

# Honorary Life Member: Dr Berti Manuel

It would be unusual to visit a well-established communication house in Africa, Asia or Latin America that would not at some point in its development have come under the influence of Berti Manuel. A WACC employee from 1973 through 1992, Bertie came to the organisation via the Agency for Christian Literature Development (ACLD) -- the successor agency of the Christian Literature Fund.

After the "new" WACC was formed at the "Skyway Hotel" (near Heathrow!) in 1975, Bertie served WACC as director of the newly formed Print Media Development Unit (PMDU). His 'companion-in-arms' at that time was Neville Jayaweera, director of EMDU - the Electronic Media Development Unit.

In later years Bertie became Regional Coordinator (Asia) and Director of Project Evaluation, notably promoting his love of print media by initiating a series of workshops and seminars in different regions on content analysis, production techniques, creative editing, financial management and marketing.

Some quotes from correspondence from Bertie to his supervisors reveal the nature and style of his work-related travel: '.... a few appointments in Africa. One had to do with Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Addis Ababa, then a workshop/seminar for African children's literature at Nairobi, Feb. 1-7, and the third, immediately following the seminar in Nairobi, in Kampala, Uganda, a Chairpersons' Seminar on Management.'

Bertie was known in Latin America as well. Former WACC General Secretary Carlos Valle recalled at the time of Bertie's retirement that Bertie, while visiting Latin America, had coined the phrase "manana theology" which could mean to put aside responsibilities for another time, but which could also mean working for a better tomorrow, 'un manana'. He went on to thank Bertie for his commitment to the 'manana' of WACC.

If we were to single out one major achievement of Bertie's work in WACC, it would inevitably be for the foundational work he put into the WACC presence at the Frankfurt Book Fair. For many years, concluding only in 2002, WACC brought together publishing house staff from around the world, especially the Global South, for seminars, training and the experience of finding their place in the world of publishing.

A second great gift to WACC occurred when Bertie recruited the Rivera sisters. Rebecca and

Mary Luz, to leave the CCA office and to move to London, where they contributed jointly more than 60 years service to WACC, for which they were recongized during the 2003 Honorary Life Member Service.

Regrettably Mrs. Vimela Manuel was unable to travel for this recognition service. Happily, both Preethi Manuel and Anand Manuel, with their families, are present today.