

Arthur Stace Radio Interview, 1964 – Transcript

Presenter: *[One of] the things that strikes a visitor to Sydney, and indeed many other towns right throughout New South Wales, is the fact that someone has been there before, in writing “Eternity” on the footpaths, on walls, almost anywhere, in very fine handwriting, and in yellow chalk.*

For Monitor, Jim Waugh found Mr Arthur Stace, who writes “Eternity” and asked him, “Why?”.

I do (it) to help others, because I believe that they're in this world for two things – as help or as hindrance. I know by helping other people, to know that there's an eternity to face, to be ready for it, is a lovely thing to know.

Interviewer: And you think this single word message, Eternity, um, has done good in the past?

Yes, I can prove to you in many cases. Many cases, where men have been turned from darkness into God's marvellous light. One of them done seventeen years' gaol, and was turned, and went back with his wife and is now good (?) himself. And I could (?) many others, but it would sound like boasts – but I won't tell you about the others, for fear you might think that I'm overdoing it, or exaggerating.

Interviewer: Mr Stace, how long ago did you start doing this?

About twenty years ago.

Interviewer: And what started you off?

I was listening to a man one day, in Burton Street Baptist Church, a man called John Ridley, the Australian evangelist. And he was preaching on Eternity. And he said these words, “Eternity! Eternity! Where, oh where, will you spend eternity?”

And the Lord laid it on my heart, there and then, to go out and write “Eternity”. I went straight out and I've been writing it for twenty years.

Interviewer: Were you a good man at the time, before you were converted?

No, I was a very bad man. I was very much under conviction and many convictions. Ah, for drunkenness, for thieving, and for many other things that I can't mention just here.

Interviewer: Mr Stace, how far afield have you gone in writing Eternity on footpaths?

Well I would say, from here to Wellington that way, to Cessnock, to Newcastle, to all the suburbs, pretty well round most of the places in New South Wales. And right round Melbourne.

Interviewer: When do you do it, when do you find time to write this?

I get up early in the morning and I have one hour with the Lord, between four and five, and I have a cuppa tea and off I go on this particular work, writing "Eternity" wherever the Lord sends me.

Interviewer: What do you think of people who come up to you and see you writing it – are you very often caught in the act?

Oh yes, very often caught in the act, and they say, "What's this gov doing now? They say, "Oh crikey, this man's a rat [?], he's writing Eternity. Look!" And then they ask me the question about "Eternity" and I tell them, and they say, "My word, you're pretty right! You've got to face it!"

Interviewer: Have you ever been in any trouble with the police because of writing on the footpath?

Yes, I've been held up twenty-one times for "defacing the footpath". But it doesn't belong to the police, it belongs to the city council. And they can take the name and report it to the city council. So, anyhow, after a while they got to find out my best (or past?) life, and they said, "Well", the Inspector said, "Isn't this better to see him doing this, than you fellers chasing him through the lanes and streets in Sydney?"

Interviewer: Has anybody ever tried to copy you – tried to write Eternity on the footpaths, the same as you have done?

Yes, there's been many a one. There was one man once, and he stuck at it for about three months, and then he went to The Herald office, and told them that he was the man that wrote that Eternity on the footpath. And he was a ginger-headed man.

And of course this fellow said, "Ah, the feller that writes that is a grey-haired little feller. He's only a five foot three man", and he was nearly six foot, so they knew he was only a counterfeit.

Presenter: *In tonight's Monitor 64, we brought you the voice of the man who writes "Eternity" on the footpaths, Mr Arthur Stace.*

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(The audio was recorded Mr John Barwick of Gunnedah from his local Macquarie Broadcasting System station as it relayed programmes from Sydney. Transcript by Colin Mackellar.)