

# Sagas

Finding faith after fifty

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Sagas - Finding faith after fifty

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# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
INTRODUCTION	11
1. THE CRUISE SHIP ENTERTAINER - <i>Eric Mellor</i>	15
2. POLITICS AND AN IRRELEVANT GOD - <i>Hazel</i>	19
3. THE COLONEL FROM KENTUCKY - <i>Colonel Sanders</i>	25
4. THE SOUNDS OF MUSIC - <i>Carolyn</i>	43
5. THE DAY THE SENATOR DIED - <i>Caroline and Richard</i>	51
6. THE TUPPERWARE MAN - <i>Barrie Bailey</i>	63
7. WASTED YEARS? - <i>Susan</i>	73
8. THE IMMIGRANT - <i>Luke Short</i>	79
9. MAGIC, MYSTERY AND REBELLION - <i>Linda</i>	83
10. THE FAMILY MAN FROM YORKSHIRE - <i>Reg Brown</i>	89
11. THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER - <i>Kathryn</i>	95
12. COMFORT IN SORROW - <i>Ernest</i>	101
13. THE SEARCH - <i>Brenda</i>	107
14. AMAZING GRACE	113
15. FINDING FAITH AFTER FIFTY	117
CONTACTS	121
FURTHER READING	123

CHAPTER 1

# THE CRUISE SHIP ENTERTAINER

*Eric Mellor*

The Saga generation is a very mixed bunch. Whilst some may be coping with the intricacies of stair lifts, others are up in snowy mountains negotiating ski lifts! Depending on health and wealth, over-fifties often lead full and active lives for far longer than their parents and grandparents ever did. Despite the memories of the ill-fated *Titanic* ship, cruises have over the years proved popular, especially with older passengers.

Eric Mellor was born on 23 October 1910, in Salford, into a home that loved music and was full of musicians. His great-grandfather mastered the large double bass to such a level that he played in the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra (now the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra). Eric's father inherited the musical talent, resulting in him becoming a professional musician. No doubt growing up in a somewhat austere musical atmosphere had an effect on Eric, which meant that he too would have to practice for hours daily on a chosen instrument.

Back then, families would gather together just to sing. Even in the 'picture houses' the films at first were silent, and thus totally reliant upon a piano player to musically set the scenes. As all Eric's family played, they were each called upon at various times to perform this very important task. The Mellors also possessed a very large classical musical library.

Eric, inevitably, became a professional musician. Most of his life was spent either touring or playing in various resident orchestras and bands. If you had been on the original *Queen Mary* cruise ship, you might have spotted a violinist or bass player as the young Mr Eric Mellor.

During these touring times, Eric not only had an ear for music but an eye for a girl – a certain Betty Wilson, with whom he fell in love. Betty was an attractive dancer, whose colourful personality somehow even put Eric in the shade.

In the 1940s, Eric was a bass player in the residential Pavilion Theatre Orchestra, Bournemouth, continuing what was to be a generation-by-generation association with the seaside town.

Eric would be envied by some who looked at his lifestyle, the glamour of the cruise ship, and the accolade given at his performances. He was without doubt a real character who was loved by everyone, especially his children, Mike and Irene.

Mike had found a job in the newspaper business, but in the evenings he was out playing in bands at various gigs. Alcohol featured prominently in his life, which was set on a downward spiral and would have ended in tragedy if something amazing hadn't happened. Through the witness of a colleague at the *Bournemouth Echo*, Mike became a Christian. He came to real faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. This totally

transformed his life, his health, his family and his future. Eric and Betty were baffled. What on earth had happened to their trombone-playing son whose lifestyle had been causing them so many worries?

Always supportive as good parents, Betty first and then Eric were to come to understand and experience for themselves what had happened to Mike (and his wife) in relation to faith.

Mike explains: 'Mum came to trust in Christ and would often speak of the joy of knowing what it was to be forgiven. Dad remained unchanged, until something in his personal life caused him much inner regret and brokenness. It was this that led him also to a genuine repentance and personal trust in Jesus Christ.

'His was a simple faith. I remember his routine of making his porridge and reading his Bible. Morning by morning he would read, having started at the book of Genesis and slowly working his way through to Revelation and back again. His favourite verse contained the words of Jesus: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

'The peace the world offers depends on having good health, or a good pension or good family and friends, but none

of these are certain and may only be temporary. Dad loved solitude, the countryside and his own company, but none of these can give deep, inner peace. Real peace comes from a

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***“The peace the world offers depends on having good health, or a good pension or good family and friends, but none of these are certain and may only be temporary.”***

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guilt-free conscience. Mum had passed away before Dad, but he continued to be cheerful, content and humorous to the end.

‘It is such a joy to know that because of his simple trust in Jesus, Dad – Mr Eric Mellor, a former cruise ship musician and member of a well-known orchestra, is in heaven. He is neither a star in the sky looking down on us, nor playing bass in the “St Peter’s All Stars”. He is “with Christ, which is better by far” (Phil. 1:23).