

Introduction



Remembering a Life

I DID NOT NEED help to believe that Derek Prince was a great man, but I was about to get it anyway. Never mind that I had nearly grown up to the sound of this man's voice. By the miracle of the audiocassette, Derek Prince had for years taught the Scriptures in my childhood home, often while laundry was folded or the evening meal was prepared. He was part of the family, though if he got long-winded and the family routine was threatened with delay, my mother simply increased the speed on our 1970s tape recorder so that the revered Mr. Prince sounded like a British Mickey Mouse or a BBC newscast with technical difficulties. But he was always there, his voice providing much of the soundtrack of my early life.

What a privilege it was, then, to have lunch with Derek on that sparkling November day in Jerusalem. We met at the Ramat Rachel, the kibbutz hotel on the "Heights of Rachel" still pockmarked by bullets fired during one of Israel's wars. The rich tapestry of history reached to us. Through one window we could see the much-contested West Bank. Through another lay Bethlehem. And a mere hundred yards in a third direction were the scattered ruins of a citadel built thousands of years before by the kings of Judea, a bath built

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by the Tenth Roman Legion, and a Byzantine church: all the stony legacy of the centuries left to this strategic location on the south of Jerusalem and at the crossroads of history.

The voice of the past was never lost to Derek, and as we ate he reflected on the meaning of what surrounded us. He spoke of history with a casual mastery borne of years in reflection and study, and while he did, I took in his features. Though he was eighty-seven, he still had those intriguing eyes that were both intelligent and soulful at the same time. Still there was the full, jutting forehead, as though his brain was pushing itself forward. His face was yet long and narrow. His mouth was still lined by full, expressive lips, and his nose a testament, surely, to the presence of Rome on British shores. When he concentrated, his face congealed like an impassioned symphony. When he laughed, every feature conspired with glee. And I could picture how anger might animate those same features to make him fearful indeed. I hoped I would not see it.

Yet, I had feared displeasing him since I first agreed to author his biography. When his grandson Derek Wesley Selby approached me with the idea of writing the Derek Prince story, I was interested but cautious. It was an honor to be asked, and I knew enough of Derek's history to know how it might appeal to a new generation. But I wasn't sure just what kind of book Derek Prince Ministries expected. Did they want a hagiography, what I insultingly called at the time a "preacher puff piece"? If so, they needed to find another author. Nothing would be more mind-numbingly boring than just another boastful book on just another famous preacher.

But I discovered to my delight that they wanted a genuine biography, a work of poetic scholarship that would capture the truth of Derek's life and let God breathe through both the triumphant and the tragic. I was glad to hear it. I had long believed that history is best written as we find it in the Bible. Human beings are spared nothing in Scripture. We find them starkly exposed as vile and low and craven and yet approaching the angels in their better selves and delighting the heart of the Creator with their friendship. Scripture captures it all. I had come to believe that the way to write a life is to tell the truth with compassion and let the beauty arise from both the darkness and the light. The good folks of Derek Prince Ministries agreed, but I wasn't sure that Derek would feel the same way. This was, after all, his story, and he might not want it fully told.

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In fact, I feared that he might not think me the man to whom he should unfold his heart. After all, I was half his age, an American, and far from the Cambridge scholar he might have preferred as his biographer. But I need not have worried. Derek had read my other books, understood what I was about, and, more in honor to his God than in deference to me, he opened up from our first meeting. In fact, his transparency took my breath away. He seemed to delight in surprising me and chuckled that he was ashamed at how much he enjoyed talking about himself.

Our friendship was sealed by our love of humor. His sense of play was undimmed by the years, and we were not far into our relationship before the jostling began. Derek and I once spoke over dinner of what would happen to the biography if he died before it was finished. The mood grew heavy. To lighten the moment, I told him he could not die because I needed someone to explain the game of cricket to me. He didn't miss a beat. Never taking his eyes from the food on his plate, he said with disdain, "Cricket is too sacred to explain to an American." He was only half kidding.

I would remember those first steps into humor when we shared our final laugh together. He was in the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem just days before his death. Nurses were constantly fiddling with him while we were trying to talk, and finally I said, "You're not here because you're sick. You just like all these beautiful women fawning over you." He lifted his nose slightly, looked at me with the most condescending Cambridge-bred expression, and said, "Well, of course." Only after the words left his lips did his eyes betray his teasing solemnity.

By that lunch at the Ramat Rachel, Derek and I were well on our way to the kind of friendship a biographer hopes for: respectful, playful, and brutally honest. But the other dynamic a biographer hopes for was just about to make itself known. There must be the inspired moments, those unexpected revelations that cannot be scripted and that make the writer feel as though God is smiling on his undertaking. As Derek and I ate our lunch and spoke of generations past, God remembered us.

I had noticed at the far end of the vast restaurant at Ramat Rachel a large group who looked to be Eastern European. From time to time, they would look up from their food and conversation to stare our way. Some were nodding their heads, and others were soon talking as though trying to convince the group of an important matter. Then there was a change. I noticed that

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more than a few began to weep. Some knelt by their lunch table as though it were an altar and began to pray. Others held each other, as those consoling friends whose hearts are overcome. This continued for some time. Derek continued talking, unaware of the growing stir across the room. I was distracted and tried to listen to him while becoming increasingly aware that we were the focus of a commotion.

Soon a young man approached from the group and asked if he could join us. His English was excellent, and he began to explain what was happening across the room. They were a group from Hungary, he told us, and they were in the Holy Land to bless Israel and learn the geography of their faith. They had decided at the last minute to have lunch at the Ramat Rachel, but when they arrived, they quickly realized that God had ordered their steps. We did not understand at first, but the young man soon explained that in the months leading up to their trip, many of the group had begun to pray that they would see Derek Prince, who they knew made his home in Jerusalem. For some, it was the main reason they had come, and when they looked across the dining room and saw the very man they had prayed to see, they were overcome. And the tears came.

Derek and I were still confused. The young man, whose name we learned was Andras Patkai, patiently explained. In 1978, a Christian couple in Budaors, Hungary, named Sandor and Judith Nemeth, wished to improve their English. Already Judith was fluent in Russian, French, and German. Her English needed work. The couple soon found a tape entitled *Deliverance for Children and Their Parents*. It was by Derek Prince, and the truths they heard changed their lives. They played the tape for their home group of some seven college students, with Judith interpreting. The effect was astonishing, and soon after they wrote to the address on the tape to see if this man Derek Prince could pay them a visit, if he would come teach the gospel in the communist realms of Hungary. Two of Derek Prince's friends, Jim Croft and Terry Bysinger, responded to the invitation. This paved the way for a visit from Derek several years later. By then the small group of seven college students had grown to an underground church of three hundred, meeting on the outskirts of Budaors.

At this point in the story, Derek, who had been silent while Andras spoke, grew animated. He remembered it now. He and Ruth, his second wife, went into Hungary on tourist visas. They were taken to a small house

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crammed with people. The shades were pulled on every window for fear of the secret police. There was a strong sense of God's presence, he recalled, and he had seldom felt such power as he taught for days on end. He knew a bit of what had happened after. The church had grown, the pastors had come under persecution, and the communist government had tried to close the little church. Typical of Derek, he remembered that Judith was an accomplished pianist, and her husband, Sandor, was always brave in the face of threats on his life.

Derek paused for a moment, and Andras picked up the story. The church had survived, he relayed. In fact, it was now nearly forty thousand people. It printed a national newspaper, was a center for the arts, and was arguably one of the most powerful cultural institutions in Hungary. What was more, the church had been built on the ministry of Derek Prince. His tapes and books provided the foundation from which their whole movement sprang. The people of this church saw Derek as their father. Little Hungarian babies were named Derek in his honor, and, in fact, several young men and women at the Ramat Rachel were named for Derek or his wife Ruth.

It was a holy moment. Derek was overcome. While he wept uncontrollably the group of Hungarians surrounded us, and the weeping and the hugging continued. Some knelt at Derek's feet. Others gingerly touched his arm. Derek turned to me and said through his tears, "It is good you are here. God has ordained our time together." Cameras flashed, and many in the group pressed young Andras to give Derek messages in English. "I left my life of drugs when I heard your tape," said one. "My communist father converted and turned our family to Christ when you spoke," reported another with sobs. "What you have started has changed the history of our nation," a student insisted quietly.

It all seemed to have lasted but a few minutes, and then a tour guide was calling the Hungarians to their bus. Time had been suspended by beauty and remembrance. When the group was gone, I looked at Derek. He was sitting alone with his thoughts, dabbing the tears from his eyes and telling me over and again what sweet people these were and how thankful he was that God had given him this moment.

They do not give awards for ministry. There are no Emmys or Pulitzers for preaching the gospel. Yet Derek had just received an early trophy, a triumphal bouquet, from his Lord. And he knew it. Before we left the table,

he turned to me and said, “Who am I to be honored in such a way?”

It struck me that day how scenes of similar tribute could easily be repeated the world over, with a rich tapestry of tribes honoring Derek for what he had planted on their soil. A conference designed to thank God for Derek Prince would have to include delegates from nearly every nation on the earth, for he touched most all of them. And besides the nations, there would have to be representatives from the many unique gatherings he had attended. There would be delegates from the band of British soldiers who drank from Derek’s life during the horrors of war in northern Africa. There would also be ambassadors from all the thousands who heard him preach the gospel at London’s Speakers’ Corner. Certainly the hippies of America and the expatriate Jamaicans of postwar England and the converted blokes from Down Under would all be there—and thousands more. There would even have to be some in attendance to stand for the millions around the world who had heard a tape, read a book, or seen Derek in person at any of ten thousand meetings around the world. He had touched so many lives and fathered so much of what a new generation enjoyed, whether they knew it or not.

Yet, this was the challenge I felt as Derek drove away that day. How was I to capture all that this man’s life had meant, all the history his years encompassed? I let his seasons flow through my mind. He was born under the British Raj in India, educated in the radical post–World War I years of 1930s’ England, and shipped off to war as Japanese Zeros pounded Pearl Harbor. He was there at the birth of Israel, there when America unraveled in the 1960s, and there when the greatest spiritual renewal since the resurrection of Jesus filled the nations. The span of his life was daunting. He came into the world when George V ruled England with Asquith as his prime minister and when Woodrow Wilson was the American president. His first wife was born before the White House had electricity. Yet, in the last year of his life, Derek and I discussed how the Internet would change ministry and how the man who then lived in the White House was not yet alive when Derek was already in his fourth decade of life.

It was also in the last year of his life that Derek spoke the words that became my personal commission. We were sitting together in the brilliant sun of a September day in Jerusalem. It was obvious that Derek did not have long in this world. He was in pain, hard to understand, and deeply frustrated that he could not make his meaning clear. In fact, without the

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help of Pat Turner, his faithful assistant, I rarely understood anything he said. But I heard one sentence with a clarity that would never leave me. After some of our usual banter, there was a long silence when Derek spoke in a sudden burst of clarity. Taking my forearm in his hands, he leaned toward me and said, “I must apologize to you.” I was confused and asked why he felt he had anything to make right with me. He then said, in carefully measured words, “I must apologize for asking you to write a book about a man who no longer exists.”

My eyes filled with tears. This was Derek. A humble man who could admit he was not as he had been and a proud man who was frustrated with what he had become. It was an admission that I could not escape, and I took it as a challenge. In my heart I said, “No. He will not cease to exist. This man is too dear, too much a verse of God’s crafting, to allow his life to descend in obscurity.” And though I had already been researching his life for a year, I lit my torch anew and determined to impress the wonder of Derek Prince’s life on a generation who could not know how desperately they needed what his story had to offer.

He is gone now, and he is missed. His unique brand of biblical wisdom and insight is desperately needed in our time. Yet perhaps because of this retelling of his story and the devoted labors of those who now extend his legacy, it may be that the life of Derek Prince has yet to have its greatest impact in this world. This is as he would have wanted it to be, for he always knew that his life was not intended as a monument for future generations to admire but as a well from which future generations could drink.

Come, then—drink deep. The water is sweet, and our age is exceedingly dry.

1



1915:

India and the Sacrifice of Empire

DEREK HAD JUST settled into his chair and was cradling his cup of hot tea with both hands. He was quiet, pensive. I think he was changing gears.

Weeks before when his staff had told him about his time with me and how the biography was going to delve into the depths of his life, Derek had seemed pleased. “It will be good,” he said with obvious relief, “not to tell the same old stories.”

So it was time to begin. We were alone, a majestic stretch of the Judean wilderness visible through the window of our room on the Heights of Rachel. Derek shifted about a bit, sipped his tea, and then fixed his penetrating eyes expectantly upon me.

I knew he was ready. Finally, at the end of his life, he was willing, even eager, to tell it all. I had only to launch him.

“Tell me,” I said, “of India.”

Derek smiled slightly. He knew my spare words formed a challenge: “If you are ready to talk,” I was saying, “then run and I will follow. You are long past needing someone to pull it out of you.”

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He sighed wistfully and turned his eyes to the region where Jesus withstood Satan for forty days. There was a pause. “From the beginning,” he nearly whispered, “I believe that India laid claim to my soul . . .



Derek Prince was born in Bangalore, India, on August 14, 1915. He thus drew his first breaths just as much of the Old World was dying and much of the new was making itself known.

In 1915, the Old World was dying in the breasts of thousands of Europe's young who took with them to the grave the noble ideals of centuries. Just the year before, on June 28, Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife had been assassinated on the streets of Sarajevo, Bosnia, by an anarchist named Gavrilo Princip. From this seemingly small beginning, a wicked brew of entangling alliances and ancient animosities exploded into what came to be known as the Great War, the first one to “make the world safe for democracy.”

With crisis upon them, the European powers summoned their young to martial glory by appealing to patriotism and manhood. Traditional concepts of honor still lived in those days. The boys and men of the nations swelled to the call and streamed into the muddy trenches. But no one was prepared for the butchery. Technology had outstripped military tactics by 1915, and whereas just decades before war had been fought with rifles, cavalry charges, and cannon, this new war would be fought with submarines, tanks, machine guns, planes, and, most horribly, nerve gas. Human beings began dying at the hands of their brothers in greater numbers than ever before in history.

Though 1915 was far from the bloodiest year of the war, it nevertheless typified much that was to come. The battles of that year tell the tale. At the Second Battle of Artois, for example, an astonishing 400,000 men were lost. At the Second Battle of Ypres, the Germans used chlorine gas as a weapon for the first time in history and so thrust warfare to new levels of human devastation. It was also in 1915 that the blunders of the Gallipoli Campaign left more than 100,000 dead Allies on Turkish soil and almost ended the political career of England's First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.

England was tempted to be cruel to her statesmen because she was already reeling from her losses. Though the war had lasted barely a year, her killed

and wounded together totaled more than 550,000. By war's end English dead alone would total 680,000. It was madness. Surely nothing could justify such slaughter. But the nations found no way out of the darkness, and the sacrifice of a generation continued.

The Old World, both its men and its meaning, was dying. And Derek Prince was born just in time to hear its funeral dirge.

Yet a new order was rising to fill the vacuum left by the old. On May 7, 1915, a German submarine sank the *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland. Some 1,198 lives were lost, 139 of whom were Americans. The United States was incensed, and tensions with Germany rose dramatically over the ensuing months until, two years later, the Americans joined the war and sent some 4 million men into battle. More than 53,000 never returned home, a number almost insignificant beside Europe's millions, but still a deep wound to the American soul. More lasting, perhaps, was America's appearance on the world scene. Forced by the war to break from her long-standing isolationism, America would so dominate the era just then dawning that many would conclude at its end that it had been "the American century."

Another nation was just then emerging as well, from the sands of Ottoman Palestine, from the pages of the ancient writings: Israel. It had all begun with Theodor Herzl, the Jewish journalist who was so outraged by the shameful anti-Semitism of the Dreyfus Affair in France that he raised his voice to issue the call for a Jewish state. Dreyfus had been a French army officer who was tried and found guilty of treason on false charges fabricated by his fellow officers because he was a Jew. He was later acquitted, but not before France's outpouring of anti-Semitism convinced men like Herzl that the Jews could never be safe in Europe: they would need a country of their own. Hearing Herzl's trumpet call, the Jews of Europe began pouring into Palestine. This became the First Aliyah, or return to the land. When Herzl died in 1904, though, the movement he founded nearly died with him.

Great Britain gave it life again. Both to win Jewish support for the war and out of genuine sympathy for Zionism, England made a promise in the years just after Derek Prince was born that became the founding oath of Israel. In a 117-word note to Lord Rothschild, head of the Jewish banking family, Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour assured, "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." Immigration was slow at first, but the message was not lost on a

persecuted people. By 1936, when Nazism was just stepping onto the world stage, more than sixty thousand Jews had made their way to the land that, twelve years later, would become the nation of Israel. And Derek Prince would be there at its birth.

Yet, in 1915, Derek Prince was but a newborn babe. He knew nothing of wars or nations on the rise. He could not have known that in the year of his birth a man named Charles Lawrence developed the first successful air-cooled airplane engine, making long-distance flight possible. Nor could he have known that in that same year a man in New York named Alexander Graham Bell called his friend named Watson in San Francisco, thus achieving the first transcontinental phone call. Young Derek could also not have known that a man named Einstein had just announced his general theory of relativity or that a man named Ford had just produced his millionth automobile. Yet each of these breakthroughs, achieved in the year of his birth, would have a profound effect upon his life. This was 1915, the year that marked the death of the old, the birth of the new, and the beginning for young Derek Prince.



Yet Derek's beginning was as much about *where* he was born as it was about *when*. That he was born in India, that he spent the first five years of his life there, and that the men he revered in childhood devoted themselves to serving their monarch in that land are, certainly, among the most important realities of his life.

Today, Bangalore is at the heart of India's Silicon Valley. Internet commerce abounds, and there are sections of the city as modern as any in the world. Yet in 1915, Bangalore was one of the cities from which the British ruled "the Jewel in the Crown." In those days, the Union Jack flew high above manicured lawns as khaki-clad soldiers drilled, turbaned servants served whiskies on cool verandas, and officers' wives sporting parasols read Kipling and Dickens to their young.

The English had begun in India a century and a half before under a general named Robert Clive. In the name of "trade, not territory," Clive had subdued a warring tribe outside a Bengali village called Plessy and thus opened the gates of northern India in 1757. All good intentions aside, the century

that followed was marked more by conquest than commerce. In fairness, most English thought of themselves as the liberators of an enslaved people. Historian John Stuart Mill, writing in 1823, captured the dominant English view of Indian natives at the time:

By a system of priestcraft, built upon the most enormous and tormenting superstition that ever harnessed and degraded any portion of mankind, their [the Indians'] minds were enchained more intolerably than their bodies; in short; despotism and priestcraft taken together, the Hindus, in mind and body, were the most enslaved portion of the human race.¹

To their credit, the English did indeed, in Kipling's phrase of later years, "take up the White Man's burden." They instituted the Pax Britannica, which allowed legal, administrative, and educational institutions to thrive. They graced India with order, cleanliness, sport, the accumulated wisdom of the Western canon, the English language, and, perhaps above all, Christianity and a Christian idea of progress.

Still, India wanted to be ruled by Indians, and in 1857 a savage mutiny proved the point. British troops prevailed, though, and beginning in that year India became the possession of Queen Victoria. Her viceroy and his few thousand aides would determine the destiny of nearly one-fifth of all humanity. Indeed, by the year of Derek Prince's birth, more than 300 million Indians were subject to some 100,000 Englishmen and their Indian officials.

Interestingly, it was the slaughter in the trenches of Europe that ultimately led, in part, to the English departure from India nearly two centuries after Clive. The war left nearly a million British males either dead or incapable of service abroad. As a result, Indians were increasingly welcomed into the civil service, the officer corps, and the courts of law.

Indeed, one Indian lawyer, who plied his trade first in Bombay, then in South Africa, and then again in his homeland, was named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He would combine the law he learned in the Temple of London with the language of his nation's captors and merge both with a uniquely Hindu passive resistance to convince the English that they ought to leave India to the Indians. In 1947, he would victoriously hail the English decision to grant India her independence as the "noblest act

of the British nation.” In 1915, though, India was solidly English, and few expected it would ever be otherwise.



The men of Derek Prince’s immediate family were the kind of warriors who made the British Empire great. They were all army officers, all men of deep Victorian values, and all devoted to the belief that England was a force for righteousness in the world. When tourists view monuments in London fashioned to commemorate the character that built the Empire, that prevailed on far-flung battlefields, it is men like those of Derek’s family whom they are meant to remember.

Chief among them was Derek’s grandfather, the quintessential British imperial officer. His name was Robert Edward Vaughan, and he was born in Felhampton on August 12, 1866, to Thomas, a farmer, and his devoted wife, Eliza. When Robert came of age, he left home to join the army, possibly to escape a farmer’s life, and by the time of Derek’s birth was living in Rawalpindi as a lieutenant colonel in charge of supply and transport for the Indian army. He possessed an astonishing ability to organize, to plan in the abstract but execute in the particular. The army found him invaluable and promoted him to major general in recognition of his skill. One of the few surviving pictures of “the General” is a study in character. Sporting a bushy mustache and a bulldog’s jutting chest is a man of stern bearing and movie-star good looks, regally adorned in a red uniform draped with tiger skin.

On October 18, 1890, Robert, then a handsome twenty-four-year-old lieutenant in the Bengal Staff Corps, married Amy Mountjoy Woodward. Amy would become a major figure in the Derek Prince story, for she was a deeply pious woman. At a time when most Englishmen were officially Anglican but personally uncommitted, Amy was a praying, Bible-reading Christian who genuinely believed what she affirmed every Sunday in the liturgy. She also believed in the exceptionality of her grandson. Much of what he learned of faith and piety in his early years was gleaned at her knee.

The true military hero of the Vaughan family was Robert and Amy’s son, Edward. The year Derek was born, his uncle Edward was a lieutenant in the storied Bengal 2nd Lancers (Gardner’s Horse). He had entered the service on January 22, 1913, and eagerly joined the legendary horsemen who fought

ferociously and had a reputation for melting women's hearts with their gallant manner and striking blue uniforms.

It was during World War II that Edward most distinguished himself. While a lieutenant colonel fighting in the western desert of Africa, he was captured by Italian troops and taken to Italy as a prisoner of war. He then lived in a squalid prison camp for three and a half years. Finally, in an act of exceptional bravery, he escaped and made his way southward down the spine of Italy until he met up with invading British troops. Celebrated, decorated, and given a field promotion to the rank of general, Edward was made the "commander of Delhi Command" in India until independence ended that position in 1947.

Edward's career ended painfully, though. His file in the India and Orient Room of the British Library contains a troubling series of letters in which he fought valiantly to have his retirement pay set according to his highest rank. The army argued in return that Edward's field promotion did not count for purposes of retirement, and thus he would have to settle for the pay accorded a colonel. Edward seems to have ended the exchange bitterly, retired, and then died not long after of complications arising from his long imprisonment. He was a true hero of the realm, and it is of more than passing interest that the blood that flowed in him also flowed in the veins of Derek Prince.

General Robert Vaughan's daughter and General Edward Vaughan's sister was Gwendolyn Chrysogon Vaughan, Derek's mother. Like her son, Gwendolyn was also born in India, in Goomarg. Photographs of her reveal a trim, athletic figure with raven hair and eyes that blend British determination with a hint of the Indian dreamer. She was the highly cultured, overachieving daughter of a British general abroad. She read voraciously and was so skilled on the piano that she was often called upon to give impromptu concerts after the sumptuous dinners served in the general's home. She also loved tennis, hiking, and hunting, a contagious passion in British India. Clearly, she lit the early fires of learning and culture in Derek's soul. Yet throughout his life, Derek would see her as a tragic figure, a woman of great gift and beauty squelched by the stifling expectations of Victorian culture. Both her gifts and her pain would deeply shape Derek's early view of life.

On February 10, 1914, Gwendolyn married a dashing young captain by the name of Paul Ernest Prince. The single wedding picture that survives is a breathtaking tribute to the glory of British India. The men—Colonel Robert, Lieutenant Edward, and Captain Paul—are in their dress uniforms, helmets

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under arm, medals gleaming, and tiger skins grandly draped over broad shoulders. The women are adorned in Edwardian finery, delicate creatures radiating a strength and nobility borne of army life in India. Though they could not have known it, they stood that day at the end of an age, symbols of a glory soon to pass from history. Little more than four months after the wedding of Paul and Gwendolyn, Archduke Ferdinand would die of an assassin's bullet. Weeks later the guns of August would change their lives forever.

Derek's father was an extraordinary man whom Derek would refer to with honor and longing all his life. Paul Prince was born in Derbyshire on April 27, 1882. His father, Edwin, was a cotton manufacturer who, along with his wife, Agnes Ann, provided a good life for young Paul. Yet, like his future father-in-law, Paul left the agrarian life behind and won an appointment to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Graduating in 1900, his commission was one of the last documents Queen Victoria ever signed in her own hand.

Lieutenant Prince was assigned to the Royal Engineers, and after training in general engineering and submarine mining at Portsmouth, he steamed to India on the SS *Sicilia* to serve in the Queen's Own Sappers and Miners. He would give himself to India for twenty years before returning to England to instruct young engineers for another decade. Retiring in 1935, he would live another thirty years, and it was only during these latter years that he became truly accessible to his son.

These then were the characters who filled the stage of Derek's early life. It is fitting to speak of them in just such terms for, as valiant and as gifted as they were, to Derek they were not unlike players on a stage with whom he had no personal connection. It is important to remember that in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, people rarely spoke of religion, seldom spoke of personal matters, and thought displays of emotion a sign of weakness or instability. This was particularly true among military men. Though Derek revered his family members and always remembered them with pride, he barely knew them and was at a loss, even at the end of his life, to speak of them in any relational terms. They were symbols, examples, and influences, but they were never intimates. This makes Derek's early years largely about the impartation of a heritage that both empowered and imprisoned him. It is the defining dichotomy of his life, one that makes the successes of his later life even more remarkable.

When Derek Prince was born, then, on that August day in 1915, his proud parents undoubtedly intended to fashion their son into a champion

of the empire. At his baptism on October 12, the Rev. Hatchell of St. John's Church in Bangalore would have held the baby aloft and offered him to God as Peter Derek Vaughan Prince, "Christ's new faithful soldier and servant." These were the venerated words of the Anglican liturgy of baptism, but they were also the dearest hopes of the Vaughans and the Princes who stood misty-eyed in attendance that day.



Not long after Peter Derek Vaughan Prince was born, his mother declared that she did not like the name Peter and that the boy would henceforth be known as Derek. How he came to be given a name his mother didn't like is not known, but the incident does say something of the strength of Gwendolyn's personality. Derek's lifelong attraction to strong-willed women was probably an extension of his own mother's forcefulness.

Derek's early life was as much Indian as it was British. In the manner of the times, he was reared more by his Indian nanny, called an *ayah*, than he was by his own mother. In the tradition of centuries, British children of that age lived largely under the tutelage of servants and had time with their parents only at predetermined times of the day. Derek spent the first five years of his life, then, as the temporarily adopted child of an Indian woman and, often, as part of her family. He started life speaking Hindustani as well as English and knowing Indian lore as well as the poems of Rudyard Kipling and the legends of Nelson and Clive. In the same way that British nannies in London took the children of aristocrats on strolls through Hyde Park and down the tree lined Pall Mall, Derek's *ayah* took him to the markets of Bangalore and to busy corners where the other *ayahs* of British families collected to share the gossip of the day.

Derek's early childhood was similar to the romance of a Kipling novel. He lived in an exotic, violent, clashing world where East did indeed meet West. Americans would know the culture of Derek's early life as "frontier." Native uprisings were common, thieves were hung, and wild animals sometimes carried babies off in the night. Derek witnessed it all. Shortly after birth, Derek would have been laid upon tiger skins. There were many in his family homes, most of them shot by his father. Two were his mother's prizes. Danger was everywhere. During the years Derek lived in Bangalore, two officers were

killed in an elephant stampede. He knew men who had been mauled by the big cats or crippled by snakebites. These images captivated him and inspired him to write the first “book” of his life, entitled *My First Game Animal*. He was barely six when he wrote it.

The dinnertime conversation he overheard would have been filled with speculation about Indian uprisings and assassinations. The year before Derek was born, Gandhi had returned to India from South Africa, and there was rebellion in the air. The British despised this man that Churchill called a “half-naked fakir,” but their spite was mixed with fear. The natives were listening to Gandhi. Times were tense, and little Derek must have sensed it. Moreover, the talk of war in Europe and of German intrigue in the East must have filled his young imagination with flaming images.

The most important images from his first five years of life, though, were inspired by Derek’s father. Captain Prince was an unusual, often contradictory man. He was, on the one hand, a successful and respected British commander. Yet he had a nonconformist’s soul. He chafed in the regimentation of military life and was never happier than when far from headquarters with his fellow officers and an Indian crew building a bridge or laying a road. He loved the freedom, the beauty of an open sky, and the solace of a quiet wilderness. Derek’s earliest memories of his father were of the captain’s unrestrained joy upon being assigned to build in some remote backwater of India. Oddly, this meant that Derek knew his father was happiest when away from home, a message his young soul could not have failed to absorb.

Yet Paul Prince was also a man of unusual compassion and conscience. Unlike many of his fellow British officers, he learned to love India, to befriend Indians, and to despise the Western arrogance that he believed was poisoning the empire. Other officers thought him strange. He gave exceptional responsibility to deserving Indians on his crew. This shocked his British peers. He was also generous and personable with the “natives.” He often spoke up in their defense before his superiors and seemed to prefer Indian company to British in some cases. He was accused of “going native” or “going soft,” but he didn’t mind. Paul Prince served his king in uniform, but it was his conscience that ruled his life—a lesson not lost on his son.

Captain Paul was also unusual as a father. It would be natural to expect that a graduate of Sandhurst and a career military man would be a strict disciplinarian. Sometimes this was indeed the case. Derek once collapsed

into hilarious laughter when a cousin was visiting and seemed unable to recover himself. This infuriated his father and earned Derek the worst spanking of his memory. It may have been that Captain Paul was simply embarrassed by his son's behavior in front of peers. This was certainly the case with Derek's other major offense: his failure to stand when "God Save the Queen" was played. Every loyal subject of the queen was expected to rise to attention at the first notes of this anthem. Derek never did. Captain Paul thought his son was being disrespectful, and Derek was repeatedly punished until his parents discovered that he was horribly tone-deaf, a defect easily detected by those who heard him sing throughout his life.

In another break from both the Edwardian and military cultures in which he lived, Derek was always encouraged to address his father by his first name. Derek's boyhood friends would have been addressing their fathers as "Papa" or, more formally, as "the Major" or "the Colonel." Derek used the name "Paul" and never that he could remember addressed the man as "Father" or "Dad."

Perhaps more significantly, Captain Paul never once told his son that he loved him. It is one of the most defining deficits of Derek's life, though not unusual in that age. Derek never remembered climbing into his father's lap, never remembered a fatherly hug, and never remembered an intimate word between them. Such acts of tenderness may have occurred, but if they did, they were so infrequent that the adult Derek could not recall them. It is a heartbreaking reality, and all the more so when we reflect that the man who would be internationally known for his family life, who would have a global reputation as a spiritual father, and who would teach love to millions—this man had never known the love of his earthly father.

What Derek did know from an early age was the expectation, the standard, the rule. This was the primary message of his early life: there is a way chosen for you, so walk in it. But it was not a way chosen by God, personality, or gift. It was a way defined by culture, class, and dictate of tradition. The Indians called this *pakkah*: what is expected of a man, the way he ought to be. If Derek heard this word once in childhood he heard it a million times. If he was loud at play, his mother scolded that his behavior wasn't *pakkah*. If he mussed his clothes, his father warned that others would know he wasn't *pakkah*. It was the defining rule of life. A man has a role to play as determined by the past and his peers, and he dishonors both if he refuses to fill the form.

Obviously, such expectations can be stifling, soul-numbing, and vain. Yet

DEREK PRINCE—A BIOGRAPHY

there was in this inheritance a good and noble understanding of what a man ought to be, and this too seeped deeply into young Derek's soul. It is captured best, perhaps, in Rudyard Kipling's oft-quoted poem "If—." Kipling, the poet laureate of the British Empire, had written the poem to commend to a new generation the heroism that made England great. Published in 1910 as part of *Rewards and Fairies*, the words came to define the manly ideal of the age.

The impact of this poem on young Derek is hard to exaggerate. At his parents' urging, he memorized it word for word by the time he was five. He was often called upon to recite each verse as votive confirmation of the man England destined him to be. A fatherly rebuke might begin with the words, "As Kipling said..." only to be followed by several lines of the poem in answer to some transgression on Derek's part. Even in old age, Derek would lean back with his eyes closed and recite the poem flawlessly, tears streaming down his cheeks.

Indeed, so critical are Kipling's words to an understanding of Derek's life that they bear reprinting. Hearing the words again, particularly through the ears of a five-year-old desperate to please his father and a waiting world, will take us far in understanding the cultural soil from which Derek grew.

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you
But make allowance for their doubting too,

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master,
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

1915: *India and the Sacrifice of Empire*

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much,

If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!²

As moving and instructive as Kipling's words are, we must remember that they are about the externals: behavior, character, duty, and skill. But they are not about the soul, about that hungry inner man of whom prophets and poets speak, and it is precisely in this tension between the inner and outer life of man that we find the defining tension of Derek Prince.

England taught Derek to perform. It taught him honor as the way of a man fulfilling his role. India, though, taught Derek mystery. In the Hindu gods, in the Indian superstitions, in the barely conceivable ideas of reincarnation, karma, and Brahma—the invisible pressed itself into Derek's worldview. England was mind and body. India was spirit. England was reality mastered. India was reality as prison. England lived in the visible. India looked past the visible to what it thought was the real. England taught man to achieve. India taught man to cease.

Derek would spend the first decades of his life torn by the pull of the two. He was a son of the upper class who would early learn his duty and strive to fulfill it. In school, on the playing field, and in society as a whole, he would give his all to become the man of England's dream. Yet he would always feel a mystical draw, the lure of a world outside his own. Dangerously, though,

what he felt was not the lure of Christian mysteries but the seductive appeal of pagan spirituality. It would haunt him until a greater power intervened.

He first felt the intrusion of “the dark side,” as he said later in life, during an innocent fatherly prank. Men of Paul Prince’s generation believed that teasing their sons made them better men. Once during a family picnic, Captain Paul removed a piece of melon from Derek’s plate and hid it while the boy’s head was turned. When Derek noticed his fruit was gone, he erupted. Screaming at the servants in Hindustani, he insisted they return the fruit he mistakenly thought they had stolen. The family simply laughed at the five-year-old’s tantrum.

Derek remembered in later years how it was in that moment of anger that he felt something enter him. It was a strength, a power beyond his own that filled his words and caught him up in great torrents of rage. Even after the heat of his passion passed, he knew something was different and that it wasn’t good. For years, he would feel it return, welling up inside of him when emotion summoned. This was more than the spirituality India offered. It was, as he would later learn, spirits of evil occupying the territory offered them. Only after Derek had learned of their existence and how to defeat them was he able to offer similar victory to his generation.

Yet it was because of this occupation, this embedding of force into his soul, that Derek would always say that India had laid claim to him. He clearly believed that in India something had reached for him, sought to own him. Though he would return to England at the age of five to take up the duties of his station, he knew he carried within himself something that he acquired in India and that sought to exert control over his life. It would make him miserable, drive him to immorality, distance him from meaning, and leave him exhausted. All the while, he would live the pristine existence of the English upper class in the Edwardian era. He could not deny the struggle though. England and India were wrestling in his soul.