

## Monumental Ceremony

Some time ago an English Bowen therapist rang me. As she was travelling through Geelong she wanted to take a photograph of what ever Geelong had in memory of Tom Bowen. I was rather embarrassed at the time to tell her that there was no such thing. I am very thankful that this is no longer the case!

On Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October I was honoured to represent Ossie and the Bowtech Bowen world at a ceremony to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tom Bowen's death. The ceremony included the unveiling of a permanent sculpture in honour of the memory of this talented and generous man and the lady who worked with him for all of those years, Rene Horwood. Tom's daughter Heather Edmonds unveiled the memorial. Six roses were laid onto the memorial's pedestal base to represent thanks and respect from the six 'boys' who worked with Tom over the years. The commissioning of the memorial and the hard work of bringing it to fruition are due mainly to a Geelong therapist Ron Phelan. Much thanks must go to Ron for his vision, tireless efforts and single mindedness, without which this memorial would not be as wonderful or fitting



*Bowen Association of Australia president Chris Reed with American instructor Vicki Mechner at the unveiling of the plaque.*

as it has turned out to be. Other people to thank are Vicki Mechner for her assistance to Ron in editing the plaque and her support, Trevor Rose and Ann D'Arcy from S.A. for their help in raising funds, Jan and George Francis, artist and sculptor respectively, and many others including representatives of the City of Greater Geelong and the Gordon TAFE College.

Present on the day were over 100 people. Everyone there had his or her own special connection to Tom Bowen and Rene Horwood, but some people had a very special connection, none more so than Tom's daughter Heather Edmonds and Tom's youngest sister Mrs Agnes (Bowen) Shaw, representing his immediate family. Rene's son, Barry Hanson was on hand representing Rene's family. Many others were present who are important to the Bowen story. Three of the six who worked with Tom over the years (his 'boys' as he called them) were there: Romney Smeeton, Keith Davis and Kevin Ryan. Nigel Love (deceased) was represented by his daughters Vanessa and Lyrae. I represented Ossie and Elaine as they were teaching in England at the time. Kevin Neave could not attend either. Lorraine Anderson and Vanessa were among Tom's receptionists. Anne-Marie, there in her wheelchair, was one of the children Tom treated at his free Saturday morning clinic for the disabled. Anne-Marie said to me, "My mum would have killed me if it hadn't been for Tom; I didn't stop crying for three years until Tom worked on me and took away the pain!"

Vicki Mechner had travelled out from the USA for the event; others had driven from South Australia and Canberra. I have mentioned but a few of the people present. All of us there, including many practitioners and former patients of Tom's, had our own connection and our own Bowen story. We represented everyone, whether therapist or client, who has been touched in some way by the work of Tom Bowen and Rene Horwood.

### **The memorial**

The memorial is situated in Geelong West Memorial Park, in sight of Rene's front room at 100 Autumn Street, where Tom first started to practice in the evenings after he had finished his day's work at the cement works. The memorial is a granite pedestal with bronze sculpture. A Geelong husband and wife team, Jan and George Francis, created the sculpture. George was a patient of Tom's. He said to me on the day that when he was sculpting the hands it was as if his hands were being guided in their work. Heather (Tom's younger daughter) said to me that the fingertips

and fingernails were so like those of her father's it was amazing. Romney Smeeton couldn't get over the resemblance. The bronze sculpture depicts two hands holding a sphere. The hands represent Tom Bowen's healing hands, open and giving. The open sphere symbolises the resting head of a client and the worldwide acceptance and practice of the technique. The six shapes created within the half sphere represent the six students Tom Bowen affectionately called his "boys". On one face of the pedestal is a stainless steel plaque. Alongside an etching of a smiling Tom Bowen is this verse, often attributed to "John o'London's Treasure Trove":

***I expect to pass through this world but once;***

*any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again.*

The plaque continues:

*"Beginning in Autumn Street in the late 1950's, Bowen developed an innovative manual therapy for the treatment of musculoskeletal and neurological disorders. Throughout his 26 years of service to the community, Bowen regularly performed around 250 treatments per week. Together with his good friend Irene (Rene) Horwood (1908-2001), Bowen helped improve the quality of life for many thousands of people. Tom and Rene had a special affinity towards children with disabilities, whom they always treated free of charge at the regular Saturday morning clinics. Bowen's technique has been passed down through his students; it is now taught throughout the world. The legacy of Tom Bowen lives on through the gift that he gave to us all."*

Along with the unveiling of the memorial to Tom and Rene another important event took place. This was the launch of the Tom Bowen Legacy Trust Fund. This trust is to be administered firstly to pay for the memorial, its installation and upkeep, and then as an ongoing fund in memory of Tom and his work. It is proposed that the monies raised go to help disabled children, to continue in some way the work Tom held so dear.

If each Bowen practitioner around the world donated the proceeds from only one treatment per year, enough funds would be generated to make a real difference to these children in Tom's memory. In addition to practitioners, many clients have also made contributions through their Bowen practitioners. These are forwarded periodically, and receipts are sent to everyone who includes their complete name and address along with their contribution, whether in cash or cheque.

At this writing, the fund is still in the process of being set up, with Ron and myself as the signatories. Agnes (Bowen) Shaw has agreed to be a trustee as well, advising on how best to distribute the contributions. Until the trust fund is operational, monies can be sent to these collection sites in Australia and the U.S.:

The addresses in the 2002 article are obsolete and have been redacted in order to prevent confusion.

I ask the entire Bowen world to consider supporting this fund, as it will be an on going legacy to a man who gave so much to so many, especially us, the fortunate ones who carry on his work through the practice of the Bowen Technique.

Chris Reed

President of the Bowen Association Of Australia

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*The huge and happy Advanced Class at Monterey, California, October 2002*