

《峡谷天使离开人间:一生守护自杀圣地 挽救160多个人》

For nearly five decades he gazed out of his Sydney home overlooking the Pacific Ocean, inspired by one of Australia's most picturesque views. But it was not just a love for the sea that drew him to the dramatic panorama.

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Don Ritchie's window-watching had a far greater purpose. Since 1964 he has saved at least 160 lives, though some say the true figure is much higher. Mr Ritchie, who died this week at the age of 86, was known as the Angel of the Gap, a title earned for persuading people not to throw themselves off the notorious Australian suicide spot.

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Like Beachy Head on the Sussex coast, the sheer cliffs at the mouth of Sydney harbour have long acted as a magnet to those who have lost all hope. But thanks to his calm voice and sympathetic manner, Mr Ritchie offered a helping hand to the desperate by engaging them in conversation on the cliff-top in their hour of need.

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A modest man who did not court celebrity or praise, Mr Ritchie would spot would-be suicides from his home and slowly walk across the road to them. At the cliff-edge he would simply smile and ask them, "Can I help you in some way?" More often than not the quiet approach worked, though on some occasions he risked his own life by physically restraining the more determined from making their final leap.

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