

Pete Paterson: passionate philosopher, photographer



By Constance Scrafield

Sometimes Pete Paterson wants to talk first about his philosophy of life, to which he has given the name, Goodism and, withal, considers himself a Goodist.

A bit about his history explains, "When I was young, I didn't go to church much, once or twice a year. There was a Christmas tree but very little religion in the house. But when I was 12, my parents send me to a religious boarding school ? it might be Anglican, which my dad was; my mother was probably Catholic. She was German and my father was English.

"At boarding school, we had to go to chapel every day and twice on Sunday but I was old enough not to be affected too much by that. Still, everybody believed in it all."

At one point in his career, Mr. Paterson photographed Tom Harpur (?he had to have a cloud background?), who wrote *The Pagan Christ*, promoting the idea that Jesus is another myth, like so many others created during the centuries before and including his times. All the stories about Jesus were created 300 years after his supposed life, by Constantine, according to Mr. Harpur.

This and other books, pressing the message that all religion is created from myths for the sake of putting power into the hands of the few strong leaders, led Mr. Paterson to decide he does not like dogma (?am god?, reversed) but really likes the idea of people doing good for each other, all the time. Hence, Goodism.

"No dogma," said he. "No religion, nobody leading; only you, thinking, "What can I do to help somebody else?" Just say, "How can I help somebody today?" Just people being good to each other."

Having explained this theory, these ideas, he is quick to note that many people benefit from the solace of religion and he would never say to anyone not to have their faith.

Taking photographs of authors and other famous people began in Mr. Paterson's life in 1968.

Before that, "My dad was a doctor. So, there was a lot pressure on me to be a doctor. I went to university and did engineering for a year. Then, I went into dentistry but, after two years, I was looking down somebody's mouth and I thought, "this is a big mistake!"? What was natural for him was taking pictures.

Mr. Paterson had met a beautiful lady from Sweden, where they went to be married and then they hitchhiked for four months in Europe.

"I didn't have enough money to buy a car," he said.

During their adventure, he took plenty of photographs with his small Pentax camera, using film.

On their return to Canada, Mr. Paterson decided that he was a photographer and went to a Natural Resources government office, looking for a job. They asked him if he had a degree, which prompted him to enrol in a three-year course at Ryerson University. After the first year, he and his wife realized that she was pregnant and it was time for him to get out into the world to earn some money.

So, in 1968, he rented a walk-up fourth floor studio at Bond and Dundas streets in Toronto for \$100 a month and shared it with three others.

One day, he met Ramsey Derry, whom he had known at university, on the street. Mr. Derry asked him what he was doing and Mr. Paterson said, "I'm a photographer." Ramsey Derry worked for Macmillan Publishers.

"Good," said he. "Just what we need."

So, they went to the offices and arranged for Mr. Paterson to photograph Robertson Davies. It was a huge connection.

It was a wonderful beginning. From there to Doubleday and many other publishers. "I photographed hundreds of book covers," he told us.

Then, the catalogue work began: "furniture, tools, everything. Sears was a huge client."

He recalled, "The business grew and was wonderful. I photographed Michael Ondaatje, Alice Munro, Mordecai Richler.

He started photographing for McCann Ericson (now McCann), the huge global advertising agency.

"That thing blossomed," he said cheerfully.

"At the beginning, I was really shy. Then, one day, I thought maybe, I really do have a talent. But it was also a lot of good luck.

Every artist needs some luck to get ahead."

In 1972, he had bought a house in Riverdale.

It was Bob Hunter, the founder of Greenpeace, whose book *Thermageddon: Count down to 2030*, sparked the fire of environmentalism in Mr. Paterson's heart and mind.

That and Alanna Mitchell's books, *Dancing on the Shores of the Dead Sea* and *Sea Sick*, in which she explains that 99% of the world's living space is in the oceans, as are more than half of all the earth's species.

"I shout this from the rooftops," averred Pete Paterson. "They built a hydrogen truck in the '80's. This should be the direction we're taking."

Hydrogen Technology and Energy Corporation (HETC) and Shell oil company launched the first retail hydrogen refuelling station for hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles, was opened, located on Grenville Street in Calgary on June 15, 2018. This is the first hydrogen vehicle refuelling station open to the public in Canada. Three more stations are planned for Vancouver. Fuelled by water vapour, basically, hydrogen-fuelled vehicles do not produce CO₂ or other harmful pollutants. This is already being used in countries globally.

Mr. Paterson's take on the potential to move quickly against the problem of climate changing and warming compared the present day's urgency to the rush in which technology advanced in support of World War II.

"In seven years, airplanes [and other technology] was advanced in a hurry. This is like that. We have to work at as though we were at war with the problems. In a hurry to rescue our planet. It is such a precious, unbelievable -"

In 1954, his parents purchased 10 acres in Caledon and built a home, which he bought from his siblings once their parents had died. Living here in Caledon since 2009, Mr. Paterson is everywhere involved in the Dufferin community.

"I've photographed so many people in this community," he commented. "Through *In the Hills*, I got involved. I worked with Click Connect for 10 years [the photo club with CLD]. We used to go on trips every week to take pictures."

Later, taking the photographs of the members of Facilitation Wellington-Dufferin for the Photography Exhibit at the Museum of Dufferin, called *Life Actually*, was almost a new experience for him. *Life Actually* runs at the museum until December 31, 2018.

He said, "It wasn't about me taking a picture; it was so extraordinary. I got so much from each photo session: the smiles and the joy just came back to me and filled me with joy."