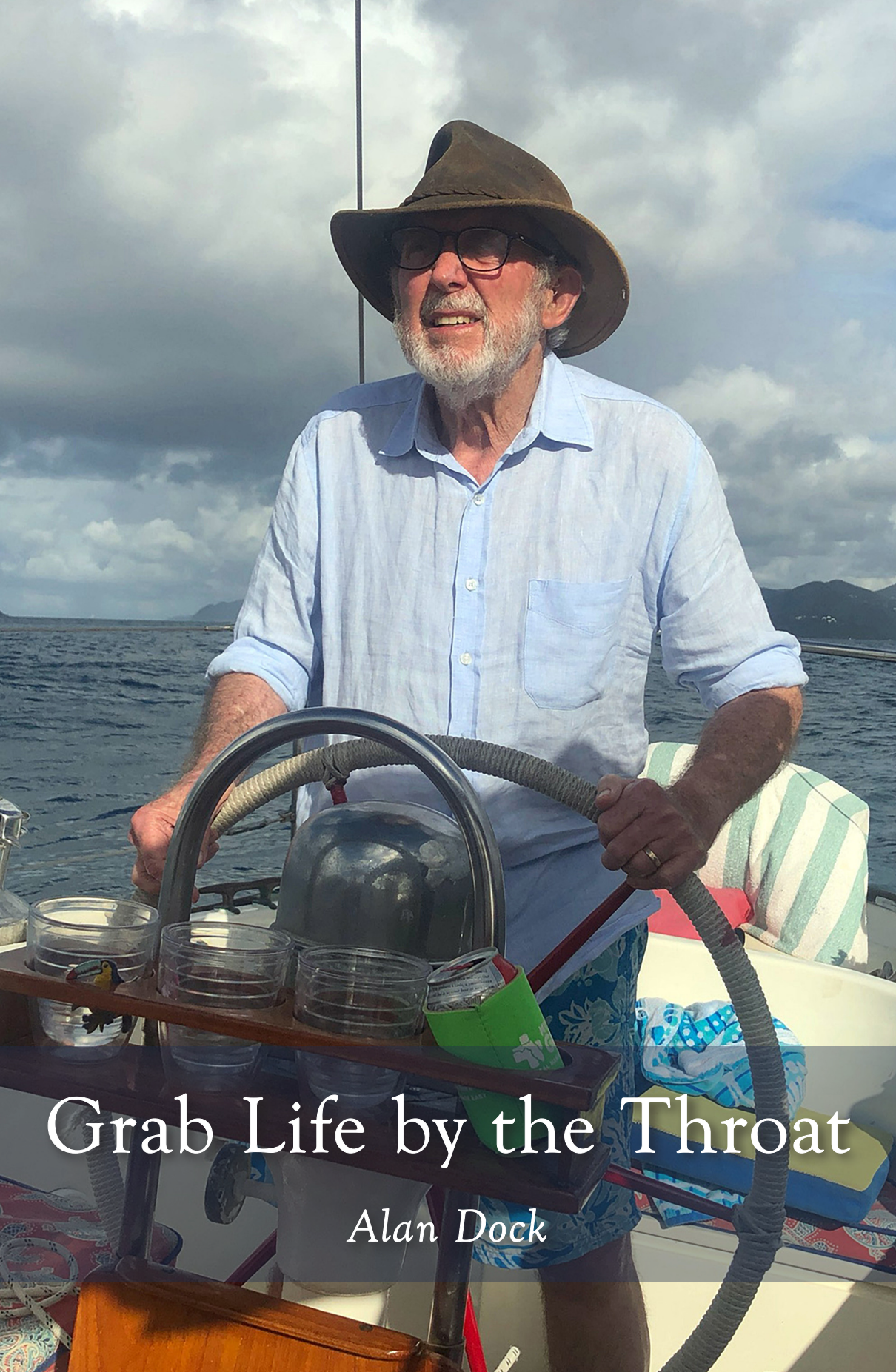

Grab Life by the Throat

Alan Dock

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My Pursuit of Learning

Alan Dock

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www.lifebookuk.com
info@lifebookuk.com

LifeBook Memoirs Ltd, 10 John Street, London, WC1N 2EB, United Kingdom +44 (0)203 291 1169

This account of my life, incomplete as it is, is dedicated to all members of my much loved, extensive family. It is an attempt to provide answers to the questions that have arisen over some 60 years in conversations with many of you.

I also mark at this point the dedicated and professional help I have received from Julie, my interlocutor and extractor of memories long forgotten, and Bailey, my indefatigable scribe and ghostwriter.

As I approach the end of this project, I have a hope that some other younger members of the family will take up the challenge and continue to record the unfolding lives of the Dock clan, and thus provide a history for as yet unborn generations of this diverse and restive family.

The Dock clan together in a village outside Florence, Italy, c.2014

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PRELUDE

The thing is, this is my life, and it's emotional – very emotional – to read through it. I'll be honest, I haven't been able to treat this project objectively. It's quite a complex task to piece together your entire life and present it in a coherent, sequential story. I hope that I've done all right by the task and kept it somewhat humorous!

I'm 85 years old, and I have recently experienced radiation therapy five times per week over seven weeks at Johns Hopkins in Rockville, Maryland. While ill health certainly crystallises one's thinking, the reason I feel compelled to write this memoir is tied to my children and grandchildren. They are unaware of many details in my narrative and have often inquired about my past, wanting to know what I've done and where I've been. I began recounting my life to some of them and, casually gathered around the fire one night, we recorded some conversations together, but now I believe it's time to give my story some structure. There is much my children don't know of my life, and while they have been told of some its parts, they are missing the whole.

So here it is.

CHAPTER ONE

Fragments of Memory: A Child During the Second World War

I was born on 25th September 1938, just as the clouds of war were gathering over Europe.

My earliest recollection is of living with my parents, Walter and Kathleen Dock, in a single-storey house, akin to an apartment, on Hawkslade Road in Nunhead, London SE15, when I was around one or two years old. It was a typical English winter scene: I was given a piece of toast with butter on it as I sat in front of the fire. Fascinated, I watched the butter melt and drip off the edge of the toast. It intrigued me, this transformation of a solid lump of yellow substance into a liquid. I wondered, how was this happening? Despite being only a fragment of a memory, it has remained remarkably vivid all these years. I suspect that this incident might have been the starting point for my bent toward science.

My origins in Britain are fairly humble. My paternal grandfather, Albert Dock, was a brass foundry worker, originally from Newcastle. He died of stomach cancer caused by the fumes in the foundry. His wife, Lillian, passed away while staying with us in Luton when I was six. Jim Curwood, my maternal grandfather, lost his life during the First World War. After his passing, my grandmother Florence remarried. Her new husband, Harry Webb, was the grandfather I grew to know best. Harry worked as a stoker on the lower decks of a First World War ship, HMS *Iron Duke*. His job involved the gruelling task of shovelling coal in the

bowels of the ship, a role that seemed especially perilous in the event of an attack as escape was unlikely in such confined spaces. However, against the odds, he managed to make it out unscathed. It was a life of immense hardship and isolation, far removed from anything we can imagine today.

My parents both grew up in London, and my father especially loved the city, so having to relocate to Luton in Bedfordshire during the Blitz was hard. The incident that prompted the move occurred when I was out with my mother in London one day. We witnessed a dogfight in the skies over the city, and as bullets sprayed all around us, my mother, in a desperate attempt to protect me, tossed me into a gutter in the street and shielded me with her own body. She returned home very shaken, and when she relayed the experience to my father, he decided it was time to move. I remember nothing of this, only hearing about it from my parents later.

You might be wondering why my father wasn't serving in the military during that time. Well, when he was a young boy of about eight or nine, he contracted rheumatic fever. Back then, little was known about the condition and its long-term effects. Although he survived, the illness permanently affected his heart, causing a murmur that remained with him until his passing. Consequently, his health rendered him unfit for any form of military service.

His career path led him to become an engineer, and upon completing his apprenticeship, he worked for Vauxhall, a British engineering company. During the war, the company was engaged in building tanks, and this became his work for the duration of the war.

In Luton, we purchased a conventional house at 93 Westmorland Avenue. It had an upper floor with three bedrooms and a bathroom. Downstairs consisted of the kitchen and a front room, or living room. Known as a semi-detached house, it was attached to another house on one side, but not on the other. It was a decent house, and we were quite content. I made friends with the Jones family next door, which was wonderful.

One night a couple of years after moving to Luton, my father took me down to the bottom of our garden and pointed out a glow in the distance.

"See that glow over there? That's London burning."

I was young, but I remember the bombers flying overhead, wave after wave. The Nazi bombers would drop their payloads on Luton and other towns, but most of their targets were in London. We didn't face many direct bombings, but we had a makeshift shelter located under the stairs. I would be awakened in the middle of the night and hurriedly escorted down into our shelter. I would then sit there, playing with my toys, while the war raged on outside.

My brother, Graham, was born four years after me on 31st October 1942. Owing to fears of gas attacks by the Nazis, gas masks were distributed to everyone. I had a gas mask adorned with a picture of Donald Duck, and it had Mickey Mouse ears. I didn't mind wearing it at all. Graham, however, was too young to wear a mask. To protect him and other babies, the authorities had devised a contraption resembling a large cooker with a glass top. He would be placed inside and the top sealed to shield him from gas exposure. He was terrified of it. Apparently, he screamed when confined in it and has, ever since, been wary of confined spaces. He was only a year old when this arrangement began. I'm unsure of the specifics regarding how he breathed inside this object. Perhaps there was an external canister to prevent gas from entering.

Back then, my parents talked about the Nazis and the horrors occurring in London. I got a sense from them that whoever was responsible for these actions was bad, although, as a young child, politics or anything of that nature was far beyond my understanding. Something interesting happened to me very recently, however. My wife, Mary, and I were travelling to Kenya for a week to visit my daughter, who works for USAID. We took a Lufthansa flight to get there without it ever occurring to me that it was a German airline. Indeed, I hadn't given much thought to Germans in general over the years. However, as I sat in my seat and heard the airline crew speaking German, I had an immediate gut reaction: I felt a sense of hatred boiling up, even after all these years. Of course, there was *nothing* wrong with them at all; they were perfectly fine people, and the flight was smooth and without any issues.

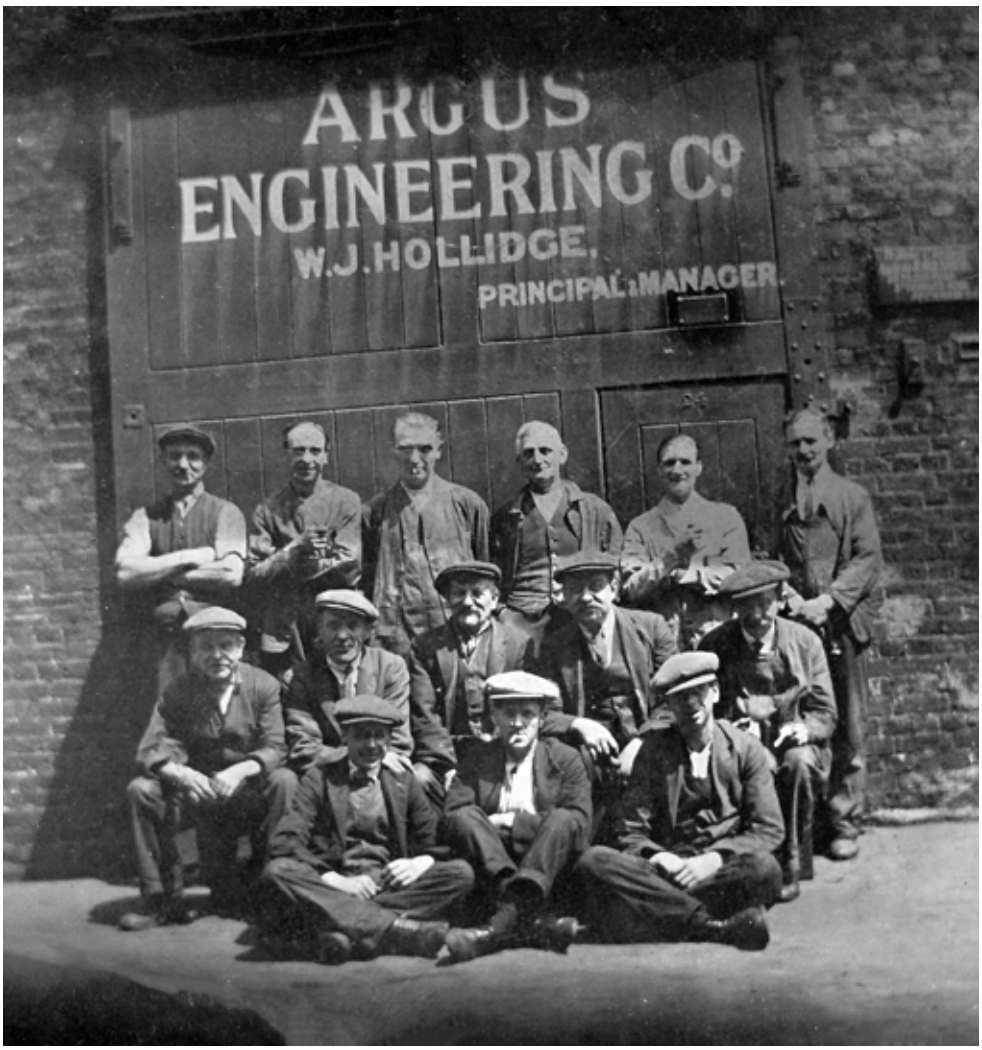
The incident made me realise that, even though I was very young, I had, on some subconscious level, still drawn a connection between the Germans and my country's suffering. Isn't it strange how this stayed buried within me all this time, and I never knew?

We lived in Luton until 1947. The winter that year was exceptionally harsh, the chill compounded by a lack of coal. I used to accompany my mother to a nearby field to scavenge wood and other materials to create some warmth in our cold living room. When she did the laundry, she hung the clothes on the washing line outside to dry, but when she brought them in a couple of hours later, they would be frozen stiff. They would stand upright in a corner of the kitchen.

I have immense respect for my mother. She bore an enormous burden. She was an ordinary housewife who had, at that stage of her life, never held a formal job. Her role revolved around raising and looking after kids.

Mum, held by her eldest sister, Florrie, with siblings Lil, Beatrice and Harry, c.1908

Mum, Dad and me, c.1941

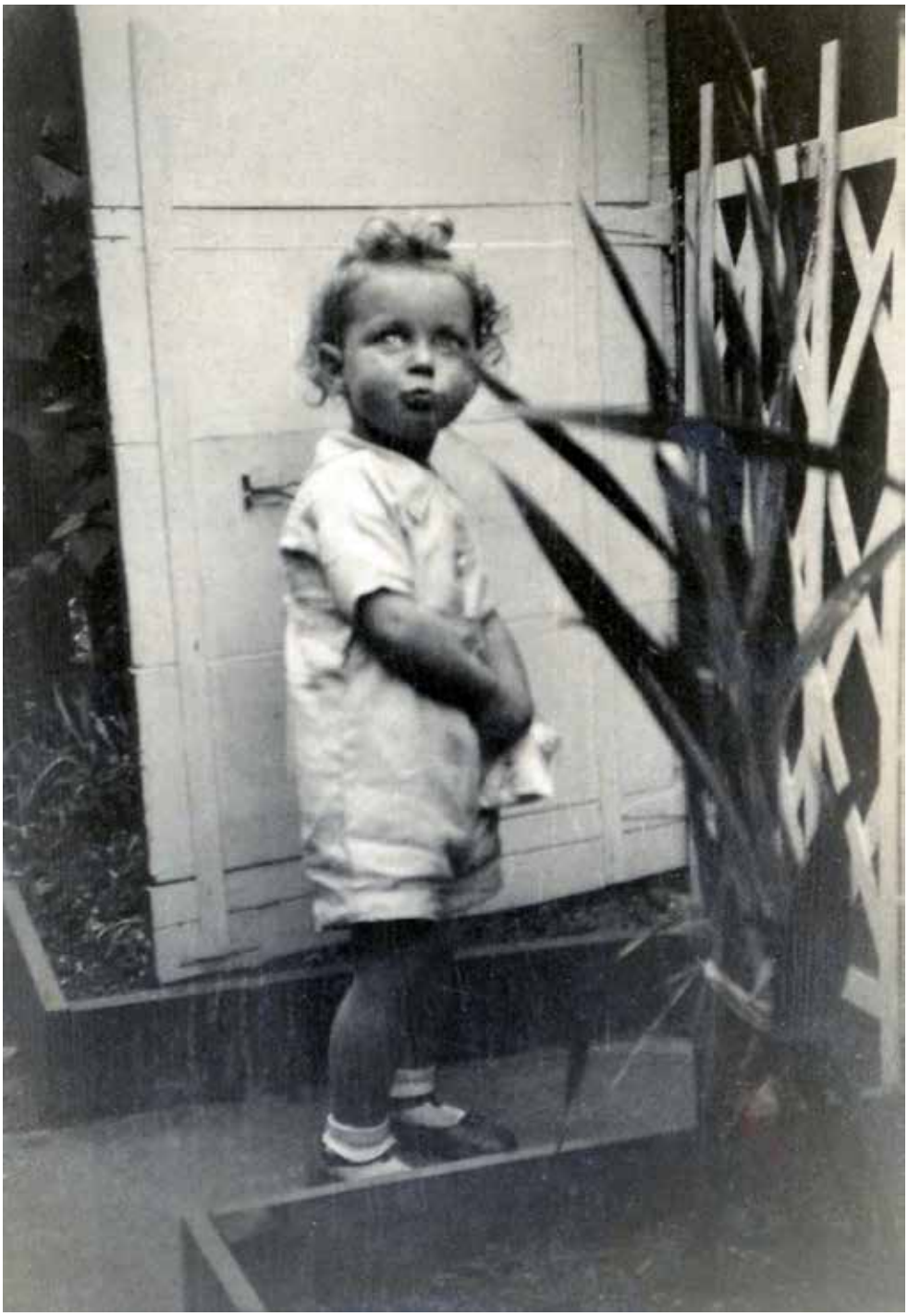


Dad, engineering apprentice (front row on the left), c.1925

Grandfather Dock, c.1920

Grandad and Nan Webb, c.1938

Dad and Mum, c.1936



Me entering air-raid shelter, c.1941

Me and Graham, c.1946

CHAPTER TWO

Bound for Warmer Weather

Johannesburg, South Africa

I struggled with severe asthma during my childhood and had frequent asthma attacks. I was always treated at home, the doctor calling at our house to administer ephedrine, or something similar. At one point, the doctor warned my parents that they might not be able to raise me up unless I moved to a warmer climate.

My father took this advice seriously, and that was when South Africa came into consideration, perhaps in part because we had a connection there in the form of a cousin living in Cape Town. I was nine years old when, towards the end of October in 1947, we left for Cape Town. Our relocation to South Africa coincided with a period of mass emigration from Britain to South Africa (partially financed by the British government) that lasted from 1947 to 1949 as people sought refuge from the aftermath of the war and the harsh climate.

We travelled aboard a Union-Castle vessel, the *Stirling Castle*. The ship was a wonderland to me and my brother. There were plenty of activities arranged for us on board, among which was the crossing of the equator ceremony with King Neptune, and we thoroughly enjoyed it. My parents also had a great time during the voyage. They danced, relaxed and ate meals that had become unimaginable in Britain since the outbreak of the war in 1939.

Post-war scarcity was among my family's reasons for leaving Britain. Although the war had been over for two years, many necessities, especially food, were in short supply and still rationed. For example, we received one egg per week for the whole family. Because I was considered the frail child, I was the one who got the egg. Ironically, I detested it. I was a rather fussy child and couldn't bring myself to eat it, no matter how guilty I felt. My mother tried various ways to prepare it – boiled, fried, scrambled – but I couldn't stomach it. My brother became jealous, and as we grew older and got into scraps together, he would call me the 'pet of the family'. (Of course, this has all been long buried. We're good friends now.)

Aside from my health and the conditions in England at the time, I'm not exactly sure what prompted my father's decision to choose South Africa, specifically. By then, he had transitioned into maintenance of the mechanical computers of the time and was a skilled engineer in the field. These computers operated by dropping pins through cards to read binary numbers and then processing the information using wheels, cogs and mechanisms in a manner akin to a tabulating machine to generate a result. This result was then printed onto sheets of paper. My father eventually got wind of an opportunity in South Africa and managed to set up a job in Johannesburg, where he was to work as an engineer with a company called Powers-Samas, which produced and marketed the machines. He was the only one who knew how to maintain and repair them. There were no emails or anything of that sort back then; everything was arranged through letter correspondence. Even the computers themselves were delivered to Johannesburg via horse-drawn transport!

After disembarking in Cape Town to spend a couple of days with our cousin, we continued our journey by boarding a train headed to Johannesburg, or Jo'burg as we learned to call it. The compartment was pretty basic, with four bunks that folded away during the day to leave just the seats, and a washbasin, and a loo down the corridor. There was also a dining car. I remember my mother was horrified to see the waiter's thumb in the soup as the bowl was handed over. The journey, or *adventure*, as my brother and I saw it, took three full days.

We lived in a boarding house-like setup in Jo'burg for approximately a year, maybe less. During that time, I attended a *girls-only* school – the only available option my parents had to enrol me in school! The girls at the school made quite a fuss about me, the only boy among them. I can't recall feeling concerned about it. In fact, I rather enjoyed the attention and feeling special in the school. I engaged in regular schoolwork, just like any other student. The only notable difference from a boys' school was that I attended knitting lessons. This class posed a challenge that I appreciated from a problem-solving perspective, but it never became a passion.

Turffontein

My parents soon bought a modest house in the Jo'burg suburb of Turffontein, which allowed me to go to a local *boys'* school, Verona Elementary. Once there, I was on much steadier ground than my all-girls' school experience.

This was an era when white children didn't attend school with black children, and segregation persisted for quite a long while. Apartheid began in South Africa in 1948, the year after we arrived in the country, when the Afrikaner National Party (NP) was elected and introduced laws formalising the apartheid system. The NP categorised South Africans into four distinct groups based on ethnicity. These were: black, white, coloured (mixed race), and Indian. Blacks were, in addition, divided into a number of sub-groups on tribal grounds. Laws preventing any deviation from the norms established by the NP were enforced. Breaking the rules, whether through socialising, relationships or interactions between white and black individuals, resulted in severe penalties under the law.

At that time, the segregation between blacks and whites didn't particularly trouble me. I observed the differences, but children don't, typically, ponder such distinctions deeply. We even had a black servant working in our house. It was just the way things were to me; whites and blacks led separate lives.

I would like to clarify that we were quite content during our time in South Africa. As white children, we had the freedom to travel wherever we pleased and felt perfectly safe doing so.

When I was around 10 or 11 years old, my friend David Gallop and I used to hitchhike out of Jo'burg. (These days, if you saw two 10-year-olds hitchhiking, you'd likely report them to the police.) Sometimes, we visited museums. Other times, we scrambled around nearby dumps where people discarded old washing machines and other items, scavenging for bits of metal and other interesting items. I had a fondness for working with mechanical things, even back then, so we sought out pieces that could be useful and dragged them back home.

We also used to hitchhike to a pub called Uncle Charlie's. We'd spend time there, not drinking or anything of that sort, but simply enjoying the surroundings. There were swings and other attractions for kids, so it was a pleasant experience. Nearby was a small river which I once fell into while climbing a branch overhanging the water. I managed to get out, but I was soaking wet. We then had to thumb back into town, me still sopping wet. When we got home, we ironed our clothes straight away, ensuring that they were dry by the time my mother returned. Still, my parents eventually banned David from our house because they deemed him to be a 'bad influence'. Naturally, I was aggrieved and deliberately sought out his companionship anyway.

On Guy Fawkes Day, 5th November, we dressed up and went out with our tins, rattling them under people's noses in the middle of autumn, trying to collect money. My brother, Graham, was too young to join in our shenanigans at this point!

My parents, whose political sympathies leaned towards the Labour Party in Britain, felt some disdain for Churchill, despite his contributions to the country. Upon arriving in South Africa, they disapproved of the right-wing government that enforced apartheid's stringent social regulations. Initially, they believed they were adhering to what they deemed appropriate but soon realised that even unintentional breaches of these rules could land them in jail. After enduring a couple of years in this restrictive environment, my father decided that it wasn't

acceptable for our family. He felt we needed to seek a different place to live, somewhere that such limitations didn't exist.

The last straw for my father originated in his preference for white bread, a trait I've inherited myself. He adored white bread, but the government banned it. This might seem irrational, but for Afrikaner South Africans (descendants of Dutch settlers), it was a matter of going back to their roots. Buying white flour became illegal, and you could opt for brown flour only to adhere to this regulation. My dad couldn't accept this. Being a skilled engineer and handyman, he crafted a hand-operated sieve from wood that allowed us to sift a meagre supply of white flour from the brown flour. My mother then baked illegal loaves of white bread – with curtains drawn!

Me and Graham in costume aboard the Stirling Castle, 1947

Dad, Mum, Graham and me, Johannesburg house, 1948

Computer arrives, Powers-Samas, Johannesburg, 1948

Dad and computer, Johannesburg, 1948

Mum and Dad, Diering Road house, Johannesburg, 1949

CHAPTER THREE

Fuelling My Fascination with Mechanics and Science

1,000-mile road trip to Zambia

It was in early 1950 that we moved to Lusaka in the family car, a 1938 Chevrolet. I was around 11 years old when we embarked on this 1,000-mile trek from South Africa to Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). There were two seats in the back, two in the front, and no seatbelts.

The roads were quite challenging, especially once we departed South Africa and journeyed further north. As we traversed Southern Rhodesia to reach Lusaka, the condition of the roads worsened considerably. Ingeniously, an engineer had devised a strategy wherein two strips of tarmac approximately 80 inches wide were laid with an area of dirt between them, a setup that allowed one car to drive with its wheels on each strip. When two cars approached each other, they shifted over so that each was travelling with just the offside wheels on one strip, thus enabling safe passage. This was a design that enabled all-weather roads to be established much more economically than if full-width paving was used. While it was practical, the process of getting on and off these strips was perilous, particularly when rain had eroded the section between the strips. My father, however, seemed unperturbed.

At one point, we became lost. I also remember passing through a town named Mazabuka – lion territory! There were reports of lions taking lives in the area, so my mother became anxious when we needed to get out of the car to empty our bladders. Despite her concerns, we

never actually encountered a lion. For the duration of the journey, we slept in the car or at a roadside inn.

Over the years, my father meticulously maintained our car, and I gained extensive knowledge about automobiles by observing him dismantle and reassemble that Chev. I believe that I inherited my love for mechanics from my father. He was always interested in cars. He was an exceptional mechanic and engineer who always maintained his own vehicles. He would often dismantle cars, and I assisted him, primarily with tasks like grinding valves and similar activities. I realise now that I probably didn't contribute much, but he was pleased to see my interest and made me feel involved.

He was a tinkerer and always dreamt of having a workshop. While he attempted to set one up behind our house in Luton, it was really a makeshift garage where he housed old run-down cars. He built a workbench equipped with a vice so that he could work. However, his really creative tinkering took place in Lusaka. His new job – in the North Rhodesian Ministry of Finance – was vital to the monthly production of pay cheques for all government employees. He was such an essential part of the whole system that the government provided him with a proper workshop to maintain the computers in the Ministry of Finance. It was there that, with access to a lathe, he truly flourished. He could craft remarkable things with it. On Sunday mornings, I used to accompany him and watch as he worked on his projects, learning the intricacies of the lathe.

My father became well-known and popular in the Ministry of Finance's colonial circles for crafting dinner bells out of brass, which were designed to call the maid during dinner. One particular bell had, I recall, a small tray on its top with two champagne glasses and a bottle serving as the handle, all made from brass. He also created small beer tankards shaped like traditional tanks and with glass bottoms, a skill he was quite proficient in. I observed him work, and listened as he explained the process. When he needed to produce something intricate, he demonstrated the lathe's workings to me. He would clarify how it moved when cutting a screw thread, and how to calculate the

correct gear ratio for turning and moving along the piece. I learned a great deal about lathes during that time and thoroughly enjoyed it.

My father was employed in the Northern Rhodesia colonial services, the government system that preceded the creation of the independent state of Zambia in 1964. As a state employee, he was provided with government housing, which was furnished by the government. I recollect that we had three servants – a cook, a houseboy and a garden boy – because even if my father was an engineer of modest means and fairly lowly in the government hierarchy, having three servants was customary. The house was more spacious than our old home in Luton, although it was a single-storey structure. (In Britain, it might be referred to as a bungalow, although this isn't exactly what it was.)

There was, during that era, a trend in constructing houses of an assortment of materials that included asbestos sheeting. Our house in particular was made entirely of asbestos. The health concerns associated with asbestos were unknown at that time, and it was considered good material for constructing housing. It offered effective insulation, was waterproof, lightweight and easy to produce. In consequence, we lived in a house with asbestos walls and an asbestos roof. I believe such houses were eventually demolished owing to asbestos-related health dangers.

My brother and I shared a bedroom, my parents shared another, and, for reasons of financial constraints, a small third room in our house was rented out by my parents to an arrival who was originally from Scotland. His name was Charlie Bell, if memory serves me. The house had only one bathroom. Despite occasional disagreements, we managed to get along for the most part.

Around this time, my dad had a motorbike. He would leave it at home when he headed off to work and, of course, my buddies and I couldn't resist taking it for spins around the bush paths nearby. One day, my young brother was eager to give it a go, so I hoisted him onto the saddle. He couldn't quite reach the pedals, but nevertheless, he managed to set the bike in motion – straight into the bedroom wall of our house!

When my dad returned home, we spun him a tale about a snake that we threw a large rock at, thereby accidentally smashed the asbestos sheeting wall. But when the neighbours, who had seen my brother crashing into the wall, showed up and spilled the beans, Dad was less concerned about the accident and more worried about the snake story he had already told the Public Works Department!

Eventually, when I reached 16 years of age, I had my own motorbike, a Royal Enfield 350. It had been involved in a fatal accident that resulted in significant damage to the front end, and it was thoroughly mangled and little more than a pile of scraps when I took ownership of it. My father rebuilt it with me. We got new tubes for the front forks. I learned a lot about motorbikes during this process.

During our early years in Zambia, life at home was tumultuous. Shortly after we relocated from South Africa to Lusaka, my father's heart collapsed completely as a consequence of his childhood rheumatic fever. He was only 45 years old. Given his position in the colonial service, no effort was spared. The entire family – my brother, my mother, my father, and myself – travelled to Britain for him to have heart surgery. At a time when heart surgery was still in its infancy, my father underwent surgery on the mitral side of his heart valves, both sides having been damaged by his rheumatic fever. Unfortunately, the procedure couldn't address issues with his aorta. The surgeon, Russell Brock of Guy's Hospital in London, was a pioneer in this field. He had to break and pull apart two of my father's ribs to open access to his heart, leaving a scar that stretched from his breastbone around to his backbone. Miraculously, he survived the operation.

We stayed with my grandparents on my mother's side during the surgery period. As we were mainly in London, where the operation took place, many of our aunts, uncles and other relatives emerged out of the woodwork to meet us. We got to know them better, and were not only able to strengthen family bonds, we were also, since most of the family had spent their lives in England without ever venturing elsewhere, able to regale them with tales of our adventures in Africa. We would tell them stories about travelling from Jo'burg in our old

1938 Chevy car, my dad's pride and joy, which seemed to give us a certain prestige among kids of similar ages. During this period, which was almost a year, I was enrolled in Wilson's School, a local grammar in southeast London, while Graham was enrolled in the local elementary school. At Wilson's, I vividly remember doing chemistry experiments involving burning magnesium ribbon, and then carefully weighing the residue. An oxide was produced, establishing the molecular formula of magnesium oxide. This experience provided a great impetus to my scientific bent! But when my father was recovered sufficiently to travel, I was very pleased to get back to Africa.

School days in Lusaka

For my schooling in Zambia, I attended Lusaka Boys School initially, starting in the final class, standard five. At that stage, black communities didn't mix with white communities, and every child in my school was white. Even though there wasn't any formal apartheid (which was why we moved there), a cultural bias still prevailed.

The school was, in many aspects, structured along the lines of what one might expect from an English standard elementary school. There was, however, an unusual mix of rural kids and town kids, many from families in positions of authority. It was common to see farm kids attending barefoot, as was customary for them. This was considered normal – hardly worth mentioning.

In my standard five year, I developed a fascination with radios. As children often do, I became obsessed and absorbed a great deal of information about radios and their functioning. I read extensively about valves, circuits and radio mechanisms such as superheterodyne receivers, exploring how they operated.

This passion led me to disassemble several radios in order to understand their inner workings. However, there was one particular radio, an old one given to me by my grandfather during our time in Britain, that I deeply regret dismantling. Unfortunately, I couldn't put it back together or make it function properly again. Nevertheless, that experience taught me the value of taking things apart to see how they

functioned. It helped me better understand the impact of removing different components.

Additionally, I built a crystal radio set, winding the tuning coils myself, and installed a long aerial in the garden that allowed me to pick up remarkably strong signals – so strong, in fact, that it once picked up Buenos Aires in Argentina in the middle of the night.

Next, I decided to build a 'bicycle radio' for myself, using the bicycle I commuted to school on. I planned to power it using the dynamo connected to the back wheel of my bicycle for running the lights. I built the radio under the saddle and connected it to headphones.

To make the bicycle radio function, I tinkered with various capacitors, valves and resistors. Transistors hadn't yet been invented in those days. It's hard to explain precisely how I got it to work; even my father asked me how I learned enough to construct radios, but I could only reply, "I don't know, Dad, I just fiddle about and do it." And that was the truth – it was all just a kind of experimentation.

My bicycle radio attracted the attention of my school's headmaster. He asked to see it in action, so I proudly showed him. Unfortunately, there are no photographs capturing the humorous sight of the headmaster pedalling around in my headphones, trying to catch the local radio station!

"I'm very impressed," he told me, but he didn't take it further than that.

Seeking pocket money, I attempted to repair radios for local neighbours and friends. Unfortunately, I didn't always succeed. In fact, in some instances, I returned radios in a worse state than when I initially received them. It was a learning experience, and sometimes my efforts were more about investigation than solutions.

Nevertheless, this marked the beginning of my journey into practical science, and it all began with a radio when I was 11 years old.

When I was around 12 years old, I was best friends with a boy named Brian. His father, Cyril Richardson, held the position of superintendent at a large prison, and, interestingly, he also served as the hangman. The prison was located in what was known as Broken

Hill back then, but in modern Zambia, it's called Kabwe. During a visit to Kabwe, we obtained permission from Brian's father to enter the prison grounds to teach, a venture that marked my first experience of teaching. It was remarkable to see the enthusiasm of the prisoners, some of whom had committed crimes as serious as murder. With hopes of securing better opportunities upon their release, they welcomed the opportunity to learn English, arithmetic and other subjects. It was a formative experience for me, and one that left a lasting impression.

When I was around 15 years old, a group of us decided to explore the Leopard's Hill limestone caves, located in a remote part of Lusaka. Without any adults accompanying us, we ventured into the caves equipped only with candles, ready for an adventure. The air was thick with the presence of bats, and bat guano covered the ground. As we delved deeper into the caves, we encountered narrow passages where we had to crawl on our bellies to progress. Communication was limited among us, adding to the sense of excitement and uncertainty. At one point, someone sustained a minor injury, a mere grazing on the leg, highlighting the inherent risks of our youthful escapade.

At about the time I started school in Lusaka, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was formed. This resulted in the establishment of two new secondary schools in the Lusaka suburb of Kabulonga: Gilbert Rennie and Jean Rennie. Both schools were designed identically – one for boys and the other for girls. I was in the first 'form 1' of Gilbert Rennie. Both schools had modern classrooms and science laboratories and were built as 'flagship' schools to show the value of the Federation.

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was an idea conceived by white politicians to combine Northern Rhodesia's copper wealth with Southern Rhodesia's industry and farming, and with labour supplied by Nyasaland. This union did not, though, consider the opinions of the black communities in these three countries, and by 1963, the Federation had fallen apart. Yet, during that brief period, initiatives like the government's investment in new schools, including ours, aimed to demonstrate that resources wouldn't be centred just in

Salisbury (now Harare) in Southern Rhodesia.[1] Significant investment poured in to promote educational opportunities in the northern regions and Nyasaland as well.

I was fortunate to have a remarkable physics teacher in Mr RH Brown. I had him for my entire school career because he came with us from the elementary school to become a teacher at the secondary school. He crystallised my passion in science. This period coincided with the Soviet Union's launch of the artificial satellite Sputnik in 1957, so it was all very exciting. Mr Brown was someone I truly admired. He became my idol. His teachings in science were not only informative but practical and valuable.

I want to devote a little space to relating my time under the tutelage of Ron Brown because it had such a significant effect on my future direction. He had an innovative approach to physics teaching, offering us two avenues of learning. First, he gave rigorous experiment-based formal lessons covering the required syllabus, and second, he encouraged us to explore and engage, within reason, in activities of our choice.

We had science fairs, and he initiated a science society, offering us the opportunity to prepare and present lectures on any scientific topic we found intriguing. My first lecture was about UFOs and my conclusion was that we knew they were out there, somewhere. Each of us received a white lab coat after we gave our first lecture. The delivery of three or more lectures earnt us a 'professorship', a significant status symbol in the school community.

Attendance at society meetings was extended to our sister school, Jean Rennie, bringing girls into particular focus for us as adolescents! We then invited the black students at a school called Munali, of which the Federation also assisted in the construction, to our science meetings, and we sometimes visited their school too. It was a lesson for us in how we couldn't continue as a segregated society.

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[1] Salisbury became Harare after full independence was granted by Britain on 18th April 1980. For clarity, I refer to Salisbury and Rhodesia before this date, and Harare and Zimbabwe thereafter.

In formal lessons, we participated in experiments to explore various concepts. One such series involved us in trolley experiments. (This was invented as part of the Physical Science Study Committee (PSSC) programme in the USA.) The set-up involved launching down a gentle slope a wooden trolley that ran on ball bearing-mounted wheels and trailed a ticker tape. As the tape passed through a ticker tape machine, tiny dots were punched at set intervals along its length. As the trolley accelerated, the spaces between these dots increased. From the measurements, we could calculate velocities, acceleration and other fundamental aspects of motion. A pivotal moment in my science education!

Another example illustrates the close relationship between our formal classes and the science society. In the classroom, I did an electrical experiment involving a Wheatstone bridge – essentially a length of wire with a sliding contact to balance the electromotive force from one source against another. The crucial aspect for such an experiment was having a consistent stable standard cell which maintained a constant voltage. A cadmium Weston standard cell was just such a source. The school didn't have a standard cell, so I set out to make one, and this became the topic of my second science society lecture. I obtained the chemicals for the cell by going to a mining laboratory and begging for them. Things were simpler then; you could easily walk into a laboratory, and if you made a good case, they would provide what you asked for. It was a wonderful time to be a young scientist!

Mr Brown was a veteran who had served as a bomber pilot during the Second World War. Despite the chaos of battle, he had always maintained a steady focus on his flight paths, ensuring the precise dropping of bombs when ordered by his navigator. His experiences shaped him into an organised and disciplined individual, but he also possessed remarkable wit and an unflappable demeanour. Undergoing emergency training as a teacher after the war and then emigrating to Zambia, his dedication and approach to teaching made him the perfect science mentor for me. I felt so inspired by him that I followed in his footsteps and became a science teacher later in life.

I often lament not having the chance to express my gratitude to him once I became a teacher myself – just a simple, "Thank you, Mr Brown."

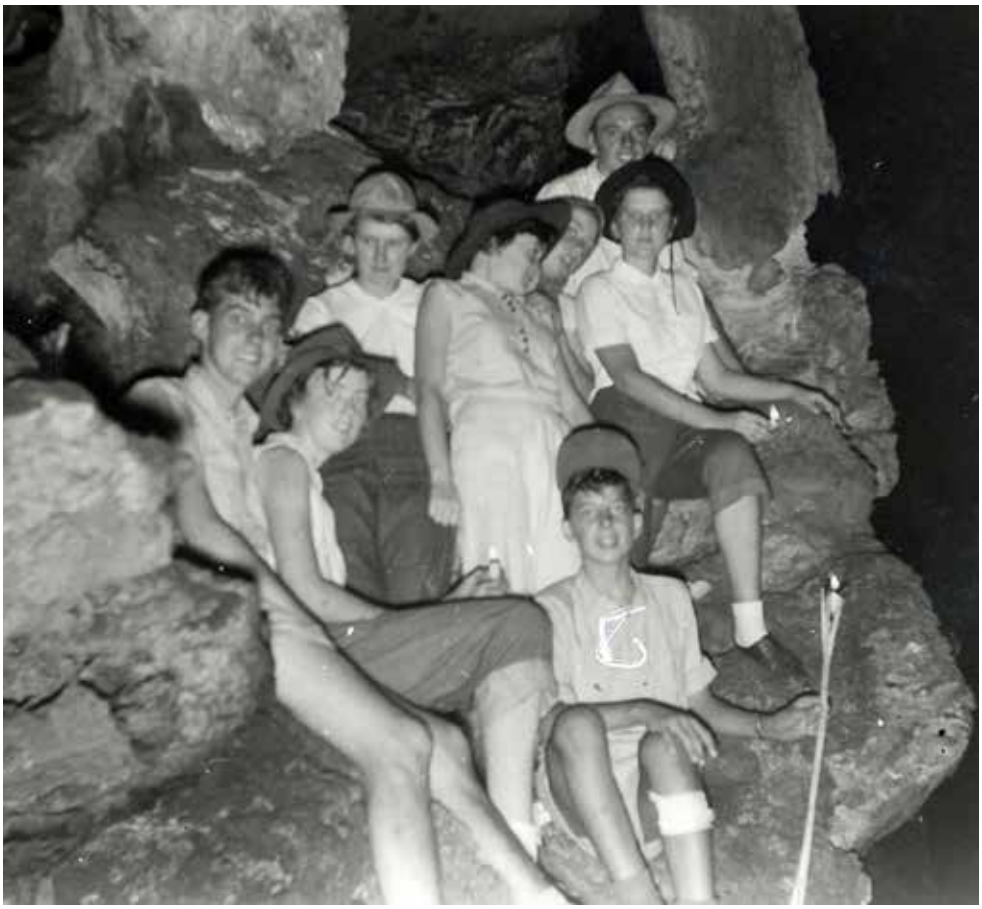
In total, I completed six years of schooling in Lusaka and graduated in 1957. In my final year at Gilbert Rennie, I was made head prefect, or 'head boy', leading the system operated at the school whereby senior students were responsible for minor infractions of discipline. I was also awarded the school Honour's Blazer in recognition of my contributions to the school, comprising a red blazer and red sweater indicative of my status. I also proudly wore a badge of honour, a distinction reserved for only one or two individuals each year. This badge held great significance, symbolising exceptional achievements. Even as head boy, one couldn't guarantee receiving such an accolade; it was based solely on individual performance. Forgive me for indulging in a bit of self-praise, but I was immensely proud to have earned that badge!

The asbestos house, Lusaka, 1950

Dad with his pride and joy, the 1938 Chevy, Lusaka, c.1951

Graham and me biking to school, Lusaka, 1952

Dad at the Ministry of Finance workshop, Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, 1952



Me with my first girlfriend (Judy) and Graham, caving at Leopard's Hill, Lusaka, 1955

Me on my rebuilt Royal Enfield, 1956

Me as head boy with Susan Rhodes (head girl), Rennie schools, 1957

CHAPTER FOUR

Loss and Learning at The University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland

My father passed away in 1958, the year I started university. He hadn't been very supportive of my decision to attend university to pursue teaching. Seeing my inclination toward mechanical and electrical things, he envisioned me following his path as an engineer. I was, though, determined to become a teacher, even if it didn't pay very much, and we had our disagreements about my choice. But as I headed to university in Salisbury in early 1958, he was bedridden and gravely ill. Despite his condition, he managed to convey his wishes for my success. "Good luck, son," he said, as I left. He passed away a few weeks later.

After my father died, my mother, at this point in her mid 40s and an ordinary working-class woman whose skills were primarily in housekeeping and raising children, had to become independent. She completely reinvented herself, including learning how to drive. I tutored her, which was quite a hair-raising experience. Once she had obtained her licence, she purchased a small Ford car, thus gaining her independence. Owning not just a means of transportation but a sense of freedom and autonomy, my mother was truly in the prime of her life. A position then opened up in the Ministry of Finance for telephony work as a switchboard operator. Despite having no prior experience in the field, she secured this job with the support of Dad's friends, who helped facilitate the opportunity for her.

She persevered with her new job, despite the challenges. For example, she accidentally dropped a couple of important calls (if memory serves, I believe one of them was from the Minister himself!), but she kept learning. She adapted, learned and evolved into a valued member of the staff.

Thankfully, I had received a federal scholarship from the mining companies for my university education, which covered some of my fees. I also received a federal teaching grant, which was available to individuals who wanted to become a teacher. There were also other bits and pieces that I had put together to cover my own finances.

I wore a black armband for a couple of weeks in honour of my father's passing, a common symbol of respect back then to mark the death of someone in your family. It saddened me to lose my father, but there was a lot happening at that stage in my life. My primary focus was to acquire my degree, and that drive took precedence. When I was alone, the loss weighed more heavily on my mind, but otherwise, I managed to maintain my focus.

Before the Federation, there were no higher education opportunities available locally and one had to go overseas. After the formation of the Federation, the British government spearheaded an initiative to establish the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, situated in Salisbury, the capital of Southern Rhodesia.

The University of London collaborated in this venture, guaranteeing the degrees offered by the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This was a substantial step because it provided a credible, recognised stamp of approval – it wasn't just some tinpot university. My degree, for example, stated 'University of London, external student', or something similar. Examiners would come out to Africa, oversee papers and practical work, and ensure that standards were upheld in line with those of British institutions like Oxford or the University of London.

The university was quite small, especially in its early years. In its first year, the total student count was around 127, and by the time I joined in 1958, it had risen only modestly to around 250 students. In my physics class, we had a mere seven or eight students, giving us a very

personalised and attentive learning experience. Our lecturers would hand out lots of assignments owing to the small class size, allowing for a more focused interaction between students and teachers compared to larger groups. We received a terrific education as a result.

As a small pioneer student body, we also got to play a major part in designing the system under which we studied. I became the chairman of the student council in my second year, initiating what turned into a tempestuous series of student meetings as we hammered out a constitution for the student body. The university was a non-racial island in a country which was still largely segregated by race. Our initial constitution made no provision for electing representatives by race, and so it remained for several years. Later, after I left, and in a regressive step, this principle was abandoned and replaced with representation based on the halls of residence, which were largely segregated by race in those early days.

During my time leading the council, I was fortunate to lead small delegations to three student conferences. We represented our students in Rome, Tunisia and Ethiopia, and it was the last-mentioned attendance that I remember best. The conference, to explore possibilities for exchange of student publications, took place in Addis Ababa over about 10 days. Already thinking of education as my career, I obtained copies of the small Amharic reading books promoted by the then Emperor Haile Selassie (the Lion of Judah) as a start on educating his thousands of young subjects. This interest led to an invitation from the Emperor for an audience with him in the royal palace. The conference of some 50 students turned up to be escorted into an enormous throne room, magnificently decorated in red and gold. We were presented to His Majesty individually, and were then served traditional snacks and mead, the latter an alcoholic drink mentioned in the Old Testament. Of course, being students, we over-imbibed and the party became very boisterous after the Emperor withdrew. Nevertheless, some of us turned up at the palace the next morning to be escorted around the grounds by the Emperor. We were even allowed to stroke his lions, which rove freely within the grounds, and ride the horses of the Imperial Guard!

And there was still more for us to enjoy because we were also flown to the centuries-old medieval city of Harar in a DC3 aircraft belonging to His Majesty's air force. It was a truly memorable conference!

The University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland's chancellor in those early years was Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, of the British royal family. She was immensely popular with the students, and her annual visits for the graduation ceremony were occasions for celebration. In my years as chairman of the student council, I was honoured to preside over a luncheon with her and the student body. During this luncheon, she intercepted a frantic mime from one of the students to me, asking for permission to smoke a cigarette. Since she indulged in the habit herself, she smiled and asked me to grant that student his expressed wish!

I was drawn to the field of science because of my aspiration to become a teacher. I recognised the necessity of obtaining a science degree to pursue this career path. I had the opportunity to choose two majors for my studies. For the first year, we selected three subjects. Then, to pursue a BSc general degree, we needed to select two subjects to continue with. My initial three subjects were physics, chemistry and mathematics. Passing the first year was a prerequisite to advance to the second and third years for the second phase of the degree. I managed to pass that phase. In the second phase, I focused on physics and chemistry.

The curriculum followed the full London syllabus, which required extensive practical work in both subjects alongside lectures covering various theoretical aspects.

I distinctly recall my organic chemistry lecturer, Professor Harper. His unique teaching technique involved writing on the board and erasing behind him as he wrote, leaving words in between for us to catch. We had to take notes quickly before they disappeared! I don't know if my distaste for organic chemistry is a consequence of that teaching method, but there you have it.

We participated actively in the research project of one of our physics professors, Dr McElhinney. He was exploring the ionosphere by sending

signals up and bouncing them back down to Earth, and we would record their time of arrival with a radio receiver. This was crucial to determine the ionosphere's height. The experiments often took place at night, and we, as students, enthusiastically joined McElhinney in these endeavours. Although I believe our findings might have been published, I never thought to follow up on this research.

I graduated in December of 1960 with my BSc (Hons).

That same year, my mother was killed in a tragic car accident. She had begun dating a man, and they were on a date to have an afternoon picnic near the Kafue River. On the way back, a heavily intoxicated farmer ran into the front of their car. There were no seatbelts in those days, and the impact threw her through the windscreen, fracturing her skull. Her friend was killed instantly.

Barely three years after my father's death, news of the accident was a grim call to receive. I thumbed my way back to Lusaka immediately. Although I got there before my mother died, she never regained consciousness. She was truly a remarkable person, making a life as an independent woman after losing her husband. It was tragic that she couldn't enjoy that life for long.

My brother Graham and I attended the funeral together. At the time, Graham was still studying in the sixth form at the Gilbert Rennie school. After our mother passed away, he faced uncertainties about where he would live while he finished his education. However, Lionel and Pat Humphreys, a kind-hearted couple in the government financial department who didn't have children of their own, graciously opened their doors to Graham. They provided a home, even setting aside money in a bank account for his future. They were wonderful, caring people, and we are both grateful for their critical support.

Going through this tragedy together brought Graham and me significantly closer, even though I didn't see very much of him while he was finishing his A levels. For approximately a year and a half, the Humphreys supported him until he headed off to the University of Rhodesia to earn a geology degree.

When he graduated, he went to work as a prospecting geologist for one of the mines in Zambia's Copperbelt. His role entailed walking in a straight line across vast stretches of land, collecting soil samples at intervals, meticulously labelling them and later constructing a geological map to assess traces of copper and similar elements. His life as a geologist, walking unprotected through the Zambian bush, was lonely, and sometimes dangerous.

I persuaded him to come to the Bahamas when I took up an appointment out there some years later (see Chapter 6). While there, he met and married his wife, Angela, who was the biology teacher in the department of science I headed.

Mum with her car, c.1958

Me and Shirley, 21st birthday party, 1959

Me (student president) and Maureen Johnson (secretary) with Her Majesty the Queen Mother, 1959

Students' Union Council, 1959

Me with the Queen Mother, student dinner, 1960

CHAPTER FIVE

Beginning a Family

When I went to university, I continued to date my high school girlfriend, Judith Anderson. In my senior year, we split, and Shirley Aitken-Cade came onto the scene. She was a fellow undergraduate, studying sociology, but a year ahead of me.

We dated for about a year and married in August of 1961, a few months after my graduation. We were in our early 20s. After arranging everything, we tied the knot and embarked the Union-Castle Line's ship *Pretoria Castle* for Britain for our honeymoon.

Once in London, I pursued a one-year course at the Institute of Education to earn a graduate certificate in education. This enabled me to obtain my teaching qualification. Upon arrival, we settled in to a tiny flat in Tooting Bec in South London at a cost of £3 10*s* a week.

As I couldn't work, the agreement was that Shirley would find some form of employment to sustain us. She took up various jobs, from working in a shop to securing clerical positions here and there. Although none of these roles brought in a substantial income, they provided enough for us to get by while I pursued my studies.

We didn't enjoy a lavish lifestyle by any stretch of the imagination, but we made it work. I vividly recall us deliberating about whether we should eat some green and mouldy sausages that we couldn't afford to discard. I suggested scraping off the mould and frying them, deeming

it an acceptable solution to our tight budget. Despite the challenges we faced, we were genuinely happy.

At around Christmas towards the end of our first year of marriage, we went to a concert in the Royal Albert Hall. I believe it was a programme of Tchaikovsky. We both enjoyed it very much, and nine months later, Barry was born!

Shirley was on the pill at the time, so Barry's arrival was a bit of a shock to both of us. Birth control pills were in their infancy back then and had a very high oestrogen dose, which meant that taking them regularly was essential. In the throes of passion that night, Shirley forgot to take her pill. And that was all it took. Barry was born on my birthday, 25th September, in 1962.

Shirley's mother, Edith, who originally hailed from Kansas City in the United States, lived in Mount Silinda on the eastern side of Rhodesia, where she worked as a nurse. She married a local white hunter and established her family in that part of the world. Despite her American roots, Edith rarely returned to her home country. Many of her friends there were ageing, and some were passing away. Conscious of this, Shirley and I conceived an idea: we would journey to America and traverse the country, recording messages from Edith's friends onto a small reel-to-reel tape recorder and bring them back to Africa for her.

During the time between graduating from the London Institute of Education and taking up a planned teaching appointment in the US, we therefore undertook this trip across the USA in a Nash Rambler car, which we bought for $250 in Wilmington, Delaware, on arrival in the States. We travelled 20,000 miles across the country in that old car, even though Shirley was pregnant and it didn't have air conditioning! We had to take Icelandic Airlines over and back because it was the only airline that would carry pregnant women! It was such a memorable and epic event that we made a scrapbook of our trip. It's still in the family's possession.

I admire the diversity in the United States. You can find any climate, population or community you desire here. However, I'm not blind to the fact that diversity issues persist, particularly concerning equitable

treatment for black individuals, which concerns and disappoints me. Nevertheless, I've always been drawn to this country.

Embarking on our journey without the convenience of the Internet or Google Maps, Shirley and I explored the US with a hefty guidebook, and relied on a large map book to navigate our route. It was quite an adventure when you consider that neither of us was familiar with the US at the time.

People seemed to gravitate toward us, perhaps because we were perceived as somewhat unconventional – after all, we hailed from Africa. We were on a mission to collect messages for Shirley's mother, a visionary nurse turned missionary, who hadn't seen her former students in years. Her students recorded heartfelt messages for her on our small tape recorder. We made it back to England with our precious taped messages with only three weeks to spare before Barry entered the world.

I intended to return to the US in October 1962 to secure a teaching job, or at least, that was the initial plan. Amid our preparations, however, the Cuban Missile Crisis unfolded. From Britain, we witnessed the tension escalating between the major powers on either side of the Atlantic and concluded that it wasn't the right time to return to America, fearing it might become a nuclear battleground.

I scrambled to find alternative work, and then managed to secure passage on an 8,000-ton cargo ship bound for Cape Town the following week. We embarked on this unexpected journey with our six-week-old child.

The cargo ship was very small, with just the crew and five passengers. I suspect that the crew was making a bit on the side, but I don't know that with certainty. We did pay *somebody* for our three-week passage to Cape Town. It was, nevertheless, a special journey. The crew really enjoyed having a newborn baby on board. We'd find the first mate wheeling the pram and helping Barry go to sleep.

While en route from Cape Town to our final destination by rail, we made a brief stop in Salisbury, where Shirley's parents lived. We stayed with them for a couple of weeks before taking another train,

this time heading to Luanshya in Zambia, a Copperbelt town where the federal government had appointed me as head science teacher at a co-educational school.

We lived in Luanshya for almost three years, during which time our first daughter, Eleanor, was born on 7th January 1964.

As parents, we found ourselves constantly fretting over every minor cough or hiccup our kids experienced. Each little ailment would stir up our worries, and we would rush to our local Irish GP repeatedly with our concerns. It was during one of these visits, probably the hundredth time or so, when our kids were experiencing some minor issues, that our GP shared an unexpected but strangely comforting remark: "Know that they're very difficult to kill." Surprisingly, his candid statement offered a sense of reassurance in those moments of parental concern.

Me and Shirley, engagement photo, 1961

CHAPTER SIX

Beginning My Teaching Career in Changing Times: Luanshya, Zambia, and Nassau, Ba

Luanshya High School

Teaching was a fulfilling profession for me. I decided to teach at high school level because the science was a bit more complex and interesting. I wanted to spark the interest of the kids I taught, so I would attempt to dress up the elementary things they were learning in such a way that they could see the science underneath the facts.

In Central Africa, as well as in Britain, the teaching of science was predominantly about imparting a multitude of facts accumulated by various scientists throughout history. The teacher's role was to ingrain these scientific facts in the students, typically by writing them on the blackboard, discussing them briefly, having the students copy them down, and then assessing their ability to reproduce them in exams.

Following the Soviets' successes in satellite technology, there was a significant international shift in the field of science education. We knew we couldn't surpass the Soviets if our approach to science education remained solely rooted in traditional methods. The science world was undergoing a transformation, introducing new methods and approaches deemed more effective for teaching subjects like chemistry, physics and biology. There was, therefore, a pivotal shift towards emphasising the importance of conducting science experiments.

The USA was at the forefront of changing the teaching of science. Eager to adapt, I gathered as much information about the new methods and approaches as I could and began incorporating aspects of the USA's Physical Science Study Committee's (PSSC) programme into my teaching at Luanshya High School. Additionally, the US chemical bond approach (CBS) emerged as another significant development for the field of chemistry, while in Britain, the Nuffield Science Teaching Project was introducing similar revolutionary techniques in teaching science. All of this contributed to my teaching.

Engaging in experiments was crucial because it was the most effective means to truly comprehend science – by actively participating in the process, repeating experiments and generating data through this iterative loop. There was a significant improvement in the quality of science education as a result of this approach.

When I was contemplating the essential science concepts to teach, the approach was to delve into the fundamental principles and how these concepts were derived. The goal was to construct a model that would guide students through experiments to aid their understanding. One of the ways in which I did this was to model the kinetic theory, which underpins the effect of energy on matter, at an elementary level with students. The model is constructed using students arranged in rows and columns to illustrate a cubic crystal. In previous experiments students had obtained samples of salt crystals by evaporating a solution. These crystals are obviously cubic, and seeing the link between the salt crystals and the model of a group of students is an easy step. The introduction of energy into the model by shaking the linked students can cause the links to be disrupted and the individual particles to move freely (that is, the crystal 'melts'). From this beginning, students are led to an understanding of the three states of matter, evaporation, and the nature of gases and liquids.

Another fascinating example was magnetism. Students needed to grasp the intricacies of magnets, magnetic fields, polarities and attraction. To illustrate this, iron filings on a piece of paper were used to reveal the magnetic force lines. Then, the pivotal question arose: what's inside a magnet?

This curiosity led to an experiment in which we broke magnets into smaller pieces and theorised tiny magnets within, aligned in a north–south orientation. This deduction hinted at something occurring within the magnet itself. Accordingly, I tasked students with heating a piece of a magnet using a Bunsen burner.

My teaching approach centred around stimulating students' critical thinking. In the case of magnetism, I encouraged students to contemplate the magnetism itself. When a piece of a magnet was heated, it lost its magnetic properties – the magnetism had, seemingly, vanished. Upon allowing it to cool down, the magnetic characteristics reappeared. Guiding them by reference to the basics of kinetic theory, I prompted them to consider what happens when you heat a substance: the particles inside it vibrate vigorously. If these vibrations intensify enough, the particles can lose their order. Conversely, when it cools down, these particles return to their original positions, and, consequently, the magnetic properties are restored.

To simplify the explanation of magnetism, the concept of tiny particles within the magnet, essentially mini magnets or small magnetic domains, was theorised from the heating experiment, and students learned that small magnetic areas are jumbled up and vibrating in various directions, showing no large-scale magnetism.

To test this understanding, I presented another scenario: if we take a piece of iron and stroke it with a magnet, what do the students think happens? Some students might suggest that it aligns particles in the iron. To verify this, we conducted the experiment and, as expected, the iron particles did align so as to produce a weak magnet.

Emulating my mentor, RH Brown, I established a science society at Luanshya High School. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to express to him the extent of his influence on me and how instrumental his guidance was in my success. Nonetheless, I'm certain he would have been pleased to know the impact he had had.

Throughout my professional journey, my passion for teaching and my fascination with science remained unwavering.

Luanshya High School suited me very well. But during this period, the Federation shattered, and in 1964, Northern Rhodesia demanded its independence from the colonial office in Britain. It became the self-governing country of Zambia that we know today. With the system in flux, rather like the heated magnet, our situation became uncomfortable. I grew up in a segregated society and was shaped by that society, so I found the rapid changes in Zambia disquieting. Suddenly, there were all kinds of different people in the school, and I was still in transition myself.

I applied for science teaching posts in several parts of the world and received, all on the same day, notices of offers from Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia, Wanganui in New Zealand and Nassau in the Bahamas. We decided to take our young family to the Bahamas!

Queen's College

In 1965, I accepted a teaching position in science at Queen's College in Nassau, Bahamas. (Despite the name, this was a high school.) As a young couple, Shirley and I were enticed by the exotic allure of the Bahamas, with its captivating features. It seemed like an appealing prospect, especially since we didn't know much about relocating to New Zealand, which was a considerable distance away.

Queen's College was an independent Methodist school, highly regarded in the Bahamas, but it was an entirely new environment for me. Keep in mind that I was arriving from Zambia, which was in transition and still very segregated. The country had only just begun to integrate a few black and Indian students into the boys' school in which I taught. However, upon arriving in the Bahamas, I encountered a completely integrated setting. The community was so intermixed that almost everyone was of a similar coffee-coloured complexion. The Bahamas' racial spectrum was far more continuous and diverse than anything I had experienced before, and it was quite striking.

There was a phase of adjustment, and the true turning point for me stands out vividly. I remember reprimanding a student named Kate Adderly for not completing her homework. Halfway through

my scolding, it dawned on me that she was black. In Zambia, such a situation would have put me on edge, and I would have been cautious about reprimanding a black student too harshly. However, in the Bahamas, that distinction held no weight. The cultural dynamics were different; there was a sense that everyone was regarded the same way. This realisation came as quite an eye-opener to me and marked my personal evolution.

Another notable aspect of my time at Queen's College was the school's struggle with teaching physics. Remarkably, until my arrival, the school had never achieved any success in teaching physics. Historically, no student had passed the exam. During my first year at the institution, I had a lone student under my tutelage for physics, and, against the trend, he succeeded in passing the subject at Advanced level. This achievement significantly bolstered my standing and credibility.

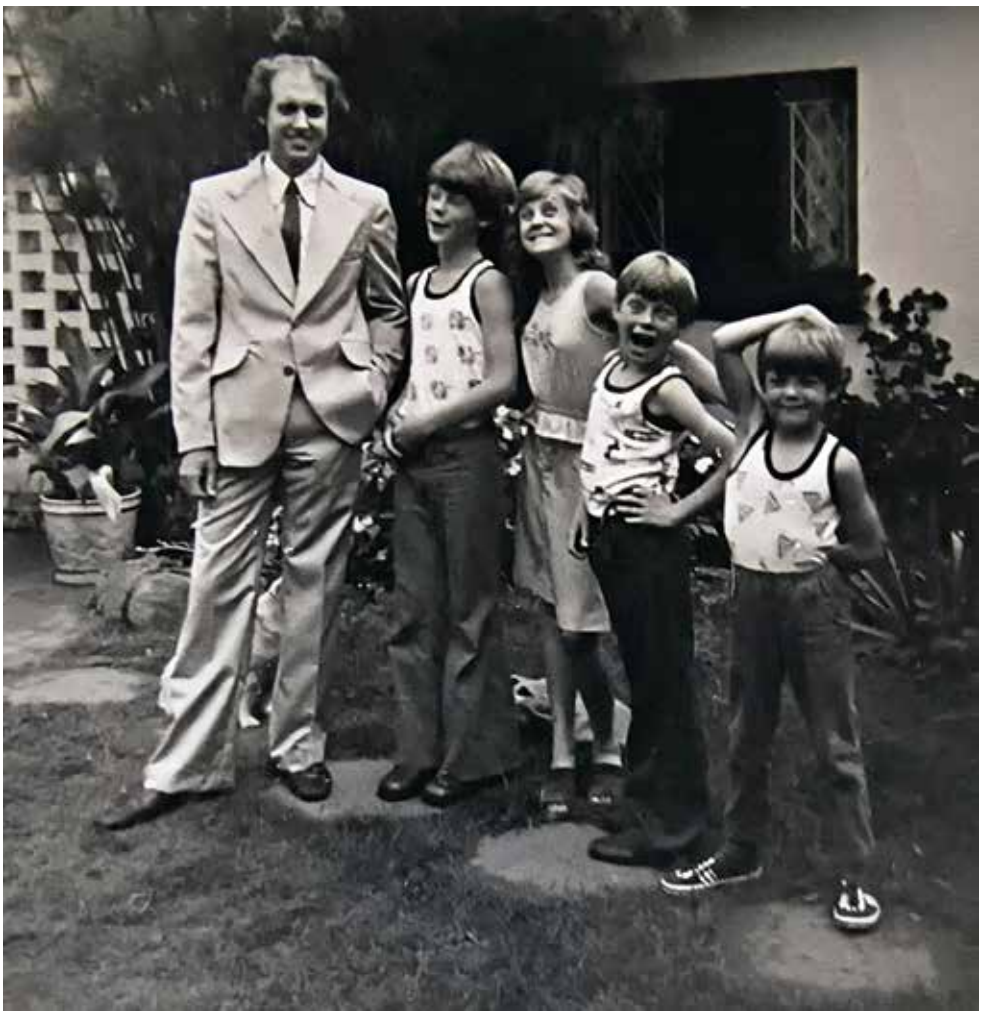
I not only had to establish a physics laboratory from scratch, but I also had to implement various innovations. Since Queen's was a private school, resources and funding were limited. We didn't have money for gas pipes, for example, so I had local carpenters create benches, each of which was equipped with a gas cylinder. I also installed a galvanometer on the wall with a focused light on it, allowing me to illustrate concepts that were otherwise challenging. The galvanometer was incredibly sensitive and able to pick up extremely small electrical currents.

During my time at Queen's, I was assigned as the master in charge of public examinations. Dorothy Stimpson, the secretary, typed up letters and memos about exams for me to send out to the parents. In one unforgettable incident, she nearly sent out a letter that should have been headed, 'Public Examinations', but with the 'l' missing from 'public'! Fortunately, we caught this error in time and avoided an embarrassing situation. Once rectified, we got a chuckle out of it.

It was around this time that Shirley and I went on a holiday to Eleuthera, one of the nearby islands. It was a long, thin island and fairly empty of people, which was quite romantic, and staying there didn't cost very much. In the natural course of things, Gavin came along shortly afterwards.

Gavin was born at a hospital in Nassau on 12th March 1967, and his arrival was not without incident. Obviously, I wanted to be present at the birth, but the hospital was run mostly by American nurses and doctors who weren't used to having husbands on the scene, and they had to be persuaded to let me in. They also had a tendency to knock out the mothers with drugs during delivery, so every time they put a mask on Shirley's face, I took it off again. Gavin arrived in fine style, my wife was conscious and I was very happy.

We now had a family of three children, all under six years of age. Shirley's parents in Salisbury often told us that they wished we weren't so far away as they wanted to see their grandchildren occasionally, which seemed reasonable, and they pushed for our return. Within three years of our arrival, we left the Bahamas, although we could have stayed longer. I possess a collection of photographs from my time in the classroom. In those images, I appear as if I was a permanent fixture there.



Me with (left to right) Barry, Eleanor, Gavin and Rory in Chisipite

Me (centre) planning the Inhaca Science Expedition at Oriel boys' school, Salisbury

CHAPTER SEVEN

Rhodesia: Becoming Self-Sufficient

We left the Bahamas in 1968 and returned to Rhodesia, our decision to do so based on more than Shirley's parents' desire to spend more time with their grandchildren. Shirley had also reached a point where the Bahamas didn't offer the same appeal for her. Meanwhile, I discovered a path that offered greater career prospects for me than my role at Queen's. I took up a post as the head of science at Oriel Boys' High School, in Salisbury, ended my contract with Queen's College and returned to Rhodesia. The following year, on 15th May 1969, our fourth child, Rory, was born in Salisbury.

It was around this time that challenges began to surface in my marriage with Shirley. Looking back, I can see my lack of sensitivity to the immense responsibility she had in nurturing our young children. She had limited time and energy for me, which I had difficulty understanding back then. Hindsight offers clarity and reveals my shortcomings at that time.

These were difficult times, not only for me and Shirley but for Rhodesia too. I was preoccupied with my teaching at Oriel, and as the infiltration of guerilla groups intent on overthrowing Rhodesia's government increased, magnifying the turmoil and the differing opinions of the white population, Shirley and I grew apart. We were both aware of the developing problem but chose different ways of dealing with it. Shirley tightened her focus on the family, while

I selfishly sought companionship through liaisons with friends and colleagues. Neither of us tried to confront the problem honestly.

Simultaneously, an opportunity to purchase a deceased estate in Chisipite arose. At that time, Chisipite was a fringe area of Salisbury and not regarded as prime real estate, so we were able to make an offer on the estate. It was accepted by the executors, and we became the owners of three acres and a small house. I immediately began the process of enlarging the house with four bedrooms and an additional bathroom for our growing family. I think both Shirley and I hoped our new home would give our marriage a fresh impetus.

A teacher's salary offered limited finances, so we decided to use the three acres of land to create self-sufficiency. We established five beehives way down on the far corner of the property behind some trees, and they produced our honey. We sank a borehole to give us unlimited water and, gradually, we acquired the resources we needed. We also had labour available to us. Employing a gardener, we cultivated vegetables. To educate ourselves on basic farming principles, we read a lot of self-help and farming books on various subjects.

We expanded our little homestead with a number of animals. We constructed a pond at the bottom of our property, which allowed us to keep ducks. They would, we anticipated, help fertilize the land and produce manure beneficial for our vegetables. We also had bantam hens. These not only provided occasional meat and eggs but also aided us in pest control by picking off insects from the rows of vegetables. Having the hens around worked wonders. I also constructed rabbit cages and we started raising rabbits. Their breeding speed was truly remarkable, even with just three breeding does and a buck. Once the male was introduced to a female, she would produce a litter in a little over a month. We developed a system in which we separated the litter from the doe after about two weeks, allowing them to grow independently. The mother was then put to the buck again one month after birthing the litter. This arrangement provided us with a consistent weekly supply of rabbit meat. The litters grew rapidly and could be culled after six to eight weeks.

On Saturday mornings, I would select the rabbits to be slaughtered. The process for this wasn't hard at all. You hold them up by the back legs and they stick their head out. A swift karate chop then stuns the animal before slaughter. I usually attempted to do this while the kids were occupied elsewhere with sports or other activities, but they once caught me in the act, red-handed. They weren't particularly perturbed by the killing process, and, being children, their curiosity led them to want to see the rabbits' internal workings. The kids had pet rabbits too, but they were kept separately from those designated for meat.

We did have one mishap with the rabbits. In the dead of night, somebody came and stole and killed our buck. These are quite large animals, so there was a trail of blood to follow. It led all the way to our neighbour's yard, and, with the help of the police, we eventually found the perpetrator. I never got the buck back because he had eaten it. However, I had to bear witness to the man's sentencing for the theft.

In addition, we ventured into milk production by acquiring some Saanen goats. Our three goats proved to be exceptional milk producers. Once they started lactating, they continued to produce milk indefinitely, provided they were milked regularly. A well-bred Saanen goat can yield about a gallon of high-quality milk each day. An advantage of these goats is that, without a male involved in the process, you avoid the metallic taste that originates from the pheromones in the male. If you keep your goats separate from the male goats, you will have delicious milk that is even whiter than cow's milk. We were very satisfied with them and kept them until we moved again. We had so much milk that we were giving it away!

My least favourite job was waking up at 5am to milk the goats. After a party that goes late into the evening, the last thing you want to do is get out of bed in the morning. Alas, it had to be done! You could hear them yelling and pleading, 'I'm heavy! Come and milk me'.

The kids used to help us out as well. Shirley was most focused on helping to produce the vegetables. We cultivated a vegetable known as comfrey, which was touted as a miracle plant. Despite its reputation, it didn't have a pleasant taste, so we never consumed it. However, it

turned out to be a favourite among our goats, which absolutely loved it. They also relished dead papaya leaves, which we nicknamed 'goat crisps' because they were crunchy!

All in all, we had vegetables, honey, milk, fruit and meat – everything we needed. It provided the learning platform for us to prepare for our next step!

At this point in my narrative, it's necessary to depart from the chronological since major parallel lines in my life were developing simultaneously. These were: my involvement in national television; leading the development of a new way of teaching secondary school science for rural secondary schools in Zimbabwe; the final disintegration of my marriage to Shirley; and my involvement in the police reserve as a consequence of the increasing guerilla activities in the country.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mr Fix It and RhoSci

In the midst of everything else, Mike Robson, a friend I had known since college, presented me with an opportunity. He was producing a show for national TV in Rhodesia and approached me about being involved, thinking it would be enjoyable for us to work together. As a result, I found myself with a weekly TV programme while continuing my teaching at Oriel. Upon reflection, it's remarkable how much energy I had in my 30s!

In my inaugural TV programme, I shared insights on assembling basic technological components – simple yet essential elements. I covered topics such as attaching a plug to a cable, explained how fuses operated, offered maintenance advice for sewing machines and emphasised when to oil and when to avoid it, among other helpful tips. For this segment, my name on the show was 'Mr Fix It'. I hosted a season of seven or eight programmes.

This programme introduced me to the world of television, and I found that I had a taste for it. It sparked an interest in me to create a science-based programme. Named *RhoSci* and produced by Tim Atkins, the show aired in Rhodesia at 5.30pm in the evening in 1975 and 1976, targeting younger school-aged kids at middle school but capturing the attention of adults too, thanks to favourable reviews in the national TV programme guides. These are excerpts from a few of them.

1975

Alan Dock's *RhoSci* is done with enthusiasm and a good deal of preparation. He has the enviable knack of simplifying often complicated processes. Last week's show on the telephone, for instance, must have held many parents as well as their offspring. It was far better done than the old "Mr. Wizard" shows. One wonders, in fact whether this or something similar should not be screened at peak times.

1976

Stealing quietly back to the screen this month was Alan Dock's *RhoSci 76*. Dock is the perfect guide-explainer, and our children are in safe hands with his lucid commentaries. Why, though, bury something as good as this at 5.30 on Thursdays, hardly a capacity viewing time.

Paul Chadwick, *Look & Listen,* RTV

The show was aired live, and it was an unscripted affair. Arriving at the studio with my selected materials for the day, I would set them up in sequence along a bench. There were no detailed instructions for the cameramen or producers; they only knew when I would start and finish.

The format comprised three segments, each about eight minutes in length, in a half-hour show, interspersed with advertisements. In the first segment, I delved into scientific principles such as exploring fire, and conducted experiments to elucidate the necessity of fuel, oxygen and heat to facilitate burning. Then, in the second part, I showcased real work in an area related to the topic under discussion. For instance, for the fire episode, we visited the local fire station and observed the firefighters' professional practices. I even had the opportunity to slide down the fireman's pole. Finally, the third segment aimed to provide

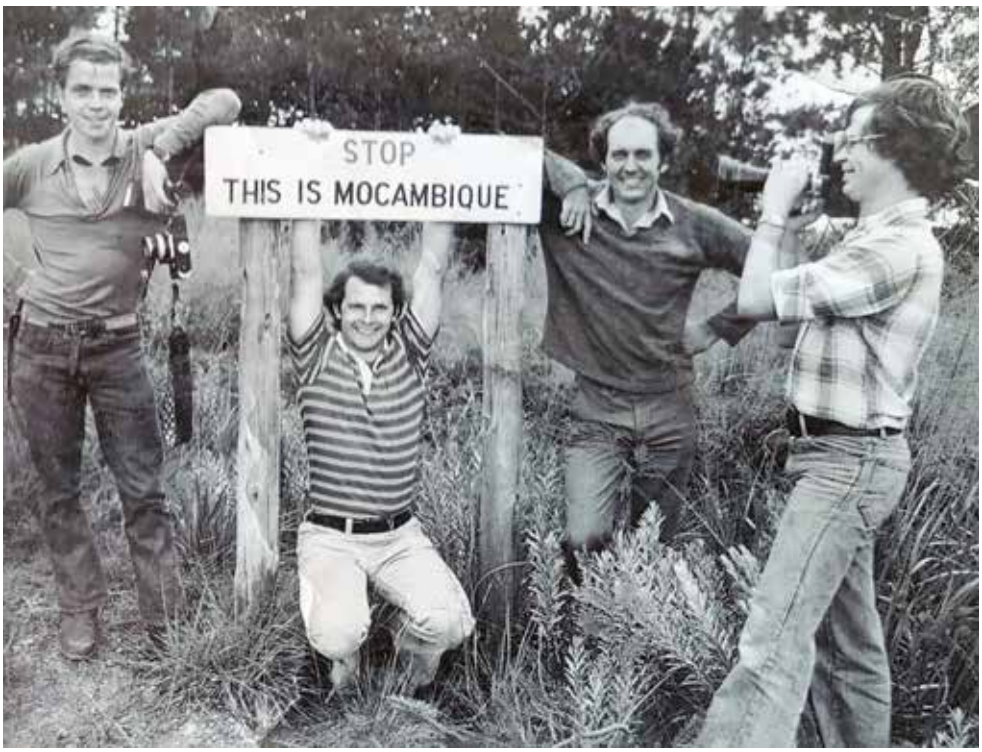
career insights, and was intended as a platform for career contemplation for the youth. I invited firefighters to share their experiences, aiming to guide young viewers to consider various career paths.

Another of the programmes was about timber, for which our crew went up to eastern Rhodesia where it bordered Mozambique. I wanted to show trees being grown and brought down. However, since this was where the guerrillas operated, everyone on the set was armed when we were up there to film this section.

When Rhodesia became independent, the show was retitled *ZimSci*, reflecting the country's name change from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe.

The show continued for a couple of years, with a total of three or four series, which was a nice run. It couldn't sustain me as a full-time job, but I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I was, though, disconcerted at being recognised on the streets. Exclamations of, "Hey, I know you!" were intriguing at first, but it came to be a bit overwhelming!

I left my role at the boys' school and gave up the television work in 1976 after I took a leap and applied for a lectureship at the new Science Education Centre (SEC) established at my university alma mater. Surprisingly, my work in Oriel School and in the TV programmes had made an impression, and the SEC, seeing potential in me and my contributions, offered me a position as a lecturer in science education. This marked my entrance into science teacher education in Salisbury. It was a promising opportunity for my professional development.



Filming TV programme on the Mozambique border

RhoSci TV programme

CHAPTER NINE

The Rhodesian War of Independence

Across the middle decades of the twentieth century, Rhodesia sought full independence from Britain, which would not grant it unless a path was opened for greater participation by black citizens. The government of the day (the Federal Party) tried to revise the constitution to allow greater representation for black citizens in parliament, but a preponderance of white voters objected, ushering in the right-wing Rhodesian Front party, led by Ian Smith, in 1962.

Ian Smith was a fighter pilot during the Battle of Britain in 1940 and was shot down and seriously wounded. He recovered, but the left side of his face was permanently paralysed. He emigrated to Rhodesia as a participant in a government scheme to populate the colonies.

Smith was steadfast in his belief in maintaining separate but equal communities for blacks, a stance that drew significant international criticism. Despite this, his policies seemed to function with the tacit support of RSA (the Republic of South Africa) for a period of approximately 11 years. Smith's declaration of Rhodesian independence, known as the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), in 1965 altered the country's course away from British rule.

This set the stage for an increase in guerrilla activities and an increase in Rhodesian military actions. Alongside UDI, legislation was introduced in Parliament to force the call-up of all reasonably fit male

citizens of up to 50 years of age for limited periods. Exemption on the basis of conscience was not recognised.

So, the choice after UDI was clear: you can join the military, or you can go to prison. Since I had four kids, there was no way that I could stand with my principles since this entailed imprisonment, so I joined the Police Reserve. The alternative would have been to join the regular military forces, which were far more dangerous. Although I knew of some in the Police Reserve who were shot and killed, I knew of *many* people in the military who were killed. While I was away on military duty, my television show was postponed, and the family kept the smallholding going, with the kids taking on more responsibility as they grew older.

I did about a month of 'boot camp' in the Police Reserve, which involved rigorous training in everything from marching and shooting rifles to throwing grenades. Once we graduated, we were assigned a number of roles in quite a few different locations. One of our duties was manning roadblocks to prevent guerillas from entering Salisbury, for by denying them access to the city centre, we prevented their tactic of throwing grenades into crowds of civilians. We went on all-night patrols too, stopping and searching incoming trucks for arms such as grenades and anything else suspect. We did this once or twice a month. Twice a year, we were sent away for three to four weeks to do something for the army.

A further Police Reserve responsibility was to provide armed escort to the weekly civilian convoys which travelled between Salisbury and Beitbridge on the South African border. These convoys usually travelled at speed, with about two car lengths between each car, driving the approximately 300 miles non-stop to minimise guerrilla attacks. Our escort vehicles were converted pickup trucks armed with ex-Second World War machine guns originally mounted in Lancaster bombers. When the war ended, many of these weapons were considered surplus and discarded, but, somehow, a good number of them ended up in Rhodesia. On the pickup trucks, they were bolted into an armoured cylinder mounted on the back that was rotated with the feet.

On our pickup truck, there was an interesting feature that you might not notice right away: a small voice pipe that ran down the side. Modelled on the old ship's communication system between bridge and engine, it connected to a funnel inside the cab, which I set up for myself. We used to while away the hours by playing chess!

On one occasion, I was sent to a region near the Bubi River on the RSA border. Our duty was to walk a section of the railway line between Salisbury and South Africa every morning. The South Africans supported Ian Smith and were using the line to send in materials and weapons. The guerillas knew this and would often plant explosives along the tracks to derail trains. It was our job (for the three or four weeks I was stationed there) to patrol up and down the line. Each patrol group was always made up of three people, one person walking in front and the other two behind, keeping a lookout to make sure he didn't get shot. We would walk the length of our section of the line, about 10 kilometres, before turning around and heading back.

On one of these patrols, we found a note from the guerrillas attached to a fence. We had, it told us, been rubbing shoulders with them in the pub in Bubi the previous evening!

On another deployment, I had a month-long stint as a radio operator in the Nyanga district, a mountainous region in the east of the country. Our designation was Oscar Alpha 6 (OA6). Five of us found ourselves on top of a barren hillside, armed with rifles and a total of three mortar bombs between us to throw at guerillas if they should attack us!

Food was very limited while we were manning OA6. I remember dropping an egg on the dirt floor while I was stationed there, and since eggs were precious, I scooped it up, washed it, dusted it and ate it. It was just about edible.

Our role involved maintaining an aerial and a powerful transceiver on a 24-hour basis. Surrounding us in the valley were Rhodesian troops trying to hunt out guerrillas, and they couldn't communicate with each other because of the intervening mountains. The role of OA6 was to relay messages back and forth between the troops, and this was key in keeping the guerrillas' activities limited.

Anyone who wore a uniform and actively hunted guerrillas was a target, so we hung tin cans on a wire around the encampment to act as a warning if anyone approached our station. We mounted a guard in rotation at night, and were there ever any attempts to breach our perimeter by guerillas, they would have sounded the cans and the rattling would give us warning. Thankfully, our cans were never rattled. It would have been so easy for the guerrillas to wipe us out, but they never figured out where we were or how significant our role was.

On a third occasion, I was stationed at the police unit in Umtali (Mutare after 1980), positioned on the eastern border of Rhodesia. Just about five miles away, on the other side of the border with Mozambique, were the assembled guerillas of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Among those guerilla units was one of their leaders, Dzingai Mutumbuka. We never had any direct interaction with him; we merely observed him and his guerillas from a distance through binoculars, just as they watched us.

There are too many details for me to be able to convey everything about my time in the Police Reserve. I have a separate day-by-day diary of one deployment that describes many events, including, for example, the night we endured a shelling that, miraculously, missed its mark.

As the dust began to settle after independence, I did meet Dzingai directly in October 1980. A geologist by training, he was, by then, Minister of Education and had become aware of my research at the university. Shortly after taking office, he called me in to see him and expressed the new government's interest in expanding secondary schools as a priority, and particularly in implementing a science programme. We discussed this aim in the light of my research for an hour or more, and because he was a decisive man of action, we agreed on a plan there and then. The plan involved cooperation between the SEC and the Ministry of Education (MOE), and my function was to be the point of contact and implementation leader.

Dzingai became a good friend of mine and was the best man at my second wedding. It's remarkable to think that, in our previous roles,

we could have been shooting at each other. We're very glad we never had to.

I worked at the university during that time, and I have a distinct memory of entering the classroom, still wearing my camo uniform after a night patrol shift, and standing my rifle in the corner before delivering a lecture. The college was a mix of black and white students, and we were on opposite sides of the fence. There's no doubt in my mind that most, if not all, of the black students were ZANU sympathisers. This meant that I had guerillas (they called themselves 'freedom fighters') in my own classroom – I know I did! Meanwhile, it was obvious to them that I, coming off duty in my camo and carrying my rifle, was in the Police Reserve. I never knew which of my students were involved. Had I known, I would have had to call the police and they would have taken the students away. Instead, everyone just kept their silence.

As Rhodesia moved through the 1970s, the war against the guerillas began to falter. The guerrilla forces were becoming stronger, more organised and a significant threat to life. South Africa was beginning to experience similar problems of its own and could no longer support the country. Protracted discussions began with Britain, leading to an independent Zimbabwe in 1980, with a new constitution and universal suffrage under the ZANU PF presidency of Robert Mugabe.

I was in the Police Reserve for about five years until it was disbanded upon Independence. It was a major part of my life for a long, long time.

Conscription legislation also had a significant impact on my eldest son, Barry. The introduction in the early 1970s of legislation banning young white males from leaving Rhodesia before they had done military service brought about a major change in our family. We had no idea how long the war against the guerilla forces would last and we certainly didn't support the policies of the Smith government, so we took the decision to send Barry, then 14 or 15 years old, to live with friends in the UK and complete his secondary schooling there. This decision didn't take us long to make because we didn't want him fighting in the Smith army when he grew older. Too many people were being killed.

Although Barry wasn't keen to go, he understood why he had to leave until the war was over.

For Barry, then in his early adolescence, going to the UK was a life-changing disruption because although, technically, he had always been British, he had never lived there. We sent him to live in Gravesend in Kent with a somewhat eccentric friend of mine, Magnus McLeod, from my university days. He already had three kids, but he volunteered to take on Barry as well. From then onwards, we corresponded with Barry through letters and occasional visits. He never returned to Rhodesia and, over time, became a proper Englishman, obtaining a BSc degree through the Open University, marrying an English girl from his school and raising a family in Britain. Now in his 60s, he continues to enjoy Britain to this day.

Meanwhile, Barry's brothers and sister followed their own paths. Rory remained in the Rhodesian school system until he completed his education. His academic performance wasn't particularly strong – schooling simply didn't align with his interests or strengths. He made his way to the UK, and knocked around doing various jobs until, as he tells it, one day when part of a temporary labour force sweeping out Wembley Stadium, he had an epiphany that he could do better than this! He followed his interest in computers and enrolled on a computing course with City & Guilds, followed by a Higher National Certificate from the University of Southampton, and he capped his academic career by obtaining an MSc in advanced computing from the University of Aberdeen!

Eleanor, on the other hand, excelled academically and upon completing her schooling, she pursued a degree in law at a university in Rhodesia. She obtained a good London degree and was set to follow further academic goals. However, love intervened, and after a whirlwind romance, married Mark Humphreys, the son of Johnny Humphreys, a good friend of mine.

Gavin took an entirely different direction. In his penultimate year at Mount Pleasant High School (chosen for its proximity to the university so that I could bring him in from the farm on the back of

my motorbike on my way to work), he learned about the existence of the United World Colleges (UWC) movement, an organisation with colleges in various parts of the world. It recruited about 100 students each year from around the world to follow the two-year International Baccalaureate course. In addition, the students assumed a role in the local community. For example, in the first UWC in Bristol in the UK, students crewed lifeboat patrols for that part of the British coastline. The College movement hoped that in bringing together students from diverse countries of the world to undertake a rigorous course of study together and to participate in a significant community responsibility, they might develop more peaceful attitudes to other countries when they assume adult roles. Gavin focused on the Armand Hammer College in New Mexico in the USA. With Shirley's help he obtained finance and was accepted into the college during his last year of school in Rhodesia! That was his life-changing fork in the road!

Shirley with (from left to right in back) Eleanor, Gavin and Barry; Rory at the front

Me on convoy duty with the Police Reserve

CHAPTER TEN

Zim-Sci: The Best Professional Years of My Life

Ahead of the curve

In October 1980, Dzingai gave me the task of preparing science materials for school students. This project was part of an initial expansion plan to transform 465 primary schools into secondary schools in rural areas and would accommodate roughly 40,000 children. It would be quite a rudimentary system for teaching science, but Dzingai appreciated the concept of a supportive programme for primary school teachers to teach secondary sciences and wanted to proceed with it.

My university tenure was paused while I created what became the Zim-Sci science teaching package. Initially, my salary was still paid by the university, but as the project got underway, we received significant support from SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency), and they took over my salary payments.

The idea behind Zim-Sci stemmed from my research programme at the university. I was keen on broadening science education to reach more students and experimented on a small scale with distance education methods for children, deploying a fairly basic set-up with tape recorders in classrooms. I became aware that most school science programmes were lacking in terms of actual science content. Those that did incorporate science followed an outdated, almost Victorian method of teaching which involved memorising scientific facts and regurgitating them during exams. This was considered an understanding of science,

but I strongly disagreed with that approach. My primary aim was to enable students to engage with science *actively*. This was the core goal behind both the distance teaching and the eventual Zim-Sci initiative: to encourage kids to experiment, immerse themselves in science, draw conclusions from experiments and learn through this process. I led the project to develop the teaching method and to provide materials to schools so they could conduct science experiments with their students. The project proved successful and was perhaps ahead of the curve.

There were six of us working on the Zim-Sci project's first team, and since this was quite a small team, it was an intensely busy time for us all. On the initial development team were Peter Dubé; Gifjem Baya, an artist on loan from the MOE to create illustrations for the teachers; Bunty Hosking; Sue Stocklemeyer; and David Wright, with the MOE.

Later, I expanded the team to include three or four additional members, bringing the total to eight or nine during the busiest times, although we were still very thinly stretched. For the most part, we maintained the same team, fostering a strong sense of team spirit. Our frequent meetings involved discussions and debates, and I think I managed to inspire them with my own enthusiasm. Overall, it was a tight-knit team.

The collaborative process within our team involved individual members writing their assigned material at home. For instance, Sue took charge of our first unit, 'Learning to be a scientist', writing it at her home before bringing it in on a Monday morning. Then, we gathered in my office to collectively review and critique the content. This process often involved dismantling and reconstructing the material, with Sue defending her work while the rest of us provided feedback, sometimes pointing out what didn't work or needed adjustments.

The programme we developed was a comprehensive one, encompassing all the elements needed to teach the Ministry of Education Junior Certificate science syllabus. The system we developed consisted of four units: pupil study guides, affordable equipment kits, resources for classroom teachers, and a teacher's guide.

Materials

The MOE requested that I create an initial batch of materials, aiming for a monthly distribution to the 465 schools in the transformation initiative. The materials in this batch were for the first grade level, form one, which typically included students of around 12 to 13 years old – similar to the early middle school level. Sadly, there were no media resources available at that time. It would have been fantastic to have them.

We commenced our work in late November and continued through December, finalising the initial guide for distribution to the schools by February 1981. These were printed by the government print service, which was adept at large-scale jobs, producing a print run of 40,000 to 50,000 copies for us.

Because the course focused on practical application, we also needed to assemble experiment kits for the schools and find something to put them in. Our solution was to procure 465 six-foot steel containers with lockable doors – filing cabinets of a kind commonly found in office settings.

During my research for distance science teaching, I visited supermarkets to search for science-related materials, collecting items like fertilizer cups, pins, paper clips and various other things that I thought could be useful. The initial kits were primarily composed of these collected materials, but the challenge was to source enough kits. We aimed for a typical class size of 40, with students working in pairs, which meant we needed 20 sets of equipment, stowed in the filing cabinets, to enable each pair in each class to conduct experiments.

Each of the 465 filing cabinets, one for every school, was transported to the local showground in Harare. We rented the primary agricultural exhibition hall and meticulously arranged these cabinets in neat rows throughout the space. Behind the scenes, we procured all the necessary supplies and equipment, and employed Boy Scouts to place everything in the cabinets. We then packed and shipped out 465 complete kits of equipment around February. This was about one month ahead of the students' schedules, which meant we worked continuously to prepare

the next set of materials, getting them written, printed, and distributed to the schools on time. We distributed a new set of guides every month.

Teaching guides

In terms of the teaching strategy for this project, we took a fairly traditional approach: a specific topic is introduced through questions and then led into a discussion orchestrated by the teacher. Subsequently, problems for investigation were derived from this discussion, ideally followed by experiments to collect data. This data was then discussed further, refined and incorporated into pupil notes. While many primary school teachers were familiar with the approach, they were much less so with the topics they had to teach.

Primarily from primary schools, the teachers had limited knowledge of science and were extremely apprehensive about handling a subject of which they knew little. Creating a Teacher's Guide that would bolster their confidence, elevate their status in the classroom and equip them with the necessary materials without requiring them to be science experts was therefore essential. The Teacher's Guide was a crucial component of the project.

The structure of the student study guides relied primarily on symbols, which served as indicators of the tasks within each lesson. (See the photos at the end of this chapter.) Additionally, there was a focus on understanding what had been learned, often termed as 'objectives' or 'behaviour objectives'. We deliberated extensively on what should be included in the objectives for each unit. Our goal was to ensure that students didn't simply memorise these objectives as a routine practice, so we aimed for them to be less straightforward, not specifying precisely what students would encounter within the 30 or 40 pages of their study guide.

This was a departure from the traditional method, in which teachers provided information on the board, students noted it down and then reproduced it in exams, a cycle familiar to those in primary education.

For instance, one of the topics in the first set of guides was centred on understanding the senses by examining when you can trust your senses

and when you can't. We began by exploring senses in a straightforward manner. For the first lessons, we even provided a script of what we wanted the teachers to convey. However, we assured them that they could use their own words if they felt comfortable and understood the concepts they were to teach. This wasn't a given because these were primary school teachers who had probably never learned certain scientific concepts. Still, since a few of them would want the freedom to move around in their lesson, we wanted to make the options clear. Our overall objective was to make sure the teachers stayed 'on side'. We didn't want them thinking that we were walking in and taking over their classrooms.

We utilised a graphics artist from the Ministry of Education's audiovisual department. Initially, the quality wasn't optimal, but the artist quickly improved and created engaging covers and illustrations for the experiments. I am convinced that these illustrations, which showed African students carrying out science experiments, were a major factor in gaining students' confidence.

Science kits and active learning

We introduced several innovations in the science kits. One was the utilisation of clinistix, which were designed to measure sugar levels in diabetics by dipping them in urine, any consequent colour changes indicating sugar presence. We repurposed these sticks for our experiments to detect sugar in photosynthesis experiments. Another innovation was the adoption of a British invention called a bioviewer, which resembled a microscope but had film strips showing actual microscopic views underneath the lens. The kids could view these and focus on them, even draw from them. They were inexpensive, a couple of dollars each, and you would often find them in the biology units. We selected the images to be incorporated on the film strips.

To transport most of the kit cabinets out to rural areas, we partnered with the Coca-Cola Company, which had a widespread distribution network reaching even the most remote villages. Some of our science kits went out in their trucks, and others were loaded onto the roofs of

rural buses and transported to the rural villages. In either case, kits were dropped near the schools.

The students, enthusiastic about the equipment, then carried the steel cabinets on their backs and walked them into their schools – sometimes a couple of kilometres or more. These kits weighed around a couple of hundred pounds! Students were so excited because they had never had people paying attention to them before. At most, they were used to having one textbook that a teacher would drill them on, but they weren't used to having materials to experiment with.

This initiative marked the first time that equipment was provided for school use, that students received study guides for their personal reference and that teachers received guidance in their Teacher Guides. Looking back, the kits we sent out in February 1981 seem quite basic, but it was a significant start.

We also thought long and hard about how to provide a source of heat for the experiments that needed it. Eventually, we created a little tin can device out of materials made locally for other purposes. Filled with methylated spirits, it had a hole drilled in the top where we inserted a wick. These little 'meth burners' were quite sturdy. We even practised tipping them over and bumping them to ensure they were safe. Fortunately, we never encountered any mishaps or fire incidents. We did, however, later discover that some of the teachers kept a few of the burners and replaced the methylated spirits with liquid paraffin oil (kerosene), turning them into lamps instead!

For some of the experiments done by teachers, we also provided a little rechargeable battery and a tiny strip of solar cells to charge it up with over a couple of days. The teachers were quick to notice that this little battery could be connected to a bulb, and then they had electric light.

When schools used up the consumable materials in the kit, we had to organise annual resupply kits. We stored replacement materials in an old warehouse in a suburb of Harare, where a member of the Zim-Sci team was responsible for resupply. This was another vast operation.

We received feedback from teachers expressing that some students, especially girls, weren't fond of merely observing experiments without

active participation. We had unwittingly reinforced this cultural stereotype with the cover illustration on the first-year units! By the second year, we had changed the cover, and there was a significant improvement. Both boys and girls were actively involved in the experiments. We still received negative feedback from the teachers, however, who didn't like the fact that boys now appeared to be taking a subordinate role. After that, we gave up putting either boys or girls on the covers and used abstract designs instead.

Support programmes and team workshops

We established support programmes that evolved over the course of three to four years. One of these was a weekly 30-minute radio programme facilitated by the Ministry of Education. Our team contributed by responding to teachers' questions or providing additional guidance related to the content we were developing. It was a way to bridge the gap between us and the schools, and to establish connections with teachers across the country. (Under the Ministry of Education system, we were required to excel nationally, driven by concerns over disparities between the southwest and northeast regions. Similar dynamics persist in the country today.)

Most teachers had transistor radios and regularly tuned in to these programmes. Our other ongoing commitments prevented us from extensive participation, but we managed to participate in about a third of the broadcasts, dedicating 10 to 15 minutes each time to the science materials.

We also organised team workshops focused on specific parts of the syllabus and took them on tour in various regions around the country in July 1981, towards the end of the second term. It was enlightening for our team to observe the challenges faced by teachers and realise the impact of the materials we were producing. The positive feedback encouraged us to continue providing comprehensive content and told us that we were on the right track. It was clear that we needed to begin from scratch and cover fundamental concepts thoroughly in the Teacher Guides.

After several years of these workshops, we noticed an interesting development. Teachers became more confident and adept at incorporating additional materials into their lessons. This was a significant outcome, indicating that our training approach had empowered them to diversify their teaching methods. It's remarkable how this practical approach supplemented and enhanced their teaching skills without the formal training typically received in colleges.

The fruits of our labour

Rhodesia gained independence from Britain in 1980, and everyone, regardless of race, was united in the endeavour to make the new, independent state of Zimbabwe work. (It was true! Everyone was tired of war and killing.) A collective commitment and humility prevailed, a sense of starting from scratch, of wanting to build something solid from the ground up. In this new environment of hope, everyone on the Zim-Sci project expressed a shared determination to make it successful.

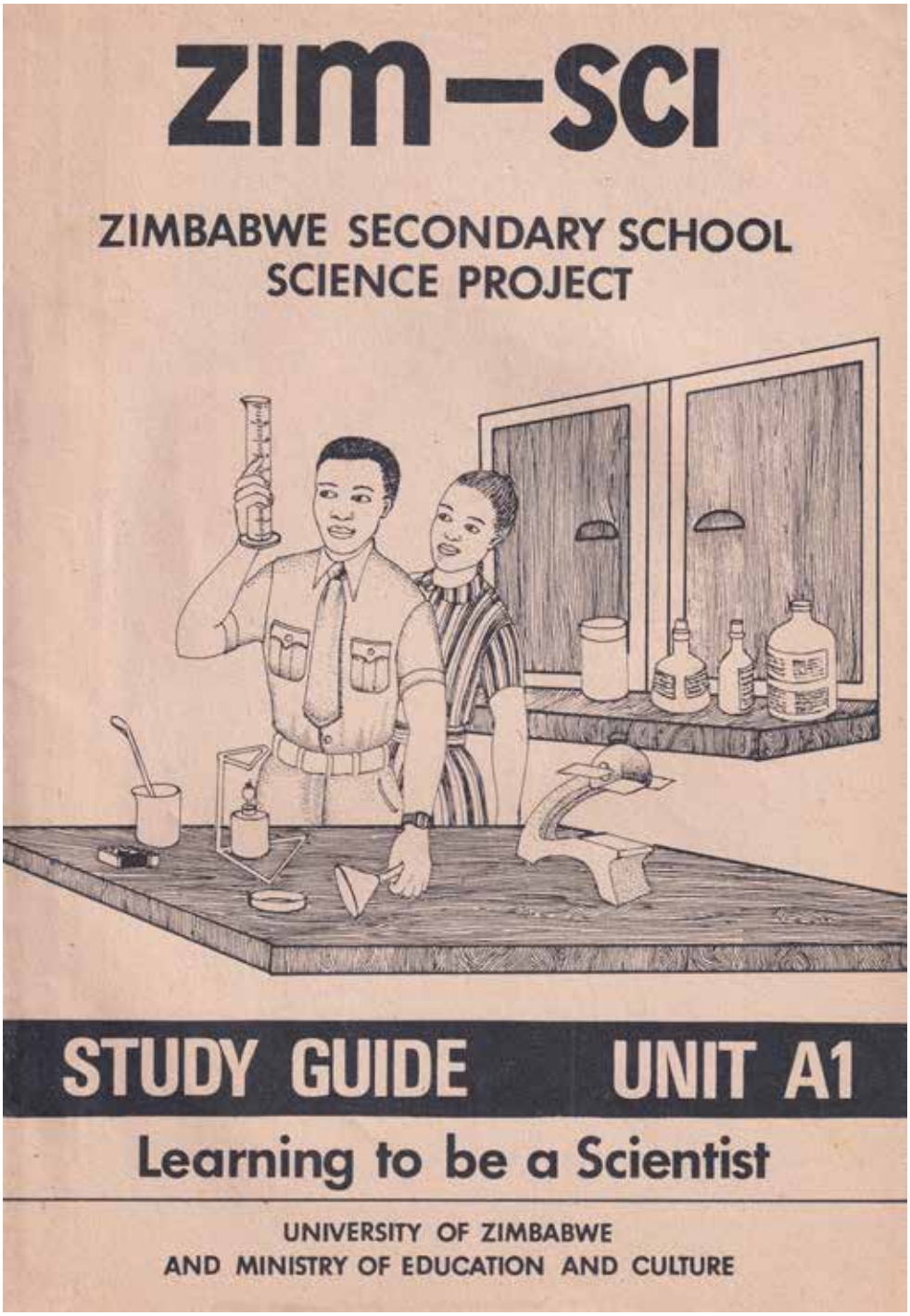
We conducted a formal evaluation administered by a professional education evaluator. At the end of the initial two-year course, which led to a junior secondary certificate, 70 per cent of the Zim-Sci students passed and performed excellently. On another evaluation note, the University of Zimbabwe informed me that they could identify our students because they were skilled in setting up experiments and executing them, skills that were notably absent in other students entering the university.

The government funded the project initially, and we secured a small grant from UNESCO, but the major financial backing came from SIDA. After I made a presentation to them, they showed interest and offered substantial funding, contributing more than $1 million, a significant amount at that time. This funding primarily supported the procurement of science kits and assisted in compensating some of the individuals working with me. The University of Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Education had numerous areas that needed financial support, so SIDA's involvement was greatly appreciated by both institutions for its substantial financial backing.

We took the programme to a few other countries, including Malawi and Botswana. The latter adopted it and created their own equipment, although I didn't have a chance to see their materials. We exchanged information with South Africans (who reflected the political changes beginning in that country) because South Africa was more technologically advanced at the time and was working on an improved version. Nevertheless, they also incorporated some of our ideas into their work.

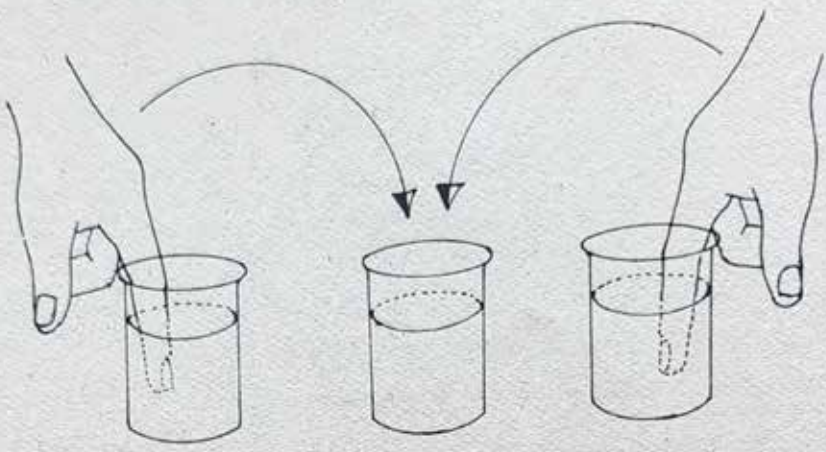
Eventually, the dean at the university approached me to say that he wanted me to resume my formal academic role as a lecturer instead of putting my energies towards high school education! The programme had, by this time, been running for about four years, and the Ministry of Education sought to appoint their own person to oversee it. Consequently, both entities collaborated on easing my departure from the Zim-Sci project. I understood where both parties were coming from – and I was pretty burnt out at that point.

The Zim-Sci project was close to my heart – my whole life. I put everything I had into it, and I consider these years the very best of my entire professional experience.



Zim-Sci Study Guide, first unit, year 1

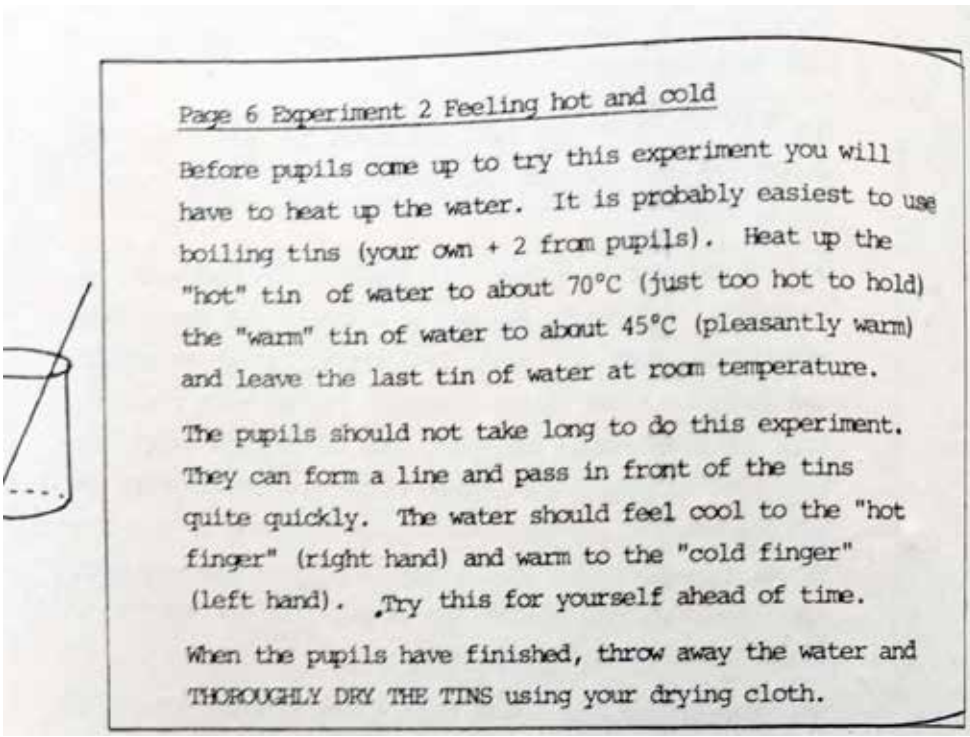
EXPERIMENT 2 Feeling hot and cold



At the front of the classroom are three beakers of water. One is fairly hot, the second just warm and the third is cold. Put a finger of your left hand into the cold water and a finger of your right into the hot. Take them out and quickly put both your fingers into the middle beaker. How does the water feel to your left hand? And to your right?

Did your fingers send you different messages! Are they deceiving you too?

Inside Zim-Sci Study Guide A1



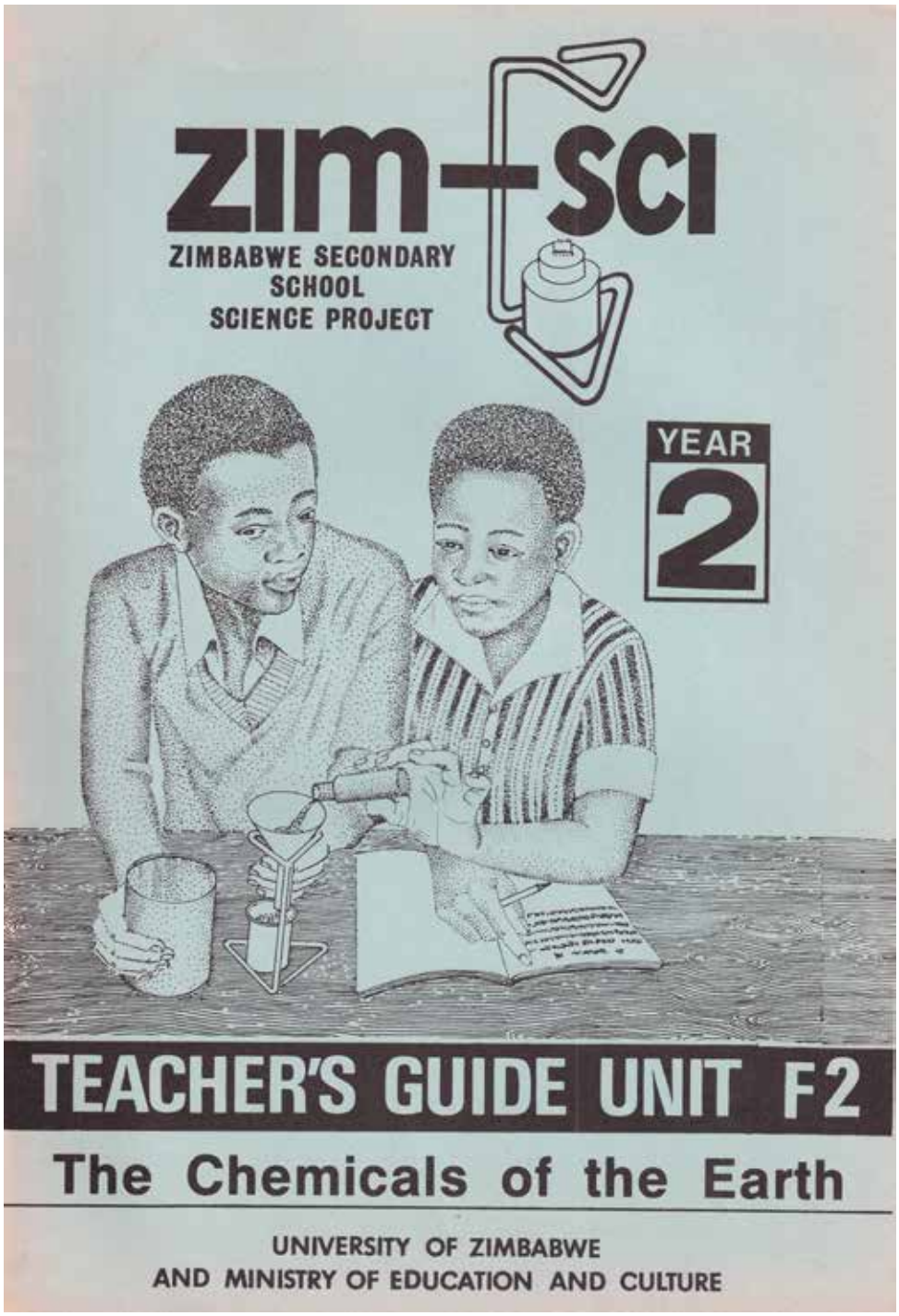
Page 6 Experiment 2 Feeling hot and cold

Before pupils come up to try this experiment you will have to heat up the water. It is probably easiest to use boiling tins (your own + 2 from pupils). Heat up the "hot" tin of water to about 70°C (just too hot to hold) the "warm" tin of water to about 45°C (pleasantly warm) and leave the last tin of water at room temperature.

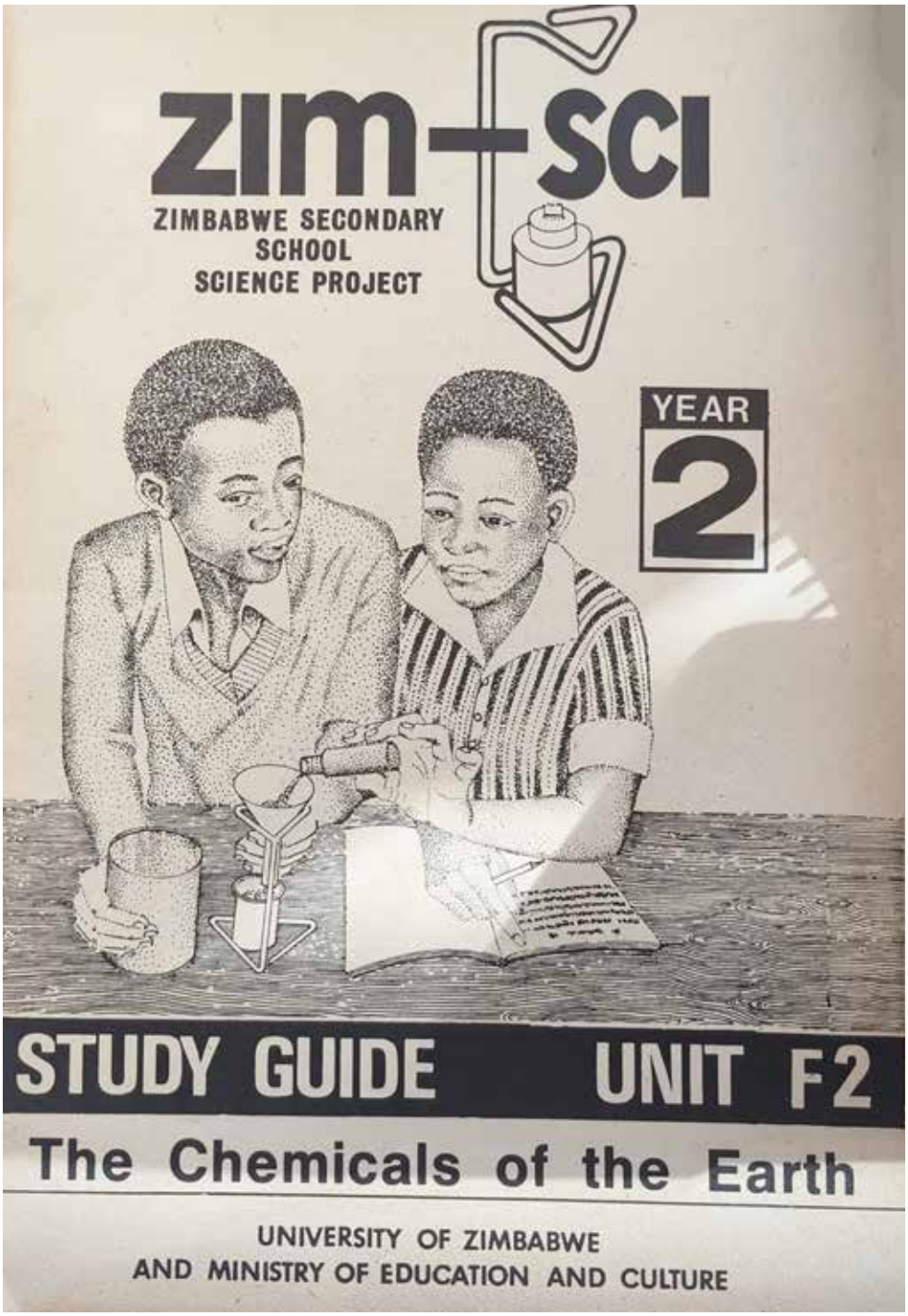
The pupils should not take long to do this experiment. They can form a line and pass in front of the tins quite quickly. The water should feel cool to the "hot finger" (right hand) and warm to the "cold finger" (left hand). Try this for yourself ahead of time.

When the pupils have finished, throw away the water and THOROUGHLY DRY THE TINS using your drying cloth.

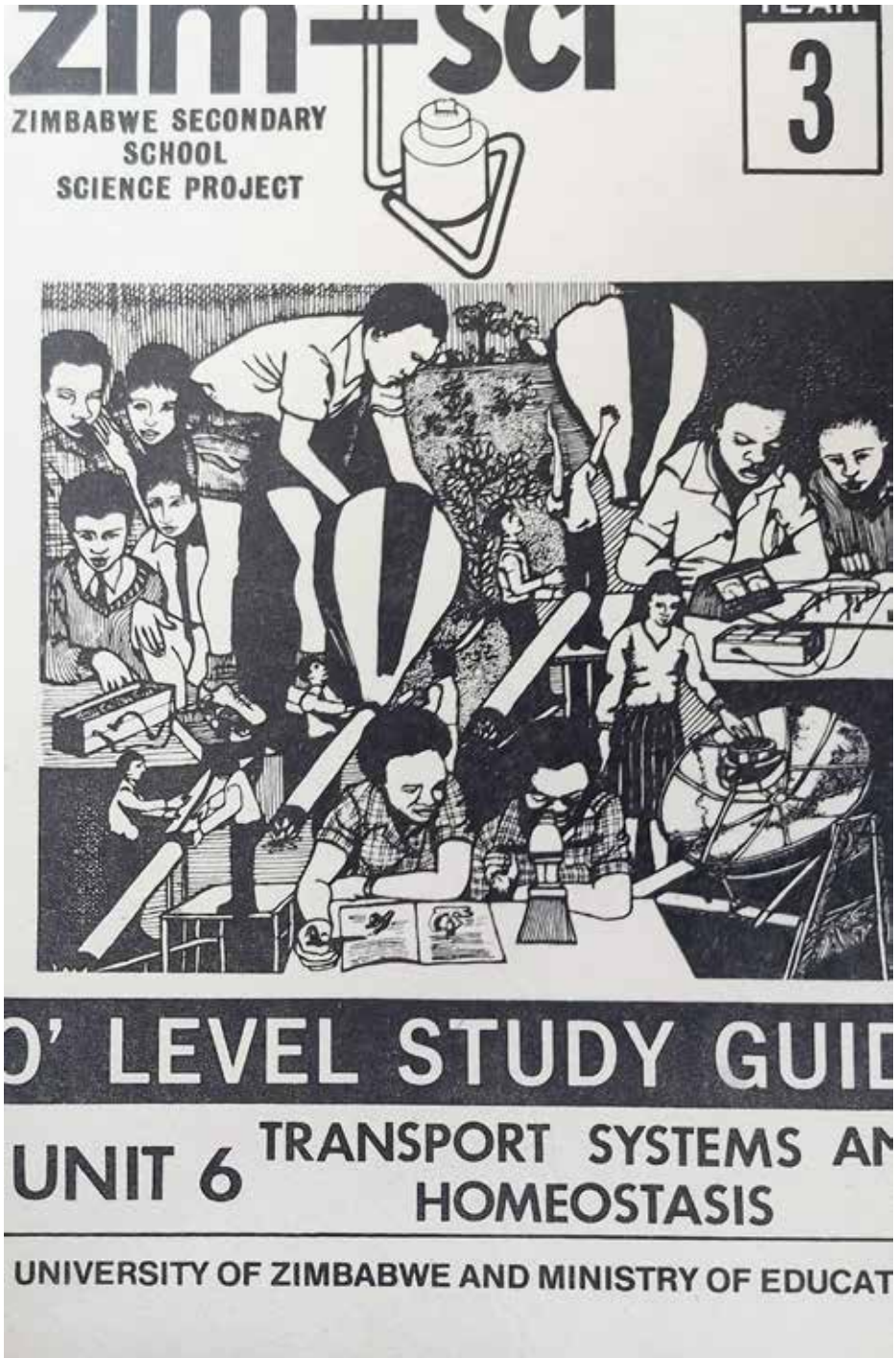
Zim-Sci, inside study guide A1



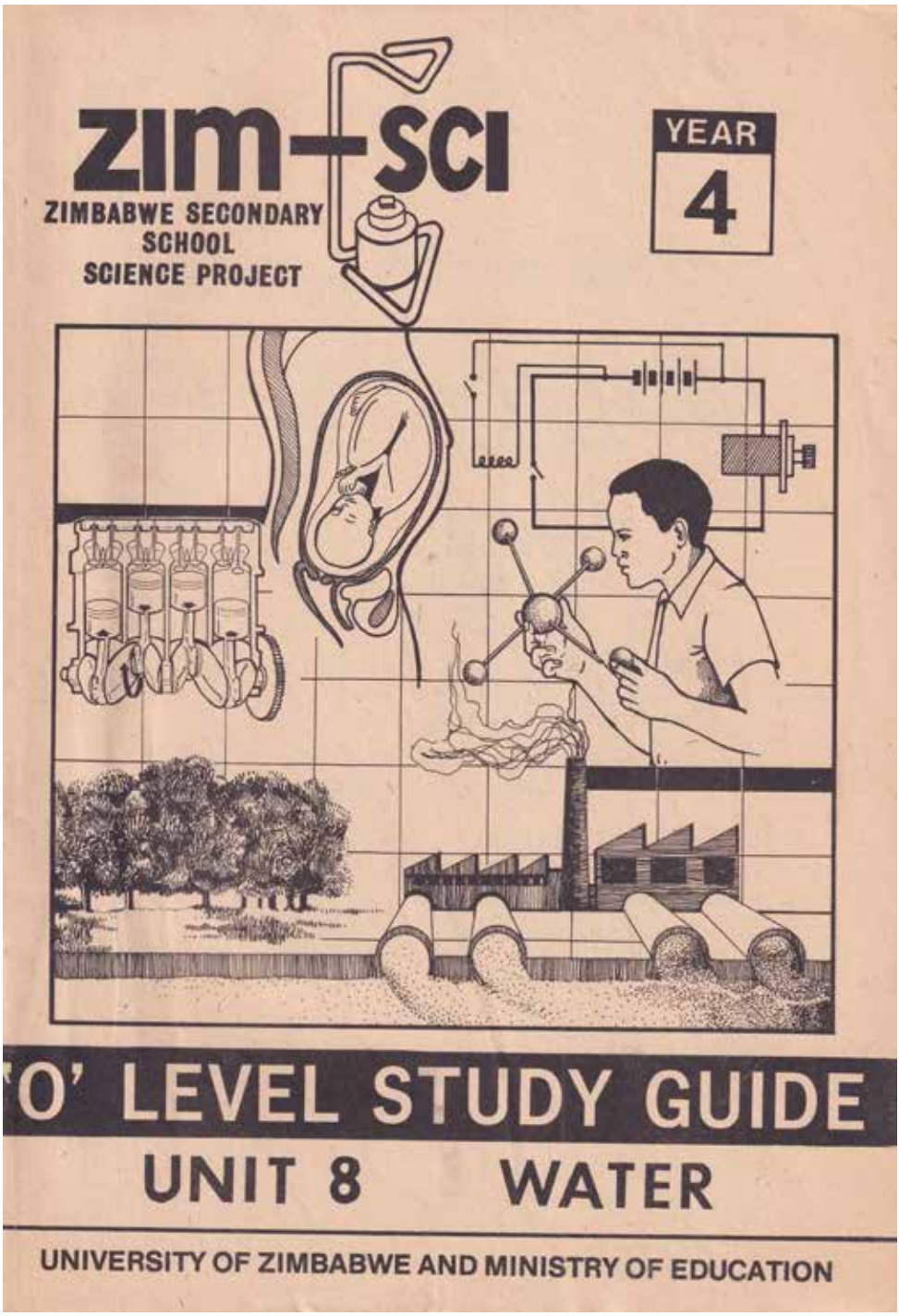
Zim-Sci Teacher's Guide, second unit, year 2



Zim-Sci Study Guide, year 2



Zim-Sci Study Guide, year 3



Zim-Sci Study Guide, year 4

Zim-Sci bioviewer

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Moving On

A new farming endeavour

Following Rhodesia's independence in 1980, local property became immensely appealing to the numerous aid agencies and embassies that suddenly arrived in the new Zimbabwe. During Ian Smith's tenure, his so-called UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) regime, with its whites-only government backed only by South Africa, had enjoyed very limited international support. This discouraged investment and depressed property prices. The post-independence period, however, was marked by an influx of people and the demand for houses inevitably surged, propelling property values upwards.

The semi-rural Chisipite house and three acres that I had purchased for £4,000 when we came back from the Bahamas became highly attractive to agencies who wanted to set up a base. They sought reasonably sized houses where they could potentially expand or build additional structures on the land. Eventually, we sold our house and land to an incoming embassy for a substantial profit.

With the proceeds from the house sale, we scanned the area for potential investments. At that time, rural areas hadn't surged in value as swiftly as semi-rural areas since there wasn't much interest in buying farms. There was simply no significant demand for them. Consequently, we had the finances from the sale of the Chisipite home to acquire an

existing farm situated in Mazoe, just outside Harare, marking the start of a more authentic farming endeavour for us.

The property we purchased had a complex history. It bore the scars of its past in the form of several substantial holes, remnants of previous gold mining activities that had taken place in the region. (Although the area indicated traces of gold, we didn't discover any substantial deposits.)

Our new farm encompassed around 300 acres, approximately 50 of which were suitable for cultivation, while the rest consisted of rocky terrain and the remnants of previous mining ventures. Water supply emerged as a critical concern. To address this, we installed pumps on two or three boreholes, ensuring a steady and reliable water source.

Once we began operations, we built on our Chisipite experience, and our focus shifted toward cultivating vegetables, for which purpose we utilised approximately two acres. We attended local markets on a weekly and monthly basis to sell our produce. We also grew modest crops of corn and sorghum, borrowing equipment from neighbours to reap the crops and then selling them to the Grain Marketing Board. One year, I produced *11 tons* of corn, which I thought was quite a lot of corn! Despite our best efforts, the farm wasn't financially profitable, but it did bring us joy and satisfaction. I particularly relished spending my weekends on the tractor, ploughing the land.

Given the subpar quality of the land, it wasn't conducive for running extensive cattle farming operations, but it was suitable for Dexter cattle. This small breed of cattle originated in southwest Ireland and was adopted in the nineteenth century for milk and fresh meat on sailing ships. Dexters were also ideal for areas with limited grazing as they required less food. Eventually, we managed a herd of around 80 miniature Dexter cows. We had one bull only; Bushman was his name.

Additionally, we kept goats for milk along with cows, as well as a mix of chickens, ducks and various other animals on the farm. As our children grew older and began assisting us more, we were able to expand our farm operations.

Within the 300 acres of our property there was a village where 20 to 30 individuals resided. We hired five or six of these locals on a regular basis to help manage various farm tasks – tending to the vegetables, looking after the cattle and taking care of the routine chores. It was more than just employment; these individuals were not only self-sufficient but also contributed to the farm's functionality. They lived on the land itself, eliminating the need for commuting, and supplemented their livelihood by maintaining their own chickens and similar endeavours. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement that worked out quite well for everyone involved.

On Sunday mornings, we took walks around the farm, exploring the entire area, which often took a couple of hours to cover. I remember venturing into the mines once or twice, out of curiosity about what lay within. They were essentially just holes with horizontal tunnels reaching about 30 feet in the ground. We eventually fenced them off, concerned about the possibility of children trying to access them.

Separation

Shirley and I were married for 26 years.

There was a time that I dabbled in poetry, and a few poems are significant in shaping my growth and signalling new directions. During the period that I was separating from Shirley, a decision that we grappled with for about a year, I wrote her two poems.

This poem, written in 1989 when I was on a consultancy in Malawi, is one of them. Just thinking about it makes me sad. At the time, I hardly realised that I had reached a fork in my life's road, and that a new and totally different journey lay ahead.

November 1989
A Long Night in Malawi

Do you feel me close by when the breeze sighs softly
at the end of the day?
Do you hear my whispered response to your hidden thoughts?

Do you sense me near you when the night is long
and the hours at lowest ebb?

Do you hear my laugh in yours as if we're
still sharing life's random quirks?

Do you feel my hurt when you hurt?

Do you feel my love when I remember yours?

For I feel you here, where you have not been.
I know you're near when you're not
I often yearn to turn back the clock
While crying caution – that way lies hurt for both

This I know:

In June will come a time,
Time for love and autumn gold,
Time for duo adventures and trusted sharing

Or

Time for parting,
Time for ruling off,
Not with hate, but with love
Of what was, and never again can be.

In this time for reflection

On past, and possible futures
On should it be yes, oh yes
On should it be no, alas no

Know that I think of you:

Oft in sadness,
Oft in longing.
Sometimes in relief,
Sometimes in anger,
Most oft in that unstable amalgam we made of marriage,
Over twenty-six joyous, glooming, patchworked years.

But always, but always always with love.

Shirley and I had been separated for a couple of years by the time we divorced in April of 1991. Afterwards, my concern about my relationship with my kids weighed heavily on me. Rory was 19 at that time and the others in their early 20s.

One of my sons, in particular, expressed his feelings clearly when he wrote: "You've spoiled my image of what your marriage was like and what my marriage could possibly be." That note has stayed with me, always in the back of my mind. However, over time, he and I have become great friends, and he made a wonderful marriage and family, with two children.

The others seemed more indifferent and didn't worry too much about it. I've tried to explain to them what I felt had happened, but they also talked among themselves, possibly having a better understanding of the divorce than I did at the time.

For a short time during this period of hiatus, I was in a relationship with a widow called Dorothy, who lived in England. I met her in Britain when I was passing through, doing a consultancy. At that stage, Barry was dating her daughter, Nicola. Although they had a connection, their relationship didn't last. I eventually moved to England to be with Dorothy, but things didn't work out between us, mostly because of a conflict with her son.

As part of our divorce settlement, I passed ownership of the farm over to Shirley. She intended to continue living there, and since it was

only some 20 miles outside Harare, she developed a plan to build small cottages to rent to people who were looking for a peaceful and rural break from the pace of town life. Several cottages were built, and the scheme showed signs of becoming a useful part of her income.

My daughter, Eleanor, moved onto the farm from Harare with her three children and helped Shirley to develop her plans and expand the produce production to include the growing of peppers and other vegetables. She had been on track to become a lawyer, and her achievements were so outstanding that, with aspirations of studying at Oxford, she even contemplated applying for a Rhodes Scholarship. Her plans took a different turn, however, when a boyfriend – Mark – entered the picture. They were married quickly on our farm, settled down and had a family together. As the Zimbabwean educational system deteriorated, however, aided by the decision to abandon internationally-recognised school examinations such as A levels, which had been inherited from the British system and were deemed colonial remnants, Eleanor sought better educational opportunities for her children elsewhere. She made the decision to relocate to Britain in 2000 and, accompanied by Mark, she and her children started a new life there. Mark had aspirations of furthering his education in Britain, so Eleanor took on the responsibility of working to support the family while he pursued his studies. He had never, though, fared well as a father or a husband, and upon completing his master's degree, he disappeared from the scene.

In 2002, Mugabe's government passed legislation through Parliament which permitted forced takeover of white-owned farms without compensation. Furthermore, black Zimbabweans who had established communities on the farms and frequently worked on them, were also expelled during a takeover. Soon after the Land Acquisition Act was enacted, Shirley received a letter informing her that she no longer owned the farm. She was given a month to vacate, leaving behind all farm equipment, without compensation for land, houses or equipment. Small farms such as this one ended up being owned by favoured members of Mugabe's government.

She too left Zimbabwe soon after that and joined our son Barry and his family in Herne Bay on the Kent coast. The British government provided a small pension and assisted her in finding a small apartment. The reason for this, I believe, was that during my graduate training in Britain, Shirley was employed there, paying taxes and contributing to the British system.

Shirley soon established herself in the community of Herne Bay, babysitting her grandchildren in Barry's family and becoming a leading light in community group activities.

We maintained a fair amount of contact throughout the years. When Mary came into the picture, she and Shirley sometimes met at family functions, and while this was a bit awkward at first, I think they grew to like each other. Shirley used to fly to the States to visit Gavin in Virginia. We always ate lunch or dinner when we all got together. Once, she even stayed at my home for Christmas.

Sadly, Shirley is gone now. She passed away in late 2023 from an aggressive form of leukaemia, surrounded by her four children and their families. I would have wished to be there myself, but Shirley intimated that she did not want me present during her passing, and I respected her wishes. I wrote a difficult letter to her which I hope repaired some of the injury I had done to her and our family.

Those who have been through the disruption of divorce and remarriage will understand me in saying that Shirley has a special place in my heart, and I mourn her passing. This is apart from the wonderful love I share with my wife, Mary, in a second marriage of now over 30 years.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Closure and New Beginnings

My parents' graves

This *really* is a strange story. While living in Harare, I took a friend who was visiting from Britain to a tourist village in town where you could see how the traditional Shona people lived. Within the village was a witch doctor, who captivated my friend with his vibrant feathers and intriguing demeanour. After a brief spectacle, the witch doctor turned his attention to me, fixing me with an intense gaze.

"I need to talk to you," he uttered in solemn tones. Although we had never encountered each other before, he proceeded to unfold a startling revelation. "Your parents are very angry with you," he declared. "They are buried in Zambia, and you haven't visited their graves in many years."

This sent a chill up my spine. These were facts I couldn't deny. I hadn't returned to Zambia for many years.

He detailed the steps I should take to rectify this situation. First and foremost, a journey to Zambia was imperative. There, at the gravesite, I was to pay my respects and execute various rituals, including the pouring of beer onto their graves.

Despite his detailed instructions, I gave them no thought for quite some time, but more of this shortly.

The World Bank and meeting Mary

In 1988, towards the end of my time as a university lecturer, the World Bank approached me. They expressed their appreciation for my work in Zim-Sci and proposed a collaboration to possibly extend it to other countries. Initially, I was hesitant, harbouring reservations about working with the World Bank, which I perceived as an entity that exerted financial influence and thus gained control over nations.

Nevertheless, I accepted the consultancy opportunity, which involved working in Lusaka, Zambia, with a team joining me from Washington, on a temporary basis. One of the compelling factors in my decision was the challenge for the average citizen of accessing foreign currency in Zimbabwe. It wasn't that possession of foreign currency was illegal, but rather that obtaining it was a complex endeavour. The consultancy offered a substantial amount of foreign currency, and this provided a valuable nest egg that could be utilised if I ever felt the need.

This consultancy provided me with far more than just foreign currency, however. It represented a momentous fork in the road for my life because the World Bank assigned me to work with a young American consultant, Mary Barton, from Washington.

Mary was much more experienced with the organisation than I. She had been a consultant for them for quite some time, working in other parts of the world such as Bolivia. We worked together on the Zambian Ministry of Health's budget proposal because the Bank was thinking of funding some of it. I didn't have any expertise in health at all – Mary wasn't a health expert either – but the Bank presented this opportunity as an inducement, and I agreed, thinking that, as a seasoned professional, I could analyse any set of documents and discern the intricacies of the Ministry of Health. This assessment turned out to be quite accurate.

We dedicated 10 days to scrutinising budgets, evaluating accomplishments and identifying areas that needed attention. The culmination of our efforts was a comprehensive report that effectively captured the current state of the Ministry of Health at that time.

In the days that we worked on that budget, a spark grew between us and a friendship developed.

Mary had an affinity for Africa, and I think part of her fascination with me was that I was from Africa. While at high school, she had participated in a student exchange programme with a student named Phillipa from Pretoria as part of the American Field Service (AFS). She spent three months living with a host family, the Doegs, in Pretoria. During this time, she developed a deep appreciation for the continent. Despite coming from a very different backgrounds – Mary from a more relaxed Kansas City school, Phillipa from the structured environment of Pretoria High School for Girls – the connection was undeniable. Phillipa and Mary still regard themselves as sisters.

Later, Mary returned for a consultancy with USAID (US Agency for International Development), further solidifying her connection with Africa. Her fondness for the region persisted, even as she pursued her career with the World Bank. It wasn't until I met Mary's AFS family much later that she began to take our relationship seriously. They insisted on interviewing me when Mary mentioned she was dating a much older man. This led to my journey to Pretoria for a weekend with them, underscoring the significance they placed on Mary's well-being and our relationship. By the end of that weekend, they said, "He's OK. We like him." (We still visit with the mother every time we go to South Africa.)

One morning in Lusaka, while exploring the health budget, I walked down to breakfast, and there was Mary, standing by the pool. She was 27 years old at the time, and dressed in nice shorts. On a whim, I approached and playfully pushed her into the pool. She emerged enraged, and the chase began, with her pursuing me all over the place. She was – and still is – very feisty. I think that's one of the things that attracted me to her. That spontaneous moment marked the true beginning of our relationship.

I've always lived by the motto 'seize life by the throat'. Whenever an opportunity presents itself, like pushing a beautiful girl into a pool, I seize it without hesitation.

In my recollection, the time we spent together working on the budget was exciting and enjoyable. Afterwards, Mary returned to Washington, and I went back to Zimbabwe to complete my work with the Ministry of Education and the university. Initially, we thought that would be the end of it. However, email communication was becoming more prevalent at that stage, albeit in its early phases. The World Bank had a system called 'All In One', which I could access through the embryonic Internet and used to keep in touch with Mary.

Mary came over again, this time visiting Zimbabwe, and while I can't quite recall the reason for her visit, we spent a memorable three- or four-day weekend in the eastern part of the country, further solidifying our connection. Subsequently, she returned to the United States. Around this time, the World Bank renewed their keen interest in having me join them. They suggested I come to Washington at their expense, work in the department for a couple of weeks, and take a look first-hand at what they did.

Given that Mary was in the picture, this arrangement seemed like a good opportunity to explore both the job and our relationship. I went to Washington, spent a few weeks working with the Bank (though I can't quite recall the specifics of the tasks assigned), and returned with a positive outlook. I underwent a formal interview with department members, and after that, I was appointed as a full-time staff member and moved to Washington in 1989. My focus was primarily on science education, particularly the Zim-Sci programme, which we aimed to introduce into other countries where suitable.

In practice, however, things didn't unfold exactly as planned. The Bank assumed that my expertise in education could be applied across various areas. Consequently, I found myself involved in projects ranging from curriculum development to assessing science education in classrooms, without a specific mandate to introduce programmes based on my Zim-Sci experience. Despite working for the Bank for a decade in Washington, I never quite delved into the implementation of science education initiatives in the way that had been envisioned initially.

I have some regret that I didn't continue with the original plan. Nevertheless, the experience brought a wealth of new knowledge about education and science education around the world. I had the opportunity to visit several African countries, including Tanzania, Kenya and Botswana. Additionally, I ventured further afield when I was sent to Indonesia, where I spent about three weeks examining science education practices.

I came closest to implementing the Zim-Sci programme in Indonesia, where I delivered talks on Zim-Sci to members of the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, it never gained traction. The challenge is that if a system is entrenched in traditional views of science education, an approach involving kits of pieces of equipment devised from readily available items may not seem appealing. Many preferred environments equipped with a more conventional set-up of teak benches, gooseneck taps, rows of bottles and white coats. This sentiment was prevalent in Africa as well, including in Zimbabwe. Once the Ministry of Education took charge in Zimbabwe, they started gravitating towards the traditional approach, although our 465 schools never did get those white coats and teak benches!

Gradually, my role evolved into that of someone who could analyse a system and identify shortcomings in education. I would assess whether the teachers were receiving adequate training and if the students were getting the right educational input. My approach became more abstract, addressing the broader aspects of science education. I found that I could get quite an accurate impression of a science department in a training college or school by just walking around the laboratory and opening cupboards. I could assess how much equipment was available to students, how well used it appeared to be, and what relationship there was with the course. I acknowledge that this exposes my bias towards practical work in the teaching of science, but it is still my firm belief that science can only be understood by *doing* it.

My visit to Sri Lanka at the height of its civil war was a noteworthy experience. Despite the challenges, I focused on science education in teachers' colleges and schools, especially, given the limited accessibility

enforced by the conflict, in the areas surrounding the capital. Generally, my impressions were positive. I won't delve into the details of the locations we visited. It's crucial to note that all these experiences were intertwined with the development of my relationship with Mary, which continued to grow via our email correspondence.

My initial time with Mary in 1989 certainly involved some lively moments, including nights spent at nightclubs in Washington, DC. We frequented such areas as Adams Morgan to go dancing. In a memorable incident in the Kilimanjaro Club, we accidentally tumbled off the stage while dancing. Despite being in my 50s, I found myself embracing the spontaneity and joy that this relationship brought into my life. And it was reassuring that Mary's friends accepted her opinion of me.

We quickly moved in together in an apartment I rented on Capitol Hill. Mary's mother, Hazel, was somewhat old-school and never quite approved of this arrangement. She would call and ask for Mary in a way that intimated she assumed Mary actually lived elsewhere.

In 1990, Mary was offered a job in Zambia to oversee a project funded by the World Bank. At this stage, I had become a staff member in the Bank, but Mary was still a consultant. From her perspective, this opportunity provided a chance to distance herself from a relationship with a man significantly older than herself. She likely felt it was a bit crazy, given that there was a notable 23-year age gap between us, and that I was around 50 years old at the time. Therefore, she accepted the job in Zambia, hoping that the situation between us might fade away naturally.

I was two years into my separation from Shirley and waiting for the formalities of the divorce to pass through the courts in Zimbabwe when Mary and I met. The years between us made our relationship seem improbable, and I had concerns about the age gap too, but I was quite arrogant back then. I was as good as the next guy, I believed, and I didn't *feel* old in the least.

In the first year of my tenure at the Bank, I wasn't content with the idea of us being separated. Mary's messages telling me that she missed me too were a major factor in my discontent! I approached my

department boss and expressed my desire to join Mary in Zambia. I initiated negotiations with UNICEF to bring me on board as a temporary consultant there, with a specific focus on education. The aim was to collaborate with them and contribute insights to enhance their science education programmes. Fortunately, my director, who possessed a compassionate demeanour, granted approval for me to take on this temporary assignment. And so, in 1991, I set off for Zambia to join Mary.

All our experiences of living together and navigating life together, like discovering our shared love of *Star Trek*, strengthened our relationship. One of the more serious discussions Mary and I had revolved around the topic of children. Mary expressed her desire to have children, but my initial response was hesitant. It was something I hadn't considered because I felt I was well past the age for starting a family. I expressed my uncertainty, but Mary was clear that wanting children was a crucial sticking point for her. She stated that if I didn't want to have kids, we wouldn't get married. After brief consideration, I told her I accepted those conditions and was prepared to be a parent in our marriage!

A Kansas City wedding

From living together, we decided to take the next step and, although I never proposed in the formal sense, we became engaged in December 1991 while visiting Kansas City from Zambia. Mary later mentioned the lack of a formal proposal as we crossed a road, so I got down on one knee in the middle of that road and asked her to marry me.

One Saturday morning in Zambia, Mary and I drove out to the Kabulonga cemetery where my parents were buried. The area of the cemetery that I remembered as the site of my parents' graves had become heavily overgrown in the 20 or so years that had passed, and I had trouble finding them. Towering over the bush scrub and small trees, however, I could see a magnificent bougainvillea tree, which I then remembered had been planted on my mother's grave soon after her burial by her close friend May Rogers, by now also long gone. Mary and I stood at the graves and, following the advice of the witch doctor

in Harare several years previously, I introduced Mary as my wife to be, and we solemnly poured some beer on each grave before drinking the remainder ourselves. I felt a lightening in my step after that small ceremony. Strange, but true.

Our journey continued on a roller coaster as we planned to tie the knot in Kansas City, where Mary was born and her family lived. (When I had last driven through Kansas City, it was on my cross-country trip with Shirley in 1962. At that point, Mary would have been only three months old.)

Mary's dad was still alive then, but he had suffered a major stroke that rendered him bedridden, in need of full-time care and unable to speak. I read to him occasionally, once asking him to blink if he understood what I was saying. He responded with a laugh, showing that I had managed to connect with him. He seemed to enjoy being read to, particularly appreciating Hemingway's short story *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*.

Despite my attempts to reassure him, he bristled a bit when I mentioned wanting to marry his daughter, although he couldn't vocalise his objections. This vulnerability touched me deeply, and I resolved not to take advantage of the situation. Additionally, each of Mary's four brothers took me out for an earnest dinner to quiz me. Mary is the youngest of the siblings, and they were very carefully looking after her best interests.

Hazel, Mary's mother, likewise, wasn't thrilled about it. I decided to have a conversation with her. Understandably, she had concerns and questioned me thoroughly about my previous marriage. Though it wasn't an easy process, I respected her inquiries and understood her desire to ensure that history wouldn't repeat itself. At the end of the interrogation, she summed the conversation up with the words: "Well, you've convinced me. I'll back you." She never returned to those inquiries again and never reneged on her original decision.

Hazel took charge of all the wedding planning. She had only one daughter, and she was determined to make the most of her one opportunity to organise such a significant event. Understandably, it

needed to be a production, and we were fine with that, particularly since we were working in Zambia at the time and couldn't handle the arrangements ourselves. The decision to have a church ceremony in the Episcopalian Church, as per Hazel's wishes, reflects the blend of traditions and familial considerations in our wedding planning.

Weddings in Kansas City are grand affairs. It seemed that there was a continuous stream of parties leading up to the big day, with a different member of Hazel's community hosting a party for us every night. I distinctly remember a party hosted by Donald Hall, a prominent figure in Kansas City and the CEO and owner of Hallmark cards. As a wealthy man, he generously threw a lavish party for us. I have a vivid memory of his house, which, strikingly, sported the unique architectural choice of a tree growing up through his front hall. It was a distinctive and memorable feature.

The date of the wedding was 2nd January 1993. This turned out to be a tricky time with the weather. An ice storm in Kansas City added an extra layer of complexity, leading to cancellations and difficulties for many, and a fresh crop of grey hairs for Hazel. The band cancelled. The cake was cancelled. But it all worked out in the end. The band showed up in time, and a friend of mine drove his car down an icy road to fetch the cake (sideswiping two cars on the way back)!

Despite the hurdles, it was heartening that our friends from Zambia were able to make it, even if some from Harare and Washington were prevented from attending by flight disruptions.

The minister who married us offered us counsel on strengthening our marriage, suggesting we invite my four children from my previous marriage. We took his advice to heart, and they all came, contributing to the meaningful and inclusive atmosphere of our joyous occasion. Some of them had never been to the USA before, so they were curious. They had the chance to meet much of the local society, including Mary's parents, which helped their integration into this new arm of their family.

Unfortunately, unbeknown to us, Mary had contracted hepatitis right before our wedding. We suspect it happened during a quick stop

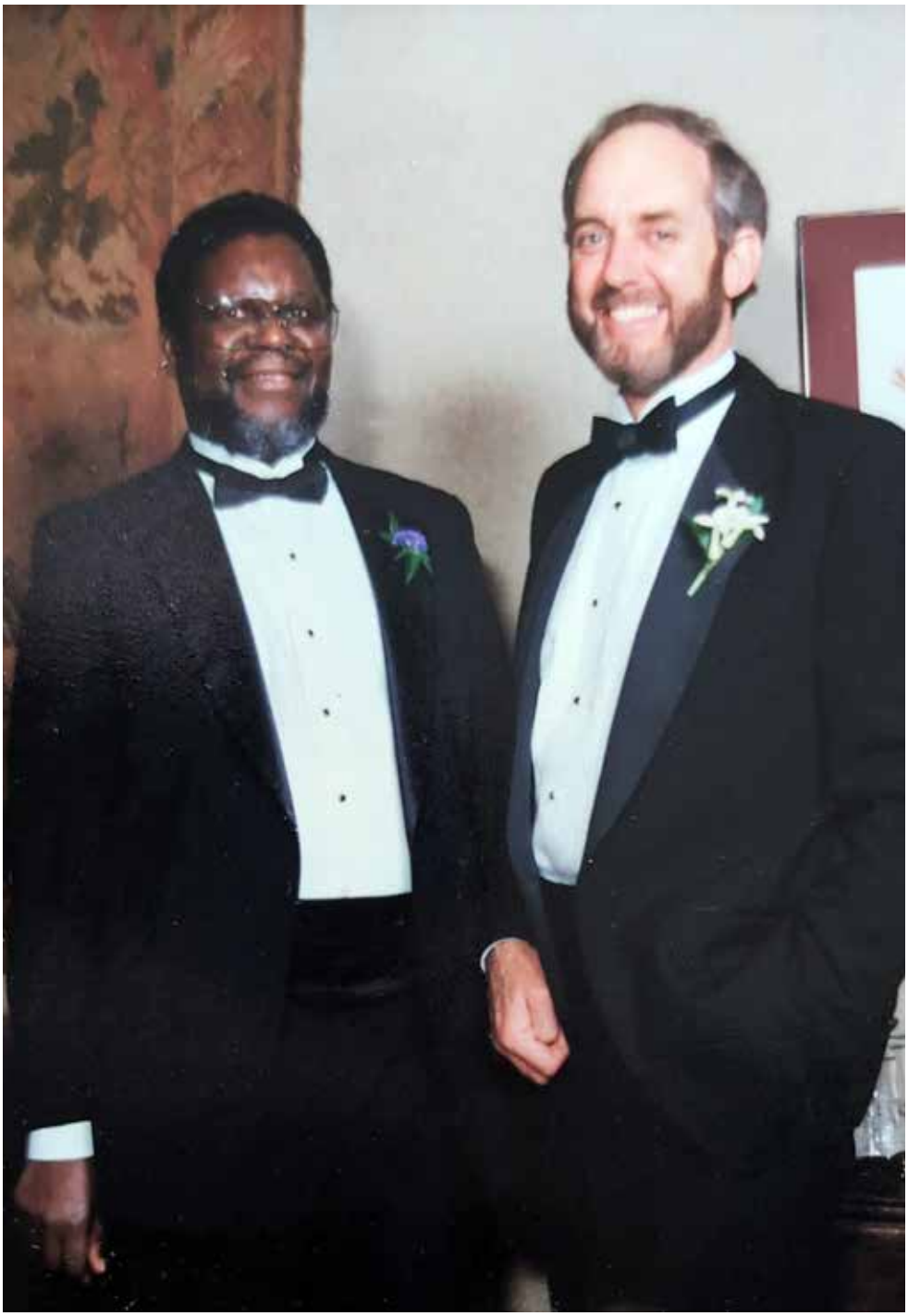
for a hamburger at a little dive in Lusaka as we headed to the airport on our way back to Kansas City. The symptoms didn't surface immediately, so we proceeded with our plans, returning to Kansas City to tie the knot. Unfortunately, and quite unwittingly, she exposed many of the guests at our wedding to the infection by kissing dozens of them! As far as we know, nobody developed the disease.

Later, during our honeymoon in Portugal, she began feeling nauseous, which we initially attributed to excess drinking. Despite her discomfort, we continued with our plans, but by the time we reached the Seychelles, she was incapacitated, spending her honeymoon bedridden and vomiting. The local Cuban doctors we consulted repeatedly asked if she was pregnant, but her condition worsened, leaving me to care for her and even handle bedpans throughout what was supposed to be a romantic getaway.

Mary continued to deteriorate until she reached a critical point, prompting me to urgently seek help for her in South Africa. A medical evacuation was arranged, flying her out of the country to Pretoria that same evening. Upon arrival, she received immediate medical attention, and the doctor diagnosed the nature and severity of her illness. He revealed to me that if I had delayed medical help for another three days, I might have lost her.

After a period in the hospital, Mary stayed with her AFS family in Pretoria for three weeks while she recovered. It was a slow process. She couldn't even have a drink for nearly a year afterward, even when we returned to Zambia following the wedding and honeymoon. We returned to Zambia as a married couple in March of 1993.

Mary and me, wedding in Kansas City, 1993



Dzingai Mutambuka (best man) and me at wedding, Kansas City, 1993

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Starting a Family Again Halfway Through Life (or My Years as a House Husband)

Arlington

Newly married, Mary and I finished our contracts in Zambia and returned to Washington. We decided to purchase a house in Arlington, Virginia, although, I must admit that I wasn't particularly fond of Virginia – not then and not now. While we liked the house itself, its location on the flight path for planes heading into the airport in DC was less than ideal for us. Our proximity to the Potomac River was captivating, but the planes that descended over the house to fly along the river somewhat diminished its attractions. It was certainly an intrusive, noisy interruption to everyday life. Every four minutes!

We resided in that Arlington house for five years, and in July 1995, while we were there, Chris was born. Katie arrived in May 1997, and our family was complete! Around this time, we decided to hire house help.

While in Zambia, we had taken on a housekeeper named Maria Chishimba. Over the months we lived there, we got to know her and promised that if we were ever fortunate enough to have children, we would arrange to bring her to Washington to be our house help when one or sometimes both of us were on mission out of the country. Fortunately, we were able to do this through my employment at the World Bank as a nanny could enter on a visa connected to my World

Bank affiliation. Maria and I took turns caring for the children, with her handling most of the responsibilities when Mary was on mission, and all of them when Mary and I were occasionally away for a couple of weeks at the same time.

Maria's background is quite remarkable. At around 35 years old, she didn't hesitate to fly for the first time and move to the US, where she adapted seamlessly. As our nanny, she excelled, and the children adored her. We have numerous photos of her carrying the kids on her back, a common practice in Africa.

Mary didn't mind the planes at the Arlington house as much as I, but the constant noisy air traffic soon prompted us to explore other options. We received a good offer for the house and, without hesitation, moved as swiftly as we could. I left with a sigh of relief.

Chad

In August of 1998, we took our young family to N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. During our time there, N'Djamena was a modest town dominated by a single main street that traversed its heart. Surrounding this thoroughfare were bush roads indicative of the city's rural character. Along the main street, sparse amenities dotted the scene, including a Chinese restaurant, a pharmacy, a photography shop and a handful of other establishments, albeit nothing of significant scale. The town maintained its rural ambiance, with no notable influx of modern architecture, save for a comparatively modern hotel standing out amidst the traditional structures. In essence, it was a town devoid of substantial urban development, with a population numbering a couple of hundred thousand residents at most.

Our return to Africa was tied to our evolving careers. Mary was steadily climbing the managerial ladder at the World Bank, at this point becoming Country Manager of the World Bank mission in Chad. The mission was housed in a substantial building constructed by the World Bank, complete with security measures akin to an embassy. Additionally, the surrounding embassy buildings were relatively modern in comparison. However, despite these advancements, the

infrastructure for both N'Djamena and the government remained rudimentary at best.

Mary obtained her position as Country Manager when the previous incumbent was run down and killed by the local police while out jogging. It wasn't a targeted killing – he was only outside the World Bank residence – just an accident. Still, looking back, I don't know what we were thinking! "Oh, the predecessor was killed, that's OK! Let's go ahead and move there." Chad was violent, and *not* the place to be with two small, young children. Katie would have been around two years old at the time.

Despite the potential concerns, we found reassurance in the security measures in place to protect us: a perimeter fence around our house and stationed guards. Our travels were facilitated by a chauffeur, and we were escorted to our destinations in a large, partially armoured SUV. At the time, we scarcely dwelt on the extraordinariness of these arrangements.

Our house in Chad was located next to the Chari River, and although we were surrounded by security fences, we had a front-row seat for all the activities along our bit of its banks. The Chari, serving as the boundary between Cameroon and Chad, had a somewhat notorious reputation and was known for smuggling activities. Police patrols were a common sight, but their attempts to catch smugglers met with very little success. During our time there, we witnessed some remarkable incidents, including a group of smugglers whose dugout canoes capsized in the most surprising way and sank like stones as they attempted to cross the river. We later learned that they were carrying ammunition belts.

On another occasion, an army patrol deployed on the other side of our fence by the authorities managed to come quite close to catching some smugglers. Unfortunately, the ensuing exchange of fire coincided potentially hazardously with our children playing in the garden.

"Stop!" Mary shouted at them, "You're endangering my kids!"

"If you don't shut up, we'll shoot you," the army patrol replied. Mary immediately got on the line to the Ministry of Finance and the patrol was pulled out.

I called the local police the 'Keystone Cops' because they did such bizarre things. They had a truck with a massive custom-built piece of iron protruding from the front, the purpose of which was to spear smugglers when they chased them. As I said, Chad was a really violent place.

Thankfully, Maria was there to help us watch over the children. She also found time to learn both Arabic and French while she was in Chad. She really was quite the woman! Additionally, I recall our cook, René, who had received culinary training in France. My interaction with him primarily involved collaborating on the weekly menu, wherein I would incorporate his suggestions. Given his French training, butter featured prominently on the grocery list, with several pounds consumed weekly. Despite the substantial butter intake, René's culinary skills encompassed a wide variety of delicious meals. He was indeed a remarkable cook, and he developed a special bond with Katie when she was a young child. I vividly recall that for Katie's birthday one year, he crafted a spectacular baked Alaska dessert, complete with meringue and an ice cream filling. It was a memorable treat that Katie still reminisces about fondly.

At the age of six, Chris was ready for preschool, and we decided to enroll him in a French school with a solid reputation. We believed it would be beneficial for him to learn the language from an early age. While he did become proficient in French, he didn't thrive academically. The school followed a rigid curriculum, and Chris struggled with the strict guidelines. A pivotal moment occurred when he returned home in tears one day after a Christmas activity at school. In the assignment, he had drawn a Christmas tree in red because he liked the colour, only for the teacher to reject it and demand that he redo it in green in accordance with tradition. This incident highlighted the restrictive nature of the school's approach, particularly for a young child like Chris. Subsequently, we made the decision to transfer him to the American School, which offered a more suitable environment for him.

Around this time, Katie, being naturally curious about her brother's activities, expressed a desire to attend school as well,

despite being significantly younger than the typical student. Given the circumstances and the flexibility afforded in an African setting, Maria, our nanny, accompanied Katie to school alongside Chris. This unconventional approach seemed to suit Katie's desire to be a part of the school experience. Arrangements were made with the school administration for Katie's attendance, and she was assigned tasks in a designated area of the classroom while Chris pursued his studies. This set-up essentially served as a pre-preschool experience for Katie, who was brimming with excitement.

When we took the children to school in the morning, usually with a driver, they sat in their car seats and played a game. The game involved counting how many people they could see on the street who were holding AK-47s. At times, they counted as many as 10 individuals carrying these weapons. It wasn't a pleasant environment to live in.

One day, friends of ours invited our dog, Buddy, an English setter, to join them for a run. They met a group of Chadian teenagers who stopped them, robbed them of their watches and wallets, and, shockingly, for no apparent reason, they cruelly stabbed Buddy with a knife. Sadly, we were overseas at the time. Mary had to break the devastating news to the children that Buddy had not survived the attack. We buried him in the garden, and it was a heartbreaking experience for us. The children were traumatised and absolutely beside themselves.

During that time, Muammar al-Qaddafi, Libya's ruler, visited Chad to meet with the president. He made quite an entrance, arriving with his tanks and making a prominent display of his wealth. He brought along his entourage, which included a unit of female soldiers, 'Amazons', under his command. He placed tanks on every corner of N'Djamena. It was quite a spectacle.

Qaddafi's visit highlighted Mary's grit and determination. She was, at that point, Country Manager of the World Bank's division in Chad, and she attended a diplomatic occasion at which Qaddafi was present. The diplomats were expected to shake his hand. Many did, but Mary refused to shake his hand, a testament to her principles and fearlessness.

Mary's primary undertaking during her time in Chad involved negotiating an agreement between the Bank and the Chadian government to fund a pipeline project following the discovery of oil in Chad shortly before our arrival. Given the relatively low price of oil at the time, around $25 per barrel, funding was crucial for extraction efforts. The agreement stipulated that the funds generated would be allocated towards education and health projects. To safeguard against potential changes in government or mismanagement of funds, elaborate legal agreements were drawn up. Funds were to be deposited into a trust fund overseen by an independent board, with disbursements made in accordance with the agreement. However, as oil prices surged to nearly $100 a barrel during the negotiation and construction phases of the pipeline, significant sums of money became involved. Consequently, when oil production commenced and revenues flowed, the agreement was reneged on.

President Idriss Déby essentially stated that he now possessed substantial wealth and offered to repay the Bank's loan immediately. With this gesture, the Bank lost its leverage and control over the funds as they were now directly under Déby's authority. Unfortunately, contrary to the agreed-upon allocation for education and health, the majority of the funds were diverted towards military expenditures, including the acquisition of tanks and other weaponry, reflecting his military background. It was a disappointing turn of events as the intended beneficiaries, the education and health initiatives, received only nominal amounts. Despite these setbacks, the pipeline project was somewhat successful, with oil production continuing to this day, although the original objectives were not fully realised.

The US Embassy in N'Djamena boasted a building of considerable size. Owing to our affiliation with the World Bank, we enjoyed a cordial relationship with the embassy staff, and this connection granted us access to embassy events, including the annual Easter hunt organised for American children residing there. (On one occasion, I was even enlisted to don the Easter Bunny costume!)

We also frequented the Marine base, which housed a small contingent of about half a dozen Marines responsible for embassy security.

Every Friday afternoon, they hosted a social gathering featuring activities like football, accompanied by affordable American beer, peanuts and other provisions from their supplies. The base also boasted amenities like a large swimming pool and courts for beach volleyball, providing entertainment for both adults and children. Owing to the scarcity of other recreational options available to us, the Marine base, despite its limitations, became a significant social outlet for our family. It was particularly appreciated by the children.

Another avenue for social excursions was spending time with missionaries who, although they had limited financial resources, conducted admirable work. On Fridays, when we weren't attending events at the Marine base, we hosted gin and tonic parties at our home. Our residence boasted a swimming pool, which we decided to convert into a saltwater pool to avoid having to use chlorine. It was a thoroughly successful endeavour. Procuring 400 pounds of salt from the local market, we transformed the pool, which thereafter required minimal maintenance and suffered no problems with algae or other issues commonly associated with chlorinated pools. It wasn't as salty as seawater, just salty enough to keep microbes under control. It provided a pleasant setting for Friday afternoon gatherings with missionaries, who typically enjoyed gin and tonics in moderation while their children played with ours. These gatherings often doubled as birthday celebrations, with each family taking turns hosting.

Apart from these intimate get-togethers, our social life revolved around occasional dinners with close friends and diplomatic events attended by Mary. One memorable occasion was a dinner with the Minister of Planning, a devout and conservative Muslim who rarely entertained females at his table. From his perspective, hosting Mary was a significant gesture. While his wife remained in the kitchen, Mary's presence at the dinner table marked a notable step forwards in cultural understanding and acceptance.

We once took a memorable excursion to Waza, a game park near Lake Chad in the western part of the country, where we encountered lions, elephants and assorted wildlife. Unfortunately, owing to

rampant poaching, the park has since been depleted of its fauna. We also ventured to Lake Chad, which was considerably larger at the time but has since diminished to a mere puddle. Another notable spot was Elephant Rock, located outside N'Djamena. From a distance, it resembled an elephant atop a mound, hence its name. The area was a popular destination, particularly because it had a cool cave where the children could explore and climb freely under Maria's watchful eye.

My own role with the World Bank went through some changes in the three years we were in Chad. As a complication, the Bank had a policy against husbands and wives working as a team in one location, especially if one of that couple was serving as a director. I was, therefore, officially on secondment from Washington to Chad, working as the education officer with the Ministry of Education to improve education in the country.

During my time as an education specialist before my retirement, I embarked on several field trips in a Land Rover-type vehicle across the desert to visit schools. However, our plans on one occasion were disrupted when, halfway through the trip, the car broke down. The nuts on one of the rear wheels had come loose, causing a stud inside the system to break. Without the necessary tools to make repairs, we found ourselves at a standstill. With no immediate solution in sight, I resigned myself to the fact that we would remain stranded until help arrived. Fortunately, there was a village approximately six kilometres ahead. The driver set out on foot and managed to locate a mechanic in the village who, against all expectation, had the necessary studs. After obtaining the parts, they returned to our location and carried out the repairs, allowing us to continue our journey. We were incredibly fortunate that the ordeal was resolved so readily.

At the time, you wouldn't have recognised me since, as per the advice of the Chadians, I dressed in full Arab attire to combat the intense heat. Traditional garments worn by Arabs offer excellent cooling properties, providing shade and ventilation for the body. Constructed from cotton, they allow for breathability while ensuring constant

protection from the sun. To complete the ensemble, I adorned myself in a turban, which covered my head entirely.

In 2000, I reached the World Bank's relatively early retirement age of 62 and officially ceased to work for the Bank. There was, though, still a need for my expertise, and I became an IT consultant. This period saw advancements in technology for connecting countries like Chad with the Bank in Washington. Chad, in particular, was targeted to receive the installation of a large dish on the mission's roof, prompting the arrival of various experts to assemble and configure it. Since I was somewhat tech-savvy, I played a role in setting up the satellite station in Chad. Through the experts' guidance, I learned the intricacies of its maintenance, gradually assuming responsibility not only for the dish but also for all the associated equipment in the mission. After the installation, I maintained the satellite link with Washington, handling any issues that arose, such as power outages. There were backup generators, but they failed to start on occasion. If a generator failed, I would receive a phone call in the middle of the night and would have to get in the car and go out to start it myself. The link had to be maintained, no matter the challenges. As new missions arrived, it fell upon me to ensure seamless integration, becoming, in essence, the mission's IT point person.

Sadly, Maria could no longer stay employed with us after I retired. In addition, while we were in Chad she had secretly been seeing a boyfriend, known to us as Michael the lizard, who gave her AIDS. I told her to use a condom, but she said, "Well, they are not always convenient."

When she began working for another family in DC, they unlawfully obtained a blood sample from her and labelled her as HIV positive, resulting in her immediate termination. Devastated, she came to us in tears. In order to remain in the US, she had to go 'underground'. She stayed in our basement for a while, and we kept up contact with her over the following years.

Eventually, she found another job and continued working, managing her condition with medication. However, as time passed, her health

deteriorated, prompting her return to us. Maria hadn't seen her family in several years, and she knew her time was running out. To help her reunite with her loved ones, we provided her with $1,000 and her plane tickets and accompanied her to the airport. Despite concerns about her health, we convinced Ethiopian Airways to transport her. Maria sat through the flight without leaving her seat, eager to see her children. Sadly, she hadn't been taking her medication consistently and passed away within the year. She played a huge role in my children's lives. They still talk about her with much affection.

During our time in Chad, Rory, my younger son from my marriage with Shirley, came to visit us, along with his wife, Catherine, before they had any children of their own. Their visit lasted about three weeks. Rory's resourcefulness left a lasting impression on me because, within half an hour of arriving, he had managed to procure some marijuana! I didn't partake myself and was unaware of any local market or place where one could obtain it. Yet Rory, with his adept conversational skills, quickly found a way to acquire what he sought from the local guards, much to my surprise.

Maryland

In 2001, at the end of our three years in Chad, we returned to Washington. Upon our return, we anticipated safety in DC, but we were swiftly met with 9/11, the anthrax scare and the terrifying Beltway Sniper attacks.

Remembering our experience of living on a flight path in Virginia, we rented and then bought a house, a one-storey 1950s rambler, in the town of Somerset, just outside the area of DC and in the state of Maryland. Somerset was incorporated in 1906 and consists of about 400 houses in a tight community, with no room for further expansion. It remains our home to this day.

We didn't realise it at the time, but we had landed in a gem of a community! Once we moved in, we discovered there were many children similar in age to ours. They rapidly made friends and established bonds which have survived to this day, even as they have all grown up and

gone their different ways. Some even ended up over on the West Coast, but they still visit each other. My initial impression was that it was a nice community to rent in, but I wasn't keen on buying the house.

After renting it for a year, we did, however, decide to buy it. The owner was a bit difficult and initially didn't want to sell, but I developed a good relationship with his wife because she was an artist making jewellery, and this was something I was interested in. One day, she invited me to lunch with herself and her husband at their place, and as we ate, she turned to her husband and said, "Just sell the damn house."

Once we had bought the house, we decided to expand and renovate it. We calculated that moving elsewhere would cost us around $30,000, so we opted to stay and make improvements to the house while construction was ongoing. We made the decision to 'pop the top', as they say, and added a second floor on top of the original rambler base. During the construction, we lived in the basement of the house. I built a bathroom down there, moved the dishwasher down, and salvaged some items from the kitchen that would have otherwise been demolished. This arrangement lasted for about nine months. It was a shift that marked a period of chaos and constant commotion, which was a significant change for us. Chris and Katie took the chaos in their stride, and eventually, the house was transformed into a beautiful space with four bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms and a family room.

An architect friend, although primarily focused on office buildings, took on the challenge of designing our house, with us covering the necessary expenses. His design for our house, based on the 1950s rambler, was his first residential project.

His plan for addressing the second floor included gutting the entire first floor and constructing a new kitchen and family room. Later, we built a screen porch outside the family room. The most recent change was three or four years ago when we added a sunroom to the other end of the house.

It was fascinating to learn that our house and the house on the opposite side of the road were both built by a builder on speculation. The house across the street is identical to ours as they were both built

on the same model, which makes walking into the basement of that house feel eerie. These across-the-street neighbours, who were great friends of ours, spent some time in the Far East, and upon their return, they transformed their house, recreating it in a Chinese aesthetic. Meanwhile, our house remains a traditional colonial home. So, despite being originally identical, each house has a distinct character and appeal.

As Katie approached school age, we were uncertain about the best choice of school for her. Eventually, we considered Sidwell Friends school. After we applied and she went through the necessary tests, she was accepted as a preschooler. The school, a Quaker institution emphasising social interactions, placed her in a preschool group where she excelled.

Meanwhile, Somerset Elementary, which still exists today, was the first school Chris attended in the US. When we enrolled Katie in a private school, however, we felt it necessary for Chris to join her to maintain consistency. His admission process was more demanding, requiring him to demonstrate his abilities at the school level and take a psychological test; nevertheless, he managed to secure admission. From that point on, around third grade, he thoroughly enjoyed his time at Sidwell.

I have an amusing memory of Chris's time at Somerset Elementary. He and his friend were hanging out together one day when, for no apparent reason, they decided they didn't want to be at school any more, so they just upped and left, heading straight home. They were only about seven years old! When I found out, I quickly called the school, reaching them just before they pushed the panic button. Of course, the boys were sent straight back to school.

Both Chris and Katie remained at Sidwell until they graduated from high school in 2013 and 2015, respectively.

During this phase of our lives, Mary served as a sector manager for agriculture and environment at the Bank. In fact, she became the director of Environment and Climate Change in 2010. Her career was thriving, so I decided to become a house husband. With Mary

frequently travelling abroad, the responsibility of managing the house, doing the cooking, doing laundry, taking care of the kids and all the other paraphernalia of family life fell on me. I embraced and enjoyed this new role. I even learned how to cook! I remember the kids enjoyed spaghetti in particular, and I liked to make sausages myself. After a time, I learnt to cook more sophisticated meals. I started with a bunch of cookbooks and just went through them.

Once the children were settled in Sidwell School, I found joy in attending school events, including the memorable day that, while watching Chris play soccer, one of the other parents asked me about my grandson!

I also participated actively at the school in various capacities. Occasionally, I even taught at Sidwell when they needed a physics teacher. Stepping back into teaching after all those years was quite an interesting experience. Naturally, I did my best to prepare for each lesson, although my memory of teaching had faded somewhat. Overall, it went smoothly, and my teaching instincts kicked in. I didn't have any trouble with classroom management, the students responded well to me and I found that I still had a knack for connecting with them.

I was also involved with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and eventually became the chairman. Leading the PTA was quite a political affair. The school's head at the time was a difficult character and few teachers related to her. From the get-go, we clashed. She insisted on attending all PTA meetings, which I staunchly opposed. I argued that parents needed a voice that was not under the principal's watchful eye. It was a tough battle, but eventually, she relented. Still, whenever she did show up, I made sure to acknowledge her presence and exit with thinly veiled gratitude before moving on with our agenda.

It wasn't just about meetings; she had a knack for micromanaging. She couldn't stand teachers running their own classrooms and demanded rigid conformity. I recall an incident when she criticised a teacher because his students didn't evacuate in an orderly fashion during a fire drill. The next time around, in a statement of defiance

against her unreasonable standards, they all emerged wearing plastic fire helmets and marched out in perfect rows.

Then there was the debacle with the founder's portrait. A senior thought it would be funny to 'borrow' it from the library, and when the principal caught wind of the theft, she wanted to ruin the student's future by expelling her and giving her a bad recommendation. It was a moment that revealed her true character. One of the teachers, who had been at Sidwell for a long time and was much respected by all the staff, realised the severity of her punishment and intervened, saying that if she did this, he would leave. She climbed down, and the student graduated from Sidwell. Soon after this clash, the head of the high school was fired by the Sidwell Board. Sadly, the teacher who defended the student prank passed away from cancer not long before Chris graduated.

Overall, I believe I was a better parent and husband second time around. Unlike my first marriage, in which I juggled farming, running a teaching department, managing a TV programme and serving in the military all at once, I wasn't inclined to take on every opportunity that came my way. It was a lot to handle, and I realised the importance of prioritising and maintaining balance in my life.

Cameroon

We moved to Yaoundé, Cameroon, in 2007. We had completed the renovations of our house in Somerset just before we travelled to Africa, which allowed us to rent it out during our time away. Mary was now World Bank director for West Africa and visited 14 countries on a regular basis.

Upon our arrival in Cameroon, I found myself retired but unable to sit idly by. I oversaw household staff such as the cooks and cleaners, but this wasn't a challenging job, involving just the typical tasks associated with living in African countries. I also became deeply involved with the American School of Yaoundé, where the children were enrolled. I took on the role of chairman of the board. Teaming up with another parent who happened to be a skilled accountant, we embarked on the arduous task of sorting out the school's financial accounts. Its financial

situation was in complete disarray, and navigating our way through the disorganised records took us around six months. It seemed that they had never undergone a proper audit, or at least, not one that could be successfully completed as auditors were hesitant to sign off on the accounts. We worked diligently to rectify this, eventually reaching a point that auditors could confidently approve the accounts. This marked a significant milestone for the school. None of this would have been possible without the invaluable assistance of Caroline Rossignol, wife of Ivan Rossignol, who worked alongside Mary at the World Bank.

Our home in Cameroon was situated near a prominent landmark, not quite a mountain but a sizeable hill known as Mount Febe. Mount Febe served as a popular destination for weekend exercise outings, and we would embark on leisurely walks up its slopes, a journey that typically took around three-quarters of an hour to an hour to reach the summit, before descending back down.

We also embarked on the far more significant adventure of climbing Mount Cameroon, a much larger 'hill' standing at about 12,000 feet. The altitude posed challenges, with reduced oxygen levels making the ascent challenging. Chris, ever adventurous, made the climb twice in consecutive years. However, for the rest of us, the experience was incredibly demanding. It took us three days to complete the journey up and back down. The descent was particularly strenuous, with steep slopes that caused discomfort and even resulted in the loss of toenails for Mary and me. We camped halfway up the mountain before reaching the summit the following day. Mount Cameroon, though a dormant volcano, presented other hazards, including lava fields of sharp, porous rocks that we had to traverse. Despite the difficulties, reaching the top was a momentous achievement, and even our youngest, Katie, who, at seven years old, was officially too young to climb, tackled the ascent with determination.

While we resided in Cameroon, Hazel, by then in her mid to late 70s, paid us a visit. Arriving via an Air France flight, she made her way to us in Yaoundé. One of her favourite pastimes during her stay was to join me in the evenings before Mary returned from work. As

the cooks prepared supper and the evening buzzed with activity, Hazel and I would sit together on the veranda outside with our English setter, Blue. From there, we witnessed a mesmerising sight: *thousands* of parrots flying in to roost as dusk settled in. It was a breathtaking spectacle. About half an hour later, the sky would darken again as countless bats emerged to begin their nightly foraging. Watching the wildlife became the evening ritual for me and Hazel, accompanied by a gin and tonic for me and vodka for her.

Working in some countries was more straightforward than others. Despite the challenges, we had some memorable experiences as we explored Africa. We even had the opportunity to visit Senegal. However, such travels would be much more difficult today.

Our canine companions: from Blue to Chance to Lady

We acquired our second English setter, Blue, around the time we went to Cameroon. Blue was an independent dog and couldn't be controlled easily. He had a tendency to wander off and return on his own terms. Once, he managed to escape from our gated house, leading our driver on a merry chase downtown. Cameroonian locals captured him, and the driver had to pay to retrieve him.

Sadly, Blue met a tragic end. We took him with us to Hilton Head, South Carolina, for a vacation, and while we explored our Airbnb house, Blue discovered a pond at the back. This seemed like heaven to him, and he jumped in without hesitation. I, still happily inspecting the inside of the house, was alerted to the horror unfolding in the pond by ear-splitting screams from Chris and Katie, who had followed Blue outside. Rushing into the garden, I arrived in time to get a final glimpse of a struggling Blue as he was dragged under by a large alligator. Mary wasn't with us, so I found myself dealing with two distraught children sobbing over the loss of their beloved pet. That night was filled with sadness and grief.

The next morning, I went to the pond, hoping to retrieve Blue's body. Our plan was to have him cremated to provide the kids with some closure. However, although his body had floated to the surface, the alligator still lurked nearby. We were never able to retrieve his body.

Losing Blue was an incredibly traumatic experience for us, and initially, we couldn't countenance the idea of having another dog, especially not another English setter. However, upon returning home, we realised that the absence of a canine companion was deeply felt by the children and decided to visit a local dog rescue centre to explore the possibility of adopting. Over the course of three days, we met numerous dogs, each with their own unique charm, but it was on one particular day that a little pup caught our attention. He bounded out, swirling around us with boundless energy and immediately winning us over. When we interacted with him in the designated area, he went wild, dancing around, circling us and basically selling himself to us. It was a moment of serendipity, and that's how Chance became part of our family. The kids named him; after Blue, he was their 'second chance'. He was a mix of breeds, possibly including Labrador, black mouth Chow, and others. He turned out to be a wonderful dog, a real gentleman.

Chance truly fancied himself as human, often uttering sounds resembling human speech. In particular, he loved to perform an uncanny high-pitched whine. Our experience has shown us that pets can exhibit a myriad of characteristics that often mirror human traits, adding to the depth of our relationships with them.

Chance was a remarkable dog in many ways. Once, he came on a trip to California with us. He travelled in the plane's hold, and I have a video of him riding in a cage as it went down the ramp from the aircraft. When we arrived, he enjoyed the freedom of running along the shore in Laguna Beach. On another trip, we drove our old Toyota thousands of miles cross-country with Chance. While we went out for a meal, he was content to snooze on his bed in our room until we returned.

At home, his favourite spot was nestled on the corner of the couch in the family room downstairs, and he guarded this territory with a sense of ownership. However, when we decided to introduce Lady, an English setter we rescued from a puppy mill when she was about three years old, into our home to keep him company, she proved to be a

rather assertive dog. Despite her bossy demeanour, Chance tolerated her presence, though he made it clear that his territory on the couch was off limits to her. Lady, being an English setter, seemed to understand this boundary, and their dynamic evolved over time. Eventually, they became very good friends. They shared countless adventures together as we travelled around the country. They were part of the family, often staying in Airbnbs with us. Whether we were exploring new cities or venturing into the countryside, both dogs were always by our side, eager participants in our journeys.

Chance developed cancer when he was around 11 years old. We took him to the vet for an examination, where, unfortunately, it was discovered that the cancer had spread into Chance's lungs and around his spine. The vet suggested radiation, but the chances of success were slim. Faced with this prognosis, the vet recommended putting him down. We made the difficult decision to do it at home in the familiar surroundings that he knew. We arranged for a female vet to come to the house, and Chance passed away on his favourite sofa, surrounded by the people who loved him. All of us were weeping! Chris helped the vet carry him gently out of the house, where he was placed in the back of the car and taken away. We have his ashes in a box downstairs. We had planned to scatter his ashes in the garden, his favourite place, but somehow, we never got around to doing it. Perhaps we will this summer (2024).

For a long time after Chance's passing, Lady refused to use his spot on the sofa. It was as if she respected his memory and space. Certain actions and reactions made us sense that she, too, felt the absence of her friend deeply. At mealtimes, she would always leave a little food in the bowl, maybe, we thought, in case Chance came by.

Between home and Haiti

Mary took on the role of World Bank director in Haiti during a tumultuous period there. Following the devastating earthquakes and an outbreak of cholera, the country faced immense challenges.

In the first year, Mary split her time between the States and Haiti. She spent the initial six months in the States, getting herself organised,

and then the latter half of the year in Haiti, setting up her work there. By the second year, she was fully dedicated to her work in Haiti.

During this time, I made a couple of dear friends, Lois and Florence, who lived just up the road from me and helped keep me company. Both of them were widows, and they became my companions, especially when Mary was away. For example, on a Wednesday night, the three of us would venture out for dinner at a different restaurant each time, and those evenings were the highlight of my week. We would share a drink or two – nothing excessive, just enough to enjoy the moment. Lois was a bit older than me, while Florence was significantly older. When the three of us gathered around the table, Florence would remark, "We're an item!" And indeed, we were. She had her Cosmopolitan, and I usually opted for a gin and tonic. Those evenings were always very pleasant and filled with lively conversation.

I remember bringing them over to my house once in order to treat them to a lavish dinner. I laid out the table with our best china and served them a four-course meal, complete with candles to set the mood. It was my way of showing them how much I valued their friendship. They were wonderful friends.

Sadly, both of them have passed away. Lois succumbed to lung cancer in October 2023. She had been quite the tennis player in her youth, so it was a reminder of the dangers of smoking, even though she had dropped the habit in her 40s. As for Florence, she moved to Brightview, an assisted living centre, about four years ago (2020) after giving up her house. Despite her age, she was a remarkable woman – both an artist and an art teacher at the college. As of April 2023, at 102, she was still swimming, but she died – just faded gently away – in early 2024. Their presence and friendship are greatly missed.

As Katie's final year of high school approached, Mary didn't want to miss out on being there for her daughter during important milestones such as her prom. So, despite her responsibilities in Haiti, Mary made it a priority to be home as often as possible. American Airlines even made special accommodations for her, rolling out the red carpet, so to speak. The World Bank supported her by covering

the cost of one trip per month back to Washington. However, for the additional three weekend trips each month, we had to cover the expenses ourselves. It was a balancing act, ensuring Mary could fulfil her professional obligations while also being present for our family during this significant time.

Chris was already a freshman at the University of California, Berkeley.

Meanwhile, I was still mostly the one at home doing the everyday tasks, including all the cooking and laundry for everyone. I was in my late 70s at this point and more than willing to take on the household responsibilities. With the kids in their mid teens, they were becoming more independent, but I felt a sense of duty, as the senior parent figure, to oversee things. I had been involved with my second family from the start, so stepping into this role felt natural. There were a couple of instances at school when people questioned if the kids were mine, which I had to clarify, but overall, it worked out well.

Mary's regular weekend returns during Katie's final year at Sidwell posed a bit of a challenge however, because she naturally fell back into her role as the one running the household. This required some adjustment for both of us. We had to find a balance and redefine our roles within the household. Thankfully, we were able to communicate and resolve issues that arose, ultimately finding our rhythm again.

When Katie and Chris reached driving age, I decided to get them a small semi-sporty car to call their own. It was a vibrant red, so they affectionately named it Ruby. Despite their new-found freedom on the road, they took great care of Ruby and didn't bash it up at all.

Teaching my kids to drive was quite an experience, and one I particularly enjoyed, especially when it came to teaching Katie. We had our own special spot – a nearby large parking lot with plenty of space. That was our training ground. We would spend hours there, practising everything from backing up to parallel parking. In the beginning, it was all about getting her comfortable behind the wheel, gradually building her confidence as she realised she was in control of this powerful machine.

In fact, I taught all my kids to drive. Teaching them was a varied experience, with each one presenting their own unique challenges. Some struggled with coordination, mixing up which pedal to press and when. It led to a few mishaps here and there, but for the most part, they all managed just fine. Cars have become such an integral part of daily life that people tend to absorb the intricacies of driving almost without thinking about it.

If I ever found myself worrying about Chris and Katie being out late, or if I felt uneasy about their whereabouts, I'd pick up the phone and call Mary, gaining comfort from our conversation. Our house was equipped with an alarm system on the back door, so whenever it was opened, it would emit a distinct beep. I'd lie in bed sometimes, anxiously awaiting that telltale sound, the signal that my children were safely back home.

Overall, the kids were pretty responsible during this chapter of their lives. Sure, they experimented with drinking, but drugs were off limits for them. I figured it was better to have them host their parties here, in our basement, where I could keep an eye on things. In the basement, we had a set-up with a pool table that could convert into a ping-pong table, an audio system, video system and TV. It was a great space for the kids to hang out and enjoy themselves. I never provided alcohol myself, but somehow, they managed to find their way to it – perhaps a few hidden bottles I turned a blind eye to. They certainly indulged, but, thankfully, they never got into serious trouble. We had a rule against drinking and driving, which was strictly enforced, and they abided by it without any need for my intervention.

Chris and Katie had friends who lived just across the street, including a friend named Clayton. Sometimes the girls would come over here while the boys went over there and vice versa. Occasionally, they'd all get together, but more often than not, it was divided by gender, with the boys in our basement and the girls at Clayton's house. It was an interesting dynamic, but I was fine with it.

During this time, I was also a grandfather, with grandchildren in my life. With them, I found a different kind of freedom – I wasn't

the primary caregiver, so I could indulge in some playful mischief or share insights that I might not mention to my own children. There was a certain delight in gently teasing their parents by suggesting something fun or mischievous to their kids, adding a bit of a spark to our interactions. Mostly, my grandchildren were overseas, but Gavin was busy raising his two kids over in Virginia, so, naturally, I ended up spending a lot of time with them. I didn't get to see as much of the other grandchildren as I would have liked.

By the time Mary had been in Haiti for four years, Chris and Katie were off pursuing their own paths. Chris had already been living independently for a couple of years, and Katie later joined him. Coincidentally, both of them ended up at Berkeley for their undergraduate degrees, Chris first, and since it's a great school, Katie naturally followed suit. Chris pursued physics and mathematics, while Katie delved into humanitarian studies. Her major was in peace and conflict studies, and she was particularly passionate about issues related to genocide. In fact, she even presented a course on genocide for two consecutive years, demonstrating her deep commitment to raising awareness and educating others. She felt very strongly about it.

Both kids still came home during the summer, occasionally bringing their friends to visit. One summer, I remember Katie was banging on doors, canvassing for Hillary Clinton, while Chris spent a lot of his time running. They both did their fair share of chores, though they still didn't make their beds as often as I would have liked.

With the kids mostly settled and with my frequent separation from them, I found myself with more flexibility. For about five years, I contributed to the *Somerset Journal* by writing a monthly article. It was quite a commitment; I penned a couple of thousand words every month, focusing on the happenings in our town. I talked about newcomers settling in, sharing their names, where they lived, and details about their families. The mayor's office kept me updated on various events around town, which helped me keep the content fresh.

While I had all this time on my hands, I also took the opportunity to visit Haiti more often. Almost once a month, sometimes even more,

I'd head down there for the weekend. I was very aware of the fact that I was retired while Mary was still actively building her career. It was important to me that she pursued her ambitions and continued to advance professionally. I knew that suggesting she take just any job and stay at home wouldn't have been fulfilling for her. Mary was always ambitious, and her drive to succeed was stronger than ever. She wanted to progress in the Bank, and she did so admirably, climbing up the ladder to a high level. I was genuinely pleased to see her achieve such success.

Mary's apartment in Haiti was quite comfortable and secure, on the second floor and with a spacious veranda surrounding it. Life there was generally pleasant, but going out for a meal posed some challenges. The only safe option was a restaurant about 100 yards down the road. Even then, we had guards watching us as we walked there, a precaution against the dangers lurking in the streets. It was a time when scooter-riding assailants with guns became a menacing presence, attacking unsuspecting pedestrians before vanishing into the night.

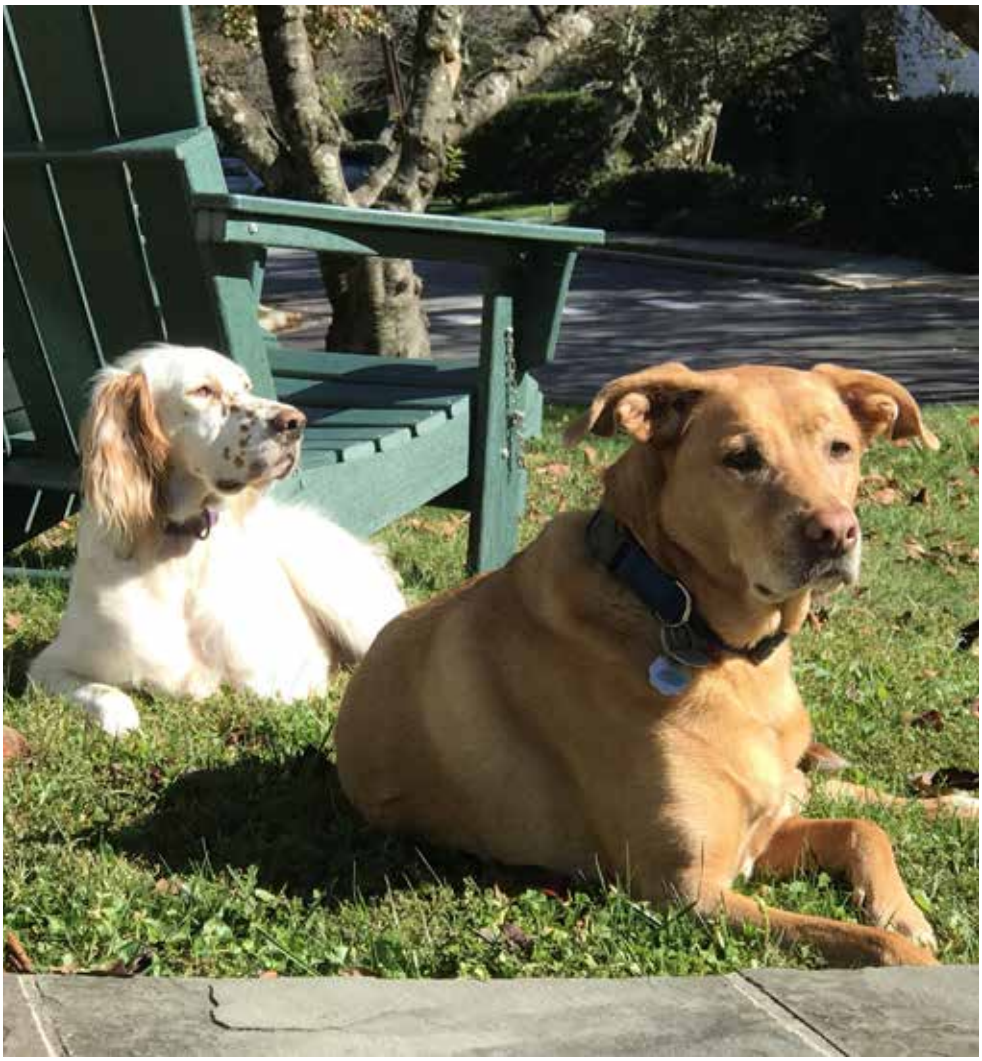
There were a couple of occasions when I unknowingly broke the rules. Once, I walked into a bank to withdraw some money. I used the machine, retrieved the money, and left. Later, the head of security informed me that it wasn't safe to do this in Haiti by oneself. Apparently, someone could have been watching me withdraw money, making me a target for robbery. The protocol was to have a guard accompany you inside the bank for safety to cover your back. This was something I hadn't considered at the time.

Around 2017, at the end of four years in Haiti, Mary retired from the World Bank.

Katie and Chris, N'Djamena, Chad, 1999

On mission, visiting schools, 2000

Retirement party, N'Djamena, Chad, 2000



Lady and Chance, Chevy Chase, MD, 2022

Katie and Chris during vacation in Yellowstone

Left to right: Mary, Katie, me and Chris summiting Mount Cameroon, 2009

Certificate for summiting Mount Cameroon

Chris, Chance and Katie driving across the US, 2012

Me, Chris and Katie at Oxford, celebrating her MSc, 2021

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

What's Everyone Up To These Days?

Chris

After Chris graduated, he decided to pursue a PhD. He spent some time as a teaching assistant before enrolling at the University of Maryland for his doctoral studies. His PhD programme lasted about five years, during which he initially considered physics but quickly shifted his focus to applied mathematics. In 2021, he successfully completed his PhD and secured a position as an assistant professor at Tufts University in Boston, where he thoroughly enjoys teaching. He once confided in me that academic life can be quite solitary, with minimal social interaction beyond the classroom, and, feeling a little isolated recently, he has indicated that he is seeking employment in the tech industry.

Chris was employed as an intern at Tesla during a summer break from Berkeley, and while he was there, a manager asked him to tackle a problem they were facing. They needed a system to track demand for spare parts across different regions of the country. Chris wrote a program to address this issue, which impressed the manager greatly. The same manager later approached him for a one-on-one interview, revealing that Chris was the only Tesla intern who had affected the company's bottom line.

Katie

Katie is currently working for USAID through a contractor, focusing on her passion for assisting those displaced by political or other forces. Her job involves being deployed to various countries to gather first-hand information on the ground and report back to the system. The reports she provides are then incorporated into policy documents shaping the US government's response to the issues at hand.

It's a demanding and intense job, with her most recent assignments taking her to Kenya, where she lived in Nairobi, and even venturing into Somalia for a time, although she hasn't shared many details about that particular mission. Naturally, we get a bit nervous when she's in potentially dangerous situations, but she's considerate in keeping us informed to some extent. While in Nairobi, she stays in a comfortable hotel called the Trademark, conveniently located near a modern mall where she can shop, dine and unwind. The hotel even provides her with a small kitchen, allowing her to prepare meals if needed. Additionally, she has friends at the nearby US embassy, making it easy for her to visit when necessary.

We visited Katie in Kenya, and while we were there, we all took a small plane to Amboseli, a picturesque game reserve near Kilimanjaro. (There was a period in my life when I had my sights set on climbing Kilimanjaro – it was a goal firmly planted on my bucket list. However, despite my aspirations, I never quite managed to check that box. The only mountain ascent I've undertaken was Mount Cameroon.) Our accommodation for three nights was nothing short of luxurious. Imagine tents equipped with built-in bathrooms! It was the epitome of 'glamping', as they say, and we relished every moment of it. The experience was indulgent yet immersive, allowing us to fully appreciate the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Our time in Amboseli was unforgettable because we were greeted by an extraordinary abundance of wildlife. The sight of *hundreds* of elephants roaming freely was awe-inspiring, and we were equally captivated by the presence of rhinos, hippos and numerous other species. The biodiversity was remarkable.

Katie spends about three months on each assignment, working diligently to gather information and compile reports. When she returns, she becomes part of the team responsible for consolidating the various reports and adding to her personal insights and expertise. This collaborative effort results in reports that carry more weight and impact, potentially influencing policy decisions and actions.

On 18th March 2024, she returned to Africa, this time to Kenya but covering Sudan, not including the recently created independent state of South Sudan. After that, her next assignment is in Jerusalem, Israel.

We're incredibly proud of her and the important work she's doing. She's truly making a difference, and it's inspiring to see her dedication and commitment to helping others.

Gavin

Gavin is the only one of my first family who lives in the States. He regularly visits me from Virginia.

Gavin was in high school in Zimbabwe when he learned about the United World College, an international organisation that establishes schools worldwide. He applied and was accepted to the UWC in New Mexico, where students from 100 different countries are brought together for a two-year International Baccalaureate programme aimed at fostering global understanding. After completing this programme, he attended Cornell University for his undergraduate degree, followed by a master's programme in South Carolina.

Despite his passion for environmentalism and his desire to work for the World Bank, concerns about nepotism (with Mary employed there) hindered his chances. Instead, he joined USAID, where he transitioned his career from his initial interest in environmentalism to working in computers. As a computer expert, he now writes programs for various purposes.

Grandchildren and even *great*-grandchildren!

In my first family, all four children have been married and have kids, and their children are now producing my great-grandchildren. I like to keep up with them all.

I have 10 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. My oldest son, Barry, has two children with Helen, a daughter, Caitlyn, and another son, Calum. The next down the line is my first daughter, Eleanor. She had three children with Mark Humphries: Morgan, Liam and Connor. Even though the marriage didn't last, Eleanor still goes by Humphries. Gavin is my third child, and he has two children, Tristan and Jason, with Fllory, who is a Latina with a family from Ecuador. My fourth child, Rory, has two children with Catherine: Rebecca and Lucy. They live in Lichfield in the Midlands in England.

Liam was the first to produce two great-grandchildren, my great-grandchild Archie, followed by George. Caitlyn then had Rowen; he's Rowen Dock Martin, with our family name squeezed in the middle. I think he's going to be called by the nickname 'Boots', but he's a very recent arrival, so there's no telling about that yet!

I keep in touch with them mostly by phone; they seem to prefer it. Occasionally, we do FaceTime, but mostly it's phone calls. We don't often do big group Zoom calls either. I usually just think, 'Well, I haven't heard from Rory in a while, I'll give him a call now'. So, roughly every month or six weeks, I contact the family, including my brother, Graham, who lives with his wife Angela in Sydenham in London. It keeps me busy.

Eleanor lives in Carnoustie in Scotland, near the famous golf course. Liam lives near Dundee with Sara and their children, Archie and George. Morgan lives on the west coast of Scotland with Ross Davey, and Connor lives in London with his girlfriend, Zoe.

South Africa

Mary and I love to travel. It's where we invest most of our money. Fortunately, I find that I can handle the travel without feeling completely

exhausted afterwards, which I'm grateful for because I genuinely enjoy exploring new places, and Mary shares my enthusiasm for it.

Our connection to South Africa runs deep, thanks to Mary's AFS family. It's the only country we've returned to again and again over the years. The flight there is around 16 hours, which I equate to about three movies, but we still visit often.

During one of our trips there in around 2017, we had the pleasure of joining Steven in a game rental reservation, Zebula. He is part owner, with 20 others, of a large house in the park. One evening, as we sat around the fire drinking wine under the starlit sky, Steven proposed something intriguing. He mentioned that there was a share available for purchase, which would grant us regular access to the park at minimal cost. It sounded like an incredible opportunity, so we decided to seize it.

Since then, we've visited Zebula every year for two or three weeks, enjoying the beauty of the park and creating cherished memories with each visit. We've experienced all the seasons there. The house is a spacious place with four bedrooms, all en suite, and comes with a maid who takes care of cleaning and the kitchen. This means we can comfortably accommodate up to eight people, including Mary and myself. Additionally, there's an overflow room, often referred to as the bunk room, where we can squeeze in a few extra guests, if needed. While it's not the most spacious, it does the job when we have larger groups. We've had the pleasure of hosting our children and their friends there. Other visitors over the years include my brother, Graham, and his wife, Angela, as well as Mary's brother Bill and his wife, Chrissy. And even Rory and Catherine, with Rebecca and Lucy.

The house comes with its own game-viewing vehicle, allowing us to explore the park and observe the diverse wildlife. Being a non-predator game reserve, it's safe to walk around and admire the plethora of antelopes, giraffes (technically a type of antelope) and various bird species. The reserve is enclosed by an electric game fence, primarily to deter elephants, although it's wise to remain cautious as leopards, known for their stealth and agility, have been known to bypass such

barriers. Since our house is located within the game reserve, it's not uncommon to have zebras and giraffes wandering through the garden!

One of the advantages of Zebula is the amenities it offers, such as the conference centre and airstrip. These facilities are often in high demand, especially on weekends when conferences are held. Attendees engage in business discussions before enjoying leisure activities like golfing or exploring the park's natural beauty. Fortunately, we have access to these amenities as well, should we ever need them during our stays. It's a perfect blend of comfort and adventure, allowing us to immerse ourselves fully in nature while still enjoying modern conveniences. Additionally, we have free access to adjacent game reserves, which have predators as well as elephants.

This year, 2024, we're planning a trip in October.

When we're in South Africa, we always make time to visit Cape Town. It's my favourite city. We love taking guests there too as they always enjoy it. It's a vibrant city with a mixed population, and the opportunity to eat at places like La Colombe, a high-class restaurant known for its fixed menu of about 20 dishes. (Although we've never tried the wine pairing that's available, the food is exceptional.) South Africa's relative currency value makes the travel experience quite affordable. And of course, Cape Town, against the backdrop of Table Mountain, has spectacular scenery.

Sometimes we stay at a boutique hotel in Franschhoek in the wine district, which boasts a certificate proclaiming it as the best boutique hotel in the world. The rooms are beautifully done, and the overall experience is delightful.

Mary's mother, Hazel, and Katie, 2012

Lois, Florence and Alan at Florence's assisted living home in Rockville, 2020

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Grab Life by the Throat

In 2011, I faced a challenging chapter in my life when I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. To address the condition, I underwent surgery. This involved a robotic operation to remove the cancerous prostate. Unfortunately, the procedure resulted in significant damage to my urinary system, leaving me incontinent upon waking up. Coping with this newfound reality was incredibly tough, and for nearly two years, I relied on nappies and other aids to manage the situation. (I even tried clamps! I leave you to imagine what those are for.)

While I tried everything within reach, the solution ultimately came from another oncologist, who recommended an artificial sphincter implant. This device, situated around the urethra, grants me control over my urinary functions through a push button located in my scrotum – a significant improvement that has brought a measure of normality back to my life.

The artificial sphincter I had implanted wore out after about four years, necessitating another procedure to replace it. As I approach the end of the replacement's expected lifespan, I'm reminded that these devices typically last four to five years. Despite the need for periodic replacements, it remains the most civilised solution available to me. With the implant in place, I no longer experience leakage or the need for those damn nappies. It allows me to function without worry or inconvenience. Whether I'm travelling, attending to daily activities or

even flying in an aircraft, it provides reliable control over my urinary functions. It's a solution that has greatly improved the quality of my life.

It was around the time of the replacement that the COVID-19 pandemic began. I contracted Covid early on, but fortunately, I took Paxlovid, and that took care of it. No hospitalisation was needed. It gave me a metallic taste in my mouth and had some side effects, but nothing I couldn't cope with. Since then, I've kept up with all the shots religiously. Looking back, the isolation was overestimated by most people because of the hype that surrounded it. We were very cautious back then, getting groceries delivered instead of going into the supermarket. The couriers dropped everything outside our garage, and then I had a table inside where everything that came in was sprayed. I was quite meticulous. Now, I go to the supermarket, and if it's crowded, I wear a mask. It's not as big of a deal.

After my initial battle with prostate cancer, I faced another setback when my PSA levels began to rise again. PSA, or prostate-specific antigen, is a crucial marker used to monitor prostate activity. Concerned by the upward trend in my PSA, I sought the expertise of a new oncologist who conducted thorough tests, including MRI scans.

The diagnosis revealed a disheartening reality. Remnants of prostate tissue had been left behind during the initial surgery, allowing the cancer to slowly regrow over the years. Faced with this recurrence, my oncologist presented radiation therapy as a potential solution to eradicate the remaining cancer cells.

After careful consideration, I opted for the radiation treatment, which commenced toward the end of 2023. While the treatment process itself wasn't overly burdensome, requiring me to lie still as a machine delivered targeted radiation, ensuring my internal organs were in the right position proved challenging. Additionally, adhering to the treatment protocol involved arriving with a full bladder and an empty colon – a seemingly incompatible routine that underscored the unique nature of medical procedures.

I did radiation therapy a total of 35 times – 5 times a week for 7 weeks. As I completed my radiation treatment, there was an air of

celebration from the medical staff, marked by a certificate and the tradition of ringing the bell at the radiation centre's entrance. While these gestures were meant to signify the end of treatment, they didn't make me feel any better.

At the end of March 2024, I had a crucial PSA test to gauge the effectiveness of the radiation. Ideally, I hope for a PSA reading of zero or close to it, indicating successful treatment. In fact, I had a reading of 0.2, which is indicative of much reduced cancer activity.

My oncologist has mentioned alternative options, such as chemotherapy or hormone therapy, but neither holds much appeal. Having witnessed the gruelling effects of chemotherapy, I'm hesitant to subject myself to such harsh treatment. Similarly, the prospect of hormone therapy, with potential side effects such as breast growth, doesn't sit well with me either. These decisions weigh heavily on my mind as I navigate the complexities of cancer treatment and strive to maintain quality of life.

While I may change my mind upon seeing the oncologist, I've decided that if the PSA results indicate signs of progression, *let it grow.* It's slow-growing, so if it takes 10 years, it takes 10 years. It will run its course.

Cancer has a way of reminding you of your vulnerability. You start thinking, *Is this the end of my life? Am I going out with this disease?* The experience prompts introspection about the finite nature of life and the looming question of how much time truly remains. These thoughts often lead to moments of reflection with my children. We've had candid conversations about life, illness and the inevitability of mortality. It was during one of these discussions (more of an interrogation really), recorded by my children, that the concept of documenting my journey took root. It was the germ of an idea back then, but their genuine interest and concern sparked the realisation that sharing my experiences could offer something beneficial.

Those recordings never amounted to anything, and neither did a further attempt at recording stories by my son Gavin. So that's why I thought, 'Let me get a professional to do this. If I'm paying a lot of money, I'll have to get it finished!'

Other than this fight with cancer, my life hasn't changed so much, except that I'm getting older. I can't ignore the stiffness creeping into my feet and legs. I'm creaky. I get irritable sometimes. I always apologise to Mary afterwards. Then Mary gets irritable with me sometimes because I can't walk as fast as she can, and I can't go out as much as she can. I don't want to eat the range of things that she wants to eat. She's quite the active one, always on the tennis court or cycling 20 or 30 miles without breaking a sweat. Her dedication to staying healthy is admirable, and I believe it's paying off for her. She had a brush with breast cancer a while back, before my own nightmare started, but, thankfully, it was caught in the early stages, and she managed to overcome it. Generally, she is sensitive to my reduced mobility but also spurs me on to make journeys to new places. She's a wonderful partner, and I'm astonished at my good fortune.

I'm thinking about taking on running so that I can start keeping up with her again! My heart is strong, and I feel that my leg muscles need extra work. (But I refuse to get on a Peloton, where you're immediately enslaved by whatever is coming over the video screen.) I have one false knee that gives me no trouble whatsoever, but the other one is seriously damaged. Climbing stairs becomes a tedious task, with one leg dragging the other due to the strain. I've contemplated getting it fixed, but the post-operation therapy for knee surgery is dauntingly painful and lengthy.

My orthopedic surgeon, who did a commendable job on my first knee, occasionally assesses the second. He has suggested a treatment that I've dubbed 'Jiffy Lube' for its lubricating properties. It involves injecting a lubricant under the kneecap, providing relief for a few months. The injection does alleviate some discomfort, although it doesn't strengthen the muscles. Still, it's covered by medical aid, so I plan to undergo the procedure again. However, my surgeon has reservations about operating on my other knee, citing my age as a concern. As much as I'd like to defy the odds, I can't help but agree with his assessment when I think about the very painful rehabilitation process!

Despite my age, travelling is always on my mind. New Zealand and Australia are still on my bucket list. I recently caught up with a friend who has just returned from a five-week adventure Down Under with his family. He mentioned that it was a bit pricey but totally worth it. According to him, the scenery in New Zealand is nothing short of spectacular. He mentioned that the flight was quite the journey – 27 hours nonstop from here to Auckland! As for Australia, he likened it to the US in many ways. Australia does seem to have its own unique charm, even if it might be a bit rugged in places. Like any vast country, it probably varies greatly, depending on where you visit.

When I was younger, my ideal way of doing the trip to Australia would have been to take a ship that pulls out of India and then goes down around the coast of Australia. Then maybe you hop across to New Zealand. It would take about three months to do properly.

I'm not sure this vision of mine will happen for me at this point, but we are going to Norway this year (2024)! We fly to Britain in July, and then leave from Southampton on a boat that takes us down the fjords for about a week. Mary's not very keen on spending a lot of time in a big cruise boat. (She did a lot of sailing before I came along and much prefers the style of a smaller boat.)

These days, I keep myself occupied with a lot of reading. *Scientific American*, *New Scientist* and *Science News* are three magazines that I subscribe to, keeping me up to date with everything happening in the science world, which has been my interest all my life. I also have an extensive workshop downstairs, although I don't use it as much these days. In fact, one of the tasks on my list is to go down there and clean it all up! The last major project I undertook down there was about two years ago. A good friend had a grandfather clock that fell over or got knocked over, and it ended up shattered into all sorts of pieces. It came to me in two buckets, a puzzle of sorts. I spent about five months meticulously putting it back together; it was like solving a jigsaw puzzle. I didn't attempt to restore its mechanical workings – that was beyond my expertise. Instead, I replaced its heart with a little electric one, similar to what I did with our own

clock downstairs. It was a laborious process, but incredibly satisfying in the end.

As I've gotten older, I've noticed that I need a midday nap more often. Sometimes, midday arrives as early as 11 o'clock in the morning, and I find myself dozing off for about half an hour. One of my favourite things to do during this time is to put the laundry in the machine and then sit and rest while it cycles through, before transferring it to the dryer and starting a new load. It's a brief break, but it works wonders for me.

I also enjoy going for walks with Lady and Mary, usually twice a week when the weather is nice. However, I can't stand cold weather. It makes my skin itchy and puts me in a grumpy mood. At time of writing, winter has turned to spring and I can feel the difference in the weather and in my knees! I'm hopeful that the warmer days will bring back the mobility I've been missing. But we'll just have to wait and see.

My doctor has reassured me multiple times that, all things considered, I'm in good health for my age. Thankfully, I haven't experienced any cognitive decline or issues with mental processing. So, for now, I'm thankful that everything seems to be functioning well.

My motto is: *Grab life by the throat*. I really hope I've done that well. I certainly consider myself incredibly fortunate. I've had the opportunity to live two distinct lives. I've been married twice, with each marriage bringing its own joys and experiences. I've had two sets of children, who bring me joy, and I've found fulfilment in both phases of my life. This may be the end of this 'Life Project', but I am looking forward to experiencing and writing further chapters.

Katie and Dad in Ireland, 2009

Our house in the Zebula game park in South Africa, 2016

Zebula, elephant sighting, 2016

Zebula, game viewing, 2016

Mary with six Thanksgiving pies in our Chevy Chase home, 2017

Five Poems

Africa

Africa,
Where the eye rests easy on infinity.
Where the will of man surrenders to the while of nature.
Where the wind blows constant conflict:
Of promise and decay, corruption and hope.
Where man talks of peace and balance,
And nature displays her age long practice.

To walk and feel the slow quiet pulse of Africa
Is to recall man's primal birth:
In that soil lies man's dreams and future.
For these lands have been his teacher,
And are often now, his judge.

Oft'times a mother,
Always a lover,
Sometimes generous,
Always jealous.

To leave, is possible:
To return, inescapable.

May 1989, Tanzania

The First Family

Each one of you has some part of me: when I write of you, I
write of myself

The first born, Barry: The confidant, and drinking friend –
Has many public images
And few known faces.

The second, Eleanor: She, who perceives the music in words,
Who sees beauty where others see dross,
Who loves the poetry threading each life force.

The third, Gavin: The worker, farmer, patient man of ideals,
Sharer of dawn's special peace,
Seeker of life's purpose in that quiet time.

The fourth, Rory: The thinker, philosopher, and academic,
Who will create much change in this poor world
When once he sees himself as real.

Strengths and weaknesses – summed in me, apportioned in you.

Bolstered by your mother's strength and intellect;
Tempered by her love and loyalty,
Weakened by her fear and impetuous fury.

You are my family

If I am not your mother's husband,
Does this make me any less your father?
I love you all, my family.

February 1986

Written when Mary and I were beginning to realise where we were heading...

For Mary

For every one of us
Time's arrow takes to lifetime flight
On one brief surge of coupled joy.

Each soul is tied
To arrow's flight,
Each life is lived in measured time.

Some paths are long, and travel straight
Some spend their force in brief and
lonely climb to uncharted heights.
Ending their span in mortal dark.

Rare chance are two which fly in twinned path
Till mortal span is done.

Rarer still are those twin flights
Which start their paths in different times.

For them the gods reserve the special gifts
Of love in life; of honey in gall.

Ecstasy is oft known by agony compared,
When one arrow ends its ordained flight
While other grieves in flight which yet remains.

And yet that love,
Wrapped in its gall,
Can yield the sweetest fruit
To those whose paths are thus enthralled.

December 1989

The Second Family

Mary: my wife, companion in adventure, mother of our children, and constant love over more than three decades. She who has never allowed me to grow old.

Chris: our first born who early showed an aptitude for learning and a willingness to experience the diverse cultures his parents exposed him to in Chad, Cameroon, and America. Who inherited a love of science and a rigorous intellect he developed into a deep knowledge of mathematics and computers. Now an Assistant Professor of Applied Mathematics at Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts.

Katie: who when just three years old demanded the right to attend school in Chad beside her brother. Who developed a love of humanity which turned into a driving urge to make the world a better place for the less privileged. She pursued and shaped this passion in a wide love of reading nurtured by her boundless intellect.

She has a joy of life which has fuelled a vast community of loyal friends. Now an Information Officer for the US State Department following her path by reporting on the plight of people enduring the outcomes of their government's ambitions.

A family I am proud to claim as my own with boundless love.

May 2024

A Reverie

Look for me not in the money malls of America
In the roiling void of middle Kansas
In the turbulent maelstrom of the Washington Beltway

Look for me not in the quiet green lanes of England
In the serried ranks of suburban castles
In the brash cheerfulness of the English summer

Seek me in the dark beer-scented brown of the local pub
In the susurrising sighs of Eleuthera's casuarina pines
In the thunderous surf and reflective sounds of America's coastline

Find me in Africa!
In the soaring cries of the fish eagle
In the dusty tension of the approaching storm
In the surfeit of first rains
In the pensive kopjes of the Matopos
In the broad deep reaches of Zambesi floods
In the smoky timeless villages of Africa

There you will find my spirit,
Free, happy, and at rest.

First great-grandson, Archie

Life
Book
memoirs