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Looking back 40 years I recall a small well lit shop at the back of an old cold sterile building in Willis Street where smiling faces stood behind a sales counter on the left as you entered, this was Unity Books.

Oh those wonderful people Alan Preston, his father Cyril, Richard Paris and later Bob Dempsey. My first book purchase was Laurence Olivier's screenplay for 'Henry V' (I bought it for the pictures).

Coffee time on a Friday Night where one could meet interesting characters and local identities. I once argued politics with Denis Glover and discussed actress Rhonda Fleming with Witi Ihimarea (a favourite of us both) such wonderful precious memories of a time when the world moved at a slower pace and life was a little simpler.

Later the move across the street to number 42 formerly the KKK (the delicatessen that is). A bigger, brighter shop with street frontage, higher pedestrian traffic and marvellous window displays inviting you to "come inside" empty your wallet or purse and leave smiling, well satisfied with those purchases. Through trial and tribulations, success and disappointments Unity Books has prospered with focused and dedicated staff, going from strength to strength, larger premises and better locations while still retaining its unique service and individuality.

Alan and his father are now gone as is former co-manager Nigel Cox and others have moved on pursuing other goals but the values, principles and standards they set remain, reflected in an extraordinary staff whose spirit echos the very name 'Unity' - integrity, harmony and accord.

The parade's passed by but those memories linger on.

Looking forward to a happy, bright and exciting future for Wellington's best loved and most appreciated bookshop. Happy 40th Anniversary.

DAVID LASCELLES. Film Researcher/Writer.