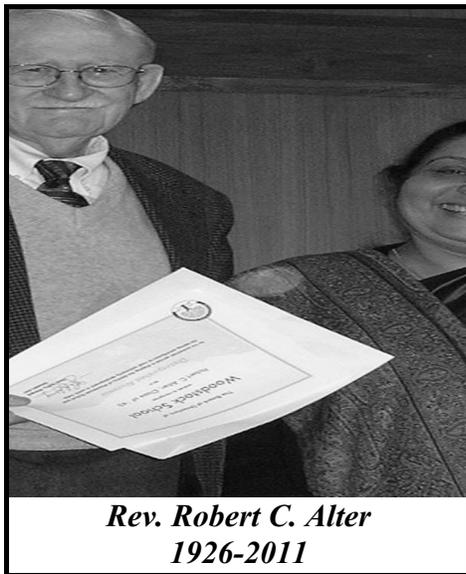


IN MEMORY OF REV. ROBERT C. ALTER 1926-2011



**Rev. Robert C. Alter
1926-2011**

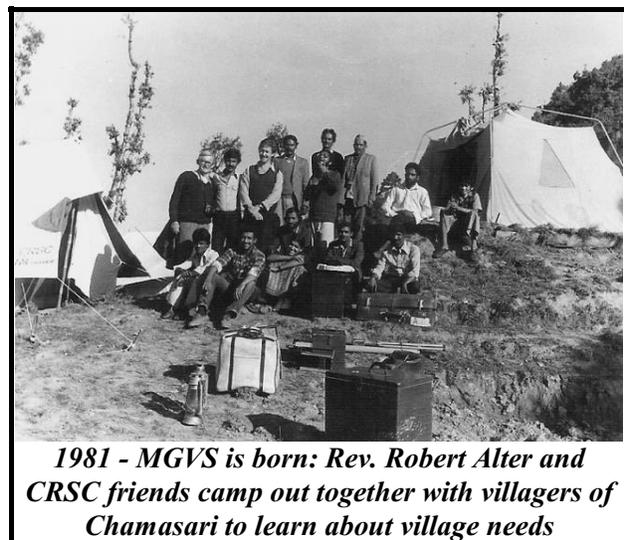
On Sunday morning, June 19th, 2011, MGVS Founder, Rev. Robert Alter, passed away in his sleep. Please join us in prayer for his wife, Mrs. Ellen Alter, and his children and grandchildren who have lost their loved one. A memorial service was held at St. Paul's Church, Landour Cantt., in Mussoorie on 1st August 2011.

MGVS is grateful for the moments we have had with Rev. Alter. He truly lived a full life, a life of meaning and giving, humility and such positive upliftment of the people around him. Villagers living in and around Mussoorie still remember Rev. Alter as "*Paani Sahib*" (Water Sahib) for the first MGVS project - the 3.5 km Patrani-Donk drinking water pipeline, completed under Rev. Alter's leadership. The pipeline was laid with low-cost PVC pipes for 14 families at a time when the government refused to acknowledge that these families

needed water because their homes were so out of the way, until MGVS showed that it was possible to bring water to the area, in 1985. The pipeline has been repaired with GI pipes in many places since that time, and it continues to be functional today, with some of the original PVC piping intact. During Rev. Alter's fourteen years of leadership as Coordinator, he also implemented a holistic approach to development issues, including health, women self-help groups and women empowerment *melas* (fairs), organic (sustainable) farming and income generation and appropriate technology. He approached village problems, with the villagers, and the MGVS team, bringing about ever-innovative and effective results. Rev. Alter is sure to live on in the family folklore of the rural people of this area, for many generations to come. The foundation he laid for helping people with respect and understanding has shaped our work and our lives. MGVS has been so blessed these past thirty years, to have been part of the life of such a wonderful man and friend. We will always miss him.

Rev. Alter's Life and Achievements

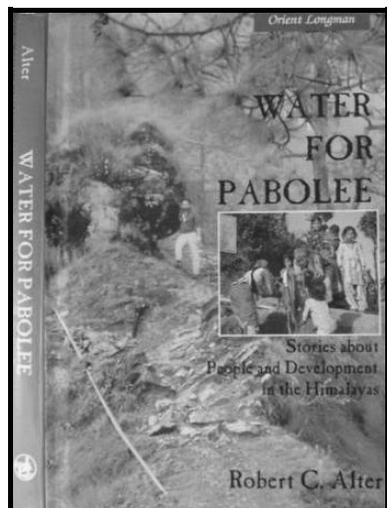
Rev. Alter was the youngest of four brothers. He was born in Srinagar, Kashmir in 1926 to American missionary parents, and he started living in a different part of the Himalayas, in Mussoorie, at age five. He graduated from Woodstock School in Mussoorie, in November, 1943, at the height of WWII. Rev. Alter managed to get passage on an American troop ship headed for the US and his studies continued at Westminster



1981 - MGVS is born: Rev. Robert Alter and CRSC friends camp out together with villagers of Chamasari to learn about village needs

College in new Wilmington, Pennsylvania in July of 1944.

In 1948 Rev. Alter returned to Mussoorie where he married Mrs. Ellen Alter, who was teaching English at Woodstock School at the time, and they both stayed on to teach at the school until 1951. Rev. and Mrs. Alter then went to America for higher studies in 1952, where Rev. Alter attended Yale Divinity School, and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1955. From 1956-1965, Rev. and Mrs. Alter served in central Uttar Pradesh, where Rev. Alter started an economic development programme for village Christians. During this period, he also completed an M.A. in Rural Sociology from Cornell University in 1962.



2002 – Rev. Robert Alter’s book, “Water for Pabolee”. Cover page shows the Patrani-Donk pipeline, where it connects between the two villages.

Then, in 1966, Rev. Alter returned to Mussoorie once again when he was asked to be Business Manager at Woodstock School for one year. From 1968-1978, he also served the school as principal. Under his leadership, schooling Indian students was introduced.

In the Spring of 1981, Rev. and Mrs. Alter started working on an action outreach programme of the Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur Dehradun, which evolved into MGVS – Mussoorie Gramin Vikas Samiti (Mussoorie Village Development Society). Rev. Alter served MGVS as Coordinator for 14 years until 1995, when he retired to Wooster, Ohio, in the US. After his retirement he assisted MGVS with reporting, funding issues and visitor groups from time to time. In 2001, he

completed Water for Pabolee, a book about his life and work with MGVS. He dedicated the book to the people of Chamasari and Kanda-Jhak; Chamasari was the first area in which MGVS worked.

Rev. Alter continued to visit MGVS and his home: *Oakville*, in Mussoorie, each year, up until a few months before his death. On April 26th, 2011, during his final visit, the City Board of Mussoorie honored Rev. Alter at his home in Mussoorie with an award for lifetime achievement. The citation included described the award as *“honoring him for a life led with great dignity and selflessness, a life rich with God’s grace and the blessings of nature - a life which has touched so many other lives, regardless of all man-made barriers of religion and caste and creed and [nationality] - truly. Bob Alter is a man of his time, a man of Mussoorie, a man of the universe.”*



1985 – MGVS staff and villagers witness the fruit of the first MGVS endeavour: water in Patrani Village, while MGVS Founder Rev. R. Alter explains the next developments of the Patrani-Donk drinking-water pipeline to the pradhan (local village council chief) of the area.