-Learning program.
- 7.4 When selecting agencies, ensure they are value-based organisations and understand adolescents. Concentrate on really local sites – this will build acceptance of the program with parents and the local community. Be very clear in communicating the schools expectations to agencies.

- 7.5 To build a culture of Service in the school, it helps to foster some academic Service-Learning. Strongly encourage learning area leaders to build service into some units of study by
- including “fostering Service-Learning” in their duty statements
 - insisting they report annually on progress
 - developing a Service-Learning elective.
- 7.6 Give heaps of recognition to students who volunteer for service through strategies like
- presenting certificates, medals, etc
 - publishing articles in newsletters
 - having student speakers at school assemblies
 - presenting T-shirts with service motifs.
- 7.7 Invite the school’s top teacher to teach a Service-Learning elective in Year 11 or Year 12. Personally invite 15 top quality students to enrol in this “exciting pilot course”. At the end of the course invite these students to speak to the next year level students, “selling” the elective to them.
- 7.8 Have the school Administration be seen in public as advocates of Service-Learning.
- 7.9 Initiate an immersion experience early in the life of the Service-Learning program. There is no more powerful transforming experience for students and teachers.

John, a 15 year old student from a school in Los Angeles, went with a group to Mexico to help clean-up an Orphanage. He told the author:

“It stopped your heart when you got there because it is so poor. So sad. Little kids run up and hug you and won’t let you go for the rest of the day. It made me feel so special because I was there.....I was the one there to help themwe took clothes from home – we cleaned up wash areas, dormitories, prepared and served lunch, changed nappies.

It made me think that I have something to do in life – help people, especially kids who are deprived..... it made me want to cry – I have never thought of kids having to live like this, but they do.... just being there to make them smile – I’m going to do this for my life now – I’m going to be a paediatrician – I feel I have to help them – I want them to know that there is someone out there, someone who cares.”

8 SHARING THE INSIGHTS

The author intends to share his Churchill Fellowship insights via all or most of the following strategies.

- by conducting a 2 hour session at a Conference of Perth Service-Learning Directors.
- by expanding the Service-Learning program in his own school, and welcoming visits from other schools whose programs are less developed.
- by publishing this report on the internet.
- by offering to speak at the Western Australian Chapters of the Australian College of Education and Australian Council of Education Administration; and to offer to present a paper at the National Conferences of these two bodies.
- offering a suitably abridged version of this report for publication in educational journals.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

This author is convinced that Service-Learning has the potential to transform the minds and hearts of the next generation of Australian adolescents. Rather than prescribe a service experience for every school student, it is better to support the “prophets” who are beginning to emerge across the country – teachers with a passion for engaging students in Service-Learning. Governments can support the organic growth of Service-Learning programs in secondary schools (both public and private) by having “seed” money available for schools to employ a part-time Service Director with a view to the position becoming full-time in the future. A well implemented program will soon stand on its own feet with support from the local community and priority support from the school administration. Such “lighthouse” schools then become a source of inspiration for others.

10 CONCLUSION

How will We know when Service-Learning has fulfilled its promise? It will be when recent University graduates answer the question “What do you plan to be doing in five years?” not only with a personal aspiration (eg. “working as a biologist”), but also with a public aspiration (eg. “working to improve race relations in my community”).

11 REFERENCES

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12 APPENDIX - SOME STUDENTS SPEAK

At the end of the day the most powerful rationale for a Service-Learning program is the testimony of students.

Steven (age 16) from New Orleans, spent a week of his holidays with a group of fellow students assisting pensioners in a poor area of Appalachia. He reflects:

“My trip to Fries, Virginia was not merely a service project; it was a service adventure. The hard physical labour, the satisfied citizens, and the emotionally awed servant all embodied the spirit of my service project.

The work I did in Fries was somewhat gruelling manual labour. I scraped and painted houses and churches for those who could not afford or who were not able to paint their own buildings. There was digging out of the town reservoir on the first Tuesday afternoon. It was back-breaking labour as we removed river sand from the town’s only source of water. The nature of my work, however, was not purely manual; often times, I would be assigned to jobs which I needed to just provide company to a lonely elderly lady. Sharing my youth and spirituality was my biggest contribution to the city of Fries. My work did not go without thanks because the people of Fries were so gracious. Ms Evelyn Farmer and Ms McClure wouldn’t let me start working until I had eaten something from their kitchens. Every person I worked for took me in as one of their own, fed me, and talked to me at length about anything. The women of Fries were so thankful for us that they cried as they presented us a plaque. The ten days I spent in Fries seemed to make the town a little happier. Everyone was smiling and thankful that “the Jesuit boys and Fr Mike Prados” were back in town.

Fries is a town that has left an indelible mark upon my soul. The city has taught me that simplicity is the key to being happy. I was simply amazed that everyone in Fries was content in their poor community. I didn’t believe that material goods were directly related to happiness, but I also didn’t believe that one could be absolutely happy when living in poverty. The group of guys I worked with taught me plenty about themselves as we became more open with each other. Appalachia taught me to have no fear of the unknown or unexpected. I feel there is nothing that I cannot accomplish after doing the daring things that the trip requires. The memories will always live on – completing Buck’s house, Roy Taylor’s church, Turk’s motorcycle, the Street family, Ms Farmer, Ms McClure, Dino, Clito, the Fiddler’s convention, the ghost in the attic, thrill hill, the pictures, the cold shower, and much, much more. At the end of my trip, I was overwhelmed with emotions of joy and sadness, enthusiasm and tiredness. Fries helped me become a more fulfilled and more understanding person as now I truly appreciate everything that I have.

I thoroughly enjoyed my service adventure and regret only one thing: I can’t go back tomorrow.”

Elizabeth, age 17, from Philadelphia writes:

Community Service is not about how many hours you volunteer, or winning an award... We go to brighten someone’s day, to help conquer an ominous math problem or sound out a long word, to bring a smile to someone’s face. We go to make it cleaner than when we came, to provide for those in need, to satisfy the hunger of those in our community and our own hunger to serve each other.

For the past four years, I’ve volunteered at St Katherine’s, a school for developmentally disabled kids aged 7 to 21. Last year, I was partnered with Chelsea, an eight-year-old girl with Down’s Syndrome. Each week as we enter the classroom, her freckled face lights up and she waves. “Hi Chels, how are you doing today?” I ask her. “Good. What’s your name?” she replies in her singsong voice. Although she recognizes me, she still does not remember my name. “My name is Liz,” I answer. She hesitates and laughs a little while sounding it out and then proceeds to

introduce me to her friends. As I kneel down at the table beside her, she points out the fresh coat of polish on her nails, and shows me how the red matches the stripes in her plaid uniform. Today we are working on recognizing animals; a small blue Tupperware container filled with miniature plastic wildlife sits on the table in front of us. Although she is practiced at this, she still struggles with the zebras and seals. Breezing through giraffes, lions and porpoises, I reach for a tough one and pull out a small brown baby seal. As I hold it up for Chelsea, she giggles: "I know that one. That's a seal" Both of us just smile.

An outsider may only notice that Chelsea hesitates when naming the colour of a crayon or counting the animals on the table. I know, however, that she pauses even less than last week. I believe that Chelsea and I have made indelible impressions on each other. Her happiness over the smallest things, like a ribbon in my hair or the beautiful shade of her turquoise crayon, regularly brightens my day. Encouraging Chelsea with words of praise, I have helped her with one-on-one attention, furthering her progress in school... I truly enjoyed working with the kids at St Katherine's. Their enthusiasm for learning and playing, their happiness at the small things which in our busy rush to get from here to there or in our efforts accomplish at least two things at once, we seem to frequently forget to stop and admire. They provide the inspiration to be genuinely happy and live life with a positive outlook. In giving only one hour each week to go to St Katherine's, we bring smiles and happiness to the kids there. But for me, what I get out of it means so much more. Each and every time I walked out the door of St Katherine's, I left with a smile on my face, knowing that I had made a difference.

In essence I have learned the truth of Ethel Andrus' words – The human contribution is the essential ingredient. It is only in the giving of oneself that we truly live."

Andre (age 16) from Fairfield was a member of a school group who spent a week of their holidays in the village of Duran in Ecuador. He writes:

"I felt guilty about it, but I wanted to come home. Thank God I slept most of the first flight home, or else I would have agonised for four more hours. While I had thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience, I desired to come back to my comfort zone and to my friends and family. I left behind very little, but brought home a worldly experience.

I journeyed to another world within our own, not knowing what to expect but hoping to find something. What I found was desperate poverty and desolation of the human flesh. I saw hundreds of thousands of people, all scrounging for their daily bread that we find all too readily. I found guilt, anger, depression, despair, hunger and yes, joy. Instead of finding complete hopelessness, I found the strength of the human spirit. I not only saw God I saw the evilness of Satan as well. I found a desire to do something for the poor of Ecuador, but realized that most of the world lives this way. Someone said that we cannot change the situation because that is just the way it is. I want to change it. Is there a way?

Americans live comfortably, are we not all granted this right? If yes, then why do only some have this privilege? While others desired to remain and live like the poor, I have a desire to raise the people out of poverty. I have a desire to raise the poor aspects of my own human self to a greater level of glory and greater love toward others and myself. I see a need for change, rather than a need for just love. The greatest act of love is to have mercy and to serve those who need to be served. To keep observing and recording the images we see is really going to do little to help the people. Rather than just observing, we need to see the need for change. Whether or not we have the calling or the ability empowered within us to create change, I know not. However, I do realize that the greatest single act we can do right now is to lead others into an awareness of what is present in the world around us, the real world around us.

I saw the sickening sight of a tall skinny man clad in a faded blue. He walked aimlessly on past us, neither caring who we were or what we were trying to accomplish, not really caring about anything at all. As he plodded down the sidewalk away from us, I could see the outline of almost

every bone in his entire body. His head was down and his arms barely swung as he slowly walked. His facial expression was that of lost hope and utter despair. Suddenly, it became too surreal to me as everything became focused before me. The dirty street with dust blowing around each time a car rushed by caught my brief attention. The sounds and smells of the market place so nearby, teeming with people rushing to and fro picking up fruit and meat that would never make its way into our grocery store in a million years, crossed my mind. My distant home beckoned to me, as I grew afraid and shocked by this surrealistic picture. And there, that tall lanky young man meandered continually as he walked slowly onward to his desperate death of starvation. I would not be surprised if that stranger were still walking in some vain hope for a brighter future, for he looked as if it might be short and rather painful.

The climb to the summit of Goat Hill is my most hated moment. The community included emaciated dogs scraping at the rock and filthy children with bloated stomachs as a result of horrible malnutrition. Overpowering was the terrible stench of organic waste and people of little hygiene practice coupled with the trash left strewn all over the ground. There was a very young girl who sat down on the ground and just cried. She was wailing and there was no-one around to comfort her or to hug her or to serve her desperate need of nutrition. Suddenly, at that moment my entire mind and soul went blank. The emotional stress was too much, rather than feeling extreme pity or anger or depression, I felt almost absolutely nothing. Some kind of emotional shock had just exploded inside of me and I had no way to control it. I still have not shaken off this shock and it comes back every time I seriously bring this whole trip back to mind. Yet, the amount of good that I saw is almost greater than that of the evil I saw. Amidst all the chaos and poverty, there were beacons of light and hope. In different locations, communities were bonding together to try and rise out of the rubble. The school, the new church and the factory are examples of the will to tower over this great abyss of inhumanity. This strong will to succeed has a ripple effect and affects whole communities and those surrounding it. The light at the end of the tunnel is the people's gathering together to fight for change. What I saw, was the beginning of a cultural, economic and bloodless revolution. The struggle to survive there is both on personal and community levels. The inspiration comes from the dedication of a select few whom have decided to take the initiative and create a change. Americans cannot change them, nor can the Church. The change has to be from within, and the people I met are struggling for change.

I myself changed. The amount of change within myself is unknown, however I have noticed a willingness to share with others the joy of this day. In the short time since I have returned, I have noticed my own growth in openness to all people, at all times. I have always been willing and have felt an obligation to help others, especially spontaneously, yet I seem to be trying to make opportunities to be spontaneously helpful. My decision to go to Ecuador did not change me, rather it multiplied the changes that were growing inside of me. I did not go to have my entire nature changed. Rather, I went to practice my self-giving habits more freely. In our society, selfishness is king. It is a society for me, myself and I. I am and can be an extremely self-giving person, but our society makes it very difficult to act humane and unselfishly as often as we ought to. Duran gave me the chance to give of myself without any reason to withhold myself for anything at all. This trip gave me an opportunity to remove my masks that hide my true inner self. I have come that much closer to a greater understanding of life and happiness.

We all value happiness. We all value love. What we put stress upon to receive either is up to the individual person and their circumstances. It is a little odd that happiness and love go together. If we desire to be happy, then we must express love. When we express love, we experience some form of happiness. To express love we need to give of ourselves. If we can reach out to our neighbour and give him a sign of love and serve his needs when the time comes, we have not only shown love to our neighbour, but also to God, our Creator. In Ecuador, people have very little to offer to their neighbour in terms of material possessions. Yet, they offer what they do have with an open heart. It is one thing to see someone give of themselves, it is quite another to see someone give of themselves when they have very little to offer.

It is very difficult for me to see the people of Duran as poor. When I think of poor people, I often think of people that are depressed because they have no money. But many people in Ecuador are

free from the ideals and the captivating spell of American materialism. In Ecuador, one can be humane and kind for the sake of being kind. There is a greater usage of the human spirit to offer guidance and hope. God is easier to find on the faces of the faithful. In Ecuador, I felt like myself and that I could be anyone I wanted. I felt closer to my inner being and have managed to hang on to this closeness even to this present moment. Sometimes it is difficult to become known to ourselves, but through thought and experience, we can become fully understanding of who we are and why we act. With this intimate understanding of ourselves, we are then truly ready to begin our transformation to complete and whole goodness in God's eyes.