

Index

1.	Party time	1-8
2.	At the feet of a wise man...	9-16
3.	From tragedy to hope	17-18
4.	From attempted murder to <i>ubuntu</i>	19-25
5.	Looking for pure water in the <i>Karoo</i>	26-32
6.	Bubbling and fast moving water	33-39
7.	From Nazi Germany to <i>Volkspeler</i>	40-44
8.	B ecoming an addict at age five	45-46
9.	Life on a farm, a horse whisperer, a pig, a cow, a "soldering man", potatoes, and a hay stack	47-52
10.	A 1948 <i>Pontiac</i> , a row boat and a speed boat	53-56
11.	Relocating to <i>Worcester</i> in a <i>Hudson Hornet</i> , and committing a perfect crime	57-65
12.	Initiation into manhood, and <i>Rawsonville se girls</i>	66-70
13.	Military "service"	71-72
14.	A "cause without a rebel", and getting "divorced" at age twenty	73-82
15.	Entering the real world, living behind the picket fence	83-88
16.	Civil service to a corporate law firm to a barefoot law firm	89-92
17.	Hard work, a motor race and antique cars	93-94
18.	A man rotting in jail in Zambia is rescued by his wife	95-99
19.	Somewhat different friends, mad musicians, colleagues and <i>Lang Dawid De Villiers QC</i>	100-117
20.	The "battle of <i>Saldanha</i> " kicks off with "scud missiles"	118-129
21.	The "battle" continues-and fearing bankruptcy	130-139
22.	Twenty beautiful women in the nude	140-146
23.	The aftermath: " <i>Lied van Saldanha</i> " and " <i>Justice</i> "	147-151
24.	The "allied forces"	152-155
25.	Ian Moultrie	156-168
26.	A holistic victory?	169-178
27.	Nerves of steel?	179-181
	Afterthought	182-183

Chapter1

Party time

I have been beyond minority for about forty two years.
I have never been beyond immaturity.

I could consider blaming my late mother for my immaturity, as she consistently introduced me to all and sundry as her baby boy. This she did until I was forty three years old, at which time she passed away, and naturally could not do so any more. Otherwise she most certainly would have.

Because she is no longer around to answer, I am really not prepared to blame my late mother. The embarrassment of her favourite personal introduction was severe when I was about fourteen years old. Fortunately it lessened over time, and eventually did not really bother me. And if I am really honest, I have to concede that I have made my own choices over the

years, and must take personal responsibility for who I am. In any event, I have become accustomed to being immature, and, with some exception, mostly like myself.

My own enjoyable immaturity has come with a price. After having lived on Planet Earth for quite a while, I still battle with who I am, and who I should be. Mature people do not seem to do have such identity crises. At least they do not have it openly. I am therefore prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt, and sometimes envy them.

As part of my inner turmoil, I have also been suffering from tensions between instincts to look after myself and my family, and instincts to look after others. Whilst I have in the far majority of cases opted for self interest and family interest, I have also over the years, on more than one occasion, landed my family in the

odd crisis around the instinct to think outside our family.

To get out of all the turmoil, I have even gone as far as considering maturity. However, in my efforts to avoid implementing this rather alarming thought, I have come across a resolving theory, not involving anything as horrific as capitulation to maturity.

It has struck me that my inner turmoil may have nothing to do with immaturity or morals or duties to others, but that it may be part of a much bigger picture.

As we are also looking after the Universe in the broader sense when we help others, with holistic long term beneficial consequences to ourselves, my own turmoil may be a mere manifestation of competition between my “base” animal instincts for “immediate” survival, and my “base” animal instincts for “long

term” survival. With nothing special or holy about either approach.

I really like this theory, and it is quite helpful. With this theory I cannot err in the moral department, and I do not have to capitulate to maturity. I can also do what I want without having to feel guilty about my decisions.

When I came across this theory, I thought that it would instantly release the tensions. But it did not.

The problem is that I am somewhat of an optimist. I therefore have a rather strong hunch that the magnetic fields in the wider Universe will not go haywire too soon, and that a kind of reverse big bang is not imminent. If this hunch is correct, it means that Earth and the human species are still going to be around for quite a while. That is to say if we do not effect the destruction ourselves.

The result of my optimistic hunch is that I now feel somewhat hard done by, as I rather suspect that I may have missed out on a very good future party.

Let me explain.

Our survival instincts naturally come to the fore when we are threatened. The more threatened we feel, the more we are inclined to take measures to protect ourselves and our families. We do so by taking different measures to secure ourselves. These range from burglar proofing, security walls and security systems, to national defence forces. These security measures also include raping the Earth, disturbing the ecological balance, and gathering possessions far beyond our needs. In its ultimate form these anxieties may manifest in what is sometimes called naked greed.

Because the expression “naked greed” results in the wandering of my mind into erotic images, I do not like the expression. Quite apart from this unavoidable erotic aspect, I also do not like the expression because I do not believe that the excesses of apparently greedy people arise from greed in the first place. I believe that it arises from fear and anxiety in the first place. I believe greed is mostly a by-product of fear and anxiety.

This means that it is my belief that the survival instincts of the human species, and the responses thereto, are directly related to the nervous system of the human species. The weaker the nervous system, the greater the risk of destructive short term survival instincts and reactions.

It is furthermore my understanding that the human species, and for that matter all species, have an

unusual ability and natural inclination to adjust, through evolution, in order to survive.

Currently one of the biggest threats to the human species is its inability to overcome instinctive short term survival instincts with holistic long term survival instincts.

I really hope that over the next million years the human species will have further evolved into a species with a nervous system that will be able to overcome its own fear and anxieties to a better extent, and therefore also its base animal instincts towards short term survival. Such evolved human species will in a sense have nerves of steel. And because the destructiveness of short term reactions will then hopefully be out of the way, Earth may indeed then become a much nicer and much more sustainable place.

It may very well then be party time on Earth.

Unfortunately I, and the rest of those currently around, have quite simply been borne too early in the evolution cycle. We therefore do not share in nerves of steel, and will also not be around if this adjustment should evolve. We may have missed out on the best party ever.

All that we can do in the mean time is to attempt to keep the place going until party time. Perhaps we can each contribute with positive energy and positive actions, in some or other way...

Chapter2

At the feet of a wise man...

I suppose the psyche instilled in childhood never really leaves us. To understand me, it is necessary to understand how I grew up. I shall therefore, later on, tell the entire story, and hope that you will not become bored. I myself think it is an interesting story. But please bear in mind my immaturity. And will you also please forgive me for saying many positive things about my parents, my sister, my brother, my wife, and children. Naturally they all also have faults, like I do. But I can see no positive purpose in dwelling on these, and shall therefore only tell you about the nice things. If this is not what you would like to hear it is fine with me...

The other day I had to attend a conference on developments in commercial law in South Africa. I was suffering from a bout of flu, and was not keen on

going. I have also suffered from insufficient interest in the academic side of law, and possibly a fair degree of attention deficit, ever since I can remember. This further dampened my enthusiasm.

The conference started with a lecture by a law professor, who explained the new legislation. I struggled to concentrate, and during the lunch hour I considered going home. However, for some or other reason I did not.

The talk that followed after the lunch hour was different.

It was delivered by a seasoned wise man, a former judge aged seventy three, who had left the legal profession years ago, and who became an international leader in the corporate world over the last decade or more.

Whilst his talk was academic in content, and whilst he delivered it calmly, professionally and without ego, it seemed clear that it was driven by inherent passion and conviction.

He dealt with the choice between serving mere self interest on the one hand, and also bearing in mind the interests of others on the other hand. Those with whom we are in some or other relationship, *our stakeholders*. He made the point that whilst *stakeholders* include ourselves and our own families, this concept also goes far beyond ourselves and our own families. That nothing we “own” belongs to us in absolute terms, and that we have to manage it in the interest of all the *stakeholders*.

He emphasized that our stakeholders also include employees, customers, suppliers, the community and everybody walking the Earth. Indeed, every person with whom we stand in *any* form of *relationship*.

He also made the point that we are only transient visitors to Planet Earth, and that we must also take care of it for the stakeholders who will only follow in generations to come. Furthermore, as we will hopefully all share Earth, and as we in any event all need Earth, all of us are indeed in a relationship with one other, and also with those who have not yet been born. Accordingly, that all the people on Earth, now and in the future, are also our *stakeholders*.

My somewhat more basic take on what he said is that, like me, he is hoping that the reverse big bang will not happen soon, and that he therefore holds on to a dream. That he is also saying that we are all living in a commune called Earth, much like a group of young persons who do not own their own houses.

He is saying that there is only one Earth, and that none of us have purchased Earth.

He is saying that even if we have purchased and taken transfer of a small piece of Earth, we could only have paid therefore with other pieces of Earth, in the form of the fruits of Earth, converted into money.

That we therefore simply from time to time swap around our temporary management of pieces of Earth, but that we then seem to persuade ourselves that we own a piece (which is also rather silly, because we obviously cannot take it with us when we leave...)

Everything the wise man said has been said before. It can be found in the Bible, the Koran, the writings of Ghandi, and most spiritual writings.

There was nothing sanctimonious about what the wise man had said. He was simply talking as an older

and wiser person, reminding us of the obvious, and at the same time calmly providing facts to back it up.

It was in the delivery of an age old spiritual message, cast in different terms.

It was quite unusual to experience spirituality at a commercial law seminar.

I was spell bound. The talk resolved much of my inner tensions, and improved my personal happiness, self-acceptance, confidence and inner peace. I no longer had any need to fall back on my own resolving theories. Despite lingering flu, I have been smiling and laughing since I attended the lecture. Even if I give away something in future, I am not really giving it away and am not doing my family any injustice, as we do not really own anything. Furthermore, if I should be kind to others and live a value driven life, I shall give much more to my wife and children than I can ever

give to them in material terms. I shall be adding to their lives, and shall be preparing my children for life in a much better way.

If they ever find themselves in crises in years to come, they will handle it much better with the benefit of values than with the benefit of material things.

I realised that money can mostly not save you in a crisis unrelated to money. And that such crises may be much more common than money related crises. And in any event, money related crises mostly have an undercurrent and origin totally unrelated to money, which will require values to be overcome.

The talk affirmed, almost in the words (with some poetic license) of the grey haired judge in *The Bonfire of Vanities*:

"What my father and my mother taught me (and prayed for) on their knees...."

Chapter 3

From tragedy to hope

I was born in 1951 in the town of *De Aar*, in the Northern Cape region of the then *Union of South Africa*. I was the youngest of three children.

Our family was a happy *Karoo* family, though my parents were hit with immense tragedy a number of years before my birth. They lost two little girls, and from my earliest days I was continuously aware of this tragedy. Particularly that my mother had again fallen pregnant after they had lost the first little one at the most beautiful age of three, and that they were convinced that *The Good Lord* had intervened in their sorrow when she again fell pregnant. However, that the second little one was then also lost, six months after her birth. I therefore have two departed sisters whom I never met.

My mother only managed to come to peace with these losses about forty years later, after my parents had retired. At this late stage my mother wrote a play called "*Marlien, maar net geleen*" (*Marlien, just borrowed*). Through the play she told the story of their grief and also of acceptance and of hope. At that stage she and my father were living in retirement in a coastal town.

My mother had always found it impossible to be idle. In her retirement she interacted with the local secondary school, assisting children with extra tuition in mathematics.

She staged the play using these children as actors.

She then finally come to rest (almost). Her art was her therapy...

Chapter 4

From attempted murder to *ubuntu*

I have two surviving siblings, a brother just one year and three days older than me, and a sister about five years older. They are quite different from me. I am very fond of both of them.

My sister is an eccentric artist, and makes the most beautiful paintings. Her house is full of these. She does not own or drive a motor vehicle, and gets along riding a bicycle. She owns a cell phone, but makes only limited use of it. She loves reading and has an unusual ability to absorb knowledge. She is interested in history, and in South African and world politics, and understands all of this quite well. She also knows a lot about art. In short she knows a lot about things I know little about.

My brother is a retired lecturer, with qualifications in business administration. He is most interested in the stock market, business matters and fishing, and loves all women. He is one of the kindest and most positive persons I have ever come across. He never finds fault with anybody, and always sees the bright side. He has suffered a series of serious heart problems, and has been in and out of intensive care units. So much so that we have almost become accustomed to it, and no longer became anxious when he suffered yet another cardiac arrhythmia or cardiac arrest.

However, last year he suffered a rather severe heart attack, after climbing steep rocks in the process of having gone fishing on his own. He was admitted to an intensive care unit in *Mossel Bay* on the Saturday, and we received news that his condition was critical. I drove through the night to *Mossel Bay*, having picked up my sister en route.

We saw him in the intensive care unit. The experienced ward sister told us that she was on duty when he was admitted, and that she really did not at that stage believe that he would make it. However, he was discharged on the Monday or Tuesday, after yet another cardiac stent was installed into his coronary artery with great difficulty, as it had to be installed into a previous stent. That same afternoon he went fishing again. He always overcomes adversity with positive re-actions. He never gives up hope.

My brother and I were brought up as twins. We started school together, wore similar clothes and also looked somewhat alike, although he was more blessed in this department. To add to the confusion we were both *Gemini*, with our birthdays three days apart.

By the time we went to school and for the better part of our primary and secondary school life, most people

assumed that we were twins. However, within our family I always remained the baby, and he was my elder brother.

We lived in *De Aar* until I was about five years old. During these first five years of my life I contracted tuberculosis as result of milk that had not been pasteurised. This manifested in my left foot, which was operated on to insulate the tuberculosis (as I understood it). My foot was in plaster for a long time, and thereafter I had to wear a special boot for an equally long time, and had to undergo annual X-Rays. For a time I was unable to walk at all, and my sister used to push me around in a pram of sorts. In the process I grew very fond of her, and she of me. At the same time I had a special bond with my “twin” elder brother, who was quite protective of me. In later years he saved both my life and that of my mother, when we were swept along by a sea stream. This he did, at the age of about eleven or twelve by literally walking on

the sea bed, with his head under the water, and pushing my mother and me, both of whom were totally fatigued and about to drown, inch by inch out of the strong sea stream, until our feet eventually touched sand and we could hold our own.

My brother and I often had fights. I was not a physical match for him, and my instant survival instincts gave rise to wild reactions on occasions. I remember throwing him with a torch one day. The lid at the back of the torch was off, and the torch thus had a very sharp edge. In my defence I would like to think that I was so angry that I did not register this. The torch cut a perfect red ring around his nose. It was a tumultuous fight. I followed up the torch with the wooden leg of a toy piano. I can still see the leg of the piano travelling through the blue sky, revolving almost in slow motion and in strange silence. When the piano leg hit the big window pane of our sitting room, the

silence was broken, with glass scattering every where. I had almost murdered my own brother.

My father came rushing out and my brother and I tried to explain ourselves, each claiming that he was in the right. My father said that he was not really interested in who was right or wrong- *“you must just stop your fighting”*. We still wanted to argue the toss. He told us: *“Did you not hear what I have said? I do not want to know who is right or wrong. I just want the two of you to stop your fighting.”*

After a short while we were laughing again. He had put out a boundary, and a full stop behind the conflict. This approach of my father has had a major impact on my personal philosophies. The victory is sometimes in giving up one's rights and expectations. Not in enforcing them.

Interestingly enough there has over the past years been an international emphasis in law towards taking into account the *spirit* of constitutional law, also within commercial settings. It effectively constitutes a swing towards moral duties, and away from contractual rights. It is in effect about “*ubuntu*” (**an ethic focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other, having its origin in the Bantu languages of southern Africa*).

Chapter 5

**Looking for pure water in the Karoo, in a 1948
*Chrysler Windsor***

De Aar and the surrounding area is part of the arid *Karoo* region. On Sunday afternoons we as a family often drove to the outskirts of the town in my father's 1948 *Chrysler Windsor*, to spend the afternoon at "*the river*". The river was a dry river bed, with reeds that were probably fed by an underground stream.

There was no water to be seen. However, Sunday after Sunday we went back to "*the river*". Almost as though we never gave up hope that *The Good Lord* would provide a blessing....

We were what could probably be described as a middle class family, though culturally rich. Both my parents were graduates, which was quite a rarity at the time.

My father was the principal of the local secondary school. He had studied into history, geography, languages, philosophy and education.

Lest the reader may become irritated with my love and admiration for my father, I would like to mention, at this stage already, that he was of course not *Jesus Christ*, and that I have also become aware of my father's shortcomings. However, in my own eyes he came a very close second...

He grew up in the aftermath of the *Afrikaner* struggle in the *Anglo-Boer* war. He was quite keen on *Afrikaner* politics, the history of *Europe*, the *National Party*, *Die Burger* newspaper, pure usage of the *Afrikaans* language, classical music, the *Dutch Reformed Church* and *Afrikaner Nationalism*.

For as long as I could remember, he was always the chairman of every grouping wherein he had become involved.

He enjoyed making public speeches, and to read out of the Bible and to pray. Through my childhood eyes he appeared to be a natural leader, in every possible respect.

On a personal level I experienced him as a kind and gentle, with clear moral values, who often told us that we should bear in mind others rather than ourselves. He never used crude language (as seems to have become one of my own addictions).

Despite his allegiance to the *apartheid* government, which stemmed from the past struggle of the *Anglo Boer* war and oppression by the *British*, he never made any racist remarks. From his point of view the emphasis was on the idea of positive social

engineering and organised *upliftment* -separate *development*.

He was a member of the infamous clandestine *Afrikaner Broederbond*, which effectively acted as a support organisation and think tank for the apartheid government. He indeed took the lead in the *Broederbond* in his region. However, his emphasis was always that change was required, and that he could make the most effective contribution “*on the inside*.” His sincere intentions were vindicated on three occasions. Firstly he greatly annoyed one of the leaders by stating an opposing viewpoint at a major conference of the *Broederbond*. Secondly I personally overheard him arguing the toss in our sitting room in *Worcester* with the leader of a rightwing party. Thirdly, he, in the seventies, in rather solemn terms, told me and my brother that we should never join the *Broederbond*. I heeded this advice, and I believe my brother did the same.

My father was disciplined, and had an unusually neat handwriting and signature, and was cultured and refined in every respect. He could sing beautifully, and he could dance with poise. He was perfectly bilingual and spoke *English* with a natural *Oxford* accent, as had been taught to him and his siblings by my late grandmother. He dressed well and I suspect that he might have admired the likes of *Clark Gable*.

At school I one day swelled with pride when an *English* speaking pupil asked me:

“Where on earth did your father, an Afrikaner Boer, learn to speak perfect English with an Oxford accent?”

Over the years I have often surmised that my grandmother probably quietly admired the sophistication of the *British*. I have also surmised that

this may have been as a result of *George Rex*, a member of the *British* nobility, having settled not too far from *Knysna*, with stories about the nobility abounding in the area.

Apart from teaching her children perfect *Oxford English*, my grandmother also mastered the art of having a high tea with doilies, silverware and other trimmings, and my father was taught perfect table manners. However, my father did not succeed to pass this fully on to me (though I am not as bad in this department as in the department of foul language.)

I only heard my father raise his voice once or twice in my entire life. He was sincere and humble by nature. Teachers who worked with him told me many years later that if you have once had him as a school principal, you can never again be happy as a teacher in another school.

In my own childhood eyes he was as close to *Jesus Christ* as was humanly possible. *In my later adult years I concluded that his major fault may have been that he did not show his faults...*

This made my own life difficult, and gave rise to feelings of inadequacy on my part, until I eventually registered that, like me, he was also not perfect...

Chapter 6

Bubbling and fast moving water

My mother was a hurricane. Or a tsunami. Or a volcano. Or bubbling fast moving water.

But water, in the *Karoo*, is always sacred.

She was completely unpretentious, and the exact opposite of my father.

Like me, she was the baby in her family. She was a combination of a mathematics teacher and a physical training teacher, with formal drama training. She was probably quite clever, as mathematics graduates were rare amongst women in those days.

She was also an excellent athlete who did the hundred yards sprint in record time.

Her father, *Alastair Morrison*, was a full blooded Scotsman. He came to *South Africa* at the turn of the 19th Century, as a missionary teacher. I have convinced myself that he must have had *Viking* blood.

Her mother (my grandmother) was one of about eight sisters. None of my grandmother's numerous sisters ever got married. Probably because the local men found my great grandfather, who was a church leader, too intimidating. However, I would imagine that the *Viking-Scotsman* was not at all phased by the local scenarios, as he indeed managed to marry my grandmother.

Sadly my mother's father died when she was only three or four years old, and she grew up without a father. She often talked about the deep longing to have known her father. This created a special bond between my mother and my wife, who lost her father when she was less than two years old. It also

prepared me to have a better understanding for this aspect of my wife's life, though I have messed up on occasions.

My mother went to university at the youthful age of 15 or 16. My grandmother decided that she was much too young to go into life immediately after she graduated. She was therefore enrolled for an additional one year course in drama. She also obtained a bursary to study rhythmic gymnastics in *Germany*. She spent a year in *Germany*, training in rhythmic movement to music, during 1938.

She therefore experienced *Nazi Germany* shortly before *World War 11*, and had to flee for a while to *England* during 1938, when the war was originally about to break out.

She told us that she personally saw *Adolf Hitler* driving past in *Kaizer Strasse, Berlin*, and that she

and another South African were laughing because the Germans burst out in tears when he came past. However, that when he passed them in his gleaming open *Mercedes Benz*, with soldiers doing the goose-step in front of him, they also burst into tears. It was "*Beatle mania*" at its very best!

She broke off her relationship with my father just before leaving for Germany. She was oblivious to world politics and the holocaust, and over the years openly talked about a transient "boyfriend" who was in the *German SS*! However, she and my father resumed their relationship after her return to South Africa. This possibly means that it can be said that my father had beaten up the *German SS* during 1939, all on his own!

My mother attended the famous *Munich Olympics* in 1938, in the company of the infamous *Robie Lybrandt*, an Afrikaner boxing champion, who later

turned into a German spy, and was ultimately charged with high treason.

Robie Lybrandt became infamous for allegedly having been returned to *German West Africa* (now *Namibia*) in a German U-boat or as a paratrooper, and was allegedly the link between the *Ossewa Brandwag* movement (which was a South African movement that sympathised with *Nazis*) and the *Nazis*. So much so that his story has impliedly been referred to in an epic Afrikaans poem, *Joernaal van Jorik*, by a famous Afrikaans post war poet, *DJ Opperman*.

Fortunately my father recognised the dangers of *Nazism*, and he refused to be involved in the *Ossewa Brandwag* movement.

He so refused at a time when it would have been more popular amongst Afrikaners to join the *Ossewa Brandwag*, and notwithstanding my mother's transient

personal “connection” in Germany with *Lybrandt* (who was a hero in many *Afrikaner* circles.)

Although my mother actually joined the *Ossewa Brandwag* for very short while, there was no risk at all of her becoming politically active. She was at the time probably still impressed with *Robie Lybrandt*, whose spy activities and connections with the *Nazis* had not yet come to the fore. However, she told me herself that all the ceremony and drama within and around the *Ossewa Brandwag* was exciting and attracted her. She was never a political animal, and had no interest in the games played by politicians. She derived her satisfaction from mathematics, athletics, rhythmic movements, romance and the drama of life, and often revealed her ignorance of politics, as well as a fair degree of disrespect for politicians. The moment my father became aware of her having joined, he persuaded her to give it up, and she did so.

Her own disinterest in politics was demonstrated quite clearly in the fifties. My father received a request from the National Party that he should make himself available for election to Parliament, for an absolutely safe National Party seat. My mother was totally opposed to this because "*politics is dirty.*" Fortunately my father, despite his personal interest in politics and the rather tempting request, declined and remained in teaching to the date of his eventual retirement.

Chapter 7

From *Nazi Germany* to *Volkspeler*

My parents became most involved in the *Volkspeler* (Afrikaner folk dances) movement after leaving university.

After her return from *Germany* my mother was able, with the benefit of training in rhythmic gymnastics, to work out rhythmic folk dances.

She promoted *Volkspeler* with great personal enthusiasm, coupled with exuberant shouting and screaming.

She was tone deaf. Not that this deterred her from singing, and her exuberant enthusiasm more than made up for this. However, my father was always there to do the required singing. Her focus was rhythm, and they complimented each other.

My mother wrote a *Volkspeler* manual which included the folk dances worked out by her, with music by *ML de Villiers*, who was the composer of *Die Stem*, the first national anthem of *South Africa*.

My mother and father both remained active in the *Volkspeler* movement, and attended conferences for this all over South Africa. Accordingly our family travelled a lot, throughout South Africa, in the *Chrysler Windsor*.

During these travels my father and mother discussed the issues in the *Volkspeler* movement, and we as children, sitting in the back of the car, listened attentively to all the *Volkspeler* dramas.

My mother frequently perceived some or other intrigue within the *Volkspeler* movement. Thinking back I suspect that the movement included a fair

amount of internal politics, and that she experienced this in dramatic terms.

Whatever the case may have been, we as children were aware of high tensions in the *Volkspeler* movement. My mother disliked the rigidity and prescriptive approach of the movement, and the fact that it was falsely held out as traditional folk dances. To her there were no fixed rules and traditions around *Volkspeler*, which was understandable, as she herself significantly contributed to the creation thereof.

During the sixties she and my father broke away from the movement, and established their own independent informal *Volkspeler* group in *Worcester*, who came together in our house once a week. They were dancing, laughing and singing in our house with great merriment, breaking the rules of the movement in the process.

To my mother it was about the joy of *Volkspiele*. It was not about the rules or any pretended tradition. However, her tumultuous personality may also have played a role in the breakaway. My father learned to live with this, and often, after a family crisis, simply smiled and said - "*never a dull moment.*" My mother really liked it when he said this.

When I was about four or five, my parents went to *Europe* for three months, on a *Volkspiele* tour. My grandmother (on my mother's side) stayed with us. She put us to bed as early as 17h00 in the afternoon, often after providing us with a meal of heavily buttered potatoes. To this very day I love the taste of heavily buttered potatoes. But I did not enjoy going to bed at 17h00. And to this day I suffer from insomnia. However, I suppose we were a handful, and my poor grandmother just needed some relief from the three of us, especially my brother and I, and that the

mathematician in her helped her simply to make a failsafe plan.

Chapter 8

Becoming an addict at age five

Whilst we were living in *De Aar* my mother wrote an “*operette*” (mini-operatic play) based on Afrikaans folk music. It was called *Kom dans Klaradyn*, revolving around an Afrikaans song also called *Kom dans Klaradyn*. And of course, it was a love story. She wrote a small role into the play for my father and herself, and also for me, my brother and my sister. We hit the stage. And I heard people clapping hands....

My parents staged the play with the *De Aar* school children, and we toured *South Africa* by train and by bus. We toured as far as *Johannesburg* in the *Transvaal*, and *Mossel Bay* in the *Southern Cape*. It was a huge success.

She had brought the professionalism of *Nazi Germany's* gymnastic training to the school children in a soft and different form. My father assisted with the musical training, and the art teacher, *Johannes Koortzen*, who later became and acknowledged *South African* artist, provided the props in the form of beautiful larger than life paintings, on massive pieces of canvas.

The whole country talked about the play. We hit the newspapers and probably the radio as well. The clapping of hands turned me into an instant stage addict at the age of five. This clearly surfaced in later years.

Chapter 9

Life on a farm, a horse whisperer, a pig, a cow, a “soldering man”, potatoes, the telephone lady and a hay stack

During year end holidays we went to visit my grandmother on my father's side. She farmed on her own on the *Van Huyssteen* family farm, *Wittedrift*, in the *Knysna* district, with the help of a foreman. En route to *Wittedrift* we drove from *Beaufort West* through *Meiringspoor* to *De Rust*, *Oudtshoorn*. To entertain us my father sometimes shouted our names within this narrow passage through the mountains, with high cliffs on both sides, demonstrating the echoes. At the age of four I could clearly hear the Universe calling my name, repeatedly...

He was quite excited when we went to *Wittedrift*. He loved the farm, and knew all the farm labourers. He was also the baby in his family. He had genuine,

personalised, most caring and respectful relationships with all the farm labourers.

I also learnt that he was a horse whisperer in his youth, and was able to calm down any wild and unruly horse by softly talking it, and could then ride away with the previously wild and unruly horse. So perhaps he was never hiding his flaws...perhaps he simply was flawless. In the sense of humility and sincerity.

The farm was quite beautiful and tranquil. I remember the “*soldering man*” who came to the farm, and soldered pots and pans in the backyard of the homestead, using an open fire to heat his soldering iron.

I also remember the rather traumatic slaughtering of a pig. The words “*to cry like a stuck pig*” therefore have quite a special meaning to me.

I also remember a cow that was caught up in the marshes. Her legs had sunk into the wet marshland, she had sunk down to her tummy, and she was stuck. When they found her she was already extremely weak. My father, the foreman and the farm labourers fetched the cow with a wooden sleigh, drawn by oxen, with my brother and me following behind. On arrival back at the farmyard they put the cow in a shed on the farmyard, and managed to shift a kind of a hammock, made out of sacks, underneath her. They then hoisted up the cow, so that she could stand without putting weight on her legs. Initially the cow looked very sad and tearful. They slowly fed her and nursed her back into life, until, to me, she was clearly smiling again, and could walk again. The compassionate approach of my father, the foreman and farm workers made quite an impact on me. I saw distinct love between humans and an animal.

I also remember sitting on a wagon drawn by oxen through potato fields, and potatoes being planted. And a huge hay stack, and making friends with the post office lady who acted as telephonist for the area. She was an unusually strong woman, and was able to pick up and to carry around two sacks of maize all on her own. She could also pick up and throw a small boy and his brother right onto the top of the haystack, whilst roaring with laughter.

When we were at *Wittedrift* we often went to *Robberg*, at *Plettenberg Bay*, to visit my father's sister, who was a cultured, sophisticated and refined woman, with lots of personality. She was married to a gentle *Dutch Reformed* Minister of Church, and both my parents were very fond of them. Particularly because my father's sister had actually "selected" my mother (who was her junior at university and in the same residence) for my father. She eventually became the chairlady of a national welfare organisation. They had

four children, who to me always appeared most distinguished.

The homestead on *Wittedrift* had yellow wood floors, and a yellow wood ceiling. Initially there were no in-house sanitary facilities.

When at *Wittedrift* my father, mother, my sister, brother and I rose early in the morning when it was still dark. Then we walked through dense bushes and trees to “*die gaatjie*” which was a pool in a river running through the farm. We then had an early morning swim, and returned for fresh home baked rusks and coffee. Sometimes my grandmother made butter out of fresh milk. We sometimes also assisted to milk a cow, and then drank the warm fresh milk, rich with natural cream.

Sometimes my father’s brother and his family were also at *Wittedrift*. They also had four children, two

boys and two girls. The boys were outdoor types, and went canoeing on the nearby *Bitou* river, in a canoe they had made themselves, using roof plate. This impressed me tremendously. Their elder sister was a most beautiful girl, with dark hair, and an unusual rosy complexion, and I admired her from a distance, although she was much older than me. Their younger sister was quiet by nature, and was my favourite niece. She, my brother and I were about the same age, and we sometimes went to catch “*kurpertjies*” (small mudfish) at “*Wadrift*”, where there was a low bridge over a nearby river. We used bent needle pins as hooks, needle thread as fishing line, and bread crumbs rolled into tight little dough balls as bait. My father taught us to do so, in the same the way as he had done as a child.

Chapter 10

A 1948 *Pontiac Silver Streak*, a row boat and a speed boat

My greatest fantasy was what appeared to be a gleaming brand new 1948 *Pontiac Silverstreak*, housed in a shed on my grandmother's farm, on a grass floor.

My father told me that my grandfather bought it as a new vehicle in 1948, but was not really able to use it for long, as he fell ill with cancer not long after he had bought it. I only saw the *Pontiac* once a year. My father normally put a charged battery into the vehicle about a week after our arrival, and he would drive it about three times during the year end holiday. Once to *Knysna* where my grandmother bought her groceries, once to *Robberg* when we went to visit his sister and her family, and sometimes a third time to

Keurbooms River where we would go for a day, and hire a row boat.

When I was about fourteen years old, I learnt that my grandmother had left the farm. I asked about the *Pontiac*, and was told that it had been sold to somebody in *Joubertinia*. I went into a kind of a temporary childhood depression. Nobody had told me, and I never had the opportunity of saying good-bye.

Over the years I kept on dreaming about the *Pontiac*, and in later years I often told my wife that if ever I see such a car advertised I would buy it, regardless of the price or condition.

At *Keurbooms River* my dad was able to row a boat in a perfectly straight line. Nobody else that I knew could do so. However, my dream was a ride in a speed boat. There was no chance that my dad could ever

afford purchasing a speed boat, and these were not for hire. On one occasion at *Keurbooms River* I was looking longingly at a speed boat, which had just arrived at the jetty. The owner must have noticed my keen interest. He beckoned me to get into the speedboat. I looked at my dad, and he gave me a positive nod. I got into the speed boat. It had a gleaming wooden deck, a real windscreen, a real steering wheel, a real engine and a real speedometer. The owner took me for a single fast turn across the breadth of the river, and returned. I was overcome with joy.

About thirty six years after the *Pontiac* had disappeared, I saw an advertisement for an exactly similar vehicle, with the same colour scheme, which was advertised from *George*. I travelled to *George*, and took my sister along, as she has an amazing memory. We looked at the car and were both convinced that it was the same vehicle. The then

owner was the head of the traffic department. I asked him about the history of the car. He told me that he could only trace it back for a number of years, but that the previous owner was from *Joubertinia*, and had told him that it was purchased many years ago from an old lady on a farm. I went ice cold, and immediately purchased the car. I had thought, thirty six years before, that my dream had been lost. However, the Universe had brought it back. I still have the *Pontiac*. A number of years ago my lifelong friend, *Maré Mouton*, and I, went on a memorable trip with the *Pontiac*. It included impromptu shows on the side of the road and in a pub, returning without a functioning self-starter and without proper lights. This required a u-turn over the *N2* at high speed when we missed the sign board for *Stanford* by reason of the poor head lights. Slowing down might have resulted in the engine smothering to a halt. It also involved driving out of depression and into the sun and into heaven...But that is a story on its own.

Chapter 11

Relocating to Worcester in a *Hudson Hornet*, and committing a perfect crime

When I was about six years old we left *De Aar*, and moved to Worcester. My father sold the *Chrysler Windsor*, and acquired a beautiful sleek copper coloured *Hudson Hornet*. To me it looked strangely low on the road, much like a sports car. We took the long journey from *De Aar* to *Worcester* in the *Hudson*. I loved every moment of the journey.

In *Worcester* I played rugby at primary school and in high school, took part in athletics, took tennis lessons from a professional (but did not fare well) and classical music lessons for about two years. The music teacher used to pray for me during the piano lessons, because I never practised. I eventually gave up the piano lessons, against my fathers repeated advice. He had realised that I have a musical talent of

sorts. My parents arranged private lessons by a jazz teacher, and I learnt to play by ear, without any understanding of the structure of music. My parents also gave me a rather large *Hohner* harmonica. I managed to teach myself to play the harmonica, to the point that my lips were sometimes bleeding.

When I was in Standard Nine (Grade 11) I won the senior debating competition of the school. My father who loved to make speeches, was very proud. I also managed to play for the second rugby team of the school, and on a few occasions for the first team. I scored only one try ever, but it was right in front of my parents. I never was a natural rugby player.

What made me most proud of my father was when he, at a time when long hair amongst school boys was almost viewed as *satanic*, issued a kind of decree allowing one of the school boys, *Jannie Beukes*, who was a talented ballet dancer, to grow

long hair. The teachers were up in arms, but my father stood firm. The school boy eventually became the top male ballet dancer of the ballet company of *The Cape Performing Arts Council*.

What also made me proud of my father was that he on more than one occasion gave school boys who had erred quite badly, and who would have been expelled by most schools, a second chance. And that he did not put a stop to what was (in the norm of sixties) a rather wild “*Beatles*” rock show by one of the school boys, during the debating society’s meeting in the school hall. When I looked up my father was stamping his feet with the school children. The school boy rock singer eventually became one of *South Africa’s* most famous stage and musical products. Since the day in the school hall I had a lingering fantasy to do similar performances. The Universe had other plans. But the Universe remained sensitive to my dream...

After I had already left school, a young school teacher at "*my father's school*", who had been a pupil in the same school and who had matriculated about five years before me, formed a relationship with a schoolgirl. My father was quite fond of this teacher, as he knew him since he was a scholar. The rather conservative town and of the other teachers were up in arms. My father discussed the matter with the young school teacher and the school girl, and came to the conclusion that they were genuinely in love, that it was good, and that nobody could do anything about it. He asked them to be discreet, and then turned a blind eye. They were married after she left school and had also completed her tertiary education, and remained happily married for a life time.

Through all of this I was trying to grow up, and to test the boundaries on occasions.

My mother had a little red *Renault Dauphine*. She was only able to drive it up to second gear, using a kind of racing change between first and second, without seeing any need to depress the clutch. She saw no purpose for any gears beyond second gear. She stopped the vehicle daily by reversing it into a lamp pole, as then only did she know that she was parked in the right position. Because she could not drive properly, it was my task to put the *Dauphine* in the backyard in the evenings, and to drive it into the street in the mornings. I developed a special relationship with the *Dauphine*, and sometimes “borrowed” it when my parents were not at home. I had found out how to hotwire it, and could therefore start it whenever I chose to do so.

When I was in Standard Nine (Grade 11), I “borrowed” the *Dauphine* one afternoon. I was about sixteen years old. I took it for a spin on the road between *Worcester* and *Robertson*. The engine blew

up. I was wearing my school jacket, and was in a complete panic. I managed to turn it around, and started to push it in the direction of *Worcester*, about twenty kilometres away. Eventually a vehicle stopped next to me and the driver politely asked “*Boy, where are you going?*” I told him that I was on my way to *Worcester*. He just shook his head, and smiled. He offered to push the *Dauphine* to *Worcester* with his own car, and did so. On arrival at our house in *Worcester* I thanked him, and managed to push the *Dauphine* into the backyard.

The next morning I pretended to start the *Dauphine*, as I usually did before we left for school. I waited until the last second, then ran into the house and told my father that the engine had made a terrible bang when I started it, and that there was oil all over the engine. My father was already late for school, and there was no time to examine what I had told him. I had planned

it all carefully, and it worked. I had committed the perfect crime...

A number of months later I wrote a letter to a friend in *Johannesburg*, who had left *Worcester* the previous year. My *Worcester* friends and I had by this time received consistent news that he was having the time of his life in *Johannesburg*, and had advanced far beyond *Worcester* levels with school girls. We were all rather jealous, and felt somewhat inferior. In an attempt to boost my own ego I wrote a long letter to him, and told him the entire story around the *Dauphine*. I also added juicy fantasies around a schoolgirl I knew, with liberal poetic license. I then posted the letter to him.

A few weeks later my mother came to call me in my bedroom, one afternoon. She told me that my father wanted to talk to me. From the expression in her eyes I realised that it was for something unusual. For some

or other reason I thought that they were going to give me a new bicycle. I went to the sitting room. My father was sitting in his favourite chair. My mother also sat down. My father shoved a piece of paper across to me, and said "*what is this?*" I looked at the piece of paper. It was my letter to my friend in *Johannesburg*, containing a comprehensive and detailed confession about the *Dauphine* episode, as well as a further rather creative "fantasy" around a school girl. I had made a mistake with the address, and the post office had returned the letter, simply addressed to our street address. I got up, and walked out of the house, in a daze. I again took the road to *Robertson*, this time walking with my own feet. When I was a few kilometres out of town my father stopped next to me. At that stage he had a blue *Ford Galaxy*. He beckoned me to get into his car. He took me home, and got out. I sat in the car for a while, and eventually also got out and went into the house. My parents never again referred to the letter or the relevant

episodes. On reflection they had probably realised that I had already been punished far beyond the extent of my misdemeanours.

A very special aspect of our life in Worcester, was that we had two Jewish families living next to us, on either side of our family home. The *Langes* lived on our left hand side, and the *Leaders* on our right hand side. Mr and Mrs Lange were kind and sophisticated, and were outgoing happy people. Mr and Mrs *Leader* kept somewhat more to themselves, but were also kind and friendly. Every year the *Langes* and *Leaders* brought us “Jewish” *kosher* wine which they made themselves. It tasted like cool drink, and we always looked forward to the Jewish wine. They also gave us *Matzos*. I acquired a lifelong taste for *Matzos*, and without exception buy it when I see it in a supermarket. I always think of the *Langes* and the *Leaders* when I do so.

Chapter12

Initiation into manhood, and “*Rawsonville se girls*”

In my own part defence I should mention that we had separate boys and girls schools. The distance between the boys and the girls probably added to the mystery, and to the fantasy world of the schoolboys. In addition, *Worcester* was a cosmopolitan town in the sixties. There were many *French* children, *Italian* children, *Portuguese* children, *Jewish* children, *English* children and *Afrikaans* children.

Amongst some of the *Afrikaans* boys manhood was only considered to have been achieved if you have once dated an English speaking girl. It was immaterial whether she was *English*, *French*, *Italian* or *Portuguese* by origin. She just should not have spoken *Afrikaans* as her first language. There was

something rather exotic about dating a girl from a different culture group.

In an attempt to achieve manhood and acceptance, I therefore dated an *English* speaking girl for the inter schools sporting event, between *Worcester* and the neighbouring town *Robertson*, when I was in standard nine.

The problem was that she was about an inch and a half taller than me. I solved this problem by persuading the local shoemaker in *Riebeeck Street, Worcester*, to add about two inches to my height by gluing extremely high heels onto my shoes. This appeared to work at first, but another problem was created. When I walked down the uneven street in *Robertson*, I wobbled. It was the tradition that the boys wore *cheese cutters* and I was proudly wearing mine. However, my *cheese cutter* seemed to pick up the wobble, to an exaggerated extent, and almost

wobbled off my head. For some or other reason it really did not feel as though I was achieving manhood in this process...

Over and above the cosmopolitan *Worcester* girls, there were also the girls from *Rawsonville*, a small town to the south of *Worcester*.

The story that went around amongst the Worcester school boys, and eventually grew into an urban legend, was that the girls of *Rawsonville* were advanced far beyond the experience of the *Worcester* girls in rather exciting respects. This legend possibly came about because it occasionally happened that the parents of city girls enrolled them at school in *Rawsonville*, which had a good school hostel, so as to remove them from the temptations of city life. Whatever the case may be, the legend was quite strong, and possibly added to the poetic license in the “*confessional*” letter to my friend in Johannesburg.

The urban legend around the girls of *Rawsonville* was strengthened a few years after I left school. A pretty, sexy and very well built girl, with long blonde hair and beautiful legs “*that went on forever*”, became a rather famous *Afrikaans* pop singer and television celebrity. She came from the *Slanghoek* area, which is part of the wider *Rawsonville* district. The legend thus became entrenched in my own mind, after I had already left school. The end result was that the following song, by the name of “*Rawsonville se girls*”, dropped into my mind many years after I had left school:

raw-son-ville se girls het groen oë
raw-son-ville se girls is mooi
rawsonville se girls...se wange raak rooi...
waarom ... kan jy dalk raai

en raw-son-ville se girls is myne
en raw-son-ville se girls is nie joune
en rawson-ville se girls...loop so swaai, swaai, swaai
met hierdie girls ...kan die wind maar waai

*maar raw-son-ville se girls kan sing
en raw-son-ville se girls kan dans
en rawsonville se girls...raak so maklik stout
met hierrie girls...is daar nie fout*

*ja raw-son-ville se girls wil sing
en raw-son-ville se girls wil dans
en... rawsonville se girls loop so swaai swaai swaai
ja hierrie girls...is alte fraai*

*raw-son-ville se girls het bene
raw-son-ville se girls... o hene
en rawsonville se girls kry mos glad nie koud
aai-aai...hierdie girls...is alte fraai*

Chapter 13

Military “service”

I finished *school* at the end of 1968. During 1969 I did compulsory military training, firstly in *Youngsfield, CapeTown*, and later in *Walvis Bay*.

Fortunately I never saw any active service. I was probably one of the most useless persons in the entire South African military sphere. It simply did not jell with me. I ducked and dived whenever I could, and became more and more lazy, and physically unfit.

I managed to persuade the military doctor to put me on *light duty* for medical reasons, for quite an extended period. I had a genuine pain in my left foot, but exaggerated this to the ultimate degree, reliant on the tuberculosis in my childhood. Eventually the military doctors booked me for an operation to deal with the persistent acute pain. I realised that there

was no genuine medical need for an operation, but I was totally cornered. To escape the unnecessary ordeal, I volunteered to go to *Walvis Bay*, where I spent the last six months of my military training.

At a later stage I had to attend a so-called three week military camp. I went on *AWOL* for an entire week, was caught during a roll call, and had to appear before a military tribunal. Fortunately they made a mistake with the charge sheet, and to my surprise I was acquitted.

Chapter 14

A “*cause without a rebel*”

I commenced my tertiary training at the University of *Stellenbosch* in 1970. My passion was to become a journalist, but my father arranged a bursary with the *Department of Justice*, and I found myself at law school.

I, for the first time, had escaped from the phase of captivity. School with my father in the role of the principal was most certainly not freedom, and military service was a complete calamity in my case.

Life was beginning at *Stellenbosch*, for the very first time. It was time to become a rebel.

Because I had had a rather protected life, and because my father supported the government party, I was not at all made aware of the horrors of *apartheid*.

These went completely past me, until about 1984. I also had a good relationship with both my parents.

I therefore did not rebel, as most students should do, against the system. My rebellion remained fully outstanding, until after 1984, when I took part in a number of freedom marches. In real substance it remained on ice until 1995.

Academically I was a terrible student. However, I did manage to get through law school without failing. This was probably due to the prayers of my parents, divine intervention and the availability of excellent notes and summaries of class mates.

I went through stretches when I did not attend a single lecture for extended periods, and often did not even know when and where I had to attend lectures. I, virtually without exception, always had to undertake concentrated study right through the night just before

a test or exam. I thus managed to absorb just enough, spat it out the next morning, and then forgot it again. I had no system, and did not understand what I was studying.

It was five years of total escapism. I practised some journalism by working as a general reporter for a newspaper during university holidays, and serving on the editorial staff of a student newspaper. I became the editor of the newspaper of my residence, and was voted onto the house committee. The remainder of the five years was taken up by social activities, with intermittent cramming for tests and exams, reliant on the notes of those of my fellow students who attended lectures conscientiously.

At one stage I had a most conscientious room mate. He was (justifiably) so upset about my limited attendance of lectures that he point blank refused to let me have his notes, claiming (correctly) that I did

not deserve it. I had to borrow my own room mate's notes from another (deserving) student, and had to make use of it clandestinely.

By the end of our second year, this room mate elected to “*divorce*” me. The crunch had come when I one night found it impossible to fall asleep. Eventually, at about 02h00, I decided to go for a nightly excursion. I quietly got up, rolled my bedding into a bundle and left the room. I went down to the bicycle shed, put the bedding on my *Lambretta scooter* (financed with bursary money from the *Department of Justice*), and rode to *Vergenoegd*, which was a pine forest about ten kilometres out of the town. I parked the *Lambretta* on a slight downhill, rolled out my bedding under a pine tree, and tried to go to sleep. I eventually fell asleep. At about 03h30 I suddenly woke up. It was pitch dark and very quiet. I thought that I had heard heavy footsteps. I saw a massive cruel looking person approaching me, with a

gleaming *panga* (machete) in his hand. Whether it was real or my imagination I do not know. I afterwards rather suspected that it was imaginary, and that the eerie darkness added to my imagination. Whatever the case may have been, I grabbed my bedding, jumped for the *Lambretta*, and ran downhill with the scooter, attempting a running start. To my relief it started in an instant. I remember the feeling of relief when the engine burst into a life with a bang, and the light came on, piercing the darkness. I *burned* the *Lambretta* down the hill, out of the eerie pine forest, and returned to the residence. When I arrived in our room, I naturally did not want to disturb my room mate. I therefore simply rolled open the bedding in the dark, and miraculously went to sleep a while later.

The next morning I woke up with my room mate, who was a gentle giant who never used foul language, standing swearing in the middle of the room. The floor of our room was covered with leaves, pieces of thin

branches and pine needles. The previous night when he went to sleep the room was tidy. When he woke up the floor of the room looked a bit like “*the floor of a pine forest*”. In my panic to get away, I had grabbed lots of leaves, little dry branches and pine needles with the bedding, had brought it all back with me and had strewn these out in the room when I unrolled my bedding in the dark. All of this was just too much for my room mate, and he shortly thereafter suggested that we should go our separate ways at the end of the academic year.

The gentle giant has since become one of the captains of industry in South Africa. I befriended his brother in law in later years, and we therefore bumped into each other on occasions. We have had much merriment when we recalled the fateful morning preceding our “*divorce*”.

Out of all of the foregoing came a song, named *Two Stroke Ducktail*, which has been specially mentioned in the *South African Rock Digest*, and earned me a listing amongst *South African Rock Legends*. However, this was probably mostly as a result of the excellent guitar work of *Willem Moller*, who was already quite famous and known as *Mister Volume* in South African rock music circles. The lyrics of the song also involve a few fantasies, and the model of the scooter has been changed to a *Vespa*. However, the running start on the slight downhill has found its way into the song:

*ek's 'n hell's angel op 'n vespa sport
ek's 'n hell's angel en ek ry deur die dorp
ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail*

*ring op my knuckle en my kop is gebuckle
hulle sê ek is gek maar ek hou my bek
want my snor is gedrop soos 'n mosselbaai rob
ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail*

ek vat 'n running-start teen 'n skuins afdraand

*my vespa knal dit is guy fawkes my pal
die meisiekinders gil ek is buffalo bill
ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail*

*ek's 'n hell's angel op 'n vespa sport
ek's 'n hell's angel en ek ry deur die dorp
ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail*

*ek weet ek is mooi, as ek my vespa looi
my spaarwiel is rond en ek spin op die grond
my vespa is blou... hier kom ek nou
ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail*

*ek's 'n hell's angel op 'n vespa sport
ek's 'n hell's angel en ek ry deur die dorp
ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail*

*ring op my knuckle en my kop is gebuckle
hulle sê ek is gek maar ek hou my bek
want my snor is gedrop soos 'n mosselbaai rob*

*ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...
ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...ek's 'n two stroke ducktail...*

During my university days one of my very best friends, *Pieter Raubenheimer*, and I often went serenading to female students. Sometimes these

serenades developed into full scale informal *operas* that went on for hours until we were chased away.

A major event at the *University of Stellenbosch* was the annual song festival, which was a sophisticated and cultural affair, involving full choirs of each residence taking part, singing cultured choir music. These choirs were accompanied by piano, flute and other classical instruments. It was certainly not a place for light music, guitars and comedy.

Shortly before the annual song festival during our second year, *Pieter Raubenheimer* and I decided, on the spur of a moment, to take part as duo. We dressed ourselves up in *Scottish* kilts, with false beards and false moustaches. Just before our residence's choir was to commence, we marched onto the stage from two separate side doors. The audience was rather surprised and initially also taken aback. We proceeded to sing *Loch Lohmann*, a light

romantic song with a *Scottish* flavour. It was sacrilege. Duos did not take part, the flavour of the music was generally much heavier, and guitars were unheard of at the *Stellenbosch* song festival.

Much to our surprise we received an encore. We had not prepared a second song and were totally unprepared for an encore. For some or other ludicrous reason we probably believed that singing a Scottish song made our appearance more classical. caught by total surprise. One of us said “*Let’s sing ‘Burning Bridges’*”, which was a “pop” song that had been on the hit parade at the time. We proceeded to sing “*Burning Bridges*” in our version of a “*Scottish*” pronunciation, heavily rolling the many “r”s in the song. I noticed that the son of one of the most famous classical choir masters of *Stellenbosch* was sitting in the front row. It looked as though he was going to be sick, there and then. This was no longer sacrilege. It was treason.

Chapter 15

Entering the real world, and living behind the picket fence

After finishing university, I had to work for the *Department of Justice* for five years. I did so for four years, and then used my accumulated pension funds to buy out the fifth year. I had an immense guilt feeling about my failure to properly attend to my studies at university, and tried to make up by working extremely hard over these four years, and also later on in my career.

On 31st January 1976 I married the love of my life, *Janita*. She is from the beautiful historic town of *Graaff Reinet*, in the *Karoo*. We lived in a one bedroom flat in *Lindenhof*, next to the *Stellenbosch* station. She was still studying, and I was doing my articles at the *State Attorney*. We were so poor that we on a number of occasions had to hand in empty

coke-á-cola bottles to recover small deposits so as to finance milk and bread at the end of the month.

One month we had a windfall. My parents or her mother provided us with a leg of lamb, and we had a very special lunch on the Sunday. That evening *Janita* prepared meat sandwiches, and put these into my lunch box for work. It was an unusual luxury for me to have meat on my sandwiches. I climbed into my lunchbox at about 11h00 the next morning, and gobbled up the sandwiches. These were a little tough, but it did not deter me at all.

When I arrived back in the flat that evening she asked me about the sandwiches. I told her that it was very tasty and that I really enjoyed the sandwiches. She looked at me enquiringly and said "*Don't you say anything more?*" I could not understand and asked "*What do you mean?*" She said "*What about the note?*" I still could not understand, and she then told

me that she had written me a romantic note, had wrapped it up in plastic, and had put it inside the sandwich. I had gobbled up the note, plastic and all, with the sandwich. As I have said, meat was an unusual luxury...

The days in *Lindenhof* were blissful, and also found their way into a song. It is called "*Babe uit die Karoo*", which I wrote it much later. The lyrics are as follows:

*het 'n potplant....en 'n hi fi
en 'n babe...uit-die-karoo*

*het 'n woonstel.. op die stasie...
en 'n beanbag...met-foomalite-daarin*

*het 'n babe wat lag... het 'n babe wat smag
het 'n babe.. wat lag... tot-laat-in-die- nag...
het 'n babe... uit-die-karoo*

*het 'n tafel... met 'n stoel -daarby
en 'n hond ...van die s-p-c-a
het 'n bakkie...met- 'n- kappie -daarop
en 'n poster... met herfsblare op*

*het 'n babe wat lag ..., het 'n babe wat smag
 het 'n babe.. wat lag.. tot laat in die nag...
 het 'n babe... uit-die- karoo*

*ek- wil-dans... in die somer...
 ek-wil-dans... voordat- die-blare op- my- val
 ek-wil-dans.... voor-die- winter- op- my –breek*

*het 'n potplant....en 'n hi fi
 en 'n babe... uit-die-karoo
 kom-ons- dans... in-die-somer ...
 kom-ons- dans... voordat-die-blare-val...
 kom-ons- dans ... voor-die-winter- op-ons- breek
 het 'n babe wat lag.. het 'n babe wat smag
 het 'n babe.. wat lag.. tot laat in die nag...
 het 'n babe... uit die karoo*

After more than thirty one years *Janita* is still my wife. But she is also still my girl friend. She is a kind, sensitive and intelligent woman, has been an excellent mother to our four beautiful children, and calm by nature. She is really “*what the doctor ordered*” for me.

She acts as the accountant of the small law firm established by me in 1993, and which has remained rather small. I myself have little interest in the financial side of the practice, and she manages our financial affairs efficiently, albeit that she has graduated, and has also obtained an Honours Degree Cum Laude, in *Psychology*. Indeed, she really does so better than any chartered accountant could have done, and relieves me from virtually all involvement in finances.

Janita is also musically most talented, and has more recently also demonstrated a budding ability to paint. She is a complete all rounder, and can do anything if she puts her mind to it. After more than three decades we are still fully romantically involved.

We have four wonderful children. Our eldest daughter is a speech therapist with a light and bouncy temperament. She is married, has a beautiful little daughter, and is at present expecting a second girl.

Our second eldest is unmarried, trained in mechanical engineering, and is employed as a sales consultant in the field of industrial equipment. He is a born and natural mechanical engineer, has an instinct for mechanical engineering, and has been interested in this side of life since he was four years old. Our third eldest studies medicine. She is in her final year. She did exceptionally well at school, and academically came fifth in the Province of the Western Cape in her matric year. She is sensitive and creative, and good blend between *Janita* and me. Our youngest is in matric, and intends to study law with effect from next year. He is a talented all rounder, with a relaxed personality. He is confident, and sociable by nature, like all our children. I think he has a very good temperament to practise law, better than my own.

I love all my children, and all of them also love me.

Chapter 16

Civil service to a corporate law firm to a barefoot law firm

In 1979, I left the *Department of Justice*, and joined a most prestigious *English* law firm in *Cape Town*, *Fairbridge Arderne & Lawton Inc.* It is the oldest law firm in the Republic of South Africa, and also the oldest law firm outside London in the entire English speaking world.

I became a director after two years. I was most proud of this, because I was the first Afrikaans speaking director of this very English firm, with exceptionally high ethical standards. A letter signed by *Queen Victoria* personally is displayed in the boardroom of this firm, whereby she appointed *Fairbridge Arderne and Lawton* “as “*her Majesty’s agents in the Colony of the Cape.*”

I suspect my appointment may not have been solely based on my merits as a lawyer. The most senior director grew up in a predominantly Afrikaans area, and took a liking in me. I also had the benefit of having conducted court trials myself without the assistance of a barrister, due to having been employed in the *Department of Justice*, where this was the norm. I thus through a combination of good fortune was landed with a directorship.

I remained with this firm until 1993. By that time I was one of the senior directors. I eventually resigned due to a difference of opinion around management issues. Or so I thought at the time. On thinking back I realise that I probably resigned because it was “*midlife crisis time*” for me. I always had a strong underlying need and desire to do my own thing. Indeed, over the years I often jokingly talked about “*ek gaan nog my eie bord opslaan*” (I am still going to put up my own sign). I also had a special need to practise law barefoot and

in shorts on occasions, something I could never even consider doing in the prestigious city firm. I managed to realise this ideal on a few occasions in my own firm. Later I wrote a song around my days in the corporate world. The song is called *Melkweg Blues* (*milky way blues*) The words are as follows:

*ek het gisteroggend vroeg.... vir my 'n siel gaan soek
daar doer by die son.... en daarby dig by-die maan
daar ver... van my dorp... en daar na,,by die stad
maar die siele was op...die voorraad was-gedaan
ek kon daai-order-glad-nie- kry*

*het toe sonder siel... na die aarde geloer
van daar doer- by- die- son... en daar digby die maan
van daar ver van my dorp... en daar naby die stad
en die aarde was- plat...en die aarde was- sat...
die plek was afgemat*

*my-voete- gevat... en die melkweg gestap
stamp my toon teen 'n stêr... en die vonke val vêr
en die reën het gehang en die bliksems het gesak
en die rivier was vol...en die water was koud...
en die geysers bly af*

*het dertig jaar later by my dorpsdam uitgespoel
en my bek was blou en my lyf was flou
het 'n tak vasgegryp onder die son gaan slaap
op die dam se rand...op die warm sand ...
op my dorp se strand*

*gedroom dat ek weer.. 'n siel kan koop
gedroom.. die dagbreek..kafee maak weer oop
gedroom jy kan weer daai star-lekkers koop
daar in my dorp....in riebeeckstraat...
en die aarde raak weer rond...
ja in my dorp.....*

en die aarde raak weer rond

Chapter 17

Hard work, a motor race, antique cars

Between 1993 and 2010, I involved myself in hard work, family life, music and antique cars.

On one occasion I took part in a motor racing event in a relatively old *Alfa Romeo*, and came third in a quarter mile sprint at Killarney Race track against a number of *Porches*. My eldest son, then only eleven years of age, was with me, and we came home rather proud that evening.

My son was especially proud because I allowed him, after the races, to drive the *Alfa Romeo* around the race track. He had never before driven a motor vehicle (insofar as I am aware), but got it right the first time. And he drove around a race track on the very first occasion when he drove a motor vehicle!

My youngest son repeated this achievement a number of years later. I wanted to drive to Somerset West in a 1936 antique *Dodge Brothers* vehicle. I asked him whether he would like to drive. He was immediately keen to do so. To my surprise he got in behind the steering wheel and drove effortlessly to *Somerset West*, through heavy traffic, with what can only be described as a seventy four year old “tank”.

My two daughters are not into motor vehicles. But they are the light of my life. They are both blonde, blue eyed and really beautiful to me. I am quite frankly infatuated with both of them. When they walk into a room I feel as proud as can be. Like my two sons and my wife, they are bright, light and always ready laugh. I think they are the two most beautiful creatures on earth. However, my sons are also good looking young men, taking after their mother.

Chapter 18

A man rotting in jail in Zambia is rescued by his wife

One of the most rewarding matters I became involved in was when a client approached me to assist around his best friend, a South African who had farmed in *Zambia* and who was at the time left “rotting” in a *Zambian* jail, without the benefit of a trial for an extended period.

The poor man wanted to relocate back to South Africa and had entered into a transaction to exchange his *Zambian* currency for *South African* currency. Unbeknown to him the recipients of his *Zambian* currency utilized the funds towards financing an intended jail break operation in order to rescue a group of detainees. They were imprisoned by reason of their involvement in an attempted to overthrow the *Zambian* government. The *Zambian* security police

had identified the source of the operational funds, and jumped to the (incorrect) conclusion that the farmer was part of the operations. However, he was really quite blissfully unaware of everything, and was simply an ordinary farmer wishing to return to his home country.

His wife tried her very best to secure his release or a trial, but was not successful. Her attempts included protesting and demonstrating on street corners with a placard for weeks, trying to draw attention to her husband's plight. All these efforts led to nothing, and she was getting quite desperate.

I wrote letters to the *International Red Cross*, to *Amnesty International* and to the *South African Department of Foreign Affairs*, but to no avail.

One afternoon his wife arrived at my office, having flown in from *Zambia* that morning. This was my first

meeting with her. After exchanging the normal niceties, she put a typical brown civil service file on my desk. I noticed a conspicuous red “*Top Secret*” stamp on the outer cover, as well as the name of the imprisoned farmer. She told me that she had visited the *Zambian* official who dealt with the matter, and that he had left his office for a few moments to answer a call of nature. She noticed the file on his desk, grabbed it and ran. She left *Zambia* the same day and took a plane to *South Africa*. She told me that the whole story is in the file.

I opened the file. It contained various detailed affidavits. These suggested with remarkable detail that the intended jail break had been organized by the *South African* authorities. The affidavits also contained rather persuasive alleged details of the parties having visited *South Africa*, having been whisked through customs in *Johannesburg* without requiring their passports to be displayed, and having

visited senior officials in the *South African Defence Force*. Also that a jet of the *Zambian Defence Force* had been “organized” and was virtually ready and fired up at a *Zambian* airstrip to take the detainees to *South Africa*, immediately after the intended jail break. The affidavit read like a book written by *Ian Fleming*.

I realised that the information in the file was explosive and could be most embarrassing to the *South African* government.

I telephoned the private secretary of a South African Cabinet Minister who was at Law School with me, and told him about the plight of the farmer and the file. He wanted me to hand him the file, but I refused, and told him that it has been put into safe custody, with instructions that it should be released to the media if anything should happen to the imprisoned farmer, his wife, or to me.

It seemed quite clear that the imprisoned farmer was finding himself in extended imprisonment as a result of the excursions of the *South African* government, and that he was paying the price for their exploits.

Within three days the farmer was released and landed on Jan Smuts Airport, Johannesburg.

To this day I do not know how they managed to procure his release, but it was quite clear that the risk of the release of the file brought an immediate wake-up call. His own wife had effectively rescued him from prison.

Chapter 19

Somewhat “different” friends, mad musicians, colleagues, and *Lang Dawid De Villiers QC*

I met and befriended various interesting persons over the years, with whom I shall retain friendship for the rest of my life. I cannot tell you about all of them, and shall only refer to a few special ones.

One of my very close friends is *Jean-Jacques Provoyeur*, who was at school with me and who became an international celebrity when he sailed solo around the world a number of years ago. He is a remarkably loyal and genuine person.

A few years ago he invited me to sail with him in the Caribbean, where he went to take place in an international yacht racing week.

Through a stroke of luck I was in the United States at the time. I took a flight from *Miami* to *Guadalupe*, where he was expected to lie on anchor “*if the wind has blown*”.

I found him on his yacht “*Aint’ Misbehavin*” at four o’clock in the morning, sleeping on deck under the Caribbean night sky. It was joyous reunion, and there was a compelling need for an immediate celebration. I had too much red wine, fell off the plastic chair I was sitting on, and fell asleep there and then.

We sailed from *Guadalupe* to *Antigua* a few hours later. I was seasick on an entirely calm sea for the whole day. At *Antigua* it got off the yacht, spent three days on land and then flew back to South Africa.

Three days later *Jean-Jacques* telephoned me from *Antigua*. He and his young South-African crew had won the international race in the class *racing cruisers*,

against the entire world. I was extremely proud that “*my skipper*” and “*my yacht*” and “*my crew*” had won. My second room mate at University, *Koos Vos* from *Carnarvon*, was unique in a special way. His interaction with the *Karoo* environment and with sheep, appeared to have turned him into a private and quiet philosopher. Though not always. He also had a strong urge to ensure the survival of the human species. This often surfaced when I attempted in a last minute panic to force knowledge into my attention deficit brain, with him pretending to study at his table at the other end of the room. He would suddenly grab the table with force, lift it into the air with much noise, at the same time yelling “*virility above and beyond the call of nature!*” He thus completely broke the little concentration that I could muster, and I had to go back to the beginning of my last minute studies.

He later married *Berdine*. She is as close to a volcano, tornado and tsunami and sacred bubbling

water as my mother had been. She came from *Caledon* in the Western Cape, but has been living in the *Karoo* for about thirty years. She is filled with positive energy and loyalty. Perhaps this is what the *Karoo* does to people from the Western Cape. Perhaps it also explains my mother.

During the eighties I met and befriended *Dr. Franklin Sonn*, later the South African Ambassador to the United States, under unusual circumstances. He was the chairman of a charitable foundation, and I met with him and his fellow trustees around a labour law issue. He, that night, repeatedly addressed me as "*boertjie*". However I noticed a twinkle in his eye and experienced an immediate natural affinity for him. I instinctively sensed that he felt the same way towards me. After he had yet again addressed me as "*boertjie*", I mischievously addressed him in an extremely rude manner. There was a moment of stunned silence from those around us, who were

unaware of the telepathy that had developed. *Dr. Sonn* and I simultaneously burst out laughing, and the others thereafter also joined in, with much relief. Later that evening he presented me with a book of which he was a co-author, wrote a personal message to me and signed it. We had become best of friends.

A few weeks later *Dr. Sonn* and his wife (who can best be described as “*lady Joan*” and who is incredibly similar to own wife) came to visit us in our humble shack in the *Leentjiesklip* caravan park, *Langebaan*. It was before *apartheid* had fallen. The previous day I had noticed, for the first time, a hurtful “*whites only*” sign mounted at the gate of the caravan park. That night I took a pail of white paint and a paint brush, and painted out the hurtful words, ducking behind bushes when cars came past. The next morning *Dr. Sonn* and his wife stopped outside our shack. As he as he opened the door of his car he stated, “*Alastair, dis jy wat die woorde op die bord by*

die hek 'uit-gepaint' het, die 'paint' stroom teen die bord af.” (Alastair, it was you who painted out the words on the sign board, the paint is streaming down the sign board). What had happened was that a heavy mist had arisen overnight, diluting the paint, and causing it to run down the sign board, revealing the hurtful words. All that I could say was: “Franklin, dit is wit trane” (Franklin, those are white tears).

We have remained personal friends, and our families have become friends and remained friends, for about two decades.

I developed a special circle of wonderful personal friends over the years. Most of them are a little mad. Others are totally mad. Many are eccentric musicians and artists.

My first two man band was with *Graham Taylor*, a most eccentric barrister practising in Cape Town. It

was called “*Al’ en sy Pêl*” (Al’ and his Pal). The stage names of the band members were *Al’ en Pêl Een (Al’ and Pal One)*.

After 1995 music commenced to play a never ending role in my life, also pervading my legal practice. I released a music CD in 1998. Directly as a result of the CD I was supported in my legal practice by two of the most positive persons I have ever met, *André* and *Janine Swart*. Both of them are also involved in music. *André* sings like a nightingale, and *Janine* plays the organ and the flute like an angel. *André* heard my CD one weekend, telephoned out of the blue, and told me that they have decided to support me. It made an amazing difference. I was able to establish a property department, and eventually to expand by appointing an additional attorney in my one-man practise.

Graham (Pêl Een) joined me as a musician during 1998. He did so even though he is an excellent musician, and it must have been quite clear that I am much more limited. He lives for and breathes music. He was and remains one of the most wonderful eccentrics I have ever come across, and I am extremely fond of him. I can write an entire book about *Graham*. He has a deep and lasting humanity, and the word “*judgment*” does not form part of his vocabulary.

The two man band grew into three man band. *Marius Doubell (Pêl Twee)* joined us as a bass player, and we called ourselves *Al' en sy Pêlle (Al' and his pals)*. Apart from being an excellent bass player, *Marius* has an unusual ability to market, and a naturally charming personality. He made an enormous contribution to launch *Al' en sy Pêlle* through the media, and soon we were in newspapers, magazines and on TV.

I eventually also formed another band. It was called *Al' en nog Pêlle* (*Al' and more pals*). The stage names of the band members are *Al'*, *Facelift*, *Titanium Tony*, and *Double Trouble*.

My very special friend *Pierre de Villiers* was called *Facelift* because he was and clearly looked much younger and better than the rest of us. We thought this to be grossly unfair, and addressed this little problem by changing his name to *Facelift*, and telling audiences that he has already had about seven facelifts. I met him by coincidence when I one night accidentally drove over his washing line. He is a dedicated and passionate drummer, and lives for music. He has a never ending sense of humour. He has an ability to energise the entire band on stage, so much so that I have repeatedly caught myself dancing spontaneously when he starts hitting the drums

Johan Engelbrecht was called *Double Trouble* because he plays a double bass. He is an experienced “*acapella*” singer, harmonises naturally and with perfect pitch, and is caring by nature. He managed to teach himself to play double bass within a few days in order to help us out, and thus earned a permanent position in the band. He also helped me to understand the musical structure of my own songs much better, and to sing within a beat. His wife, *Marinda*, is a well known playwright in South Africa, and assisted me with advice and training prior to a one man cabaret show. She has a zest for life and a natural ability to motivate and to give confidence, and this helped me tremendously. They both have everlasting senses of humour.

Tony Napier was called *Titanium Tony* because he has back problems that were unsuccessfully addressed with titanium implants. His back problems may have stemmed from having been married a

number of times, and taking the honeymoon phases too seriously. He is the lead guitarist, and a musical genius in my assessment. He has a wacky sense of humour, which always reaches a peak just before and just after a show.

We market ourselves by arriving at shows in antique cars, and this helps to attract audiences. Until we also become world famous outside our own small world, we shall have to keep on relying on antique cars to attract audiences. We may have to use antique cars for a long time...

I have had a few magic moments on stage.

One night *Graham* and I were performing in *Paarl*. We were singing a tender love song. I had written the song for my wife. Soon after we started singing I found myself in an emotional space. I could feel that I was taking the audience along, which is most

satisfying on stage. I was singing with my eyes closed most of the time, in a completely soulful mode. About halfway through the song I suddenly became aware that at least half of the people in audience were giggling. I had the fright of my life and instantly wondered whether I was completely off note, or whether there was something wrong with my clothes. I lost all the emotion and soul of the song, and mechanically proceeded, concentrating and focussing on singing it correctly. As I did so I noticed, out of the corner of my eye, that *Graham's* trousers were already down to below his knees. The reason for the giggling became quite clear. He was boasting colourful brand new boxer underpants, with a pair of hairy white legs connecting the top of the trousers with the boxer shorts. He had done it in slow motion, and on purpose. I was livid. I hope that I managed to hide my feelings on stage, but I am not sure of this. We finished the song and went on to other songs.

I thought the night was a complete failure. In fact, it was one of the most memorable performances I have ever been involved in. Over the years I have often sat laughing on my own when I think back to this moment in *Paarl*. I wish I could have been in the audience, to see the contrast on stage. The one guy carried away with himself and his own emotions, taking himself much too serious, and the other one involved in genuine entertainment for the sake of the audience.

Another magic moment was at *Oudtshoorn*, when *Lôit Sôls*, *Lesley Javen* and I did a *cross-cultural* show. *Lôit* is a rather famous South African *street poet* and a writer. He is as eccentric as *Graham Taylor*. We agreed that *Lôit* would open the show with four of five songs, and that I would then join midstream, appearing out of the blue from backstage.

I was waiting in the wings, and had a bottle of *bugu* brandy with me, to calm my nerves.

Lôit decided to start the show with an eerie *Kôï* chant. However, he became completely carried away with the chant, and simply carried on, rolling it into about four of five songs, thus converting these into incessant chanting. This continued for about twenty five minutes, almost half the entire show! The audience was eventually shifting around, as the chant simply went on and on and on, and it was an extremely hot day. In the meantime I was waiting in the wings. I had a few swigs of *bugu* brandy before *Lôit* started chanting, and quite a few more whilst waiting for him to complete. What I did not know, is that *bugu* brandy makes you perspire, and the heat added to this. I started perspiring, and was eventually drenched from top to bottom. It must have looked as though I had been into a shower with all my clothes on (as *Graham* had actually done during a previous festival, when we were late for a show).

Because the chant was rolled from one song into the other, I could not at all make out where Lôit was in the sequence of his songs. Eventually I just took the plunge, and walked onto the stage. Lôit seemed slowly to return to reality, and he gradually dropped out of the chant. It was time for me to sing. Prior to the show I thought that it would be a good idea to explain my planned late entry onto stage by saying “*I am sorry that I am a little late.*” It was not at all a good idea after the never ending chant. However, I was so stressed and confused by this time, that I could not think straight. I announced myself with my pre-prepared “joke”. I did not go down well. It did not go down at all. The audience instantly thought that they had been subjected to the never ending chant, on the hottest day of summer, because I had been late. I could feel the immediate negative vibe, and I lost all stage presence, and suffered through the entire show. Afterwards it became funny.

In the legal profession I have had the privilege of interacting with very special colleagues.

Adv Henri Viljoen SC improved my academic knowledge of law by informing me that one should never refer to “*the bottom*” of a page “*because it has sexual connotations.*”

Adv Fritz Brand SC (now a judge in the Supreme Court of Appeal) added to my insight by explaining that the case where you can advise a client that he will definitely win “*still has to be patented*”.

Adv Joe van der Westhuizen SC greatly expanded my horizons in law by, without a shred sanctimony, referring me to a passage in *Proverbs* where it is stated “*’n sagte word weer die grimmigheid af*” (a soft word prevents aggravation).

Adv Almero de Villiers and *Adv WG (Johan) van der Merwe* taught me that advocates can be super-efficient and cost-effective, consistently acting in the very best interests of clients, if they do not take themselves too seriously.

I met the late *Lang Dawid De Villiers* QC when he acted as Counsel an euthanasia matter. He was already in his seventies. He was at university with my parents, and my mother was very proud about having taken part in a play with him during the thirties. They had a further connection because both grew up in *Paarl*.

The deepest of human emotions were unveiled in the euthanasia matter. The clinical psychologist, *Dr Hendrik Venter*, who gave expert evidence on behalf of a soft hearted nursing sister charged with having “assisted” two terminally ill patients to cross over right at the end, had come to court straight from the death

bed of his own mother. This was not known to anybody in Court. *Dr Venter* was filled with the deepest of compassion, and softly gave evidence around the emotions of persons empathising with a dying patient. At the end of his evidence the entire court, including the assessors, hardened crime reporters and I myself, were crying. The case was about “*the limits of empathy - not about the limits of law.*”

Lang Dawid had returned to the legal profession at an advanced age, after having been the CEO of a leading *Afrikaans* newspaper group for a number of years. He was highly respected throughout *South Africa*. He also had a further most significant involvement in my own life further down the track. He was wisdom re-incarnated.

Chapter 20

The “*battle of Saldanha*” kicks off with “*scud missiles*”

1995 brought a life changing experience....

During a moment that appeared like total lunacy to all of those around me (and soon also to me), I became passionately worked up against intended plans to establish a steel factory in an area surrounding the *Langebaan Lagoon*. The lagoon and the surrounds are internationally recognized, in terms of the so-called *RAMSAR* treaty, as an integral part of a most important and sensitive international eco-system.

I had read repeated newspaper reports about the intended factory, and became more and more annoyed. We had a mobile caravan-shack which was installed on Municipal Land within the *Leentjiesklip Caravan Park, Langebaan*. We hired the stand from

the Municipality. By 1995 we had been having our family holidays at *Langebaan* for quite a number of years. We also owned a vacant plot in *Langebaan*. However the plot was bonded to its full value, thus effectively owned by the bank, and without any net value to us at the time.

On reading yet another newspaper article during breakfast one morning, I decided to do something about the threat of the steel factory. When I arrived at office, I told my secretary “*We are not going to work today-we are going to write love letters today, to the Cabinet Ministers of the Provincial and Central Government.*”

I proceeded to dictate a letter complaining about the intended steel factory, and faxed it to the Cabinet Ministers and the Provincial and Central Government Departments involved in the decisions to re-zone the relevant land.

Somebody must have leaked the letter to the media, and within a few days an article appeared in a Cape Town newspaper suggesting that “a *property group*” of *Langebaan* intends taking legal action against the steel factory. The “*property group*” was my wife, our children and I. The only “property” we owned at *Langebaan* was the abovementioned shack installed on municipal land inside a caravan park, and the abovementioned fully bonded vacant plot. We certainly did not constitute a “property group” and found this description funny. But we do have a real passion for the area.

As a result of my letter to the Provincial and Central Government, my name was put on a list of interested and affected parties. Although I had written a rather seriously worded letter, I certainly did not at the time have any intentions to proceed with any real legal action.

One evening I became bored with my ordinary legal work. I sat thinking about the steel factory, and commenced "*playing*" behind my computer. I must have gone into a kind of a hibernating coma. When I came round it was three o'clock in the morning. I was still at office, and had prepared a comprehensive application to the Cape High Court requesting the Court to direct the Minister of the Environment to appoint a commission of enquiry, and also to stop the Minister of Planning from the rezoning the land pending the finalisation of such enquiry.

However, it was just a playful exercise, still with no intention to proceed. Or so I thought.

I stopped playing, closed my office, and went home to my wife, who had fortunately gone to sleep.

A week or two later I was invited to attend a public meeting, convened by the Provincial Minister of

Planning, at an auditorium in the building of the Provincial Government, Cape Town.

I attended the meeting which was chaired by the Provincial Minister of Planning, with the CEO of *Saldanha Steel* and the Provincial Minister of the Environment in attendance. It was my perception that the Minister of Planning and the CEO of *Saldanha Steel* attempted to motivate the case for the steel factory, whilst the Minister of Planning at the same time pretended to stand independent.

The audience became somewhat unruly. I put up my hand and was allowed to speak shortly. A while later I wished to add something. The Minister of Planning ignored my raised hand (he was of course unaware that I had heard the clapping of hands at age five, during the *Kom dans Klaradyn* tour. He was also unaware that I was the baby in our family, and not used to being ignored).

I got up again, and told the Minister of Planning “*I can see you are not going to allow me another opportunity to speak, but I am going to do so anyway.*”

By this time I was fuming, and irritated. I had put a lot of time into thinking about the matter, and passionately wanted to make a further contribution to the meeting. It was also my perception that the Minister and the CEO of *Saldanha Steel* were trying a rather cheap stunt. I believed that they had already made up their minds and were merely pretending to consult the public.

I left the meeting, still fuming. As I walked out, I met a certain *Ian Moultrie* and a certain *Zolia Rumble*, both of whom had been speaking to me about the matter on the telephone, outside the auditorium. *Zolia* was also at an earlier meeting of *greenies* at the University of Cape Town, which I had attended. I told them that I

have prepared a court application, and that I was going to proceed.

Ian Moultrie cautioned me, and told me that I could not go it alone. *Zolia* joined in the cautioning, and told me that “*they will take you out*”. She later also told me that her telephone had been bugged, that a man had been sitting on the telephone pole outside their farm for weeks, and that helicopters had circled over their farm. However that she managed to stop the bugging by blowing on “*brain penetrating*” dog whistle into her telephone!

I felt totally frustrated. During the meeting of the *greenies* at the University of Cape Town it was absolutely clear that everybody were sincere, passionate, most involved, most concerned, and quite enthusiastic in their opposition. However the rezoning was scheduled for the forthcoming Monday, only two full workdays away. There was virtually no

time left. A senior advocate who had attended the meeting of *greenies* had totally disagreed with my assessment of the legal position. I could not see the *greenies* proceeding in time, and experienced a feeling of intense personal responsibility to proceed to Court, as my “playful” application was readily available.

When the collective anger of the meeting in auditorium dissipated later that day, I became scared. About the costs risks, about what *Zolia* had told me, and about the entire idea of tackling major corporations and the government all on my own. My nerves were shot, and I was quite scared. At the same time I also felt a compelling urge to proceed. I have sometimes wondered for a moment whether the echoes in *Meiringspoort* had anything to do with it...

I went back to my office, and reworked the application. It was a public holiday the next day, and I

and again worked on it the next day, and also on the Friday. I added a number of Respondents for technical reasons, thus increasing the number of Respondents from three to nine.

By late that Friday the re-worked application was ready. My feeling was that I had, through a lot of good fortune, managed to strike a balance between the competing viewpoints, by simply requesting that the re-zoning be held over until completion of a proper investigation by way of an official environmental enquiry. Furthermore that the Minister of the Environment could hardly refuse an enquiry in the face of the public outcry, competing viewpoints by experts, and the internationally recognised ecological importance of the area.

But time was of the essence. It was already after office hours on the Friday, and the re-zoning was scheduled for the Monday. At about 17h30 my loyal

and trusted administrative assistant, *Sean Sasman*, and I rushed from *Bellville*, where I practised, to *Cape Town*. At about 18h00 we managed to get hold of the Registrar of the High Court. We persuaded him to specially open the High Court to and to stamp the application, by way of an urgent procedure. It was thus officially issued for a hearing on the Monday morning, on a highly urgent basis. However, for the hearing to proceed, it still had to be served on Nine Respondents.

Much to my surprise I managed to persuade not only the Municipalities to open their offices on the Saturday morning to receive the application, but also the registered offices of *Saldanha Steel* and of *Iscor*.

At about 19h00 on the Friday evening we managed to get hold of a courier who agreed to take the application to *Iscor* and *Saldanha Steel*, in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

At about 22h00 that evening I served the application on the representative of Parks Board in *Welgemoed, Bellville*.

At about 23h00 *Sean Sasman* handed it to a member of the State Attorney, at his flat in *Wynberg*, thus technically effecting service on all the government departments.

By the next morning (the Saturday) at 10h00 *Sean Sasman* had driven out to *Langebaan* and *Saldanha* and had also served it on the Municipalities.

Later on the the Saturday it was also served on the registered offices of *Iscor* and *Saldanha Steel*, in Johannesburg and Pretoria, via the courier.

The impossible had been achieved. Nine Respondents, spread all over South Africa, were

served with copies, within less than a day after the application had been issued late on a Friday afternoon, after official hours.

In my wildest dreams I could not imagine that this could happen so rapidly. To this very day I still do not understand why the *Municipalities, Iscor and Saldanha Steel* had made themselves available on the Saturday.

My own inner experience of the entire exercise was that we had managed to fire “*scud missiles*” all over South Africa.

Chapter 21

The “battle” continues- fearing bankruptcy

The result of all of this was that our own family was in effect caught up in the legal process, bearing the risks of possible costs orders in favour of nine different parties. These included inter alia *Iscor*, *Saldanha Steel*, Central Government and Provincial Government.

Legal teams consisting of eminent senior advocates (“*silks*”), junior advocates and attorneys repeatedly marched into High Court Cape Town during April/May 1995. My wife and I huddled in trepidation at the back of Court, often trying to assess the extent of the legal costs that were mounting up, at our risk, on the other side.

The Minister of the Environment suddenly announced an environmental enquiry, as had been

requested in my application. However, it was suggested that it was of own volition, and that I had no right to ask the High Court to direct him to convene such enquiry. Indeed, ultimately the Court agreed with him on this point, and ordered me to pay the legal costs of the Minister of the Environment. However, by this time he had convened the enquiry, and he could not undo it any more. Fortunately I managed ultimately to get rid of the costs order against me, by waiving the various costs orders I had obtained, in exchange.

The battle was flashed out by Reuters and in the international media. I saw myself on 8 o'clock TV news, with "*paparazi cameras*" flashing around me, following on a dramatic announcement by the newsreader of "*a contest in court reminding of the battle between David and Goliath.*"

We became more and more scared. I felt extremely guilty towards my wife and children, and I remember a discussion between us one day during which we decided to accept that we may have to start all over again should costs orders be granted against us.

I found myself becoming more and more shy, trying to avoid all calls from the media, and declining an invitation to take part in a public panel discussion on national television. Fortunately a passionate environmentalist/marine biologist from the University of Cape Town, *Neville Sweide*, took over at the panel discussion, and persuasively punted the arguments against the development.

After the judgment was granted in our favour, the joy was rather short lived, as the matter again became unresolved again due to an appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein, by *Iscor* and *Saldanha Steel*. The Appeal remained pending for an

extended period, and we were again caught up in ongoing anxiety. So much so, that I sometimes woke up in the morning with a twisted spine, which I ascribed to muscle spasms whilst sleeping. It had become what seemed like a never ending nightmare.

The true hero was my wonderful wife, who through all of it supported me emotionally, and never accused or begrudged me for putting our family at risk. And who remained outwardly calm, as is her nature, although her nerves were also under tremendous pressure.

The Late *Lang Dawid De Villiers* QC represented us in High Court, assisted by *Adv Theoniel Potgieter*, a former news editor of a national newspaper, and a personal friend from my earlier transient days in journalism.

We ended up with a reported judgment in the South African Law Reports and in the South African

Constitutional Law Reports, which has become leading authority on certain constitutional aspects, and has repeatedly been referred to in legal matters relating to the environment and constitutional law.

My small law practise came to a virtual standstill for extended periods, whilst I was caught up firstly in the Court proceedings, and thereafter sporadically in the rather extensive Environmental Enquiry before Judge *Jan Steyn*.

The application was decided on voluminous affidavits, and involved three appearances in Court, and extensive preparations by teams of lawyers and experts on the other side, many from Johannesburg, with some experts from abroad. In my assessment it was a massively expensive exercise, and the costs clock on the other side was ticking away at the risk of our family, day by day...

Thanks to the legal brilliance of *Lang Dawid* at age 78 (?), assisted by *Adv Theoniel Potgieter*, we succeeded in Cape Town High Court before Judge *Ian Farlam* for an order to stop the rezoning of the site pending the environmental enquiry.

Even the seasoned *Lang Dawid* became filled with passion, arguing in graphic terms in High Court about "*die vuil besoedelde poel*" (the dirty contaminated pool) that may follow.

At that moment it struck me as rather funny. The *Langebaan Lagoon* is a rather massive stretched out piece of water. In my own mind *Lang Dawid* was conjuring up visions of a rather small pool of water with dirty and contaminated objects drifting around. I subsequently realised that he might have done so on purpose. The relationship between drifting objects in a small pool, and the water in such a pool, is much more intense than the relationship between such

objects and a stretched out piece of water, such as the *Langebaan Lagoon*. *Lang Dawid* had made his point rather graphically. And it struck home....

It was and remained battle of passion and principle. *Lang Dawid* spontaneously refused a costs order offered by the Court in his favour. *Theoniel Potgieter* worked at a much reduced fee. I eventually also wrote off the three costs orders granted in my favour.

The CEO of *Saldanha Steel* made an appointment to visit me in my office. The intended factory involved a planned development of R4.6 billion, which later increased substantially, and Saldanha Steel had a massive financial interest. The meeting with the CEO of *Saldanha Steel* was for a specifically agreed time. He stopped in front of my office, waited until almost only one minutes before the agreed time, and then walked in. We went into my small conference room. Immediately thereafter, his cell phone rang. He

requested me to leave my conference room, closed the door, and shortly thereafter called me in again. His cell phone was positioned on the table. I thought that I had noticed a red light on his cell phone. I had the distinct feeling that we were “*on the air*” with a tape recorder on the other side. He looked at me, and after exchanging niceties, asked me what I wanted.

To this very day I sometimes wonder exactly what he meant by these words, and what answer he was hoping for. I wanted to say “*Can't we come to an agreement to make it all go away*”. However, I managed to answer that I just wanted them to move the factory. I cannot claim any glory for this. I was trapped in a matter that was in the public eye. Had it not been for this, I may very well have spoken my innermost desire at that moment.

Lang Dawid often reminded me of my gentle late father. One day I was sitting in his chambers, filled

with self-doubt and anxiety, and probably hoping for an exit. I told him that I was no longer sure about my own motivations. Was it concern about the environment, was it an attempt to prove myself, was it ego, or did I simply get carried away without pausing to think? He smiled, and gently stated : "*Moet jou nie daaroor bekommer nie- niks wat ons as mense ooit doen het ooit 'n enkele motivering nie..die menslike psige werk net nie so nie....*" This calmed me tremendously.

Shortly thereafter the Court proceedings were about to commence. I attended a meeting with the legal representatives of *Iscor*, *Saldanha Steel* and the Government. *Lang Dawid* and *Theoniel Potgieter* were also present. The legal representatives of *Iscor*, *Saldanha Steel*, Central Government and Provincial Government offered me a settlement on the basis that I should withdraw the application, and that the Respondents would then pay their own costs. By this

time the costs stakes were already extremely high. I said "*No. We want you to move the factory.*" A strange calm had set, and I remember that my wife and I no longer felt captivated. I am convinced that *Lang Dawid's* philosophic words, a few days earlier, played a major role.

Not long thereafter the High Court directed that the rezoning may not proceed before the environmental enquiry has been conducted and completed.

Chapter 22

Twenty beautiful women in the nude

The *Steyn Environmental Enquiry* followed on the High Court Case. It seemed as though every expert in the RSA and in the entire world had spontaneously come forward, and many were enthusiastically supporting us.

These included environmentalists, geologists, experts on water, experts on sea movements, experts on birds, engineers, economists, experts on emissions of steel factories, town planners, architects, marine-biologists, experts on marine farming, etc.

Various advocates were involved most of the time, and the Commission included Judge Steyn, an Engineer and an Environmentalist.

I understood it to have been the most extensive environmental enquiry ever to take place in Africa, if not in the world.

On the opening day there was a deafening silence, and absolutely no movement when Judge Steyn asked for the first witness to come forward from “the green” side. I had a sinking feeling that the entire enquiry was going to "implode" before it had commenced. I went forward and entered the witness box. Judge Steyn wanted to know who I was. I told him my name and that I was the person who had made the High Court Application that had resulted in the Enquiry. I was paranoid that he would ask me technical questions about the fauna and flora in the area, as I was told that he is botanist of note. Not being a natural detail person, and realising that I had only limited knowledge about the relevant ecological aspects, I actually feared Judge Steyn (who was a most charming person). To avoid embarrassment

around my most limited knowledge, I started my evidence more or less as follows:

"I unfortunately know very little about the names of birds, plants and trees. However I do know what beauty is. If you were see twenty beautiful girls standing out there in nature in their natural state but do not know their names, it still does not detract from their beauty....they will remain beautiful"

My impression was that Judge Steyn's eyes had become hazy. He allowed me to give my evidence, but did not ask me a single technical question. In fact, he asked me very little.

After this evidence the ice was broken, and the enquiry proceeded, with the multitude of voluntary experts giving evidence, with no financial rewards for those who were on the "*green side*".

Despite a recommendation by the Steyn Commission that the factory should preferably be moved about 10 kilos inland, the Nationalist Cabinet of the Provincial Government resolved to accept relocation only about 1.5 kilos inland. In addition cosmetic little towers were added to the factory, and there were suggestions by *Iscor* and *Saldanha Steel*, and also the Minister of Planning, that the factory would resemble a cathedral (I suppose the innuendo was that it would be a holy structure), and also that steel factory with zero emission is possible.

This was of course total nonsense. Whilst I have to concede that the outline of the factory against the horizon was somewhat improved, and whilst this was well intended, a steel factory cannot ever be made beautiful. Even the cosmetic towers have by now become a rusty red. The red iron dust can also be seen all around the factory, and the plants and vegetation directly around the factory have little hope

of normal survival. However, the upside is that I could impress my children for a while (when they were still much younger) that “we” have moved the factory a kilometre and a half, and that “we” have put the little towers on the factory, whenever we drove past the factory.

The limited relocation was considered a terrible blow at the time. I prepared a rather comprehensive review application to the High Court Cape Town, but never issued it. There was by now simply too much relativity in the matter. The “anchor” environmental expert on whom I had originally relied for the successful application to High Court, had gone onto public record in support of the limited re-location, and a delegation from the International Environmental Agency from Geneva, Switzerland, who looks after the execution of the *RAMSAR* treaty, publicly shared this view.

My understanding of the law was that the Provincial Government had a rather wide discretion. They could show that they had considered the evidence at the Enquiry and the recommendations, and also that they had in part taken it into account by requiring relocation of about one and half kilos, and by requiring an environmental monitoring commission to be established at *Saldanha Steel* to report to them in the long run. I therefore had little confidence that the review application would succeed. I was also concerned about putting myself, my wife and our family through another gruelling exercise. I did not have nerves of steel, neither did my wife, and I had to take into account my family who had already, by reason of my original choice, gone through a traumatic year.

It felt as though the entire year and all the risks accepted by my family had been a complete waist. After the recommendations of the *Steyn Commission*

we thought that the factory was going to disappear “*off the face of the Langebaan earth.*” Now it was going to re-appear, in line of sight from *Leentjiesklip*, albeit one and a half kilos away from the originally intended position, and with cosmetic towers.

Chapter 23

The aftermath: “*Lied van Saldanha*”, and “*Justice*”

In the depths of emotion I managed, on the night of 30 December 1995, to write a song about the battle around the steel factory, called "*Lied van Saldanha*" (Song of Saldanha). With the exception of a rather playful mock-up advertising jingle that I had once made up to entertain my small children, I had never before written any song.

I finished *Lied van Saldanha* at about four o' clock in the morning, on 31 December 1995. By this time there were about twenty verses (apparently a rather clear sign of an inexperienced songwriter). I was so excited about having written the song, that I woke my wife to tell her about it. She was rather sleepy and surprised, and responded by saying: "*Alastair, dis vier-uur in die oggend!*" However, she must have

noticed my excitement, and she then, with drowsy eyes, said: "*Nou toe nou, sing maar die song...*" By verse seven she was fortunately asleep again.

The words of *Lied van Saldanha*, as eventually recorded, are as follows:

*saldanha...is pragtig... die weskus is mooi
langebaan... so lieflik... die aandlig is rooi*

*blomme... met kleure...heerlike geure
groen-bloue waterdie hemel is nader
grasieuse flaminke...duikers rinkink
sterre... wat flonker..... in die blou-helder donker*

*daar is oë... wat groen is...en daar is oë..wat blou is
daar is mense... wat lag....
onder die lewe se vrag*

*skielik is daar kommer... die weskus word bedonner
blou-lug... word bestook...
met geel... swawel- rook*

*vir saldanha se staal....
moet ons almal betaal
staal....koue- vuur...
in die rug van die natuur...*

*the world is a garden...the sea.....is a pond
i'm sure you'll agree... cause it is there to see*

*but who.. put this trash-bin.. next to our pond?
what is the reason
for all this high treason?*

*hierdie storie is naar.... maar die storie is waar
soos wat die staalstad daar groei...
gaan die strandmeer doodbloei...*

Many years later I was able to add a positive afterthought. But I was certainly not yet ripe for this in 1995 or 1996.

I had become extremely cynical, especially around what I had experienced as the overpowering financial might of *Saldanha Steel* against us as an ordinary family. Had we been extremely wealthy, I might have taken the chance of attempting to proceed with the review application which was fully prepared. But my nervous system was not strong enough again to risk my family and myself. I wrote a most cynical song

called “*Justice*”, playing around with the idea of the South-African Roman Dutch legal system, the black gowns of judges, barristers and attorneys, the white bibs worn in court and the first name of the late *Harry Openheimer*. The cynical words of “*Justice*” came out as follows:

*justice is miskien net 'n man se naam
want vir justice moet almal dan rome toe gaan
en die kaartjies is duur*

*ja justice is miskien net 'n man se naam
want vir justice moet almal dan rome toe gaan
en die kaartjies is duur*

*die manne in swart se dasse bly wit
elke oggend vroeg word die beurs geskud
as jy kan betaal sal die show vir jou start
maar as jy nie kan, sal ons weer moet praat*

*as justice hier was, dan was hary my pa
maar hary stem nie saam, hy sê dis nie
en die kaartjies is duur*

*as justice hier was, dan was hary my pa
 maar hary stem nie saam, hy sê dit nie waar
 en die kaartjies is duur*

*die manne in swart se dassie bly wit
 elke oggend vroeg word die beurs geskud
 as jy kan betaal sal die show vir jou start
 maar as jy nie kan, sal ons weer moet praat*

*justice word gepleeg in 'n donker steeg
 bloed word gelaat, dis rooi in die straat
 en justice... was net 'n man... se naam*

*justice word gepleeg in 'n donker steeg
 bloed word gelaat, dis rooi in die straat*

en justice... was net 'n man... se naam

The irony is that whilst writing the song the past assistance of *Lang Dawid, Theoniel Potgieter, Willie Duminy* and *Francois van der Merwe*, all of whom were lawyers who came to my assistance without expecting to be paid, as well as the selfless assistance from others, had escaped me for the moment. I did not really have any need to complain about justice.

Chapter 24

The “*allied forces*”

Various wonderful people came to my support during 1995, including *Lang Dawid de Villiers*, *Theoniel Potgieter* and *Willie Duminy*. *Zolia Rumble*, who was an energetic and charismatic lady, as well as a mathematician-scientist with a warm heart, by the name of *Dr Ewald Wessels*, became involved in a supportive role, on an almost fulltime basis.

A colleague in legal practise, *Francois van der Merwe*, whose hobby is ornithology, and who is generally environmentally sensitive, fetched me to drive me to meetings. He also frequently talked to me and encouraged me. He one day said that his family will never allow me to go under. My paranoid financial anxieties were at that stage so deep seated, that I was unable to assess this comment rationally. Whilst *Francois* may have been quite serious, I was quite

unable to absorb his comment, and in any event did not have the confidence to follow it up.

Adv Willie Duminy SC made himself available, free of any remuneration at various phases of the matter.

Numerous academics and experts, especially from University of Cape Town, also including *Neville Sweide* and various others, gave spontaneous support during the Steyn Enquiry.

Another colleague in legal practice, *Pierre Kriel*, one day arrived at my office with a cheque. He told me that the people at *Churchaven, Langebaan* had heard that we were suffering, and wanted to help with the legal fees that I had incurred with the junior advocate who had assisted *Lang Dawid*, and that they have “*sent the hat around.*”

The junior advocate, who assisted *Lang Dawid, Theoniel Potgieter* (now SC), spent many hours on the matter. He was not at the time in a position to waive his fees, but he billed me at a mere fraction of the fees that he was entitled to raise. The cheque from *Churchaven* exactly covered his fees. As I acted as an attorney to myself, I naturally did not have attorneys' fees.

We therefore had no legal costs on our side, but were facing the risk of an potentially enormous costs order that could be granted against us probably including massive disbursements in respect of experts. We also faced substantial additional costs, should the appeal to Bloemfontein end up in favour of *Iscor* and *Saldanha Steel, Central Government, and Provincial Government*.

.

Fortunately the Appeal took time and as the Steyn Enquiry became completed, it became of mere

academic importance on all aspects other than the costs orders. The Appeal was eventually withdrawn on the basis that I waived the various costs orders that were granted in my favour, and that the Minister of the Environment waived his costs order.

Chapter 25

Ian Moultrie

Yes, and then there was *Ian Moultrie*.

Ian Moultrie was a Johannesburg eccentric, and the largest private shareholder in the entire *Iscor*. However, he was vehemently opposed to the factory, before, during and after the *Steyn* Environmental Enquiry. His opposition was directly against his own financial self-interests.

He gave me emotional support on the telephone over months, on an almost a daily basis, repeatedly talked me out of depressions, and also did a lot of factual and scientific research, feeding me with information on a regular basis.

On the morning after I had written *Lied van Saldanha*, *Ian Moultrie* rather co-incidentally popped in at our

caravan-shack, in the *Leentjiesklip* Caravan Park at *Langebaan*.

I told him about the song, and sang it to him, with my own third rate guitar-accompaniment.

He became most enthusiastic, and insisted that I should sing it to the *greenies* at the *Langebaan Yacht Club*, later that afternoon.

I adhered to this request. By verse seven everybody were again asleep. My wife *Janita* probably as well, for the second time round. However, *Ian* suggested that I should record the song so that it can be used as a campaign song-"*perhaps we can still stop the factory.....*"

I went to a dusty backyard sound studio in Goodwood, fitted out with old fashioned analogue

recording systems, with massive track-to-track tape recording “wheels”.

I recorded the song with the assistance of *Barry Marais*, the owner of the studio, and a wonderful Dutch speaking sound engineer, *Gerhard Huizinga*, (who mostly sat in and assisted with advice on the beat of the song, and with amazing energy and enthusiasm).

The biggest problem was my guitar-playing, but after re-recording numerous times, the 4-track tape was ready, with *Lied van Saldanha* recorded on the one side, and I told the story about the consequences of the steel factory on the flip side.

Barry Marais and *Gerhard Huizinga* refused to charge me a cent.

My talented friend, *Maré Mouton*, who is a graphic artist, designed a beautiful cover for the tape, also without charging me.

I had about 1000 copies made, and attempted, with the help of my teenage daughter, to sell these in *Sleigh Street Langebaan*, in a rather dismal attempt to raise funds for a further public campaign.

It did not work at all, and eventually we just handed out the tapes to keep the awareness going.

Over time I heard wonderful stories about the eccentric Ian Moultrie. I am also quite sure that with a little bit of delving many more will surface.

He told me that a few years earlier he had become most annoyed about what he considered to be the environmentally unacceptable signs of Estate Agents, spoiling the landscape in the Johannesburg suburb

where he lived. Accordingly he often went up and down the relevant suburb, in the middle of the night, and "stole" all the "show house" signs he could find. He stored these in his garage.

Naturally there was pandemonium, and an outcry, amongst the estate agents. He then wrote letters to a Johannesburg newspaper under the pseudonym "*Don Quixote*", told them that he has the signs in his garage, and promised to return the signs once they have done something special for the environment.

Half-way through the *Steyn* Environmental Enquiry there were questions around the massive oil storage tanks at *Langebaan*. There was a fear that the world's ageing oil tankers would put the *Langebaan Lagoon* to further risk. There was also the concern that the oil terminal would be extended thus diverting the sea streams and causing harm to the lagoon, and that oil

may leak into the aquifers and ground water in the area, and find its way into the *Langebaan Lagoon*.

All of this had the potential of devastating and irreversible negative environmental consequences.

Ian Moultrie managed to persuade a private bore man to drill right inside a high security military area, in the middle of the night, so as to take ground water samples in the hope of proving a point.

Ian Moultrie was quite a wealthy man, and the rather substantial amounts of money involved in the costs risks we were facing, would have been of relatively limited financial significance to him. One day he said to me: "*I know you are very worried about the costs. I can write a cheque now to cover it all. But I am not going to do so, as then it will be money fighting money, and will no longer be pure.*"

I could not quite understand this at the time, but understood it afterwards. He was absolutely correct, and had he paid, it would have removed the true reward of the entire struggle.

Towards the end of 1995 I had to put our plot at *Langebaan* in the market. My practice had been suppressed throughout the year, and we were taking financial strain. I just added a significant amount to the amount we paid for the plot not long before 1995, and so determined the asking price, without any market research. To my surprise I received an offer for the full amount. The estate agent told me that a man from Whales had fallen in love with the plot as it reminded him of his childhood days, and that he had told her to offer "*whatever the owner wants.*" I found this rather strange. I believe that *Ian Moultrie* was probably behind the offer, and was assisting us without disclosure.

Towards the end of 1995 *Ian Moultrie* came down to Cape Town. He took *Zolia Rumble*, my wife and me out for dinner. That evening he told us that he had received news, a short while earlier, that he has cancer. However, he was extremely positive and stated: "*I am going to win this battle.*"

He also told us that he has conducted a lot of research, and that he had ascertained that a new form of chemo therapy was on final medical trials in the USA, though not yet approved. He said that he had managed to convince a South African specialist to take part in the medical trials, that the specialist was going to test the new drug on him, and that he was sure that it was going to work.

Ian Moultrie was now facing another totally different battle. All of us went home that night, feeling totally depressed.

I stayed in regular telephonic contact with Ian Moultrie, attempting to encourage him in the same way as he had encouraged me during 1995.

In the autumn of that year told me that it was not going very well. I happened to have a meeting in Johannesburg and went to visit him. It was a traumatic visit. Little was left of the mischievous, energetic and up-beat eccentric, with his never ending zest for life and contagious sense of humour. He was a mere shadow of his former self. His complexion was yellowish and transparent. There were dark circles around his eyes, and virtually no flesh left on his body. He moved with great difficulty in apparent pain, pulling along a drip-stand that was providing him with phethydene. When I left him I gently hugged him, realising that I would never see him again.

Not long thereafter *Ian Moultrie* telephoned me. He said: "*Alastair, I am going down to Langebaan in*

about two weeks, for my funeral, and I would really like to see you there, and for you to say a few words at my funeral. I have arranged for a nice party, Irish style, and there will be lots of whisky".

I was blown over. I thought about this wonderful eccentric man, his wisdom and emotional support. That night I typed what I would say at the funeral, finding myself in deep emotion. I telephoned *Ian Moultrie* him the next morning, and told him that I want to share it with him. I read it to him over the telephone. We were both weeping as I read it. Two weeks later I had to read it out again, this time at *Churchaven, Langebaan*.

During 1996 I wrote a song about *Ian Moultrie*. This song has never been recorded or sung in public. It was just too intense. The lyrics encapsulated the words that I read to him over the telephone, and again had to read out at *Churchaven*, two weeks later.

I am now, 15 years later, able to publicly share the words, which are as follows:

*toe ian my bel was dit vroeg in my dag
en my son het geskyn tot laat in die nag*

*ons praat toe oor dit en ons praat toe oor dat
en ons praat ook oor dit wat aan ligjare vat ...*

*hy vertel van sanet, en hy praat van haar lag,
en ons praat van die lewe en hoe om te swewe...*

en ons sê weersiens, en ons sê weersiens

*en toe ian weer bel was dit laat in my nag
en ek het gesak tot diep in 'n skag
ons praat toe oor dit en ons praat toe oor dat
en hy laat my praat oor my eie vraag...*

*ek vertel van die swart, hier diep in my hart,
en ek praat van skemer en die mis op die pad...
en ons sê weersiens en ons sê weersiens*

*ons het gepraat in die oggend en gepraat in die aand,
in snikhete somer en ook in herfs
en toe my voete wou glip, en toe ek wou val,
het 'n telefoonstem my sag opgetel...*

*ons het gepraat oor sy kinders gepraat oor my vrou
en gepraat oor die hede asook die verlede...
en ons sê weersiens en ons sê weersiens*

*maar toe ian weer bel was sy stem lig gekwel
en die drade het gebewe daar vêr van die hel...
my vriend was gediend om net te vertel
dat hy my wou nooi na sy laaste groen sooi...
ons praat weer oor dit en ons praat weer oor dat
en ons praat weer oor dit waaraan ligjare vat...*

en toe... sê ons totsiens

en toe... sê ons totsiens

en toe... sê ons totsiens... totsiens... totsiens!

Chapter 26

A “holistic victory”?

The Universe is full of hope, energy and surprises. Nothing that *Lang Dawid de Villiers, Theoniel Potgieter, Willie Duminy, Ian Moultrie, Zolia Rumble, Ewald Wessels, Neville Sweide, Francois van der Merwe* and all the *greenies* and voluntary experts did, ever had the capacity of becoming hollow or of not surviving in some or other form.

The environmental consciousness in South Africa rose, and the environmental legislation was improved.

An additional result was that I wrote and composed about thirty Afrikaans songs, recorded two Afrikaans music CD's, did performances at Afrikaans music festivals, performances on television, and in theatre restaurants. I experienced an overall re-discovery of

my creative side, and also of the “*performance addiction*” that had set in at age five.

It seemed to have happened by itself. Following on the recording of *Lied van Saldanha*, a number of songs dropped into my head. Shortly before Xmas 1996, I got the idea of also recording these songs, and giving it to clients as a Xmas gift. I went back to the dusty sound studio in Goodwood, and, again with the help of *Barry Marais* and *Gerhard Huizinga*, made a quick recording on four-track tape. *Maré Mouton* designed another cover. I then handed these tapes to clients and to friends, as Xmas gifts.

Some time later one of the most talented musicians in South Africa, *Andrew Roos*, drifted up at our house. Andrew is all classical musicians and all rock-musicians re-incarnated in one person. He came to visit *Konrad Jamneck*, a sound engineer who lived in the granny flat behind our house. *Konrad* played the

tape to *Andrew*. He liked the songs, and came to me, suggesting that I should make a CD.

I accepted the suggestion, and asked *Andrew Roos* to act as the producer. Andrew re-arranged my songs, and put together an excellent team of musicians.

We did the recordings in *Sharp Street Studio*, Johannesburg, which was the studio of *Willem Moller*. The first CD was released, and was well received to the extent that *Die Burger* newspaper, at the end of 1998 mentioned it amongst the ten Afrikaans CD's released that year "*worth listening to*".

The second CD was produced about ten years later, again with *Andrew Roos* as the producer. This CD was recorded in the *Brakmusiek Sound Studio* of *Andrew Roos*, in *Ermelo*. It was even better received by *Die Burger*.

The musical talents of *Andrew Roos*, *Willem Moller* and the other musicians who collaborated, and the professionalism of *Willem Moller* and *Andrew Roos* as producers, were at the root of the recognition that has been enjoyed by both products. My own contribution was writing the songs, singing them and having an enormous amount of fun with the most fantastic people.

Following on the *Langebaan* battle, I also became involved in a successful campaign to save a public open space and a natural park in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town from development, and assisted with the establishment of an environmental trust to protect the natural park in the longer run.

The first CD included a “reverse” environmental song called “*Neuk*”, with a chorus line that repeatedly states “*Kom ons neuk die wêreld op*” (translated as “*let us stuff up the world*”) (though one can easily

think of a somewhat different and perhaps more effective translation).

In the last chorus line of the song the words change to “*Kom ons pas die wêreld op*” - let us take care of the world.

My own version of the song has been played on Afrikaans Radio, and a famous and highly successful Afrikaans singer, *Sarah Theron*, included the song in a CD released by her not so long ago.

The words are as follows:

*die wêreld is... 'n-miljoen-jaar oud
of is dit... dalk-al drie?
en ons twee gaan nog veertig jaar maak,
of is dit dalk net vier?
so kom ons.. neuk-die-wêreld-op,
so kom.. ons neuk dit op
en daar's niemand wat vir ons gaan stop,
so kom ons neuk dit op*

*die wêreld draai in-die-rondte-om,
of is-dit-dalk-heeltemal plat?
en ons twee.. loop op voete rond,
en ons staan.. op hierdie grond*

*so kom ons... neuk die wêreld op,
so kom ons... neuk dit op
en daar is niemand wat vir ons-gaan-stop,
so kom ons neuk dit op*

*die lug is blou en oneindig hoog,
en die reënboog is vol-van-kleur
en ek en jy.. is mos ses-voet-lank,
of is dit.. dalk net vyf?*

*so kom ons neuk die wêreld op,
so kom ons.. neuk dit op
en daar is niemand.. wat.. vir ons gaan stop,
so kom ons neuk dit op*

*ja kom-ons.. neuk die wêreld op,
ja kom-ons.. neuk dit op
en daar is niemand.. wat vir ons gaan stop,
so kom ons....PAS DIT OP!*

The first and second CD also included a song named *Droomtowaenaar*, inspired by the Langebaan Lagoon.

Droomtowers has also been played on *Afrikaans* Radio. The lyrics are as follows:

*waar ons... nou gaan... het alles 'n kleur
en die wêreld draai om... om die sonlig te soen
en miskien... kan jy saam.. met my soontoe gaan
en miskien.. sal jy sien.. ek's 'n droomtowers
en miskien ... sal jy sien ... mh ..
ek's 'n droom...towers*

*waar ons nou gaan.. hang die aandlug tot laat
en die sterre en die maan.. dryf in die water se gloed
en miskien.. kan jy saam..met my soontoe gaan
en miskien.. sal jy sien.. ek's 'n droomtowers
en miskien ... sal jy sien ...mh ..
ek's 'n droom ... towers*

*en die son ..sak stadig.. en die lug is blou
en die water is koel.. in die berg se poel
en miskien.. kan jy saam.. met my soontoe gaan
en miskien.. sal jy sien... ek's 'n droomtowers
en miskien ... sal jy sien mh ...
ek's 'n droom ...towers*

*kom saam met my saam... dis nie vêr om te gaan
in die bloudonkernag... is die briesie so sag
ja kom saam met my saam... dis nie vêr om te gaan
en miskien sal ons saam... daar 'n droom kan sien*

*en miskien ... sal ons saam in 'n droom daar woon
ja miskien ... sal ons- saam in 'n droom daar woon*

Lied van Saldanha was not recorded on the first CD, but found its way onto the second CD, fifteen years after the battle. By that time the positive afterthought, already mentioned above, had matured within my own mind, and this afterthought found its way into the recording of *Lied van Saldanha*, fifteen years after the “Langebaan battle”.

Eventually the “Langebaan battle” (rather indirectly) also resulted in a book about “*finding and fitting the pieces in relationship trauma*” called “*The Giant Puzzle*”. This book would not have been written if we had not been in the struggle during 1995. It has been published, and has also enjoyed positive recognition in South African media. It has also been recommended by the former head of the “*family unit*” at the *Department of Psychiatry at University of Cape Town*, has been endorsed by a positive review

Oprah's South African O-Magazine, and has been helpful to persons in matrimonial trauma, lifting their burdens to an extent.

The book ends with the following song:

*die ou lewe..is 'n puzzle..giant puzzle.....mhm.
net 'n puzzle
die ou lewe..bly 'n puzzle..giant puzzle..mhm.
net 'n puzzle*

*dan's dit oorlog ...dan weer vrede...
dan's dit winter...en dan weer somer...*

*wat is tyd.....en wat is ewigheid...?
wat is anderkant...ander kant?
wat is duskant....hierdie-kant?*

*is my pa nog daar...is my ma nog daar...?
is my sussies daar...is my hond dalk daar?
die ou lewe..bly 'n puzzle..giant puzzle..mhm..net 'n puzzle
al wat ek weet ..is dat ek nie weet nie
al wat ek verstaan...is dat ek nie verstaan nie
maar ek weet darem ...ja ek weet darem
ek is 'n ou stukkie....van die puzzle
krom en skeef*

*maar ek's 'n perfect fit..ek's 'n perfect fit
vir my stukkie... van die puzzle
en jy's 'n perfect fit, jy's 'n perfect fit
vir jou stukkie.... van die puzzle
die beautiful... giant puzzle*

*die ou lewe..bly 'n puzzle.. 'n giant puzzle..mhm
net 'n puzzle...*

Chapter 27

Nerves of steel?

My wife and I were very scared in 1995. I certainly did not have nerves of steel, and have never had nerves of steel. My nerves were under great tension, for the entire year, and so were those of my outwardly calm wife.

Had it not been for the emotional support of all the others, we may well have disintegrated.

But we have also had lots of fun, and have been holistically rewarded in various respects, as appears above.

The music, the performances, the talk by the wise man referred to above, the two music CD's, the writing of "*The Giant Puzzle*", and also the writing of this book have been major rewards.

I have found additional inner peace, and additional sustainable joy and fulfilment.

After *Ian Moultrie's* final departure, I eventually also made peace around *The battle of Saldanha*, and performed an actual ritual to finally close the chapter.

My office and my home study were filled with documents in respect of *Saldanha Steel*, the *Langebaan* environment, the battle in Court and the Steyn Enquiry. These were all over my desks, stacked up against the walls, and were cluttering my office, my study, our environment, and my soul.

I eventually gathered the documents together, ceremonially carried them out to the pavement, and put them in the trash bin. I then finally closed the lid of the trash bin, and walked away.

Out of the heart of the Universe the lyrics of a song later echoed into my soul, in a sense similar to the echoes I heard in *Meiringspoort* at age four or five:

*as jy staan.op die maan..... vat die liefde jou saam
as jy staan op-die- maan...as jy staan op die maan*

*as jy hang aan die son..... kan die trane maar kom
as jy hang aan die son..... as jy hang-aan-die son*

*as jy swaai aan 'n ster, bly die hartseer daar ver
as jy swaai aan 'n ster, as jy swaai aan 'n ster*

*met die reenboog ...se brug, gly die tyd vinnig terug
met die reenboog se brug, met die reenboog se brug*

*as jy staan, op die maan, en jy swaai aan 'n ster
en jy hang, aan die son, langs die reenboog se brug*

*sal ons vlieg, deur die lug, tot ver van 'n sug
sal ons vlieg, deur die lug, tot ver van 'n sug*

**Alastair van Huyssteen,
April 2010**

Afterthought

Since 2009 *Lied van Saldanha* includes a positive afterthought. It reads as follows:

*“maar die storie is dalk nie so swaar nie,
die storie is dalk nie waar nie
want die blomme se geure
is weer orals te bespeure*

*saldanha bly pragtig, die weskus bly mooi
langebaan so lieflik, die aandlug is rooi ”*

I was only able to write this about 15 years after the battle in 1995.

However the seeds for the afterthought were already sown during the environmental enquiry, when a geologist gave evidence, explaining the ground layers in the area, and commenting on a layer that is millions of years old.

As he gave this evidence I momentarily realised that no steel factory can destroy the Universe. The Universe will over time cover the factory with layers of earth, and it will vanish. Possibly Earth itself may also vanish. But new life and a new environment will then be borne elsewhere. All that we can really do is to attempt to release positive energy into the Universe, and to protect what has been entrusted to us, to the best of our ability, for as long as we can do so, in the interest of *all* the stakeholders. The environment has been entrusted to us. We hold these assets in trust. As we hold our families and children, others who walk the planet, and those who will follow us.