

## An Australian true to his belief in humanity



Geoff Dibdin

One day in the 1970s Geoff Dibdin was attending a meeting of the Aboriginal Advancement Association in Griffith NSW when he was paid a tribute in an unusual way.

Mr Dibdin, who passed away aged 83 on 5 January 2014, provided practical help to the Association as an accountant and helped to liaise on its behalf with government agencies. He also helped set up a football team.

As his son, Colin, recounted in a eulogy, the chairman addressed the members saying: "We're all black fellers here." He then paused, looked at Mr Dibdin, who was of European descent, and added: "You're close enough."

That comment summed up something special about Geoff Dibdin, identifying his genuine friendliness, his gold-plated sincerity, the fact that he lived his belief in the oneness of humanity.

### Discovery of Faith

In 1952, aged 22, he was about to train for the ministry of the Presbyterian church when he heard about the Bahá'í teachings on the oneness of religion—the underlying unity of the teachings of the Founders of the world religions—and about the oneness of humanity.

He changed his plans and continued his career in Qantas with a posting to Lae in Papua New Guinea. His ability to entertain as a violinist and drummer, and his complete absence of racial prejudice, won him many friends, and were to be characteristic of his life forever.

It was in Papua New Guinea in 1954 that Geoff Dibdin joined the Bahá'í Faith. He is believed to be the first person to do so in that country, which is now home to thousands of Bahá'ís.

Returning to Sydney, he married a fellow new Bahá'í, Dawn Duncan, and moved to Parkes, NSW, where he worked as an accountant and the couple raised their three children: Colin, Marjorie and Linda.

Colin Dibdin says the people of Parkes quickly warmed to his parents, who had a genuine interest in other people and who lived a life balancing spiritual ideals with practicality.

"For example dad became an office-bearer in the Senior Citizens Association and helped found a new branch of the United Nations Association. Together dad and mum played for the local Musical and Dramatic society".

### Contributions

For 10 years, they recorded a weekly program for radio 2PK, discussing Bahá'í-inspired topics like world peace and unity in diversity, and inviting people to their home for informal discussion on such topics.

They lived a similar life as they moved over the years to Griffith, Adelaide, Carnarvon, Onslow and Karratha. In Carnarvon Geoff Dibdin worked for KARU, the Aboriginal Resource Centre and was proud of the fact that his boss was an Aboriginal man. He served many indigenous organisations including for a time as the acting chief executive of the Aboriginal Medical Service; and he also provided accountancy services to organisations which could not afford the usual fees.

In his final years in Mt Barker SA, his ailments could not stop him from his story-telling, jokes and music or from extending his warm hospitality to anybody who came into his loving orbit.

Many tributes were paid at his funeral. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia, noting his humility, innate gentleness and cheerfulness, described him as "a deeply principled man providing self-sacrificial support" and "a shining example for Bahá'í parents everywhere".



Young Geoff playing the violin



Dibdin family, 1962