

# ***“Duntroon to Dili”***

***Through Mayhem, Miracles, Traumatic stress***

***And Trust in God***

***By Gary Stone***

***With Bob Breen***

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## ***Foreword***

By José Ramos-Horta,  
Nobel Peace Laureate  
President of the Republic of Timor-Leste (2007-2013)

I have had the great fortune of getting to know Padre Gary Stone very well over recent thanks to the Stone family's rich contribution in Timor-Leste. Gary is a man that represents the finest of human qualities and I am pleased to have the honour of introducing these memoirs of his life.

*Duntroon to Dili* is a compelling story of a man who has committed his life to the service of others: to his nation as a combat Soldier, Army and Police Chaplain, to our God as an ordained Deacon in the Catholic Church and to the people of Timor-Leste and many other countries as a spiritual leader, humanitarian and man of action. Gary serves people every day of his life, void of prejudice or self-interest. He has an impressive ability to bring joy and reason to every person and situation he engages and is always smiling, though, as you will read, he is very aware of the gravity of every situation and personally committed to carry the cross, to take on other's pain and demons in every effort to help them and serve our God.

Gary's life journey began growing up in Brisbane in the fifties, joining the Australian Army Cadets at the age of 13, and on completion of school attending the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1970. Upon graduating from Duntroon, Gary served as an infantry officer deploying to Malaysia as a Lieutenant, was selected to be an exchange instructor at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as a Captain, commanded an infantry rifle company as a Major, commanded the embarked Land Force Elements deployed in response to the 1987 Fiji Coup, and finally as a Lieutenant Colonel, commanded a Peacekeeping Contingent in the Iran-Iraq War.

Despite being a distinguished graduate of senior military staff colleges and with a wealth of experience as an Infantry Officer, Gary gave up his promising military career to train and be ordained as a Deacon in the Catholic Church. Whilst this is an unusual segue for an armed forces commander, you will see that the ethics, values and manner in which Gary served in this first career were a smooth transition to the next exciting chapter in his life—a chapter that has allowed his skills and commitment to have a very special personal impact in the world.

In his new vocation, Gary served as Chaplain in both the Australian Army and Federal Police, with multiple deployments to Timor-Leste, The Solomon Islands, Bougainville and the Asian Tsunami of 2004. He also continued to be an active leader in a wide range of communities that he has been a part of, as well as an outspoken advocate for peace, justice and morality.

Gary brought his skills of leadership and management into ministry, leading to the establishment of Friends and Partners with East Timor, which delivered over \$1,000,000 in aid and human capacity development to the poorest areas of Timor-Leste.

Through Gary's story we see the power and tangibility of compassion, empathy and communication as skills in dealing with the widest range of people at all levels of society.

A life as a peacemaker has exposed him to considerable danger and personal trauma. Dramatic experiences in the Iran-Iraq war saw him develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Gary chronicles his own struggle and management of this illness, and his parallel ministry to other veterans similarly affected. His experience and understanding of the comprehensive physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual strategies that he has employed, should help all who read this to understand and deal better with this condition.

Gary's two sons Michael and Paul have followed him in military service, with eldest son Michael receiving worthy recognition on two episodes of the ABC Australian Story for his actions in Timor-Leste in separate crises in 2006 and 2008. All three Stone men have served in East Timor in uniform, as well as in a range of humanitarian roles. The whole family has been my guests at my home in Dili, and I have enjoyed their hospitality at the Stone family home in Brisbane. I was grateful to the Australian Government to have seconded Michael to my staff as the President of the Republic of Timor-Leste in 2007, where he served with distinction for over four years. Providentially, both Gary

and Michael were on hand when I was shot in 2008, and were instrumental in my survival and the support of my family.

Throughout Gary's life journey we hear of his unshakeable faith in God, numerous miraculous experiences, and his passionate desire to give witness to that faith in action, through healing, peacemaking and advocacy. With the courage of his convictions, Gary publicly protested against US President George Bush's plans to invade Iraq, and relinquished full-time service in the Australian Army in opposition to Australian participation in the war. Amazingly, Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty then personally invited Gary to join his team of Chaplains in the AFP, and Gary was able to continue service in another uniform of his nation.

Gary Stone's journey will take you through a life of adventure around the world. It is a powerful testament of a man who says "Yes" to God's call of service to humanity; a story of a man who does not back away from a challenge regardless of the risk or magnitude. I know Gary as a man of unwavering vocation and commitment to what he believes in. He is also an inspiring father, friend and teacher. I asked him jokingly some time ago if he would be my full time Chaplain, with the reasoning that with so many sins I would require someone as committed as Gary to pray for me full time. As it has turned out Gary has been there for me, my family and my country.

Thank you Gary for your service to peace and humanity.

Blessed be the peacemakers.

José Ramos-Horta

## *Preface*

Thank you for taking up this story of a life lived to the full. I trust you will enjoy and be uplifted and encouraged by the many experiences I relate in the pages ahead. I hope they will bring a smile to your face and be nourishment to your soul. It has definitely been a journey through mayhem and miracles, traumatic stress and trusting in God.

I have had a most extraordinary life. My life has taken me around the world many times. I have been involved in seven international conflicts, and responded to massive human tragedy. I have undertaken roles as a soldier, commander, husband, parent, instructor, mentor, peacemaker, peacekeeper, minister, celebrant, and humanitarian.

Why have I written this book? Because I want to give witness to the possibilities that anyone can have in contributing to making our world a better place. Despite mayhem, miracles can still occur. Those who experience traumatic stress need not despair, because lights of hope can still guide you through the darkness. I will take you through the many “body, mind and soul” therapies that I have utilised, but none have been more help than trusting in God’s deliverance. For those who struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), reaching out to be grasped by the hand of God can be transformational.

Why should this book be of interest to you? I would like to give awareness of:

- how the people of our Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police have contributed to immense good in the world in the last 45 years.
- how ordinary Australian citizens, without any government support, but acting together, can engage in significant humanitarian activity that benefits the lives of the neighbours in our region.
- how you can understand PTSD. I will describe my own experience of this illness; how it can be managed when it is understood properly, and how you can help others with this illness.
- how my experiences and those of many others, have been shaped and supported by being involved in the *Missio Dei*-the Mission of God-to contribute to restoring humanity to live in the fullness of life, through acts of love and sacrifice, offered to our neighbours.

I hope my stories will be of interest to a very wide audience and not just those with an interest in military, police, religious or charitable activities, but anyone concerned with making the world a better place. Whilst my underpinning motivation and supports are underpinned in a Christian worldview, I have collaborated with people of many religions and people with no religious affiliation, in this wonderful mission.

What follows is very much an Australian story, lived out with other Aussies making a positive difference in world affairs. Many of the dramatic experiences of this life have been lived out in far-away places, but all have been underpinned by family life with my wife Lynne, and our children, Catherine, Michael, Christy and Paul, (and not forgetting our granddaughter, Brianna). They have been my consolation and a source of great joy and stability. Both Michael and Paul have followed in my footsteps as soldiers and have deployed on operations overseas, with stories of their own to tell. The whole family has had to carry the extra burden of a husband and father who has been emotionally affected by witnessing numerous crises. When I came home from war, war came home with me. We have hung together well with this challenge.

I began writing this in 2009. Immediately I became aware this was an enormous task, and that as with most things in life, I would need collaborators to make this happen. Many people have helped, but Bob Breen, a Duntroon classmate who had also made a Christian commitment when I had in 1972, has been the primary collaborator. He has written a number of military history books, and assisted a number of other authors. He has been happy to assist me editorially and also to stretch me in reflecting upon, wondering about, and testing the influence of Jesus Christ in our journey. Writing this book is a product of our collaboration. Publishing it has involved the collaboration of one other of our Duntroon classmates, Ian Gordon. Ian has done a fantastic job designing and developing the words into a book of great quality. He, like Bob, has made his own positive contributions to making the world a better place, through service to humanity. Thank you Ian and Bob-friends forever.

None of what I share has been by accident. My life has been guided in a mysterious way by Divine intervention, and my choice to do what I thought was God’s will. I am involved in a journey as one of

many people engaged in the Mission of God. You will become more aware of what this can entail as you read of my experiences. Jesus proclaimed, "Blessed are the Peacemakers", and truly I have been richly blessed. May you be blessed too, as you take this journey with me.

Gary Stone, Brisbane, 1 July 2014

( Perhaps insert a small cropped photo 46 here)

## ***Glossary***

1300hrs-Military time using 24 hour clock to designate 1.00pm  
ADF-Australian Defence Force  
AFP-Australian Federal Police  
AK 47-Kalashnikov 7.62mm assault rifle  
Aussie-Colloquial term for Australians, or Australian made  
Archdiocese-a very large Diocese led by an Archbishop  
Bpm-Heart beats per minute  
Battalion-Tactical group of about 850 soldiers, comprised of 5 or 6 companies  
Brigade-Tactical group of about 5000 soldiers, comprised of 6 or 7 battalions  
CIMIC-Civil-Military Cooperation  
C130-Transport aircraft that carries up to 100 soldiers in fighting order  
Catechist-Lay leader/teacher in Catholic Church  
Company-Tactical group of about 130 soldiers, comprised of 3 platoons  
Counterinsurgency-Operations against enemies hiding in the general population  
Digger-Colloquial term for Aussie soldier (from the digging of trenches in WW1)  
Diocese-a grouping of parishes led by a Bishop  
Division-Tactical grouping of about 15,000 soldiers comprised of 3 brigades  
Infantry-The combat soldiers that close with the enemy on foot  
Lieutenant-Army rank where an officer commands a platoon  
Lieutenant Colonel-Army rank where an officer commands a battalion or unit  
Major-Army rank where an officer commands a company  
Maverick-a strong willed, independent, man of action  
No-Man's Land-The area between opposing forces on a battlefield  
Pasdaran-Colloquial Iranian term for Iranian Revolutionary Guards- a fanatical militia group that ousted the US backed Shah, and took control of Iran  
Platoon-Tactical group of 30-45 soldiers, comprised of 3 sections  
RAR-Royal Australian Regiment-the Regular Army infantry battalions  
Rosary-A traditional Catholic prayer based on Luke1:42  
Section-The smallest army tactical group, of about 10 soldiers  
UNMO-United Nations Military Observer  
UXO-Unexploded Ordnance  
Veiled speech-Conversation where participants speak in code words  
Wontok-Melanesian concept of brotherhood