Scenes From a World Long Gone

1945 - 1972

Jack Hoffmann

Foreword

"We all grow up with the weight of history on us. Our ancestors dwell in the attics of our brains as they do in the spiralling chains of knowledge hidden in every cell of our bodies."

Shirley Abbott

The past is as inscrutable.

I have looked backwards through a mirror warped by time. Parts of the mirror reflect brightly and clearly episodes that have been emphasised and exaggerated by frequent retelling. Some memories are frozen starkly in black and white photographs. Others are blurred, their details faded and made fuzzy by the passage of years.

What the mirror reveals most of all, in fact, are the shadows where lost memories are buried forever.

Memory is as much an illusion as a view through lenses of lead.

Most of what I have written, really happened. But blurred, warped memories need to be resuscitated, refurbished, perhaps romanticized and embellished a little, for the telling.

Nevertheless, the essence of my life in South Africa, as I relate it, is genuine.

The conversations I relate, should, of course, not be taken literally. They are reconstructions, conflations, montages. But here again, their essence is real.

The names Herbert, Martin, Stanley, Anjoli and Patrick are fictitious but the people they represent, are real.

This memoir was written in 2015

Note:

Many of the scenes depicted in this memoir have been previously published in my novel

He Does Not Die a Death of Shame.

Roots

Jack's father, David Hoffmann, was born in Žemaičių Naumiestis (Naishtot-Tavrig), a *shtetl* in Lithuania, in 1908. The rise of antisemitism in the land of his birth thwarted David's dream of becoming a doctor and forced him to emigrate. He arrived in South Africa at the age of twenty. With only a graduation certificate from *gimnazija* as ballast he learned various skills. With hard work, willpower, perserverence, intellegence, fertile ideas and bold initiatives, he eventually succeeded in establishing a factory producing items such as electric light fittings and metal furniture.

He was a tall and handsome man. He was quiet and introverted. He had no close friends. He rarely spoke of his past. He lived in a world haunted by the ghosts of his family annihilated in the Holocaust.

Jack's mother, née Becker, was born in Malmesbury in the Cape Province, in 1911. She was brought up by a single mother. She bore forever the scars of her sad childhood. She was shy and diffident. She was an inexhaustible source of caring and empathy. She had a fine sense of order and a keen awareness of the beauty of things.

David and Doreen married in 1938.

Wedding - January 1938

A Leafy Suburb

Jack was born in 1941. He and his family lived in Johannesburg, the City of Gold, in the leafy suburb of Kensington. This proudly English name was echoed in the names of many of the streets: York and Lancaster, Leicester and Cumberland, Oxford and Cambridge. There was even a Queen Street.

Johannesburg had been laid out in the veld. It was not built along the seashore, nor along a river, nor on a mountainside, so there was little, besides a few low ranges of hills, to prevent the streets and avenues of the city centre and all the suburbs from being laid out in a grid pattern.

Kensington, a middle class suburb, followed this neat geometry. The majority of its inhabitants were white, English-speaking Christians. There was also a fairly large congregation of Jews and a few Afrikaners, Greeks and Portuguese. The only natives were those living as servants in the backyard rooms of the white residences.

The Hoffmanns' three-bedroomed house on Protea Street was built of yellow brick and had a green, corrugated iron roof. It had a front *stoep* of brightly polished green concrete. On the *stoep* were two large oil drums, sawn in half transversely, in which were planted flamboyant bushes of white, pink, red and purple fuchsias which bloomed throughout the long summer. In front of the house, there was a small garden with a lawn and beds of rose bushes, marigolds and shasta daisies. On the edge of the lawn was a tall fir tree that was easy to climb. If Jack climbed high enough into its branches in the springtime, he could find birds' nests holding tiny eggs of the purest white. Along the northern boundary fence was a short driveway that lead from the street to the garage.

The house in Protea Street. (Photographed in 1985)

1946: Jack in the garden, Protea Street

Jack's favourite place in the house was the room they called the library. It was really a small office where Jack's father spent most of his evenings which was the reason it always smelled of stale pipe smoke. David's desk was the main feature of the room. It had a reddish brown hue and was always kept so intensely polished that Jack could vaguely see his face reflected in the surface like the grainy photographs of a previous generation. Such high gloss revealed every fingerprint, spill and smear with maximal intensity, requiring the cycle of polishing to be restarted. The desk was dominated by the paraphernalia of the pipe smoker. A large ceramic ashtray of azure blue had centre stage. To its left was a pipe stand that held six pipes of various shapes from long and slender to S-shaped and stubby. Five were of wood in shades from black to light chestnut. The mouthpieces were black except where the champing of teeth had rendered them grey. The sixth pipe was of meerschaum. The bowl was carved to represent the head of a bearded warrior, perhaps a Viking. Its stem was of amber. To the right of the ashtray was a large jar of tobacco. It was decorated with pictures of pipes. The handle of its lid was in the shape of a pipe. Perched on top of the lid, was a silver instrument with three blades for cleaning, probing and tamping the tobacco in the pipe bowls. A small leather quiver held a bunch of white pipe cleaners. To one side, on the desk, was an oblong tin box about eight inches high. On its top was a slot for inserting coins. It was coloured blue and cream and was decorated with a Magen David, a simple map of Palestine and the letters JNF (Jewish National Fund).

Three of the four walls of the room were lined with books. There were the twenty-four volumes of the fourteenth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica which dwarfed the paltry German-language Encyclopaedia Judaica. There were only ten volumes of these, from Aach to Lyra. The publishing of rest of the Ls and the remaining volumes, all the way to Z, had been aborted by the Nazis in the 1930s. They no longer allowed Jews to spread their filthy lies. There were reference books on physics and mechanics, manuals on the construction of sheds and stables, on gardening, pruning and the felling of trees. There was a medical encyclopaedia and English, Afrikaans, Yiddish and Zulu dictionaries. There were Hebrew prayer books. There were novels in English, Afrikaans, German, Yiddish and Lithuanian. Tastes in literature ran from Mickey Spillane, Louis L´Amour, Isaac Asimov, Daphne du

Maurier and Ayn Rand, to Dickens, Dostoevsky and Mann. Jack's Enid Blytons and Hugh Loftings were shelved in the room he shared with his big brother, Alvin.

Jack loved this room, its odour of pipe tobacco and of furniture polish. It smelled also of books, a mingling of old leather, fresh paper, of glue and of dust. Above all, because this was his father's room, he always associated its smell with his father. Jack loved to open the books. He loved to study the black ants covering the pages, making words in foreign languages he could not decipher and words in English much too long for him to fathom. Some of the books had pictures in them, writhing monsters, strange people in exotic clothes, statues of naked women, heroes, saints and devils. There were stacks of magazines, Woman's Weekly, the Outspan, and Farmer's Weekly, as well as recent copies of The Jewish Herald and Yiddish newspapers. Jack often paged through the dog-eared, ancient albums from his parents' youth. They had cracked leather or creased, faded cardboard covers and added a pleasant, mouldy, fungal smell to the cocktail of other scents. The pages were black. The albums were filled with black and white photographs. Most of the pictures were small and glossy, showing faces he did not recognize. In his father's albums, were people in winter clothes and scenes of snow and houses unlike those Jack knew. There were dark forests and shiny lakes. Some of the photographs were shades of brown, others were fading to yellow. Some of the pictures were much bigger than the others and showed people smartly dressed in old-fashioned clothing staring directly at the camera without a smile amongst them. Each picture was held in place by a small triangle of black paper at each corner. Some photographs had annotations in white ink which Jack could not read.

On the wall to the left of the door, hung two pairs of black and white portraits of Jack's grandparents. Herman Becker, Doreen's father, wears a neat three-piece suit and a high, white Edwardian collar. His perfectly knotted tie nestles in the vee of the stiff collar. His head is tilted marginally backwards making his strong jaw jut. The angle of his head causes his eyebrows to be raised slightly and his lids to droop as he gazes into the camera. This gives him a somewhat supercilious air. He is a very handsome man. His dark hair is curly and parted on the left. He has thick eyebrows and heavily lidded eyes. His nose is straight and noble. He has a thick moustache twirled rakishly upwards. His lips are

lost in shadow. To his left hangs a portrait of Doreen's mother, Naomi. Her gaze is angled ten or twenty degrees to her left so that she is looking away from the portrait of her husband. She is an attractive woman. Her dark hair is wavy and appears to be short but perhaps it is gathered at the back of her head. Only a small right ear is visible. Her eyebrows are thick, her eyes large and dark. They are sad eyes. She has a small straight nose. Although her cheeks are somewhat chubby, she has an austere look. Her lips are symmetrical. Her mouth is beautiful. She does not smile. She wears a high-collared blouse around which is tied a shawl with long fringes. Her jacket is patterned with long-stemmed leaves and has a double collar. Her bosom is full. They both appear to be in their mid-twenties.

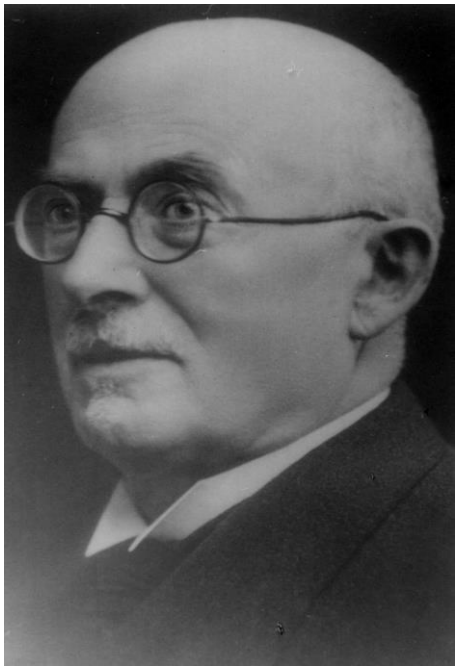
Herman

Naomi

Below these portraits hang those of David's parents. They are in their late fifties. David's father, Moshe, hangs below Naomi. He is looking to his right. Besides a periphery of closely cropped white hair, he is bald. He wears round, black-rimmed spectacles. He has a noble, gentle face. He has kind eyes. Despite the spectacles, his eyes are clearly visible, both the light irises and the black pupils.

There are small pouches beneath his eyes. His nose is prominent and finely shaped with wide nostrils. He has a neatly trimmed, white moustache and a small tuft of hair below the centre of his lower lip. He has a strong, full-lipped mouth, He wears a high, winged collar and a dark jacket. To his right, hangs the picture of Moshe's wife, Liba, on whom his gaze seems to be focused. She looks straight into the camera. Her grey hair is combed severely backwards. She has prominent eyebrows and small, widely spaced eyes. There are cobwebs of wrinkles below her eyes and at their angles. They are eyes that have known sorrow. Her nose is small. Her upper lip is thinner than the lower one. All that is visible of her clothing is a wide, white collar. Of the four grandparents, she is the only one with a glimmer of a smile at the corners of her mouth.

Liba



Moshe

The only one of these grandparents Jack had ever met, was his Bobba, Naomi.

Another room, the lounge, was seldom entered by the family on normal days. It was reserved for entertaining guests. The walls were painted the colour of good farmyard cream, the skirting boards, door- and window- frames were chocolate brown. In the wall furthest from the entrance, there had once been an open fire-place but this had been replaced by an electric heater during the War. It was

one of those old-fashioned heaters, a large square of mirror-shiny metal with three parallel horizontal coils of thin wire which took several seconds to change from silver to glowing orange. As the temperature rose, the heater emitted an irregular ticking sound like a clock in need of winding. With the asthmatic ticking, came a smell that felt like dry summer dust in the nostrils. How pleasant it was to stand inches from the ominous glow to warm one's bum and hands in the short, sharp winters.

In the centre of the mantleshelf, above the heater, was a large brass clock set in rosewood which was carved in a pattern of roses and pears. Its loud, regular, healthy tick-tocking belittled the arrhythmic efforts of the electric heater. On either side of the clock were vases of cut glass and ceramic and an assembly of porcelain figures. A man in Louis XIV attire was standing next to a pianoforte at which a dainty woman was seated. A blue and white tit was perched among holly. A black bull, head in charge mode, nostrils flared, scored a furrow in the dirt with its right front hoof. A multicoloured cockerel crowed silently. At each end of the mantle shelf, a tall, brightly polished, bronze candlestick, stood like a proud sentry. On the wall to the left, was an enormous painting of a huge bunch of lilacs in an incongruously tiny vase. Beneath this stood a chest of drawers of dark brown wood that contained linen tablecloths, serviettes and silver cutlery. On the opposite wall were two paintings of scenes of the veld, one showing thorn trees with light green leaves and spiky aloes with succulent blue leaves and clusters of bright orange flowers. The other showed a black stick figure herding scrawny cattle beside a concrete dam and a metal windmill. These flanked a tall, glass-fronted cabinet containing glasses for wine, liqueur, whisky, brandy and beer. Another shelf held bottles of Bell's and Black and White whisky, Martel cognac and various bottles of sweet wines and liqueurs. In one corner, on a tall plinth, was a sculpture of a goose and a gander facing each other. Although fashioned in bronze, their feathers appeared so realistic that one was surprised that they were hard and cold to the touch. The wings of the gander could be lifted to reveal a compartment where Doreen hid the keys to the drinks cabinet. There was a chesterfield with matching armchairs, densely stuffed and upholstered with patterns of flowers and autumn leaves. On the floor was a green pre-war woollen carpet of similar pattern. The sofa and chairs surrounded a low coffee table which held a vase of

flowers.

The kitchen was spacious and airy. It was always spotlessly clean. The kitchen table had metal legs and a surface of various shades of light green Formica that looked like marble. The four chairs were also of metal. Their seats were of the same material as the table. The feet of the table and the chairs were capped with rubber. The table stood against the wall opposite the door to the back *stoep*. To the left of this door, was a dresser covered with the same Formica as the table. Below the dresser was a dustbin and storage space for detergents, scouring powder, buckets and cleaning rags. This space was hidden by a curtain, chequered green and white. Above this dresser was a big window flanked by curtains of the same design as the one below. To the left was the door to the dining room. Next to this door, was an electric stove and oven. The stove was of white enamel with four black plates of various sizes. There were black switches which could be turned on to points which were labelled Low, Medium and High. Beyond the stove, was the sink with its draining board. Both were of dull grey metal. Here, hands and dishes were washed and vegetables, meat and fish rinsed. To the right of the sink were hooks from which hung colourful towels and dreary dishcloths. Against the wall to the right, closest to the exit door, stood a large white fridge proudly proclaiming itself to be a "Genuine" Frigidaire. Against the rest of that wall, was a dresser covered by the same green Formica. Below this dresser was a series of drawers containing cutlery, corkscrews, tin-openers, graters and other gadgets. Beneath the drawers was a line of cupboards which housed pots, pans and other utensils. Above the dresser were more cupboards which contained crockery and glassware. The drawers and cupboards were of wood, painted white. The cupboards above the dresser had doors of framed glass. The doors below had no panes. The floor of the kitchen was tiled with large squares of alternating black and white rubbery material.

The "Girl's" Room

Thula thu, thula baba thula sana

Thul' ubab'uzofika ekuseni

Thula thu, thula mntwana, thula sana

Thul'ubab'uzifika ekuseni

One of Jack's earliest memories was of a song drifting in from the back garden, through the open window and into the room where he was playing with his Tinkertoy construction set.

The source of the sounds was a plump, ever-smiling, Zulu woman named Francina. But in Jack's consciousness, she was not a Zulu, she was a "native". She was not even a woman, although she was about thirty years of age. She was a "girl". In fact she was hardly a person. She was just someone who worked around the house.

Francina was doing the washing. No, not *the* washing: *her* washing. A thick mousse of white foam spilled over the sides of a large, oval, zinc tub. She was kneading and splashing her clothes in the greying water. The tub was placed on the paving stones that lay between the back *stoep,* and the lawn which was perforated by peach, pear and plum trees. To do the kneading and the splashing, Francina had to bend her upper body forwards, at a right angle to her legs. When she straightened up, she clutched her flanks with her soapy fingers. *The* washing was done in the rather new Hotpoint washing machine proudly brought home and installed by Jack's dad only a few months previously. It was, after all, 1946 and everybody had a washing machine.

Jack left his wooden construction half-finished on the floor and went out into the back yard. Francina looked up, wiped her forehead, leaving frog's eggs of suds on her brow. They produced miniature rainbows in the sharp afternoon sunlight. She smiled her broad, friendly, welcoming smile. Her startlingly white teeth gleamed like the soapsuds. Her eyes were as radiant as the Highveld sun.

"Hello Little *Baas*. Are you hungry?"

"No thanks. What was that you were singing?" Francina's smile changed minutely from beaming to somewhat startled. She looked down at the zinc tub.

"It's a song I used to sing for my children when they couldn't fall asleep."

Jack had known Francina as long as he could remember. She had always been there. In fact, he had probably spent more time in her company than he had with his parents, well, certainly more than with his dad. She had fed him and bathed him when his mother was occupied with things like doing the family shopping, visiting friends or her weekly trip to the hairdresser. She had rocked him to sleep when her normal daily duties had been extended to babysitting in the evenings. She had comforted him when he skinned his knee after falling from his bike. But he had never really spoken to her. His only communication with her was in the form of requests, instructions or polite "Thank yous".

One day, after he had tumbled from the swing his dad had rigged up on the biggest plum tree, she picked him up, dried his tears and said, "Come, I'll make you a sandwich".

She poured him a big glass of cold, creamy milk, cut two thick slices of white bread and smeared them with butter. She covered the one slice with generous slivers of orange Cheddar cheese, placed the one slice upon the other and cut the square construction into two so that they formed two equal triangles. She put them on a plate and placed it on the table.

"Do you want a tomato as well?"

"No thanks."

She studied his sad face while he munched his sandwich, deep in thought. He had a narrow moustache of milk and crumbs at the left angle of his mouth. There were snail trails left by tears beneath his eyes. Her heart clenched both for him and the ones she had left behind. She stood with her behind pressed against the dresser to Jack's right. She never sat in "their" presence, certainly not on their chairs, at least not if they were likely to catch her in this misdemeanour.

"I have a present for you," she says.

He brightens, "What is it?"

"Finish your food and I'll show you".

He bolts down the rest of the sandwich in huge bites and hurried gobbles. He helps the process along with gulps of milk. He pushes back the chair. He takes hold of her hand. They leave by the kitchen door, onto the highly polished and recently swept *stoep* of red concrete, descend the three steps and cross the yard to her room.

The room is the back one quarter of the low building which houses the family's garage. The other quarter is the laundry where the newly acquired Hotpoint resides. This room also contains the old-fashioned accoutrements of this activity. There are taps overhanging a large, light brown concrete basin, the proximal wall of which is built at a forty-five degree angle. This wall has shallow, horizontal, parallel rills to provide friction for hand-washing clothes. There are shelves of Persil washing powder, bright blue boxes of Reckitt's Blue, bars of yellow, red and green soap, labelled respectively, Sunlight, Lifebuoy and Palmolive. There is an electric iron and a collapsible ironing board.

Actually, the laundry is slightly less than a quarter of this building because between the laundry and "the girl's room", is Francina's toilet.

He enters her room. He has never been here before. His mother has told him not to go there.

First he is struck by the darkness. There is only one small window. Then by its smallness; there is just room for a bed, a rickety looking wooden chair, a small "cupboard" which is really three wooden boxes piled upon each other and screened by what seems like an old dishcloth, which has been affixed with three drawing pins. On another box, turned upside down, stands a simple candlestick, like the one in the illustration of Wee Willie Winkie. It holds the stub of a candle. Next to it, is a purple box of Lion matches with red lettering and the eponymous red lion resplendent on a yellow label. On the edge of this box, closest to the bed, is a school exercise book and a yellow HB pencil with a well-used pink rubber on the unsharpened end held in place by a band of brass. The bed is neatly made with a pillow in a clean white slip and a dark brown woollen blanket. The white sheet is neatly folded over the blanket to make a cuff of about six inches. At the foot of the bed is folded a colourful quilt.

Under the bed is a large, battered metal trunk. Jack notices that the bed is raised by a pile of three bricks stacked under each leg. The floor is bare concrete.

The other thing Jack notices, is the foreign smell. It is not a bad smell, just strange. Some of the nuances he recognizes from when he has hugged Francina; wood smoke, candle wax, a soapy odour - a soap very different from that used by his mother. But there is something else. The ghost of last night's candle? The residues of the spray she uses against flies and mosquitoes? The shavings of a newly sharpened pencil? He cannot place it. It is his first awareness of female sweat but he does not recognize it as such.

Francina draws away the drape of her cupboard. He glimpses jars, mugs, bottles, strings of beads. She scrabbles around and produces a feather. She hands it to him, her face an image of joyous pride. The feather is pitch black, slender, and as long as his forearm. He turns to the light of the doorway to study it more closely. It shines and glistens in the sunlight. The stark black flashes purple, then green. It is a thing of utter beauty.

"It's a feather from a sakabula," she explains.

Francina, Tony, Jack - 1946

Kensington Hebrew Congregation

Jack spent his mornings at nursery school. At five, he was now one of the big boys. He never peed in his pants and could wipe his own bottom but he occasionally still picked his nose.

The nursery school was housed in the grounds of the Kensington Hebrew Congregation. This consisted of a large hall built of yellow brick and roofed, inevitably, with corrugated iron, painted black. The hall functioned as the community's synagogue which they knew as the *shul.* To one side of the hall, under the same roof, was a row of offices and classrooms. The offices housed the rabbi and the *hazan*. A larger office was set aside for the *shul* committee.

The Hall of Kensington Hebrew Congregation. (Photographed in 1985)

The hall itself could be divided along its length into two thirds and one third by a long, concertina-like, wooden partition. On weekdays, the one-third section housed the nursery school for children of three to five years of age, while the two-thirds section was used for the community's morning *shacharit* prayers. On the sabbath and at festivals, when the attendance was much bigger, the partition was folded away.

Each nursery school child had a personal peg for his or her coat or jacket. As they could not yet

read, each peg was labelled with a small painted orange, strawberry, pineapple, cat, duck, dog, parrot and so on. Jack was an apple. It was plump, red and obviously juicy and had a bright green leaf. He was very proud of it. The twelve or so children, mostly boys but also a few girls, spent the day reciting nursery rhymes, singing songs in English and Hebrew, learning some of the traditions and rituals of Judaism, drawing, painting and playing with building blocks, marbles and picture cards.

Jack hated singing because he soon discovered that while the others produced melodious sounds, he croaked. He ended up silently mouthing the words to avoid the sidelong glances of the others that reflected disapproval or, even worse, derision. He also discovered, though, that he had a good memory and could remember the words of the rhymes and songs much better than his peers. His favourite song was one in Hebrew, about a little rabbit that caught a cold because he forgot to close the door. The activity Jack enjoyed most was potato drawing. Potatoes were cut in half across their narrowest diameters and each child was shown how to carve a pattern on the cut surface, dip the surface in paint and press the coloured surface onto sheets of white paper. Jack was delighted by the patterns of circles, triangles, stars, rhomboids and squiggles that emerged from his efforts. He always chose the paint pot called Royal Blue.

The children were looked after and taught by two young women who were known only as "Miss".

1945: Nursery School

Two "Misses", front and back

Alvin top right, picking his nose

Jack just in front of the right-hand "Miss' " left knee

Sometimes the two Misses would take the children on the short walk to the nearby park. It was called Rhodes Park after Cecil John Rhodes who had decided that the whole of southern and eastern Africa from the Cape to Cairo should belong to the great Queen Victoria. It was a vast expanse of lawns, asphalted paths and trees. At its centre was a large lake where little boys caught tadpoles in nets and put them into old jam jars. Bigger boys caught fish with rods. But most exciting of all were the swings, merry-go-rounds, jungle gyms, rope ladders and slides. They were painted red and green. They were an inexhaustible source of physical challenge and adventure.

Rhodes Park, Kensington. (Photographed in 1985

In addition to the *shul* hall and its appendices, there was a cluster of smaller out-buildings separated from the hall by a courtyard paved with asphalt. The courtyard could be reached form the street via a short driveway guarded by two wide, wooden gates. Although it was not allowed, one could climb to the top of one of the gates and be swung to and fro by an accomplice. The two would then reverse roles. This was considered very daring, so few risked the possible sanctions that might result. Jack enjoyed the naughty thrill of gate-swinging but was generally reluctant to take part in the even more illicit activities of some of the other boys like climbing the tall pine trees that lined the driveway or sneaking out to play on the adjacent vacant field.

The "swinging gates" and pine trees. (Photographed in 1985)

One of the out-buildings housed native servants, another was a storeroom. These were of no interest to Jack but a third room was a source of wonder and mystery. It was a small room. The walls and the floor were lined entirely by spotlessly clean, shiny, white tiles. In one corner, there was a tall cupboard. Towards the far wall was a drain in the floor covered by a grill. A tap, from which there hung a length of pink rubber hosepipe, protruded from the wall,. The first time Jack peeped surreptitiously into the room, he was startled by its stark, gleaming cleanliness. It looked like a big bathroom, but there was no basin, no bath tub, no shower, no toilet. But what struck him most was not the mystery of its purpose. It was the smell. He could not recognize it. It was unlike anything he had smelled before. It did not smell like their bathroom, of soap and shaving cream, of Ipana toothpaste and his dad's Calox tooth powder, of the mysterious potions in the medicine chest, of the residual steam of a recent bath. It was a strange combination of wet feathers, of badly aired toilet, of moist metal.

"What could it be?" He wondered.

A Chicken

Jack happened to be in the yard of the nursery school, when the shul's *hazan,* Rev. Levy, came walking through the "swinging" gates and up the tarred drive. He entered the room of tiled mystery. Jack's pulse quickened. He made himself as small as possible and peeped through the gap between the hinged part of the partially open door and the wall. The cantor was dressed in the obligatory black suit and white shirt. Although the shirt was buttoned up to the collar, he wore no tie. He took off his jacket and hung it on a peg. He took off his shoes. He opened the cupboard and took out a pair of white gumboots which he pulled on with much *kvetching*. He reached into the cupboard once again and took out a long white coat which he put on and painstakingly buttoned every one of the eight buttons. Finally, he removed his black hat and hung it next to his jacket. His head was now covered only by his shiny black *yarmulke*.

A native now approached the door and said to Jack, "Hello Little *Baas*".

Jack pivoted around and saw the black face smiling at him. He would now never see what secrets the room held. The native opened the door widely and entered the room.

The cantor said, "Good morning Solomon."

"Good morning *Umfundisi* " Solomon replied.

"Who's your little friend?"

"I don't know him, *Umfundisi*."

"Who are you, *Pitzinke* ?"

"Jjjjjack," he stammered.

"Jack? What kind of name is that? Oh, perhaps you mean *Yaakov,* our forefather?" Said the *hazan,* pronouncing the name the Hebrew way.

"Yyes."

"What are you doing here?"

"I want to see what this room is used for."

"You are very nosy."

Jack smiled.

"How old are you?"

"Four". "But I'm nearly five," he hastened to add.

"Do you have a strong stomach?

"I, I don't know what that means."

"Are you scared of blood?"

"No, I didn't even cry when I cut my thumb. It bled a lot and I needed six stitches. Look, see here!"

He ran to Rev. Levy and showed him the long scar on the inside of his right thumb.

'*Oy vay!* That must have hurt. You sure you didn't cry?"

"No, on my Holy Jewish Torah."

"OK, OK, no oaths. You sound like a strong *boykl."*

Solomon chuckled.

"You can stay and watch as long as you don't get in the way or disturb us. If you don't feel good, just go outside."

"Yes, yes. Thank you, thank you."

A few minutes later, an elderly lady came into the room carrying a chicken by its legs. The chicken looked bewildered seeing the world upside down. It squawked inquiringly. A conversation in Yiddish ensued between the woman and the cantor but Jack could follow the gist.

"Good morning Reverend."

"Good morning Mrs. Levin. How's the family?"

"Can't complain. And yours?"

"Thank God. That's a nice fat one you have there."

Mrs. Levin handed the chicken over to the cantor. The chicken protested with a more indignant squawk. Mrs Levin took a few steps back.

"Is this your new helper?" She asked without a smile.

"Yes, he's a strong boy and wants to learn."

Solomon handed the cantor a knife with a black handle and a short blade that reflected the white tiles. Rev. Levy transferred the chicken to his left hand and held its neck just below the head. He took the knife in his right. He mumbled a prayer in Hebrew. A single white feather fluttered languidly to the floor.

"Blessed are Thou, our Lord, our God, Sovereign of the universe, Who has commanded us regarding *shechitah*."

With a single swift stroke, the blade flashed across the chicken's neck. Blood spurted. The chicken became silent. It was handed to Solomon who placed it gently near the drain that Jack had noticed when he had first peeped into the room the week before. The chicken flapped its wings, thrashed about, more blood flowed but it squawked no more.

Rev. Levy looked at Jack who was still staring with wide-eyed fascination at the thrashing chicken.

"It's not in pain," he reassured. "Have you ever noticed the leaves on a tree after a train has rushed past? The train has long gone but the leaves are still waving to the train. The chicken's life is gone, but his wings and his legs still wave to thank The Creator. How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine, thank you," said Jack diffidently. He didn't understand the thing about the train though.

"Brave boy. A *gibor*, like Bar Kochba."

The chicken had now stopped moving and there was no more blood. Solomon picked up the flaccid bird, wrapped it up in newspaper and handed it to Mrs. Levin. Mrs Levin reached into her handbag. There was a clink of coins. Without a word or a smile, she dropped them into Solomon's right palm. His left hand clutched his right forearm and he bowed slightly.

"Thank you, Madam."

"Thank you Reverend and a good *shabbes* to you and your family."

"The same to you and yours, Mrs Levin."

She put the paper-wrapped chicken into a basket and left. Solomon turned on the tap and flushed the blood down the drain. The smell of fresh blood would always take Jack back to this scene.

A Thumb

Another incident associated with blood also stuck in his memory. Some months earlier,when Jack was walking home from nursery school across an empty piece of ground which was still smoking slightly after a fire had burned it bare of grass. He saw something glinting amongst the blackened stubs. He bent down, picked it up, saw that it was only a shard of broken glass. In the second he registered this, he registered too that the shard was burning hot. He slung it away and instantly felt a searing pain in his thumb. He looked down at it and saw a line of blood welling up onto the skin. He remembered seeing grown-ups covering bleeding cuts with handkerchiefs, but he never carried one, so he pulled his shirt from his pants and held its hem around the thumb with his left hand. It hurt. He was on the verge of tears when he told himself that he was already four and no longer a baby. He hurried home. Luckily, his mother was not out.

He said, "Mommy! Mommy! I've cut my thumb."

She looked up from her magazine, saw the blood and shouted, "Oh my God what have you done!"

He saw Francina standing discreetly in the background covering her mouth with her right hand and clutching her apron with her left. Doreen gently uncovered the wound and said, "We have to go to the doctor. Give me a clean handkerchief, Francina, and get him a clean shirt."

Francina helped him change his shirt and caressed his back surreptitiously. Doreen wrapped Jack's thumb in the hanky. It was still bleeding. Jack looked at the thumb. It no longer hurt so much. It seemed like it belonged to someone else. They got into the car and drove a mile or two to their general practitioner, Dr Hurwitz. His nurse saw that the situation was urgent and called the doctor away from a consultation.

"Soak it hydrogen peroxide," he said and went back to his patient.

The nurse led them into a room and told Jack to sit down at a table in the centre of the room. She fetched a sparkling silver bowl. She filled it with liquid that looked like water but when he put his thumb into it, it started to foam like Eno's fruit salts, bottled lemonade or his dad's beer when poured too quickly into a glass. He was more concerned about the frothing than the sudden increase in pain

but he wanted to show he was brave and again pretended that the thumb was not his. His mother held his left hand firmly in hers and clucked words of support. She seemed more concerned than he.

The doctor came noisily into the room and said in a booming voice, "What have you been up to, young man?"

He had never been called that before and it felt good.

"I cut myself on a piece of glass in a field near the nursery school."

"Yes, one needs to be careful in empty fields. People dump all kinds of rubbish. Let me have a look."

"Ah, it's not so bad, but you will need a few stitches."

"Sarah," he said to the nurse, "5-0 silk and our finest needle."

The word needle gave Jack a jolt but he said nothing. He felt his mother grip his hand a little more tightly. He was glad she was there.

"A little local anaesthetic first though," the doctor said to Sarah.

Jack watched as Sarah took what looked like a glass tube, placed a long thin needle onto the end of the tube using a thing that looked like a tweezers. She then took a little bottle, the smallest he had ever seen. She wiped the top of it with cotton wool, pushed the needle through the top of the tiny bottle and somehow the glass tube filled with something that again looked like water. Dr Hurwitz, who now wore thin rubber gloves, took the tube filled with "water", with its attached needle, from Nurse Sarah.

He said, "Jack, you must now be brave. I'm going to give you a little prick. It will hurt a bit for a few seconds but then all the pain will go away. Are you ready?"

His mother squeezed his left hand even harder. Sarah took hold of his right wrist, lifted his hand from the frothy bowl and put it on a clean cloth that she had spread on the table. She kept a tight grip on his wrist. The thumb was now clean. Jack could now see that there was a deep cut that ran almost the whole way from the bottom to the top of the inside of the thumb. His mother looked away but Jack was fascinated by what looked like a smiling, toothless mouth with narrow red lips.

The shiny thin needle approached his thumb. It bit into his flesh. The doctor's thumb pushed down on the glass tube. Nurse Sarah's grip tightened. Fire consumed Jack's thumb. It was the worst agony he had experienced either on this day of pain or ever in his life before. He wanted to scream but instead clenched his mother's hand. She clenched back. He wished Francina was here. He then used his trick. It wasn't his thumb at all. He was just watching all this happening to someone else. Suddenly the pain was gone.

"Can you feel that, Jack?" asked Dr Hurwitz, pricking the tip of the injured thumb with the needle.

"No," answered Jack.

He felt no pain because it was not his thumb. He gazed at the narrow red smile. Jack now watched the doctor take a long, thin, shiny thing that looked like a small pliers. He loaded into the mouth of the pliers, a slightly curved needle. It too was shiny. Everything here was bright and shiny, and sharp. There was a whole tray of such things at the doctor's elbow. From the eye of the needle hung a length of fine black thread. He remembered that the doctor had asked Sarah for silk. He thought silk was white.

The doctor held the pliers in his right hand. He picked up a tweezers in his left. With this, he lifted the one lip of the the smiling wound, passed the needle through the skin from the outside to the inside. He then picked up the other lip and passed the needle through that from the inside to the outside. He then pulled the silk through. Jack watched in fascination. Everything happened in slow motion. Every detail became fixed in his memory. The doctor laid the tweezers down and took the needle off the silk thread. He held one end of the thread between the thumb and first finger of his
left hand. The other end of the thread was similarly placed in his right hand. What happened next was really magical. In a flash of movement too rapid to register, the doctor twirled the fingers of his right hand so that the thread was no longer an open arc, it was a circle. The ends had been joined by a twist, one end of the thread intertwined with the other. He now pulled the two ends away from each other. The intertwined curl got slowly closer and closer to the lips of the wound. When the curl got there, the doctor gave a final pull and the two edges of the wound came together. The doctor now repeated

the magical twirling of his fingers, made a new curl in the silk and guided that one down to nestle securely atop the previous one. He repeated the procedure a third time. He then held the two ends of the thread vertically upwards, away from where he had united the curls into a knot. He took a scissors in his right hand and cut the threads a short distance from the knot. It looked like a small neat bow-tie. A short distance from the first knot, the doctor repeated his trick and suddenly there were two knots. This one looked like a small ant. He repeated the procedure six times. Each time the grinning mouth became smaller and suddenly it was closed. Forever. Three bow ties and three ants.

"OK. That's that. You were a very good patient Jack, very brave. You didn't make a peep. Dressing please, Sarah."

"How did you make those little bows so fast? It was like magic!"

The doctor laughed. "Years of practice. They're called stitches or sutures."

"Will they be there always?"

He laughed again, a short friendly laugh. "No, no. You come back in a week and I'll take them out."

"Won't it open again?"

"No. It will heal securely. But you will always have a scar."

Royal Visit

In 1947, the year after Jack had watched the slaughter of the chicken and had cut his thumb, he witnessed the spectacular visit of the British Royal Family to their subjects in the Union of South Africa. The whole family graced the country with their presence; King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the two young Princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret. The white, English-speaking section of the population was agog with anticipation. What an honour had been bestowed upon them! Union Jacks proliferated like fruit flies. The Afrikaners were aghast at the effrontery of having to tolerate the heirs of Victoria who had stolen their independence. The natives were yawningly indifferent. The Jews, always respectful of monarchs, looked forward to displaying their loyalty.

Jack's nursery school was a hubbub of activity. The children had to be instructed about the importance of the occasion, Union Jacks and South African flags had to be acquired, logistics had to be arranged. On the long-anticipated day, the children, attired in their finery and armed with paper flags, were led by the two Misses, hand in hand, two by two, the half mile or so to Langerman Drive, Kensington's main road where the royal motorcade was to pass. The avenue was lined with hordes of people, all white. At some points they were four or five deep. Police and wardens supervised. When Jack's covey of twelve arrived, the wardens made place for them in the front row. The children fluttered their flags in blissful anticipation.

After endless waiting, a vanguard of mounted police approached. Some giggled as one of the horses expressed from his rear end, his opinion of the proceedings. Just behind the horses, came a capacious black limousine. The crowd cheered wildly. The car had two enormous headlights, the size of small suns and two lesser ones the size of moons. It had a grille of burnished chrome. Pennants shivered on the apices of both mudguards. Behind a liveried chauffeur, sat His Imperial Majesty George VI, resplendent in a white uniform, presumably of naval origin. His chest was bedecked with service ribbons and golden braid. Queen Elizabeth wore an enormous hat that looked like a giant's wedding cake. The Princesses had less spectacular headgear. The upper arms of all four were raised at an angle of forty-five degrees to the shoulder, elbows at right-angles to their forearms. They showed

their gloved palms to the crowd and made slight waving motions with their fingers held closely together. They displayed bored politeness but no great enthusiasm.

In a flash of an eye, they were gone but the furious fluttering of flags and howls of excited enthusiasm persisted for some minutes. Jack thought of the flapping chicken in the blood bespattered, tiled room. Now he understood Rev. Levy's analogy of the train and the leaves.

Jack was deeply impressed by this fleeting glimpse the Royal Family. He felt they were *his* King and Queen. When he got home, he chatted excitedly about the day's experience with Alvin who had also viewed the procession with his school class.

"I am so proud to be English and to have such a fine King and Queen," he said.

"You're not English, you're Jewish," said Alvin.

This information doused Jack's excitement like icy water. "Do we have a King and Queen?"

"Only in the *Tanach*. The most famous one was King David. He had lots of queens."

Nevertheless, a seed of Anglophilia had been planted in Jack's breast.

Jack in 1947

Joubert Park

The same year, Bobba Naomi visited from Cape Town.

Even though she was the only grandparent Jack ever met, his bond with her was not close. This was because he had met her only on a few brief occasions and moreover, she spoke very little English. She had arrived in the Cape as an adult from Salantai in Lithuania, speaking only Yiddish. Her Afrikaans was better than her English.

Bobba Naomi 1947

One morning, Bobba said, "We're going on a little trip. Get your jersey".

They walked up Protea Street to Langerman Drive where they boarded a cream and red F1 tram that went to central Johannesburg, a trip of about five miles. The conductor came by, uniformed in dark grey, brass buttons and matching cap with his apparatus containing cylinders of half crowns, florins, shillings, sixpences, tickeys, pennies and ha'pennies and his array of differently coloured tickets. Naomi bought a red one and yellow one but said not a word. The conductor continued along the aisle ringing his merry little bell and repeating softly. "Tickets please."

Naomi stared ahead, knees together, her hands resting on the capacious handbag in her lap. Jack

sat slumped, one foot upon his seat, his sock collapsed around his shoe. He stared out of the window.

"Where are we going?"

"To Joubert Park – for a picnic".

They got off the tram in Eloff Street, the big city's major thoroughfare. Bobba took his hand and they walked for a while along the busy pavement.

White people bustled in shops, enjoyed coffee and pastries in cafés, ate in restaurants, chatted gaily as the walked, sped by in cars.

Natives swept the gutters, polished windows, pedalled bicycles with baskets laden with wares, sat on the edges of the pavements drinking milk from pint bottles and eating hunks of white bread ripped from whole loaves. They talked in whispers. They inhabited a separate world.

She stopped to ask someone for directions. He pointed. They reached a crowded bus stop. They climbed onto a bus. The ticket procedure was repeated. They exchanged not a word. Her entire focus was on finding her way in the strange city. They got off the bus in a part of the city he did not recognize. They crossed the road and entered a park. They sat on a hard wooden bench painted brown. It was labelled with an instruction in both English and Afrikaans, in white block capitals; **EUROPEANS ONLY. NET BLANKES.**

They sat in silence. She stared into the distance, he at the tip of his shoe, each lost in their own thoughts, unable to bridge the gap between them.

After a long while she asked, "Are you hungry?"

"No, thank you, Bobba."

"You must eat! I'll buy something!"

She went back across the road and he then lost sight of her. He now looked up for the first time and studied his surroundings. He saw green lawns divided by tarmac paths and shaded by leafy trees. There was the smell of recently mown grass. There were fountains, statues, beds of flowers and myriads of cavorting children. The children were all white. The only natives were nannies in white or pink or light blue uniforms, with matching *doeks* pushing white babies in prams, and "boys" in

dark blue overalls tending the beds and mowing the lawns.

Bobba seems to have been gone for a long time. Jack stands, seeking in every direction. He feels alone, lost, abandoned. He is close to panic. He begins to cry.

One of the nannies comes up to him and asks, "Why are you crying, little *Baas*?"

He looks up into a smiling black face, not unlike Francina's. She smells of soap and Francina's mysterious odour. She comforts him.

Bobba suddenly appears. She dismisses the nanny with a curt gesture. She is carrying a half-pint bottle of milk and a small package wrapped in brown paper.

She hands them to him. "'Try it. It's good!" she says.

He unwraps the paper. A sandwich greets him with a nauseating smell of smoked fish. He had briefly noticed the same smell on her breath when she had handed him the food. He tries to take a bite but can't.

She looks at him. "Sorry. I forgot you don't like fish. But drink your milk".

He takes a small bite, gags and then forces the bolus down with copious swigs of milk. He manages a few more bites by following the same procedure and then says sweetly, "Thank you Bobba. I'm full."

She takes the remains of the sandwich and the empty bottle, rises from the bench and drops them in a dustbin - together with her hopes for bonding with her grandson.

They leave the park and make the wordless journey back to Protea Street.

Bobba left the next day, to return to Cape Town. Jack would never see her again. She died the following year.

Big School

At the beginning of 1948, having just turned six, Jack started "big" school. It was called Kensington South Primary School after its geographical position on the south-eastern corner of Johannesburg. He was especially proud of his new black blazer with the school badge on the front pocket. He wore a crisp white shirt and a tie striped black, gold and silver. His dad had taught him how to tie the knot. He wore grey flannel shorts, long black socks to just below his knees and shiny black leather shoes. On his head, he wore a black cap with the school badge above the narrow brim. He also had a brand new brown leather school-bag which had three compartments. The main part of the bag was divided into two by a leather partition. The flap which closed the bag, had two leather straps which could be fastened with two silver buckles. On the outside of the flap, between the two buckles, was the third compartment into which his sandwich tin fitted precisely. The tin was green with a picture of a roaring lion on the lid. In the middle of the flap, on the sandwich tin pocket, there was a transfer which his mother had affixed. It read JH in gold letters. It was a proud day for him. His dad had even delayed setting off for work to shake his hand and wish him well.

"I'm so proud of you, Boykie!" he said, beaming.

His mother kissed him and hugged him with tears in her eyes. Two-year-old Tony, the family's new addition, gurgled from his pram. Alvin, attired in an identical uniform, stood nearby, impatient to set off. Alvin was starting his third class, Standard I, so his school-bag bulged like a well-fed puppy compared with Jack's which was flaccid, because he was only starting Grade I.

Francina, as always discrete and trying to fade into the background, could hardly hide her pride. Jack felt that she deserved to be included in the joyful ceremony, so he walked up to her and said, "Thank you for the sandwiches, Francina" and surreptitiously brushed her forearm. Her eyes too, sparkled with tears.

Holding Alvin's hand, he walked the two blocks from the house in Protea Street to his first school day. Jack was a little nervous because he was starting school alone. None of the children from nursery

school were joining him at this school. He was comforted by the firm grasp of his big brother's hand.

He would spend the next twenty-five years studying.

1948: Jack at "Big" School

The school building was built in four sections. Three of the sections surrounded a large tarred quadrangle. An appendix extending from the eastern wing of the building, housed the two classrooms for the youngest pupils, Grade I and Grade II. The western wing contained the next two classes, Standards I and II. In the northern wing were Standards III and IV. The eastern wing was the home of Standard V, the school hall, the principal's office and the staff room. The open end of the quadrangle faced a low hill, the face of which was covered by rockeries. On top of the hill, accessible by stairs, was a bicycle shed. To either side of the shed were the toilets, girls' to the right and boys' to the left. Beyond the east wing was the boys' playground and beyond the west wing, the girls'. On the tarred surface of the quadrangle, huge maps were painted for geography classes.

Kensington South Primary School, west wing. (Photographed in 1985)

On the left-hand pole that supported the roof of the bicycle shed, was a large metal ring that functioned as the school bell. One of the senior boys was selected each year to receive the honour of being the Bell-Ringer. Just before eight o'clock each morning, he would hurry importantly up the stairs to the metal ring on the pole of the bicycle shed and stand staring at his wrist watch which had minutes previously been synchronised with the principal's. When the second hand reached the top of its orbit, he would strike the metal ring soundly with a short metal rod. *Ding-ding-ding-ding-ding-ding-ding* would echo cross the quadrangle and the playing fields. Little boys and little girls scurried off to their classrooms. The process was repeated at precisely 10:10 am. The chimes now signalled the tea break. Cheering small boys and more docile small girls would rush out to the playgrounds, bearing respectively their bags of marbles and skipping ropes. Hungry small boys, lacking foresight and discipline would guzzle all their sandwiches. At 10:30 the Bell-Ringer would summon them back to their lessons, the little boys with sweaty faces, scraped knees, snotty noses and uniforms dishevelled or soiled with smears of brown and green. The little girls had remained immaculate. The Bell-Ringer's ringing reverberated again at 12:00 and 12:30 to announce the beginning and the end of the lunch break. Those who had devoured all their sandwiches two hours earlier, now salivated hungrily and suffered the rumblings of their tummies, as those who had planned more wisely, enjoyed

their lunches. At 2:30, the day's final peals would ring out followed immediately by the ecstatic screams of the little boys.

On occasion, the Bell-Ringer would, by mistake, strike the metal ring at an imprecise angle. The stately *ding* would emerge instead as a crippled *boing* and giggles and hoots would echo around the school. Once, a Bell-Ringer had been tempted to venture a step further into the realms of campanology. He decided to pep up the dour, regular knell by adding a melodious terminal crescendo. He was ignominiously relieved of his post.

Jack started in Grade I. His teacher was a kind, grey-haired, old lady called Mrs Hazelhurst. He learned the names of the letters of the alphabet and the numbers. Most of this he already knew from nursery school. Soon the pupils began learning to read, reciting the words written in big chalk letters on the blackboard.

"BAT CAT HAT MAT, POT ROT COT LOT." they chanted in unison like a monk's mantra. And they recited their "sums", "1+1 is 2, 2+2 are 4".

They learned to write the numbers, letters and short words with chalk on their own little black slates edged with wood. They did colouring-in and paper-cuts and had exciting stories read to them.

Jack's school-bag remained empty except for his sandwich tin.

In Grade II things progressed rapidly. The pupils had to write whole sentences with pencil on paper and the sums were now so complicated that they were called arithmetic. Jack's school-bag started swelling proudly with a pencil box and two exercise books. The pencil box contained two lead pencils that wrote in black. They had pink rubbers. Three other pencils wrote red, blue and green but they were never used. The box also contained a little pencil sharpener which was not very effective. The pencil points broke in the sharpener as soon as they reached their maximum sharpness so the procedure had to be restarted again and again, leaving a high pile of graphite powder and spiralling shavings that emitted a pleasant odour like one of David's cigar boxes. One exercise book was labelled ARITHMETIC and the other WRITING. Jack placed the exercise books in one compartment of his bag and the pencil box in the other. He did not understand why they were called exercise books. He

thought exercise meant jumping up and down. His exercise books were covered with brown paper to keep them clean. His mother had written his name on the covers. The exercise books were collected by the teacher after each lesson. She would mark them with red crayon. If your work was very good, you would get 10/10. If you made lots of mistakes you would get1/10. No one ever got 0/10.

But school was not only lessons. There was ample time for fun, games, sports and conflicts. Jack brought some of his Dinky toys to school in the compartment with the pencil box. He had quite a collection; a green Bedford truck, a white ambulance with a red cross, a grey Rover, a silver Rolls, a convertible MG, Studebakers, Chevrolets, Fords and Chryslers. They all had removable tyres which often got lost. He and the other little boys would play with them on one of the sloping banks that lead up to the bicycle shed. It was paved with large, smooth, grey rocks which were fields, lakes and mountains. The concreted gaps between the rocks provided excellent roads.

Cheder

Parallel with Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Dinky toys, Jack also attended *cheder*. Every afternoon, from Monday to Thursday, Jack would walk from school to the same building where he had been at nursery school for three years. The primary aim of *cheder* was to teach little boys enough of the Hebrew language for them to be able to cope with their *bar mitzvahs* which required them to read, in Hebrew, a portion of the Torah at the Saturday morning sabbath service in the *shul*. They also received desultory instruction in the Jewish religion.

Kensington *cheder.* (Photographed in 1985)

His teacher for the first year was Mrs Ben Ari, a diminutive woman of Slavic appearance, who wore a black headscarf, a long black skirt and a hand-knitted cardigan of multicoloured stripes. She had been imported from Israel to teach Hebrew. Her husband's family name had no doubt been Loewensohn and this had been hebraicized to Ben Ari according to the trend in Israel where diaspora names were considered demeaning. She seemed always to be smiling. She taught them Hebrew songs with the trill of a blackbird welcoming the dawn. Years later, Jack could still envision Mrs Ben Ari pointing to the little straw basket that held the chalk and pronouncing "*sull"*, which they all would repeat. Then she pointed to a little brass bell with a short wooden handle that stood next to the *sull* and said *"pa'amon".*

She taught them a song called *Eliyahu ha' Navi,* (Elijah the Prophet). It had very few words and a

lilting melody which was so simple that even Jack could easily hum it. The words invoked Elijah, from Tishbe in Gilead, to bring them the Messiah. Mrs Ben Ari told the class, that whenever they were sad or in trouble or had a fervent wish for something important, they should sing the song silently to themselves and The Prophet would make them feel better and their wish would be granted. Jack remembered her words and the words of Elijah's song and they gave him comfort. Her smile and her avian exuberance, made her beloved of her pupils who hung raptly on her every word.

The next year, she was replaced by Mr Shimoni. He was a tall, ugly man with sparse, long, greying, unkempt, greasy hair and no chin. The absence of the latter was amply compensated for, by his enormous nose. His brown, double-breasted suit was shiny from frequent ironing. Its shoulders had been cut for a heftier man and its sleeves for one of shorter reach. His white shirt was frayed at collar and cuff. His red tie had faded to a sadder hue. Like many Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, he was probably a highly educated academic whose qualifications had not been recognized in South Africa. Need had relegated him to the humiliating task of teaching Hebrew to a band of rebellious boys who would rather be out playing football than be plagued by an incomprehensible language, written in undecipherable script. Teaching was not Mr Shimoni's profession nor had he any interest or aptitude for this task. As a consequence, he was a poor teacher and could neither hold the boys' attention nor excite their interest. Boys are expert at perceiving weakness and attacking it, like baying hounds. His ineptitude provoked their mockery. Their mockery increased his ineptitude. The class was a riot of hoots, whistles and slamming desk lids opposed by pleas, shouts and threats. As a result, most of the lessons were wasted, as the poor, red-faced, sweating, lugubrious man struggled to keep his temper controlled and his tears of frustration and humiliation at bay. He screamed for order. His exhortations were not enhanced by his atrocious East European accent which the boys would ape with cruel glee.

"Plizz pay attention!" would be echoed by "Plizz, plizz, plizz" and giggles.

"Behayff yourrrself!" reverberated as "Behayff, behyaff, behayff" and snorts of laughter.

"I vill giff you a schmack!" evoked a chorus of "Schmack, schmack, schmack" and guffaws.

One of the most ill-mannered of the boys, once mumbled, "Can I fuck your daughter?"

"Woss?" asked the hapless Mr Shimoni.

"Can I have a drink of water?"

Gales of ruthless laughter.

Jack stared silently down at his desk during these exchanges, both because he felt they were cruel and because he thought it strange to make fun of the man's accent when most of their parents spoke English in the same way.

Jack enjoyed studying Hebrew. He found it a complex but extremely logical language. Once he had sorted out the pattern, the intricacies became simple, except of course, for the frequent exceptions to the rules.

Sixpence Change

Shops lined Queen Street and Langerman Drive, Kensington's main thoroughfares.

Jack associated each of the shops with a specific smell. The butcher's was of garlic salami, known to him as polony, mutton fat and the damp sawdust on its floor. The baker's smell was of fresh bread and cinnamon buns. The drapers had a dusty scent of cotton fabrics and skeins of wool. The dairy gave off an aroma of fresh cream and Cheddar cheese. At the grocer, open hessian sacks of flour, rice, sugar and coffee beans emitted their odours. The shop that sold beer, wine and spirits was called the bottle store. It had a separate entrance for non-whites and did not allow children to enter. The heady smell of its products pervaded out onto the street. The barber shop smelled of singed hair, hair oil and bay rum. From the ladies' hairdresser, escaped warm, ammoniacal gusts from hair-dryers that looked like space helmets. The space helmets enclosed heads comically encircled by an array of coloured curlers. The pharmacy, which was known as "the chemist", exuded eau de cologne and menthol.

Jack's favourite shop was the "Greek" café which produced scents of vanilla and liquorice. The name "café" was a misnomer. Although one could, in fact, buy a cup of coffee there, this commodity was very seldom sold. The main trade was in ice-cream, chocolates, milkshakes, fizzy drinks, known locally as "colddrinks", sweets, potato crisps, pop corn, sticky raisin buns, sandwiches, hot dogs, cigarettes and tobacco. In the background, the ringing and clanging of pin ball machines was heard. Accompanying this, the whirl of a magical machine converted a dollop of white ice cream, a splash or two of milk and a violently coloured essence, into a delicious, frothy milkshake.

The name "Greek" was often a misnomer too. The establishments were called "Greek" cafés because many of them were run by Greeks, just as many of the fruit and vegetable shops were run by Portuguese.

Another favourite of Jack's, was the Jubilee Fish and Chip Shop. It was the one that was the most redolent of all. The reek of deep-frying oil pervaded the air a half a block away. It clogged one's nostrils and clung to one's clothes and hair. For a sixpence, one could buy a good portion of freshly made chips, which were doused in salt and vinegar and expertly served in a trumpet of newspaper.

They were soon consumed but the delicious residue of salt and oil could be licked off the fingers long afterwards. If one had a shilling to spend, a lump of battered fish could be added. If one was was low on funds, one could ask the friendly shopkeeper for "A penny's fish crumbs, please." He would then trawl the bottom of the massive frying utensil with a large perforated spoon and place a spoonful of the oily detritus of the day's frying into a newspaper trumpet. He would ask generously, "Salt and vinegar?", even though one was only paying a penny. The resulting crunchy, salty, vinegary, oily nuggets assuaged one's hunger until supper time.

A dreary post-office, with separate entrances for Europeans and Non-Europeans smelled like a schoolroom, of dust and ink. There were shops Jack had never entered so they had no smell at all; a Barclay's Bank, a Standard Bank, two building societies, a shop called Ladies' Fashions and another with signs that read Gentlemen's Outfitters. Occasionally, in the latter two, the dummies displaying the latest wares behind large glass windows would be unclothed. Jack giggled at their pink nakedness.

At the western limit of the row of shops on Langerman Drive, was The Regent, the cultural hub of the suburb. It was a square building, with an art deco facade that housed the local cinema, known colloquially as the *bioscope.* It had showings every day, except Sunday when it was closed in accordance with the beliefs of the Dutch Reformed church. The evening performances were largely for adults but on Wednesdays and Saturdays, there were afternoon performances, grandly called matinées. Here the *bioscope* would be packed with children who queued for tickets at the ornate, grilled box-office. If one was under twelve, a ticket cost sixpence. Older children paid a shilling and a penny. The time before the performance and during the interval was almost as exciting as the performance itself. Scores of little boys had brought along their comic books to swap; Roy Rogers for Lone Ranger, Superman for Captain Marvel, Beano for Dandy. The little boys would then rush into the *bioscope* to occupy the front rows. Older boys and girls gravitated the the back rows, where, in the dark, they engaged in innocent fumblings. The showing was divided into two parts. The first hour or so, advertisements were shown followed by a documentary, a Tom and Jerry, Mickey Mouse or Popeye cartoon and a short newsreel called "African Mirror" which showed the news of the week.

Its introduction featured a Zulu warrior in full regalia beating a drum. Little boys would stamp the floor furiously in time with the drumbeats. Then there was a twenty minute break when an extra sixpence could buy a bag of sweets or a slab of chocolate and an ice cream or a cold drink. More advertisements followed and then, at last, came the "big picture", most often a Western, known locally as Cowboys and Crooks, a British comedy or a film starring Butch Jenkins or Lassie. Little boys would boo disgustedly during any love scenes or shout warnings to heroes at times of danger. If one had more money to spend, one could buy further supplies from the uniformed vendors who plied the aisles with large trays of goodies. After *The End* came up on the screen, a picture of a uniformed, bemedalled King George the Sixth, standing solemnly in front of a waving Union Jack, would appear to the sounds of *God Save the King*. Hordes of little boys would then stampede out, leaving their jetsam behind them.

One day, as Jack is leaving, he realises he still has a coin left in his pocket. He takes it out. He feels its weight in his palm. He looks up. He sees the ice cream 'boy' is still there on the roadside. He is black. He wears a short white jacket. He is sitting on his cycle ringing his little bell. The back part is a normal bike. The front has two wheels. Mounted on these wheels, is a big box. I approach.

He says, 'Hello little *Baas*.'

Jack say nothing. He raises the lid of the box. A cloud, like steam, rises from the dry ice. It tickles my nostrils.

'Which one do you want, little *Baas*?'

'An Eskimo Pie.'

He hands it to Jack. Jack gives him the coin and walks away, ripping off the cold wrapping. He licks the chocolate coating. It tastes of nothing because it is still frozen. Jack hears him calling.

'*Baas*!'

Jack turns. He is holding out his hand, smiling. Jack looks at him, puzzled.

'Your change, little *Baas*. You gave me a shilling.'

He hands Jack a sixpence.

Jack says, 'Thank you,' and walks away.

Jack recognises that something significant has happened but cannot quite construe it.

Then he understands.

He goes back to the ice cream boy. He smiles and gives him a Superman comic.

Langerman Drive. (Photographed in 1985)

Jubilee Fish and Chips, Queen Street. (Photographed in 1985)

Margate

1949. "Your dad's building a new house for us to live in," announces Jack's mother.

"A new house? Where? What's wrong with this one? Will I have to go to a new school?"

"Slowly! Slowly! Just listen. Daddy wanted a bigger house with a bigger garden. He found a plot of ground not far from here and started building a house there many months ago but it won't be ready for a while. In the meantime this house has already been sold so we have to move out. It's too soon to move to the new place and that's why we are going away for a few weeks. Your dad has to look after the business, so he'll be staying here. He's rented a flat until the house is ready for us all. We'll be going to Margate. Uncle Len will drive us there"

Uncle Len, David's brother, arrived in his 1948 Citroen. He was to drive them to Margate, a popular holiday resort on the south coast of Natal. It was a beautiful car. It was shiny black with sparkling chrome bumpers and hubcaps. It had six lights in the front, two more even than the car that had carried the King and Queen! Two were affixed to the bumper. One enormous lamp and one tiny light were mounted on each of the mudguards. There were two upside-down chrome vees on the grille. Most exciting of all, was the fitting for the spare wheel on the lid of the boot. There was just enough room for one suitcase in the boot. Uncle Len tethered the second suitcase to a luggage rack on the roof.

All three boys hugged and kissed their dad.

Jack said, "Will you come and visit us?"

"I'll try."

"Please, Daddy."

"Be good and listen to your mother and to Alvin," he said to Jack. "And you too, Tony. Be good."

To Alvin he said, "You're almost nine. You're the big man of the family now. Look after your little brothers."

Alvin's face reddened but he said nothing.

Doreen climbed into the back seat with Tony on her lap. Alvin got into the front seat next to Uncle Len. It had been decided that Alvin and Jack would take turns in sitting next to him. They drove well

into the night. When it was Jack's turn to sit in front, Uncle Len let him press the button that dimmed the headlights when other cars were approaching and then back again to high beam when the car had passed.

"You're doing well, *Boychick* ." He always called them *Boychick*.

It was about five hundred miles from Johannesburg to Margate. The journey took about eight hours. They stopped on the way at the sleepy towns of Standerton and Ladysmith for petrol and refreshments. They arrived in Margate long after dark.

Margate was new world. They stayed at a hotel, Doreen in one room with Tony, Alvin and Jack in another. This, in itself, was a new experience. They had never stayed in a hotel before. The few previous holidays they had spent had been at the homes of relatives. They found the sea, endless white-tipped waves, beaches with soft, warm sand and even though it was mid-winter, a lukewarm lagoon. They were free to spend their days unencumbered by the burden of school and the rigours of routine.

Alvin had taken his father's parting words most seriously. "You're the big man of the family now. Look after your little brothers."

He led them and guided them with a protective arm around their shoulders or holding their hands. He approved or disapproved their plans, suggested and supervised adventures, watched over them as they paddled in the lagoon or built sand castles in the wet sand. He had become their Big Brother.

Margate 1949: Jack, Alvin, Tony

Alvin, Tony, Jack

Tony had, until now, been a gurgling and then a prattling entity of another world, cosseted in the care of their mother and Francina. Alvin and Jack had not related to him as a real being, let alone a brother. Now, suddenly, they were constantly together with him from morning to late evening and found that it was fun to teach him games and activities and to enjoy his questions, his laughter, his reactions.

Another big change was the food. At each meal they were free to choose from a printed menu offering a variety of dishes and were allowed to eat as many of the courses as they desired. There were though, two minor provisos which were easily surmountable; they could tackle as many of the desserts as they desired as long as they had eaten at least two other courses and all courses, including the desserts, had to be eaten completely. They were not allowed to leave uneaten food on their plates.

At breakfast they discovered a dish to which they had never before been exposed. It smelled of smoke and fat. It lay in pink, crisp curls upon the plate. It was streaked with yellow-white strands. It lay beside eggs fried into precise, porcelain-white circles with perfectly round, bulging golden centres. The crispy curls tasted as they smelled, of salt and smoke and molten fat. Jack dipped chunks of white bread into the glistening yolk and wiped the plate clean of the spilled yellow yolk and the puddles of fat. Strangely, although they couldn't get enough of bacon and eggs, they never ventured into the other pork dishes on offer.

At home in Kensington, the family had been what was known as "traditional" but they were not orthodox. Traditional meant that on sabbath eve Doreen lit candles and David mumbled the blessing for the sweet ceremonial wine and the *kiddush* prayer. They celebrated Passover and New Year with the extended family and the adults fasted on Yom Kippur. The boys had all, of course, been circumcised and would one day celebrate their bar mitzvahs. The meat Doreen bought was kosher and no pork or shellfish were allowed in the house but they ate ice cream after meat and drove in the car on Saturday.

Some weeks later, David arrived in Margate to take the family back to Johannesburg. The boys were overjoyed to see him and he held all three of them in his arms at the same time. He hugged them till they squealed.

They drove to their new home two miles to the east of Protea Street just beyond the eastern outskirts of the city. The house lay in the tiny adjacent town called Bedfordview. David had built a two-storey, slate-roofed house. Each of the boys had his own bedroom. The house stood on five and a half acres of land. David told the boys he was planning to have cows, horses, chickens, geese and ducks. There was an orchard of apricot and plum trees. He planned to build them a swimming pool.

The boys could believe neither their eyes nor their ears.

September, 1949: The house at Bedfordview, near completion

The World Expanding

By the time Jack and his classmates reached Standard II in 1951, they were reading and writing well and doing more difficult arithmetic. In addition to adding and subtraction, they now had to know how to divide and multiply. So they had to learn their "times tables" by heart from 1 x 1 all the way to 12 x 12. The series for 16 was thrown in because there were 16 ounces to the pound. They had a new subject called Hygiene were they were taught basic facts about the human body. They learned of skin and muscles, teeth and bones, ears and eyes, germs and food. They also started learning Afrikaans which was an obligatory subject at all schools.

At English lessons, the teacher would write letters on the blackboard like this: - ING. Each pupil in turn, would have to add letters in front of the suffix to make a new word. The first ones were easy, like SING, WING, KING. Then it got more difficult like SPRING, FLING, THING. They went through many combinations like - ONG, - ANT, - ARM. One day, the cheeky boy of the class, Graham Markham, put up his hand and asked, "Miss, when are we going to do - UCK?"

Some of the boys giggled, most didn't see the joke. Graham was packed off to the principal who sent a note to his parents saying they should wash out his mouth with soap.

In the fifth class, Standard III, Jack and his fellows continued with all the previous subjects but things became even more interesting when two new subjects were added, geography and history. The class trooped out onto the quadrangle and studied the map of South Africa painted on the asphalt. They were shown how it was divided into four provinces, The Cape, Transvaal, The Orange Free State and Natal. Jack, thinking of Francina, asked where Zululand was and was told that it wasn't really a place, it was just part of Natal. They learned where all the big cities and towns were. Some of the towns had funny names like Bronkhorstspruit, Riviersonderend, Hartebeesport, Pofadder, Umtata and Amanzimtoti.

One of the things Jack loved in geography, was learning the car registration letters which appeared on each car's number plate. Each province, town or region had its own registration letter. If the car

was from the Cape, the registration letters started with C. Cape Town was CA, Port Elizabeth CB. Transvaal started with T. Johannesburg was TJ, Pretoria TP. Orange Free State was O. Bloemfontein was OB, Wepener OW. Natal had an N. Durban was ND and Pietermaritzburg NP. All the letters were followed by a series of numbers specific for the individual car. The pupils had to learn as many registration letters as possible. The teacher taught then amusing ways to remember the difficult ones. George was CAW because it is always Cold And Wet there. Kroonstad was OM because the inhabitants were bad drivers and the cars turned head over heels there: OM in Afrikaans means "over". One raised one's CAP in Cathcart. It was Jack's first introduction to mnemonics, a technique he would use throughout the many years of his studies.

In Standard IV, he met a teacher he would remember fondly for the rest of his life. She was much younger than the other teachers and she was beautiful. Her name was Miss da Silva. She had long, black, lustrous hair and deep brown eyes. Her tone was soft and gentle, quite unlike the harsh carping of many of the others. Instead of pontificating from the front of the class, she would walk up and down the aisle and care for each pupil individually, asking how things were getting on.
"Are you following? Are you keeping up?" She encouraged each pupil with private whispered words, a smile, a pat on the shoulder.

She taught geography differently from the Standard III teacher. She did not issue long lists and regiments of data to be learned by heart. She taught her pupils to seek their own facts.

"On Friday, each of you must bring an example of something that comes from each of the continents. It may be a picture or even a drawing but it would be nice if it were a product. Try to work it out by yourselves without help from anyone. Except books of course."

Nervous chattering amongst them.

Jack was excited. He knew exactly how he would solve the problem. He ached to do well because he loved Miss da Silva and wanted to impress her. He already knew how to handle Africa, Asia and South America. North America and Australia were more problematic.

"Does she expect Antarctica as well?" he wondered.

He took a roll of Cellophane from the kitchen cupboard. He cut out four squares. He used his wooden ruler to measure that each square was exactly six by six inches. Into the one square he placed a teaspoon of coffee to represent Africa and into the next, rice for Asia. The third one received cocoa for South America and the fourth, dessicated coconut as a representation of snow for Antarctica. He hoped this would be allowed. He folded each square carefully and sealed them with Sellotape. He would take a tin of sardines to represent Europe. They come from Portugal.

"What about the last two?" he pondered.

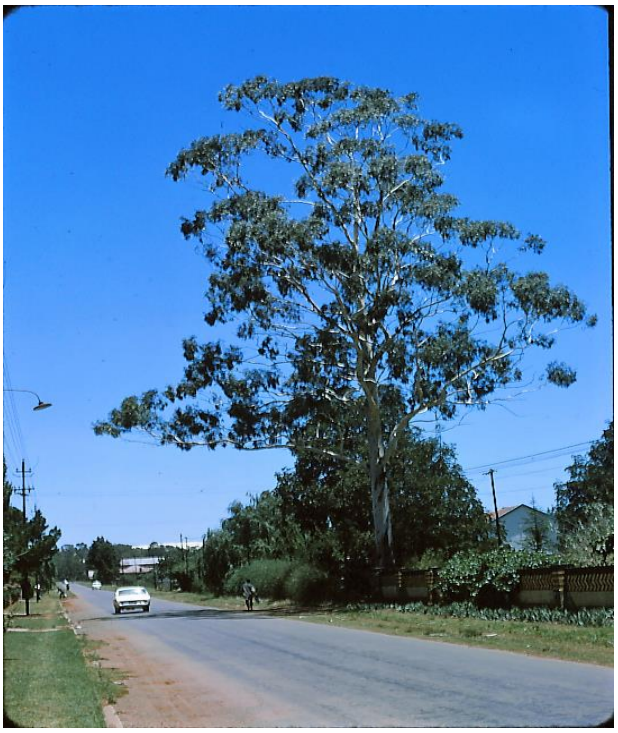
"I know! A feather for the Red Indians!"

He rushed to his room, scrabbled in the big box stored under his bed in which he kept his hoard of treasures. He still had Francina's sakabula feather.

"I hope Miss da Silva won't mind it's from an African bird."

Australia was a problem. "A picture of a kangaroo? No, too simple. A drawing of its flag? Maybe, but it's a difficult one to draw." He thought and thought and then he knew. "A blue gum leaf!"

He knew that the tree's real name was Eucalyptus and that it came from Australia. He scurried outside and under the huge blue gum in the corner of the garden, he found not only leaves but also a cluster of the tree's capsules that look like tiny acorns. He put them in Cellophane as well.



Blue gum tree outside the house in Bedfordview. (Photographed in 1985)

On Friday, each desk was cluttered with offerings. Most had brought pictures untidily ripped from magazines or they displayed books open at the relevant page. Some had more original objects like bits of cotton wool to represent North America and handfuls of sand to represent the Sahara. Miss da Silva went from desk to desk, chatted with each pupil and commented on their efforts. Jack couldn't wait until it was his turn. When she arrived, he shuffled nervously in his seat.

"That looks very impressive, Jack. Tell me about them." She encouraged.

He explained each item. When he got to the sakabula feather, he decided to be entirely honest. "This is to show Red Indians from North America. I didn't have an eagle feather so I used this one from a sakabula. I hope that's OK, Miss."

She smiled her friendly smile and said, "Of course that's fine. We use one thing to represent another all the time. For example, printed words represent thoughts, paintings can represent nature, photographs represent memories. Excellent choices. Well done, Jack."

He glowed for days.

Arlies and Bok-Bok

School was not only studies. During the breaks. the boys played various games.

A perennial favourite was marbles. They were called *arlies*. Each boy carried his *arlies* in a cotton bag that could be pulled closed with a drawstring. The number of marbles in the bag depended on how much spending money the owner received and how good he was at the various games. The marbles were of two sizes, the standard, small ones and the bigger ones that were called "goons". They had names like whities, puries, glassies, whirlies and cat's eyes according to their colours and internal structures. There were various games, all aimed at winning marbles from another boy. The games involved one boy shying marbles at another boy's pile of marbles. If the shyer hit the pile hard enough to dismantle it, he won the mound of marbles. The marbles that missed became the other boys winnings. Scavengers and pirates would stand behind the owner of the target and grab marbles that escaped his reach. Jack was reasonably good at *arlies* but certainly didn't have the bag that bulged the most.

Another activity was Tops. Jack was not good at this. This involved wooden tops with metal tips in a myriad of shapes, colours and sizes. A long length of string was wound around them. The end of the string was held firmly in one's hand and the top was then slung furiously onto a hard surface. The top that spun the longest, was the winner.

Another favourite, though illegal game, was *Bok-Bok.* Which involved one group of boys jumping onto the backs of another group of boys. The game was banned because of the risk of having one's back injured.

Then there was Squashed Tomato. A row of boys sat on a low wall. The last boy would push the one next to him with fierce movements of his thigh and buttocks to dislodge him from the wall. The aim was to reach the end of the line. Jack enjoyed this game in the winter as it was a good way to keep warm.

Of course, there were also more orthodox games like football and cricket being played by the older boys.

Strangely, when Jack played marbles, he was never aware of Alvin's presence but when he ventured into *Bok-Bok* or Squashed Tomato, Alvin always seemed to be around buffering him from injury, diverting danger, shielding him from harm.

The girls could be distantly glimpsed, in their segregated playground playing games with skipping ropes or sitting in small groups giggling.

Occasional quarrels arose which were settled by fights behind the bicycle sheds. These too were illegal and one had to find ways of explaining bloody noses and soiled or ripped clothes to the teacher after the break. If caught *in flagrante delicto* by a teacher, the fight would be stopped and the combatants invited to "have it out with the gloves". This meant that the two would meet on the quadrangle after school hours. Spectators would form a circle. The two delinquents were fitted with boxing gloves. A signal would be given and the two would slug it out supervised by the teacher until one or the other or the teacher had had enough. These combats were much less brutal than they might sound.

Once a week the whole school was called to Assembly on the quadrangle, the Standard Vs at the back, the Grades in the front. The staff of teachers stood facing the school with the principal in front of them. Announcements were made, for example, dates for the School Fete, Parents' Day, school outings, sporting fixtures. After the announcements, the pupils and staff sang The National Anthem, *Die Stem van Suid Afrika* in Afrikaans and then in English. Jack croaked his way through.

The School Fête was held once a year to raise funds. There was a flurry of planning activity in the weeks before the event. Parents had to be canvassed for donations of items for the various stalls. Pupils had to be recruited for different chores. Some duties were more prestigious than others; manning a stall was high status, being a general factotum, low status. Jack's highest achievement was being put in charge of the stall that sold colddrinks. His mother always donated a beautifully decorated cake of which Jack was always very proud. He was even more proud in Standard V, when his dad donated a lamp from his factory as the prize for the main raffle.

Parents' Day was also an annual event. The classes were lined up parallel to each other on the

quadrangle. The staff and principal were assembled before them and the parents sat to each side. There were one or two boring speeches. There followed the most important event of the year. Each class had prizes for 3rd, 2nd and 1st in Class and one for best progress. All the prizes were in the form of books, on the inside front cover of which, was an ornately decorated label with the school's name and appropriate data filled out in copperplate script. Jack sometimes received prizes. For example, in 1948 he received one with the rather frightening title *Monster Book for Tinies* but the word monster was an adjective rather than a noun. He received Enid Blyton's *Fifth Holiday Book* in 1950 and *The Chronicles of Robin Hood* by Rosemary Sutcliff in 1951. It was an indescribable thrill to hear one's name announced and to walk proudly from the class's line up to the principal to receive the book.

Sex

In Standard IV, Jack was made aware of sex. The pupils were now all eleven years old. Jack had, of course, always been aware that there was a difference between boys and girls. It was a simple difference. You played with boys and not with girls. And that was that.

The precocious Graham Markham took it upon himself to instruct the others about girls. Sniggering small boys stood in clusters around him: "They have tits that you can *vry.* They use *poeslaps* (sanitary towels) and *bubstraps* (brassieres) and you can fuck them."

The word *vry* pronounced ″fray" meant, in Afrikaans, to woo or to court but when used as a South African English slang word, it meant to feel or caress a girl's breast. This could be done with the hand outside the *bubstrap* or within it. The latter achievement was called a *kaal tit vry* (naked breast *vry*).

Jack stood on the periphery without completely understanding either the words or what all the fuss was about. He had, of course, noticed that some of the girls had developed bulges on their chests but he had never really thought much about it.

Things exploded when Miss da Silva caught Graham passing a pencilled note to Lola Lloyd, who was the girl most well-developed on the mammary front. On it was written: "Have you read the book about fuck and vry?"

They never saw Graham again.

At last, in 1954, they reached Standard V. They were now the seniors of the school, the "big" boys (and girls). Important chores were distributed. Jack was given the prestigious duty of Bell-Ringer. He later got the even more important job of film projector operator.

Jack was now twelve. He became increasingly aware of breasts. All the girls had them now. Not only Lola Lloyd. Now, strangely, girls' breasts were attractive, something to study, to admire, surreptitiously, of course. He began to speculate how they looked without clothes on, how they felt. He began to compare their sizes, their shapes. They were an endless source of mystery, wonderment

and delight.

He became aware too, that girls smelled differently from boys. No, it was not just that they smelled cleaner, fresher, more soapy. They had a special smell that to him was very clear but he could not describe it in words. It reminded him a little of the smell he had first encountered in Francina's room so many years ago: earthy, musky, dark, mysterious.

Jean Bird was the tallest, prettiest girl in the class. Her breasts were now big enough to stretch the fabric of her orange school frock to a point just short of ripping. She sat in the front row. She had asked the arithmetic teacher, Mr Morton, a question. Jack was standing at the front of the class on some errand. He saw Mr Morton walk over to Jean to help her with her question. In his three piece grey suit, white shirt and maroon tie with golden tie pin, he placed himself just behind her right shoulder. He bent slightly towards her finger that was pointing at the problem in her exercise book. His right hand was on the desk. He now placed his left arm across the top of her back, eased his hand into her left armpit with its palm towards her body. He then scissored his fingers back and forth across the side of her breast, back and forth, open and shut. Jean reddened but remained silent, motionless, rigid. Jack stared. He did not fully understand what was happening but he sensed it was illicit, wrong, something to do with the preachings of Graham Markham.

Shocherdikke

Blacks in South Africa outnumbered whites by about ten to one.

Jack was not aware of his whiteness as an identity. The identity he carried was Jew. However, always in the background of his existence, provoking little awareness amongst him and his peers, were the nameless, faceless shadows - the natives, the non-Europeans. The term "native" should have been construed as a compliment; it implied that they had originated in South Africa, that it was they who belonged there. But, strangely, it was no compliment. It indicated inferiority. The other term, non-European, was on the other hand, a clear insult. It implied that anything not European was of lesser importance. Most pejorative of all was the term *Kaffir,* from the Arabic word for infidel. It was commonly used by Afrikaners. The Jews too, had their pejoratives; *Schwartze,* which meant black in Yiddish or *Shocherdik*, shortened to *Shoch,* from *shachor,* black, in Hebrew.

Jack was also aware of another group of black people. They were called Indians. He had first become aware of them in Margate where all the waiters at the hotel had been Indians. They were different from the other blacks because they had long, straight, black hair rather than peppercorns. Their women wore saris. They generally spoke much better English than the other blacks albeit with an accent which was considered very amusing and was easy to mimic. The demeaning term for them was *Coolie* or *Koelie*, a term that originally meant an unskilled Asian labourer. The word was thought to originate from a Gujirati sect of day labourers called the *Koli*. They were often seen in the streets of the suburbs of Johanneburg on horse-drawn wagons hawking fruit and vegetables.

Jack knew a naughty rhyme, recited in an Indian accent:

"Coolie, Coolie, what you got?

Monkey nut and apricot!"

It was made even more naughty by changing the second line to "Apricot and monkey snot!"

Jack had begun gradually to register the blacks as "people" only after his relationship with Francina.

He would see the women, all dressed similarly to Francina in maids' uniforms of white or pastel shades of cream, yellow, pink, green or blue. They had matching aprons and *doeks*. Their heads were always covered, if not by a *doek*, then by a beret. They always seemed to be smiling and singing as they went about their chores, laundering, hanging washing on lines, ironing, cooking, sweeping, polishing, feeding white babies or airing them in prams. The men were dressed in overalls. They swept gutters and pavements, mowed lawns, planted gardens, weeded flower beds. Some were dressed in long, dark blue cotton coats and delivered groceries on bicycles laden with mountains of items. Some were pitch black from top to toe, black on black, except for their teeth and the corneas of their eyes, from delivering heavy sacks of coal carried on their shoulders. Yet others emptied giant metal dustbins onto trucks. The bins smelled of coal ash and rotting oranges. They repaired roads, dug ditches, laboured as builders, painters, roofers. They sang sad songs of longing as they carried out theses tasks. On Sundays, they would go off to visit friends, now clad in suits, shirts, ties and hats, most of them ill-fitting cast-offs from their white masters.

The black men were called "boys", the women, "girls", irrespective of their ages.

At Jack's school, they swept, cleaned windows, weeded, did odd jobs. They never spoke unless spoken to. Sometimes they would look up from their labours and watch the children at their marbles and *bok-bok* and smile. They touched their headgear and said, "Hello, Little *Baas*."

Jack would try to remember their names, to say "Hello" when he met them. He tried to see them otherwise than as nameless, faceless shadows who had no identities.

But he could not yet conceive the iniquity that was being done to them.

Them and Us

At nursery school, all the children had been Jewish, so Jack's Jewishness was simply a fact of life, like the colour of his hair or the name that he bore. It was not a thing that was registered in his consciousness, not a matter he questioned or speculated upon.

At primary school, however, the class was mixed. It represented an average cross-section of white, English-speaking South Africa. There were, of course, no Blacks. Afrikaners attended their own schools where Afrikaans was the language of instruction. Most of Jack's class was "English". This was a rather misleading term. It meant that they were English-speaking rather than Afrikaans-speaking. It also meant that one or both of their parents were a generation or three removed from Britain. But in the vocabulary of the Jews, it also meant Christian. If one's mother asked, "Is he Jewish?" One would answer, "No, he's English". One or two in the class were of mixed origin, say with an English mother and an Afrikaner father but if they spoke English at home, they would still be classified as English. If one's parents came from Greece or Portugal, the child would speak English but would be referred to as Greek or Portuguese but not English. There were one or two of these children in the class as well. In addition, besides Jack, there were five Jewish children, three boys and two girls. Jack knew one or two of them from *shul* but he did not particularly gravitate towards them. Most of his playmates were English and he was not really aware that there was much difference between them. Yes, they spoke at times of church, or Easter eggs or Christmas but those were but words, not concepts.

Then, one day, Jack was rudely awoken to the fact that there *was* a difference, that he *was* different. One of the boys, a grubby bully named Brian, came up to Jack for no apparent reason and shouted into his face, "Jew!"

Jack had heard single word expletives before: Fool! Idiot! Bastard! Arsehole! Cunt! Kaffir! They had usually been addressed to someone else. But this was the first time that he had been made aware that "Jew" could be used in the same manner. The way the word had been spat at him, left Jack in no

doubt that Brian's "Jew!" belonged in the same category as "Cunt" and "Kaffir". On subsequent occasions, Brian's taunts progressed to ″Dirty Jew", "Bloody Jew" and "Fucking Jew". Then he seemed to run out of adjectives. Jack was surprised at first, not hurt nor angry, because he felt he had done nothing wrong to merit a verbal attack. Then he realized that just being a Jew, was apparently wrongdoing enough.

Another episode occurred some months later. On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, before the first lesson, all the junior classes were gathered in the school hall for "Hymns". Jack regarded this as just another subject, like arithmetic or geography. He joined in innocently, along with the rest of them, croaking unmelodiously while the others warbled sweetly. The words of all the hymns were presented in beautiful, clear, hand-written block capitals on huge sheets of paper which were attached to a tall board. The sheets could be folded back over the board to reveal the sheet beneath. One hymn told him that the Lord God had made all things bright and beautiful and all creatures great and small. These facts he knew already from nursery school but he had never sung them in a song. Then he learned that someone called Jesus loved him. This he had not known before but he was grateful.

One day, before the singing of hymns commenced, the teacher said, "The Jewish children may decide which hymns they would like to sing and may remain silent while we others sing the ones that offend them."

Jack did not quite understand the message and looked about him at the other Jewish children. They all looked as puzzled as he except for one of them, a fat boy called Aubrey, with whom Jack had never played. He was nodding smugly.

″Let's begin," said the teacher. She folded back sheets until she came to the one called " The Lord's my Shepherd". All the Jews looked at Aubrey. He was nodding vigorously. This one was kosher. It had been written by one of our guys. Aubrey knew it in its original Hebrew version. They all sang. And so they went along. As the text of each hymn was revealed, it was quickly scanned by the censorious eyes of fat Aubrey. If it contained the word "Jesus" or other profanities, Aubrey banned it with a decisive shake of the head. Jack later found out that Aubrey had told his parents about Hymns.

They had raised the issue with the Principal who had passed the message on to the hymn teacher.

This was the second time Jack had been made aware of his Jewishness. He had been made to feel that he was different, that he was apart from all the others. The first episode, with Brian, had set him apart because others regarded him as different. The second episode, the one with the hymns, had set him apart because a co-Jew had demanded that they be set apart.

A third episode soon followed which set not only him, but all Jews apart. Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed for passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. David, reading The Star, remarked angrily, "It's amazing how all the comments focus on the fact that they were Jewish and imply that all Jews are communists and disloyal citizens. It's been the same throughout history. When one Jew sins, all Jews are guilty."

General Knowledge

By the early fifties, after Margate, Jack had begun to regard Alvin not only as a protector but as a source of knowledge. Before entering Alvin's room, Jack could foresee exactly the scene that awaited him; Alvin lying prone across his bed with his lower legs at right angles to his thighs, crossed at the ankles so that his soles faced the ceiling. The upper half of his body would be dangling over the edge of the bed. On the floor would be a book. Alvin always seemed to be reading. He read books, magazines, comics and newspapers. He read anything he could lay his hands on. Doreen shook her head lovingly at him because he even read the stained, soggy sheets of newspaper that had been used for wrapping meat, fish or vegetables. He read on the toilet. He read in the car. He read walking to school. He read in bed before he slept. To Jack, he was an inexhaustible well of information. He seemed to know everything.

"How do you know all this stuff?" asked Jack

"By reading. It's called General Knowledge."

"General Knowledge?"

"Yes, it's everything they don't teach you at school."

One day Alvin showed him an issue of the National Geographic Magazine which had full page pictures of famous historical figures with a corresponding page of text. Alvin had already learned all their names and assimilated the details of their lives. He pointed out to Jack pictures of Alexander, Julius Caesar, Napoleon. Jack was fascinated. Alvin showed him his illustrated encyclopaedias which had information about birds and animals, planets and stars, battles and warriors, rivers and mountains. He had books about sporting heroes and war heroes. They spent endless hours imbibing this glorious knowledge. They compiled lists, they exchanged facts, they quizzed each other.

"Do you know that Reginald Walker was South African and he was the first non-American to win the 100 yards at the Olympic Games? That was in 1908."

"Do you know that the Caspian Sea is the biggest saltwater lake in the world and Lake Superior

the biggest freshwater one?"

"Do you know that Fanny Blankers-Koen won as many Olympic gold medals in athletics as Jesse Owens?"

"Do you know that the giant redwood tree can be eighteen hundred years old and is the oldest living thing on the planet?"

They could name all the Olympic cities from 1896 to 1952. They knew all the capital cities of the world. They could list all the states of the USA. They knew the names of inventors, authors and statesmen. They could tell you which was the highest mountain, the tallest building, the longest river. Anglophile Jack could name all the British Prime Ministers from Walpole to Churchill. They cavorted together in this sunlit pond of knowledge, splashing each other with droplets of facts, drenching each other with data. They floated on the surface of a pool whose depths could never be plumbed.

The War

Jack seemed always to have been aware of "The War".

One of his earliest memories was of the day his mother had told him that he could no longer have his weekly penny slab of Nestlé's chocolate.

"Why?" he asked.

"It's rationed because of the War."

"What does rationed mean?"

"It means that some things are scarce and have to be kept for the soldiers."

He knew what soldiers were because some of the visitors who had dropped by at Protea Street, wore khaki uniforms and berets or forage caps.

The two older boys were taught to eat everything on their plates.

"Why?"

"Because other people are starving because of the War," was the illogical reply.

Later, information about the War drifted into Jack's consciousness via whispered conversations, overheard by chance. It was not a topic that was aired openly in front of the children, especially not what was happening to the Jews. His mother had told stories of her Cousin Tony who had been killed in the Italian Campaign. She told Jack that his father's family had all been "killed by the Germans".

"We mustn't talk about it," Doreen would say. "It makes your daddy very upset."

For Jack, then, death this was an abstract concept, something he had never seen nor felt, like snow. He could not comprehend what it meant.

Jack was not taught about the War at school or at *cheder,* so his main source of knowledge of the Second World War came through comic books like Battler Britton, Matt Braddock, Blackhawk and GI Combat. His ultimate heroes were fighter pilots and remembering the King's visit, preferably RAF fighter pilots. Together with Alvin, he found real-life RAF aces like James Edgar "Johnnie" Johnson and Douglas Bader. They were especially proud of the South African aces like Adolph Gysbert "Sailor" Malan, John Dering Nettleton and the man with the magnificent name, Marmaduke Thomas

St. John Pattle. There was room for a bomber hero or two as well, Guy Penrose Gibson and Peter Stevens. The latter was a special hero for them because he was Jewish and had been born in Germany as George Franz Hein. He was not allowed to join the RAF as he was a foreign alien, so he assumed the identity of a dead school-friend, was admitted to the RAF and flew twenty-two bombing missions before being shot down over Amsterdam. Remarkably, names like Montgomery, Patton and MacArthur meant nothing to them.

They learned to identify the fighters, bombers and transports of the RAF, the USAAF, the Luftwaffe and those of the Russians and the Japanese. They could rattle off their names and their identification letters and numbers. "Bristol Type 156 Beaufighter!" "Mitsubishi A6M Zero!" "Supermarine F-22 Spitfire!" "Lockheed P-38 Lightning!" "Focke-Wulf Fw 190!" "Avro Lancaster!" "Grumman F6F Hellcat!" "Lavochkin La-7!" "Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress!"

They would shout with glee as they tested each other on the silhouettes of the different aircraft. They made models of the planes out of balsa wood and painstakingly painted them with paints that smelled of marzipan. They affixed transfers of air force insignia and squadron emblems.

Their replaying of the War was a pantomime. The protagonists were the British against the Germans. The Americans, Russians, Japanese had but minor roles. For them, war was a game of glorious dogfights between Hurricanes and Messerschmidts in clear blue skies. The juddering of machine guns was not a harbinger of death, it was tattoo of victory. The shrieking of a downed Blohm and Voss was not a wail of lamentation, it was a paean of triumph. They knew nothing of the realities of war, of bodies impaled on shards of metal, of limbs severed by tracks of tanks, of coils of intestine spilling into foetid mud, of gangrenous wounds beset by maggots, of eye sockets left empty by crows and ravens and abuzz with green flies, of rotting bodies half buried in mire, of fresh bodies frozen in snowdrifts. They saw not the widows, the orphans, the queues for food. They could not conceive of villages, towns and cities razed to piles of rubble. They were oblivious of the stench of death, the odour of sorrow. And their war games had little to do with Jews.

Only gradually did that sinister "Jewish" aspect of the War, the fact of the Holocaust, penetrate

Jack's awareness with a few words here, "concentration camps", a few words there, "gas chambers".

Gradually, vague new words emerged from the silence; 'transportation', 'camps'. Then the terms became more defined; 'forced marches', 'trains for transporting cattle', 'transit camps', 'concentration camps', 'labour camps', 'extermination camps', 'gas chambers, 'Zyklon-B', '*Endlösung*', '*Vernichtung*'. A whole new vocabulary of death.

There followed an elegy of names; Chelmno and Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Belzec and Buchenwald., Majdanek and Mauthausen, Ravensbrück and Sobibor, Theresienstadt and Treblinka. And Auschwitz-Birkenau.

With knowledge gleaned in fits and starts, single words expanded into sentences and sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into books until the Holocaust became part of his very essence.

He could at last begin to understand the pain of his father. But he never asked him about it.

Betar

There were numerous Jewish youth movements in South Africa, all vaguely modelled on the Boy Scouts. Each one represented the youth wing of the various Jewish political persuasions. They ranged from Hashomer Hatzair, which was socialist with Marxist leanings, through Habonim, who were socialist-Zionists and Bnei Akiva, the religious Zionists, to Betar, the revisionist Zionists.

When Alvin was eight and Jack six, David had sent them to join Betar. Betar had been founded by Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky twenty-five years earlier in Eastern Europe. Jabotinsky was a politician, soldier, poet and philosopher. He was an ardent Zionist. He believed that a Jewish state should be established on both sides of the Jordan River. He believed that the Arabs then living there, should become citizens of this state on equal footing with the Jews. He believed that the Jews could only regain their dignity and win their state by military means. Jews must raise themselves from "the pit of decay and dust" he preached. "By blood and fire Judah fell. By blood and fire Judah will rise again", was his slogan. With this prophesy in mind, Betar was fashioned along military lines. Its members wore military style uniforms and were taught military discipline, marching and drilling. Betar had a flag, emblems, badges of rank, an anthem and even its own greeting and war cry. The members were taught Jewish history, especially about the Israeli War of Independence and the history of Zionism, the geography of Israel, Hebrew songs and Israeli dances. They were imbued with a feeling of nationalism and patriotic fervour. They were taught Jabotinsky's credo of *Hadar,* a Hebrew word that translates vaguely as "splendour". In Jabotinsky's conception, is was the ideal to which every Jew should aspire. "Even in poverty, every Jew is a Prince." he said. He or she should be strong of will, honest, generous, loyal, polite, respectful. Above all, one should have self-respect and dignity.

Alvin and Jack attended Betar meetings at the *shul* every Friday night dressed in their navy blue shirts, khaki shorts, brown leather belts, sky blue scarves held in place by a leather toggle and navy blue forage caps on their heads. They wore long khaki socks and well-polished brown leather shoes.

On their caps and left sleeves, were sewn Betar's emblem, a yellow seven-branched *menorah.*

Here, new heroes were added to their panoply of Second World War and sporting heroes. They had already learned of the ancient warriors like Joshua, Gideon, Saul, Jonathan, David, the Maccabees and Bar Kochba. Now new names were added that sent shivers down their spines and warmed their bellies with pride. They were taught about Mordechai Anielewicz who led the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising against the Nazis. They heard about Hannah Szenes, who had been parachuted into Yugoslavia in order to cross the border into Nazi-occupied Hungary where she was to aid in rescuing Jews. She was captured by the Nazis and executed after she refused to give details of her mission under torture. They learned about heroes of the Irgun, the military wing of Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionist movement, David Raziel, Dov Gruner and Shlomo Ben-Josef.

Joseph Trumpeldor was however, the principal hero.

″Joseph Trumpeldor is one of our greatest heroes," said the instructor. "He was a member of kibbutz Tel Hai in the Galilee. Before he came to Palestine, he was a soldier in the Russian army and he lost his arm in the war against the Japanese. He became the most highly decorated Jew in the Russian army and was the first Jew ever to be made an officer. In 1920, a large number of Arabs attacked the gates of the settlement. Trumpeldor held the gates against them."

"He defended them single-handedly, I guess," said Jack facetiously. Alvin punched him.

"No, no," replied the instructor, missing the cruel pun. "He was not alone. He was mortally injured. Before dying he uttered the famous words 'Never mind. It is good to die for our country'. That is why Betar's special greeting is "Tel Hai", to remind us of his heroic deed. And that is why Jabotinsky named Betar after him. In Hebrew BYTR are initials meaning 'The Covenant of Joseph Trumpeldor'. And that is also why we include the words "never mind" in our anthem."

Once a year, in the long summer school holiday around Christmas time, Alvin and Jack were sent to Betar's annual camp near the seaside in the Cape. Tens of eager boys and girls from the ages of seven to eighteen, clad in their Betar uniforms, crowded the platform at Johannesburg's Park Station each with a suitcase, collapsible canvas and wood camp bed which they called stretchers and

a small hamper of provisions for the journey. Parents were bid farewell. Some of the children were tearful. Most wore a look of nonchalance that belied their insecurity at the thought of fending for themselves so far from the comforts of home, for three whole weeks.

In his younger years, the camp was somewhat of a nightmare for Jack. He was consumed by homesickness and mosquitoes. The only thing he really enjoyed, was the thousand mile train trip which lasted about thirty hours. Six boys occupied each cabin. There was immediate scuffling and argument about the distribution of the bunks. Most preferred the top bunk, others the middle one. The two weakest boys had to make do with the bottom bunk. Jack always chose middle as this allowed him to look out of the train window. During the day, the four upper bunks were stowed against the walls. There was again pushing and shoving to gain the window seats. The seats, bunks and bolsters were covered with bright green leather or was it just plastic? The walls were panelled with brown Formica. Under the windows, a small wash basin could be folded out. The door to the cabin could be slid open or shut, a job requiring more strength than the muscles of most small boys could manage.

Jack would spend hours simply staring out of the windows at the slowly passing scenery, feeling all his senses being assailed at once. He saw grasslands, first green, later yellow, that stretched to the horizon, now free of all living creatures, then peppered with cattle. He saw the vast Karoo and read the shapes of beasts and demons in the dark brown, rocky crags and hillocks. He noticed how the colour of the distant hills changed from grey to blue to lilac to orange to pink with the angle of the sun. He saw stately eucalyptuses near the tracks and copses of tortured scrub and crippled trees scattered further afield in the barren landscape. He saw flocks of sheep tended by lonely black shepherds near metal windmills and concrete reservoirs. He saw signals changing from red to green, noticed meaningless letters and cryptic numbers printed on poles. He read names of stations written on large white boards which told the distance travelled from Johannesburg and that remaining to Cape Town. He saw the magnificent purple Hex River mountains cosseting wide rivers in its fertile valleys. He heard the rhythmic clickety-clack of the metal wheels on the rails. The rhythm broke, like a gramophone needle hitting a scratch on an LP record when the train crossed junction points. He heard

the joyful screaming of little black children as they raced after the train rushing from and speeding to destinations beyond their comprehension. They hailed the monstrous procession of clanging steel hurrying past their stationary lives. He heard the plaintive wail of the locomotive's whistle, changing pitch with the buffeting of the wind and the curvature of the tracks. He smelled the sulphurous smell of coal smoke, the metallic smell of steam the clean sun-burnt scent of the arid landscape.

Journey's end was heralded by the unmistakable silhouette of Table Mountain. It never entered his conception that his mother had done the same journey, in the opposite direction, years before he was born.

An ubiquitous component of the lovingly packed hampers, was boiled eggs. "They are nutritious and keep well," said the loving packers who chose to ignore their inevitable side effects. As a result the train cabin rapidly became enveloped in a miasma of noxious fumes, arising first from the freshly shelled eggs and subsequently exacerbated by the gaseous by-products of their passage through six gastrointestinal tracts. The air was redolent and seemed even to take on a vaguely yolk yellow tinge.

"Sis! Who *doefed* (farted)? Was it you, Mike? You've been gobbling eggs like a two-stroke."

"No, it wasn't me! It was Ian!"

"I haven't eaten any eggs!" Ian answered, with vestiges of yolk and egg white still lingering between his teeth.

"Shouldn't we open a window," suggested Jack.

"No, it's too noisy and the cabin will get full of smoke," answered Gerald.

"Bullshit, our coach is number sixteen from the engine."

Jack loved to put his head out of the window and feel the wind in his face. When the train curved to the left, he was given a view of the locomotive billowing smoke, hissing stem, pistons churning, the mighty wheels burnishing the rails. This activity had its dangers. A smut in the eye could be most unpleasant. And Gerald was right. Even though they were so far from the locomotive that it was much diluted smoke that reached them, the open window left a powdering of microscopic carbon particles that found their way into hair, ears, eyes, skin creases and the gap between the back of one's neck and

one's collar. When they washed their faces in the tiny basin, the patina of soot was not washed away, it was merely smeared into a black circle that ran from just below the hairline to the front of the ears, behind the angles of the jaw and ended in the crevice below the Adam's apple.

The camp site had already been prepared for them by "The Advance Guard", a group of older boys who had volunteered for tasks like pitching the tents, digging the trenches for the toilets, raising a flag pole, constructing a watch tower, building a tuck shop and clearing a kitchen and dining area. Tradition stated that, emulating *kibbutzniks,* they had achieved all this unaided. But few believed that they had not had help from a gang of native helpers, at least for the most arduous tasks. About thirty bell tents had been pitched in a broad semicircle. One arm of the crescent housed the girls and the other, the boys. In addition to these, there were two rectangular tents, a large one for the camp administration and a smaller one that acted as the hospital tent. These two were placed opposite the swathe of bell tents. Between the round and the square tents, was a parade ground with its central flag pole.

Each bell tent housed four to six children with their stretchers arranged along the circumference of the tent. Their first duty was to dig a shallow trench along the outer perimeter of the tent to prevent rain from entering the dwelling. They were instructed how to loosen and tighten the guy ropes, how to roll up the wall flaps and secure the entrance flaps. They were warned not to touch the canvass when it rained as this would cause leakage.

Each morning, they were woken early by the bugling of reveille. They scrambled bleary-eyed into their PT togs. An older boy would supervise their jumping jacks, press-ups, sit-ups and short jogs. Then they would rush off to the *bog-shop* and showers. Jack hated the *bog-shop.* It was a long wooden bench perforated by buttock-sized holes which overhung a long deep trench. The area was fenced off by screens of hessian to give a semblance of privacy. Jack hated the very fact of having to empty his bowels in the company of others. The other boys took pride in the volume and of their *doefs,* the size and shape of their turds and enjoyed comparing the various odours they produced. He hated the stench of accumulated fæces, putrefying urine, the buzz of the greenbottle flies, their writhing white maggots

on the khaki shit, and even the ammoniacal smell of the quicklime which was cast into the pit at irregular intervals. He was not sure whether it was used to combat the flies, the maggots or merely the smell. He hated the showers too, where boys compared the number of their pubic hairs and competed in the length of their penises. Another game that evoked boundless mirth, was to see how widely one could stretch one's scrotal skin. The champion of this tournament could expand his to such extremes that he was nick-named The Bat. Jack tried to find times to carry out his ablutionary and excretory functions when the facilities were less crowded and competition less rife.

Breakfast followed. They were served cereals or porridge, hunks of white bread with margarine and jam and milky tea. After breakfast they had to tidy their tents and dress in their uniforms. They would assemble in order of height, boys and girls separately in three arrow-straight ranks to form three sides of a square facing the administration tent and the flag pole. The three ranks represented the three age groups, each named after Betar heroes. The youngest were the *Hashmonaim*, the Hasmoneans. The intermediate group was the *Kanai'im*, the Zealots and the oldest group, *Bnei Etzel,* Sons of the Irgun. The latter two groups wore light blue ties and lanyards instead of the scarves the Hasmoneans wore.

The ranks were ordered to attention in Hebrew and the camp leaders, called *mefakdim (*officers), not one of whom was more than eighteen or nineteen years old, slowly inspected the ranks. The oldest of the officers was the camp "doctor". He was a second-year medical student.

"Your tie is crooked!"

"Your cap is too far back!"

"Your shoes are not polished!"

"Your pants are dirty!"

"You haven't shaved!"

Then the programme for the day was announced, the flag hoisted, the Betar anthem sung and the order given to dismiss. Mornings were spent learning bush craft, tying knots, hiking or swimming. Lunch was usually provided by tins of Glenryck pilchards. Its red label featured a splendid blue-grey

ascendant pilchard. One could choose between "In Brine" or "In Tomato Sauce". Both were equally unappetizing. Jack would split their headless, tailless cadavers longitudinally along their middles and dissect out the vertebral column and as many of the smaller bones as possible as well as the disgusting little grey sausage-like appendage some of them still contained in what was left of their bellies. Even then, it was impossible to avoid the occasional gritty crunch of an unidentified bone. The others were so busy talking that they gulped their pilchards down undissected and oblivious of what their anatomy concealed.

The afternoons were spent on games, sport or studying Zionism and Israeli geography or learning songs. The latter were all rousingly patriotic. The lyrics were either in English or in Hebrew. One or two were in Yiddish. Some of the melodies were original, especially the ones in Hebrew but most were purloined from Russian folk songs, songs of the Irish Rebellion and the American Civil War. Some of them were achingly beautiful, like the one in Hebrew about hills ablaze with red anemones. Another told of tired workers in the Jezreel Valley returning from their labours. A third recounted the story of the conquest of the road to Jerusalem during the War of Independence and a fourth sung the praises of a hero who had fallen in battle in the dew of the Negev Desert. Other days were spent on all-day hikes or competitions with neighbouring Zionist youth camps.

Supper often consisted of a rather disgusting stew of indiscernible bits of meat, gristle and fat and vegetables that had long since lost all traces of their identity. It derived its flavour from the congelation of burnt material that had welded itself to the bottom of the enormous cooking pot.

After supper, the *Betarim* gathered around the campfire where songs were sung. They clapped in unison to the beat of the melody. Some of the songs required swaying in rhythm from side to side with one's arm around the shoulders of the person next you. Many of the older boys, in anticipation of such a development, positioned themselves so that the adjacent person was of the female persuasion. Those with vocal expertise might sing solos. Those with instrumental talents strummed guitars, tooted recorders or squeezed concertinas or accordions. Others did imitations, performed parodies, told jokes or ghost stories. All these entertainers, as well as those that sang the loudest,

clapped the most vociferously and swayed the most rhythmically, were said to have "spirit". Those with spirit were "in", those without, "out". Jack was indisputably out. He enjoyed most of the hearty songs and croaked along with the rest, but the jolly, rhythmic clapping and comradely, shoulder-hugging swaying, were not for him. He could neither play an instrument nor tell amusing stories. His expertise was his accumulation of all the information on history and geography they had taught him, but no one ever quizzed him on that.

One of the ways by which one could display that one possessed spirit, was by taking part in "raids". These could be minor raids like entering another tent in the middle of the night and befouling the innocent sleepers with such materials as lipstick, shoe polish, tooth paste or shaving foam. More daring raids could be made on the tuck shop. Raiders would prize open one of the corrugated iron panels, stick in an arm and grab handfuls of confectionery. Major raids were those infiltrating neighbouring youth camps. The ultimate aim was to steal their flag. All these nocturnal shenanigans had to take place without being detected by the guards. The older boys had a rota by which they shared guard duty in four-hour shifts. They were generally ineffective, as, in practice, this meant that the guard had merely exchanged a comfortable sleeping place for a less comfortable one.

Some days were spent on trips to town or to the beach. The whole camp was transported on fleets of buses. Someone with spirit would lead them in singing and they would clap and sway in unison. On the trips to town they would be dressed in their uniforms. The buses would drop them at a central square. They would line up in ranks. They would stand at attention. They would sing a Hebrew song or two. The would end by screaming the Betar war cry in Hebrew:

"WHO ARE WE?"

WE ARE BETAR!

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

A STATE OF OUR OWN!

ON BOTH SIDES!

OF THE JORDAN!"

As one of the youngest at his earliest camps, Jack was placed in the front row of this activity. He hated this infinitely more even than the crowded *bog-shop* with its coprophiliac boys, its stench, its flies and its maggots. The good citizens of the city, going about their business, were assailed by a cohort of strangely uniformed banshees screeching in an unidentifiable language. They stopped and stared. Jack felt that they were all staring directly at him. He reddened with embarrassment and sweated in anguish. He would have liked to have crawled under the cobblestones.

Some years later, after he had been promoted from scarf-wearer to tie-and-lanyard status, he was part of a similar exhibition. Even though he no longer stood in the front line, he was as embarrassed as he had been previously. In Jack's mind they were arrogantly proclaiming:

"TAKE NOTICE OF US!

WE ARE JEWS!

WE ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU!"

Jack believed they should be humbly saying, "Look at us. We are Jews. We are no different from you." He did not feel that being proud of your identity necessitated that this identity be flaunted, trumpeted abroad. Being proud but modest, in his mind, fitted in better with Jabotinsky's concept of *Hadar*.

1957: Jack in Betar uniform

1957: Bnei Etzel at Betar Camp

Klabberjass

Alvin and Jack loved to watch their dad play klabberjass. Klabberjass was the national game of South African Jews. Its origin was probably Dutch but it had apparently not caught on amongst the Afrikaners. It is a trick-taking card game less sophisticated than bridge but slightly more complex than whist. It can be played by two or three players but the most popular form was with four players. It was, initially, especially popular with middle-aged and elderly men but soon caught the attention of the young. It was never played by women. They played rummy. A frequent and typical sight was that of four men sitting around a table topped with green baize, cigarettes, cigars or pipes in their mouths, glasses of whisky or beer readily at hand. One would hear the rapid-fire shuffling of the deck, almost always red or blue Bicycle cards, followed by the slapping of cards onto the table, each in their turn. There would be shouts, to the uninitiated, of unintelligible words, like *"trompf", "jass", "manille", "bela", "tvantzig", fooftzig"* and loudest of all *"schtoch"*. At the end of each hand, there followed a cacophony of questions, oaths, accusations and blame as the post-mortem examination took place. Then there was the clinking of coins as the winner was paid. The two of them sat fascinated at David's side trying to fathom the rules, enjoying the atmosphere of malignant competition which they soon learned was but benevolent camaraderie. When they asked David to teach them, he said. "Not yet, *Boykies*. It's not a game for little boys."

Later though, when they were in their early teens, David taught them the two-handed form of the game. They played for pennies. It was clear that very soon after each hand had been dealt and Jack had played his first card, David could work out exactly which cards Jack had in his hand. Jack had no idea how to do this and played mechanically. As a result, his dad always won but as Jack's pile of pennies grew smaller, his dad would suddenly start losing. Jack soon discovered what was happening and protested. His dad would beam his high-cheeked smile.

1960: A game of klabberjass. David, Alvin, a friend, Jack.

Xanadu

By the middle fifties, David's business was doing well and had long since expanded from a wrought iron works to a small factory which now produced electric light fittings, metal lamps, metal furniture and prams. The original premises near the city centre had become too small and David built a new factory in an industrial area in an eastern suburb of Johannesburg. The factory now employed about fifty workers.

By sheer example, David taught his sons generosity, humility, honesty, integrity, will-power and the rewards of hard work. He was a tower of strength and support.

David's new factory. Built 1957

Visiting card

David continued to work long hours throughout the week but he kept his promise to his sons. He built for them a rustic Xanadu. He worked every weekend from dawn to dusk with two or three black labourers. He planted lawns and flower beds. He hauled gigantic rocks to make rockeries. He constructed a fish-pond. He had a swimming pool built. He erected a fountain in the shape of an elephant which sent a spray of water from its trunk into the pool. He fenced off areas for the chickens, geese and ducks he had promised. He added peacocks and guinea fowl. He built a shed for the five cows he had bought. The brothers drank milk still warm and frothing from the milking. They learned how to milk, separate cream and churn butter. The huge stack of hay for the cows was a place for endless games. When the apricot and plum trees blossomed in the spring, they were a glory of white, abuzz with pollen-laden bees. Towards the end of summer, orange apricots and purple plums would be ripe for picking. They shared their paradise with their friends and were proud to register their envy.

1949-1965: The house in Bedfordview.

Tony, a friend, Jack, Alvin, David

Monkey house left top corner

Duck pond

Blossoming plum trees

1952: Tony, David, Jack, Doreen, Alvin

1960: David, Doreen, Tony

When one project had been accomplished, he started a new one. He planted a field of asparagus. He designed and constructed special knives with which to harvest them. He built a vast terrace and fireplace for *braaiing*. It was enormous enough to barbecue a whole lamb. It was decorated with a mosaic of slasto. In the chimney of the fireplace, he mounted rods and hooks for smoking meat. He built an underground wine cellar where he experimented with making wine out of the plums. He pickled mushrooms and cucumbers to reconstruct tastes of home.

He still left for work before his sons awoke in the morning and came home late in the evening. He had no close friends. His only confidant was his bother Len but he shared with him only the reminiscences of their childhood and business matters.

He never shed the ghosts of his lost family.

Doreen smelled of hairspray, eau de cologne and cigarette smoke. She always looked spic and span. Her face was carefully made up with rouge on her cheeks and red lipstick on her lips. Her blonde hair was done up in a bun or a single plait crowning her head. She was beautiful. She had a fine sense of order and aesthetics. She took pride in keeping the home neat and tidy, warm and welcoming: It was always tastefully decorated with huge displays of flowers.

She taught her sons kindness, gentleness, respect for the feelings of others, politeness, empathy and sympathy. She gleaned strength from seeing them emulating these traits.

She never shed the scars of her sad childhood

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Uncle Sholem

The Hoffmanns rarely went on family outings together except to visit Uncle Len and his wife Aunty Rose.

On the rare Sunday morning when David was not busy with his projects, he would take the boys to visit his Uncle Sholem, his father Moshe's brother. He was the only member of that generation of the family to have survived the War. Although he was in his seventies, he was a handsome, neat man who looked remarkably like the photographs of Moshe with which the boys were so familiar. His moustache was though, much more luxuriant than Moshe's had been, and it was waxed into a cavalry twirl. His wife's name was Lettie. She was an extremely ugly woman. Her lower lip hung downwards like prolapsed haemorrhoids. They lived in a tiny, dingy flat on a bleak street in central Johannesburg. Jack found it strange that despite the lateness of the hour, the pair would still be dressed in nightclothes and dressing gowns. The visit always proceeded along the same lines. David would chat to Sholem in Yiddish. Occasionally, Sholem's eyes would cloud over with tears. He never smiled. The boys sat around fidgeting in silence dreading what was to follow. Aunt Lettie would shuffle noisily into the room on her poorly fitting slippers and place before each of them, a glass of what she called "hot Bosco". It was in fact a tepid brew that bore the colour of chocolate but tasted of nothing at all. It was served with a plate of Marie biscuits that months before had had their pristine crunchiness replaced by sorry sogginess. Worst of all, was the frightful state of the glasses in which the unappetizing beverage was served. They were smeared with the detritus of previous users and it was difficult to find a spot on the rim that seemed hygienic enough to place one's lips. They politely took a few token sips and said, almost in unison, "Thank you very much, Aunty. I'm full."

When David rose to leave, the boys scurried to their feet to witness a scene that was repeated every time. David stretched out his hand to shake Sholem's in farewell. In his palm he had secreted a green five pound note folded neatly into quarters. After the handshake was completed, David's palm was again empty and Sholem's was clasped. Jack wondered each time, firstly, how the note had arrived in his dad's palm without any apparent prelude and how it disappeared into Sholem's without ever falling

to the floor. Neither David nor Sholem ever looked down at their handshake. Jack was proud of his dad's quiet generosity. The dreary visit to the flat and its unappealing fare was amply compensated for by the time he was spending with his dad.

Jack's most cherished moments were the occasions when his parents would dress up in their finest attire and go off together, as a couple, to some function or formal affair. He beamed at his dad, handsome and resplendent in an immaculate suit and brightly polished shoes and at his mom beautiful, exuding the smell of perfume, her golden hair recently sculptured by the hairdresser, wearing gloves, her handbag matching her shoes, her face made up and smiling.

Around 1953: David and Doreen

Back to Sorrento

Tony grew up as a clone of the man for which he had been named. As he was so much younger than Alvin and Jack, he was not included in their pastimes. He eavesdropped secretly on his older brothers' erudite discussions but was not invited into their conclave. He became a solitary, somewhat sad, small boy who wandered off on adventures he shared with no one. He would come home smeared with the red soil of Johannesburg, with scuffed knee, runny nose and dishevelled clothing. He invented games for himself and constructed his own playthings. He once went fishing at the little stream that ran through their property with a piece of rope which someone had helped him tie onto a stick. On the end of the rope, was attached a piece of orange peel.

"You're just like my Cousin Tony," Doreen would say, with tears in her eyes as she caressed his tousled blonde hair and kissed his freckled face. She never scolded him. She delighted in his similarity to her cousin. She gleaned comfort from his independence, his inventiveness, his self-assurance. Whether this similarity was merely mystic coincidence, reincarnation or self-fulfilling prophesy, no one knew.

Doreen had heard the story of her cousin Tony's death in Italy during the Second World War in garbled fragments. One version related that he had died near Sorrento, probably in confusion with Taranto, where his division had landed in 1944. Ever after, Doreen associated the Neapolitan love song *Torna a Surriento* (Come Back to Sorrento) with Tony's death. It became her favourite song, for each time she heard it, it returned her to Tony. Hot tears poured down her cheeks as she listened to versions by Enrico Caruso, Beniamino Gigli and Mario Lanza. Every time she looked at her youngest son, she was taken back to Sorrento.

A Harrovian Clone

In 1955, having finished primary school, Jack would be going to a high school for the next five years. The choices were many. He could be sent to the local co-educational province-run high school, to a privately run, more exclusive school which could be co-educational or for boys only, or he could be sent to an even more exclusive boys' boarding school.

His parents chose the second option. The school was called King David High School, a private, co-educational school for Jewish children. Jack exchanged uniforms and he exchanged status. His short grey pants became long grey flannels. The shirt remained white and the blazer black but the badge was now blue and white and depicted the head of a springbok and an open book. The cap was black and the tie striped blue and white. He had been one of the big boys at Kensington South but would now again be relegated to the lowest rank. It was hard for Jack to change schools. All his friends had gone to other schools so he had to start all over again trying to make new friends. He didn't think he was good at that. Alvin was two classes ahead of him at the same school and that helped a bit.

It was a time of turmoil for Jack. The hormones of Mars and the vagaries of Venus plagued his being. It was a time of self-doubt, introspection, physical challenge, intellectual searching. It was a time of yearning for identity, of clambering for a foothold on a sheer rock face that led, he knew not where.

King David High School (Photographed in 2016)

1955 Form 1: Jack back row, 5th from the left

He presented himself for the first day of his eighth year of school, known colloquially as Form I. There were seventeen other boys and eleven girls. A pretty girl came up to him. He found out later that her name was Brenda-Lee. She looked him up and down.

"What's your name?" she asked.

Jack turned red. He didn't know how to handle strangers, especially pretty girls. He had difficulty in placing his gaze. Looking into her face exacerbated his discomfiture. Casting his eyes downward he was confronted by her breasts proudly stretching the fabric of her blue and white uniform dress. He couldn't gaze at those either, so his eyes sought refuge in his hands instead.

"J-j-j-jack", he stammered.

"What's that big, ugly ring you have" she asked, pointing to the large gold signet ring his parents had given him for his bar mitzvah which had been celebrated the month before. It had his initials VJH engraved on it. Jack closed his hand into a fist, trying to hide the ring.

"What's the V stand for? She asked.

"V-v-v-vivian". He flushed a brighter shade of crimson.

"But that's a girl's name!" She laughed.

He muttered incoherently trying to explain that it depended how the name was spelt but her

attention was already elsewhere.

″I hate that name," he thought.

He never wore the ring again.

The episode was yet another in a series of disagreeable events Jack associated with his bar mitzvah. He reviewed them in his mind now. He had spent six months in the sweaty presence of Mr Shimoni learning the paired sections of the holy texts, the *parsha* and the *haftarah.* that are traditionally sung before the *shul* congregation by the boy at his bar mitzvah service on a sabbath morning. He was required not only to read the Hebrew texts flawlessly but he also had to learn the musical notes associated with each syllable, the *trop* (cantillation). But so tone deaf and unmelodious was he, that the exasperated Mr Shimoni had suggested that he drop the cantillation and simply *read* the texts without the melody. Jack was caught between the Scylla of the ignominy that simply reading would entail and the Charybdis of singing like an asthmatic toad. After sleepless nights, Jack had decided to persevere with the melodic version despite his phonic ineptitude.

His second source of embarrassment was the fact that his mother insisted that he wear a suit with long trousers for the occasion. He had never before worn long trousers, let alone a suit. He felt silly and pretentious. His mother told him he looked a real *mensch.*

The third nightmare was that he had to make a speech at the reception following the *shul* ceremony. He fretted and sweated at the thought of it. The Rabbi had handed him a standard speech. It started, "On this solemn and sacred day, which marks my passage from boyhood into manhood" and continued with similar inane observations. Jack had wanted to write his own speech and say the things he really felt but didn't have the courage. He learned the Rabbi's silly speech by heart.

The fourth burden was the ring. Jack hated anything that made him appear ostentatious and he felt that the ring did. However, out of respect for his parents, he wore it on the ring finger of his right hand. He reluctantly accepted also, that he had to wear his sea-green long trousered suit. In the end, he actually felt quite good in it. He was later grateful, as it had prepared him for the long-trousered life of high school.

He ended up *singing* the whole bar mitzvah performance on the big day, albeit in a barely discernible croak. He was red with embarrassment and damp with humiliation. During the reception, he kept going over his speech in his head but in the end was never called upon to make it.

Most of the other pupils in Form I had been at primary school together and knew each other. Jack was an outsider. He determined that he would work hard in order to show the others that he was as good as they were. But he soon discovered that the ones who mattered at the school were not the bright children, they were those who excelled at sport.

The set text in English for Form I was The Hill by H.A Vachell. It was a novel about life at Harrow School, near London, in the early days of the century. It was full of spunk and glory, a fine book for thirteen year old boys. Jack was moved to tears by its dramatic ending. But it proved to be more than a rollicking adventure story. Much more. This book was in fact the blueprint for his education for the next five years. The Hill extolled discipline, selflessness, esprit de corps, sportsmanship, physical courage, loyalty, chauvinism and martyrdom for Flag, King and Country. It was elitist. Above all it was undilutedly Anglophile. And these (besides perhaps, the martyrdom) were the qualities with which Jack and his fellow pupils were imbued over the subsequent years.

Most parents had chosen this school hoping their children would receive a good, solid education so that they would be qualified to enter a university while at the same time allowing them to be taught Hebrew, Jewish history and the tenets of Judaism. But the priorities lay elsewhere. The school's shrine did not hold a Torah scroll. It held the cricket cap of Jackie McGlew, the captain of the South African international cricket XI. Sports at King David High School, were compulsory. Harrovian sports, like rugby and cricket for the boys and archetypal English netball for the girls, gave them their heroes and their role models and taught them esprit de corps, loyalty and stiffness of the upper lip. The focus was clearly on aspiring to achieve English values and sporting prowess. Everything that was important had its source "in England's green and pleasant land." Academic achievement earned only a secondary role. Jack relished this credo. It fitted in with the seed that had been planted when he stood

waving his Union Jack at the Royal Family in their splendid limousine eight years earlier. It also agreed with the feelings of glory conveyed to him by his RAF heroes.

The quintessential English sport was cricket. It is a sport which was utterly incomprehensible to the casual spectator. To the initiated, it was vast trove of delight. It had rules only somewhat less complex than those of astrophysics. It had its very own glossary of words and expressions. Some of these, like silly mid-off, leg slip and square leg were ostensibly English but to outsiders might just as well have been Finnish. Some words did not mean what they appeared to mean, like duck, gardening and Chinaman. Other words were not English at all like yorker, googly and howzat. Some cricketing words became part of the English language; sticky wicket, hat-trick and stumped.

The players dressed in immaculate cream or white, like the High Priests in the temple of Solomon. Their pristine whiteness was sullied only by the colours of their caps, which represented school, club or country and the smears of red along the inner surfaces of their thighs, where the shiny red cricket ball was obligatorily kept polished. South Africa's rivals in the world of cricket were England, Australia and New Zealand. Like no other game in the world, international cricket matches lasted a full five days. Each second of the action was commented upon by incredibly well informed radio commentators who could quote every possible statistic of the history of cricket and relate them to the current action. In a country where television was banned as an instrument of the devil, anyone who wanted to follow "the cricket" had to listen to it on the radio. School boys rejoiced at the advent of transistor radios with ear pieces. With these magical contraptions, one could sit in class, place the transistor radio beneath the lid of one's desk, thread the wire of the ear-piece into the recesses of one's blazer, lead it along the inside of one's sleeve, place the ear-piece in one's ear, rest the side of the head containing the ear-piece in one's palm and gaze seemingly attentively at the teacher as she expounded endlessly in Latin, on Cæsar's Gallic Wars, while imbibing the succulent cricket commentaries of Charles Fortune. If one was unexpectedly called up to write something on the blackboard, one had to be nimble fingered enough to extricate oneself from one's umbilical cord to the SABC without one's delinquency being discovered. The national team, the Springboks, was made up almost entirely

of surnames of "English" origin like Rowan, McLean, Adcock and Waite. Only an occasional Heine or van Rynevelt crept in.

The case for rugby was the exact opposite. This was the national game of the Afrikaner. The national team was made up of names like Viviers, du Rand and Claassen and sporadically spotted with a *rooinek* name like Fry or Kirkpatrick. While cricket was a game of elegance, patience and strategy, rugby was a contest of strength, endurance and tactics. Cricket was violins, flutes and harps. Rugby was trumpets, drums and pipe organs. Cricket was Chopin. Rugby was Wagner. Together they created magnificent symphonies relished by a country for which sport created a national identity. An identity which excluded the Blacks, of course.

1959 A rugby game: Jack 3rd striped player from the right.

At King David, as elsewhere in white South Africa, the only Blacks one encountered were those caring for the playing fields, lawns and flower beds and those serving tea and lunch for the teaching staff. Jack and some of the others, would nod to them or greet them briefly. They would reply, as they had at the primary school, with a smile, a touch to their caps and say *"Baas"*. They would stand in fascinated groups and marvel at the excitement engendered by boys in shorts and colourful jerseys

rushing about after an oval leather ball, their tackling and sprawling, their intense huddling and heaving, their unintelligible tactics. They stared in wonder, as white-clad boys hurled red cricket balls at three sticks in the ground and at each other. They mowed the green playing fields. They heaved heavy rollers across the cricket pitch. They painted the white demarcation lines on the grass. They watered and weeded and replaced divots. No one ever tried to include them in the spirit of the competition or explain to them the complexities of the contest. *Their* sport was football which they had played as barefoot little boys on sandy, unmarked pitches with tennis balls or self-constructed, ball-like contrivances of improvised materials. When they were older, they had played on only slightly more sophisticated fields with second-hand footballs and cast-off togs.

The girls played netball. The boys thought it a silly, insipid game compared with their vicious, violent rugby. But they often watched the girls playing for two reasons. Firstly they were required to, in the name of esprit de corps, when the game was an important one against a rival school. But secondly and more to the point, they watched the girls because the skittering, prancing and jumping required by the game, caused updraughts of air that sent their short sports skirts bellowing upwards to reveal tantalizing expanses of bare thigh or in the delicious extreme, a fleeting glimpse of white panties. They ogled the breasts and commented on size, shape and degree of wobbliness. The annual swimming gala, was in this respect the highlight of the year. Here were revealed naked thighs galore and perhaps even a quarter inch of cleavage.

Netball. 1958

There were girls and there were girls. There were the ordinary ones, the Jewish ones, who perhaps looked OK and spoke with the same accent as Jack did. And there were those who came from the exclusive, private, "English" girls' schools, like Roedean and St. Mary's, to play netball against the girls of King David. They were taller, blonder, had more slender hips and more delicately sculptured breasts. They had blue eyes, rosebud mouths and complexions of fragile porcelain. And they spoke with the accent of the Queen opening Parliament. They were a source of unbearable longing. They were as unattainable as stars in a distant galaxy.

Parallel to them, were boys who attended the equivalent exclusive boys' schools like St. John's, Michaelhouse or Hilton College. King David occasionally played cricket and rugby against them. They were a notch or two finer than the boys of King David. Their eyebrows were raised an eighth of an inch higher, their noses pointed five degrees further north, their hair was more sleekly combed, their faces were less visited by acne, their hands were more lily white, their shirts a shade cleaner, their ties more neatly knotted, their trousers more sharply pressed, their shoes a smidgeon shinier,

their tongues a carat more golden and their accents oh so much less South African. It was they who could aspire to the girls of Roedean.

The Headmaster of King David was Mr Sandler. He was of medium height. He had thick dark brown hair, which was always amply oiled and impeccably combed with a parting on the left side. He wore horn-rimmed spectacles and was never seen without a jacket and tie. He had somewhat chubby cheeks and a generous mouth with a friendly smile. If one had seen him as a stranger on the street, one would have guessed that he was a benign, sweet-tempered clerk in an obscure government office. However, he was the architect of this Anglophile design and the martinet of its accomplishment. He ruled the school with an iron fist, a quiver of canes and a battery of stentorian exhortations:

"You miserable little worm!"

"Get your hair cut! You could stand behind a lamppost disguised as a thicket!"

"Have a shave! Is your nose so important that you need to underline it?"

"Pick up that piece of paper, you untidy lout!"

"What are you doing here playing chess? Where's your esprit de corps? Go and watch the rugby!"

He created his Harrow clone. If you were good at sport, especially one of the major ones like rugby or cricket, you would receive his benign smile, his approval, a warm pat on the shoulder. You were "in". Excellence in subjects like English, Latin or history, would place one in a category slightly below the Olympians but you were also "in". Achievement in lesser subjects like Hebrew, mathematics or science did not allow entrance into the club of the favoured. Those who were not specially good at anything, were at best ignored or at worst, harangued, excoriated, demeaned and abused. They were "out" and they hated Mr Sandler with a hatred that singed their souls.

Those who achieved Mr Sandler's approval became the Elite. They basked in his approval, they loved the credo he had taught them, thrived on it and celebrated it. And they, the Elite, spared no thought for those who were the underdogs. This southern Harrow was a perfect microcosm of an imperfect South Africa.

There were uniforms to illustrate this elitism and to accentuate the illusion of Harrow. One could read from the pupil's school blazer whether the wearer was "in" or "out". An "out" had a plain black blazer adorned only by the school badge on the breast pocket. A school prefect, or one with sporting "colours" had a black blazer with blue and white piping along its edges and just above the cuffs of the sleeves. A small scroll beneath the breast pocket of the blazer bore the reason for the colours: head prefect, prefect, rugby, cricket, swimming, athletics, tennis and so forth. At a later date, possibly after protests from parents, scrolls stating less prestigious talents like academics, drama, debating and chess were added. The top flight achievers had five or six scrolls below their breast pockets. The crème de la crème achieved an honours blazer which was, appropriately, pure white.

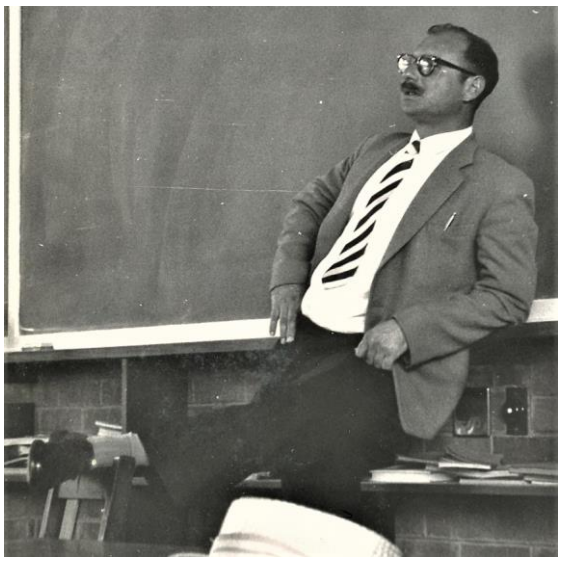
The only aberration confounding this Harrovian idyll, was, of course, the presence of the girls. But also they had uniforms. Their summer uniform was a white straw hat with a blue band, short white socks, black shoes, a thin, white, blue-striped cotton dress ending daringly high above the knees. What a delight this was for Jack and the other boys, struggling to cope with their testosterone-drenched bodies. In a certain light and at a specific juxtaposition of angles, with much craning of neck and squinting of eye, one might possibly, just manage a fleeting glimpse of a quarter of an inch of white brassiere strap on a pink shoulder. Such a peep was the apex of their carnal experience. In the winter, all chance of such innocent voyeurism vanished as the girls now wore black berets, full length, thick, black stockings, dowdy grey gymslips, white shirts buttoned to the neck and sealed with school ties. Their necks were often even more deeply buried in blue and white striped scarves. Thankfully the Johannesburg winters were very short.

In addition to preaching his credo and ensuring discipline, Mr Sandler taught English grammar. Jack and the others had drummed into them that infinitives are not to be split, that the gerund requires the possessive form of the pronoun preceding it, that one does not start a sentence with a conjunction and that one does not end a sentence with a preposition. Besides this drudgery, he also revealed to them the beauty and boundless reaches of the English language, its versatility and its protean nature. He taught them that "Words are the dress of thoughts, which should no more be

presented in rags, tatters, and dirt than your person should." Jack learned to love the English language as he did all things English.

Later, Jack learned too, to reject the elitism and to focus on the positive aspects of the "Harrowism" he had been taught, the loyalty, the comradeship and the mental discipline. They corresponded with Jabotinsky's *Hadar*.

Jack had other excellent teachers. His favourite was Mr Kahanovitz. He was a tall man of athletic build. He was already balding at the age of thirty-five. He wore small glasses rimmed with tortoiseshell. He had a bristling ginger moustache. He was always smiling, not broadly, but subtly as if enjoying a private joke. His characteristic stance in the classroom was leaning with his back against the blackboard, one leg raised to ninety degrees and resting upon the desk in front of him. He had been a cricketer and often stood with a cricket bat in his right hand with which he gently tapped his right calf.



Mr Kahanovitz. 1959

He taught Jack history. Amorphous chalk ellipses and asymmetric circles on the blackboard represented states and continents, realms and kingdoms, empires and hegemonies. And in the upper left-hand corner, was a triangle that was forever England. Exes represented generals and armies. Arrows were points of confrontation. Asterisks showed victories. By the end of the lesson, the board was an incoherent plexus of curlicues, whirligigs and squiggles. But out of this chaos, there blossomed in Jack an understanding and love of history. The achievements of Gutenberg and Caxton, Calvin and Luther, Rousseau and Voltaire, Napoleon and Metternich, Bismarck and Garibaldi became emblazoned on his memory.

They were taught the history of the ancient empires of Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome. They were taught about Vasco da Gama's circumnavigation of the Cape in 1497, the Dutch settlement of the Cape in 1652, the arrival of the French Huguenots in1688 and the waves of British settlers in 1820, the Great Trek in the 1830s, the Boer Republics, the Anglo-Boer Wars and the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. They were taught of struggles of the Europeans against the native hordes; the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, the Zulus in Natal and the Basotho on the eastern borders. But they learned not a word, not a fact, of the histories of these proud people nor of the aeons-old histories of the San and the Khoikhoi, who predated both the Europeans and the Bantu tribes in southern Africa by tens of centuries. There was no mention either of the mighty African kingdoms of Zimbabwe, Mali, Ghana, Benin, Ethiopia, Songhai, Nok, Oyo and tens of others. Africa had no history besides that of the ancient Egyptians and the European colonialists.

Mr Kahanovitz also taught Jack English Literature. Scheduled lessons were occasionally usurped by Mr Kahanovitz's asking the question ″What are you reading?" Those who were not reading anything, sought invisibility behind their downcast eyes or the lids of their desks. Those who answered Hemingway or Flaubert or Dostoyevsky, received nods of approval, words of discussion. Those who admitted to Ellery Queen or Raymond Chandler were neither mocked nor belittled. They were gently ribbed and with a wry smile, encouraged to set their literary goals a tad higher. He opened their eyes to the joys of reading.

His pedagogic tools were his love of the subjects he taught, his humour, his gentleness, his insight into the tremulous souls of pimply adolescents. He sought and won closeness rather than aiming for aloofness. He stimulated rather than scolded. He guided rather than ridiculed. He encouraged rather than intimidated. He used neither anger nor threats nor violence. A disapproving glance from him was punishment enough. His only physical weapon was an occasional fragment of chalk flicked with a cricketer's speed and accuracy at a somnolent or delinquent pupil. He spared the rod and did not spoil the child. He showed Jack that figures of authority need not gird themselves with arrogance.

The Headmaster of King David High School, Mr Sandler

Music

In the middle fifties, as Alvin entered his late teens, he had his own set of friends and his interests diverged from Jack's. He remained however, the Big Brother and was always available for physical, moral and intellectual support.

As Alvin trod more adult paths, Jack explored new worlds. The first was close to home. Tony, who had until then been regarded as a spoiled, irritating, younger brother, drew closer to Jack. Jack admired his adventurous spirit and his independence. They paged together through the same illustrated encyclopaedias that Alvin had shared with Jack a few years previously. Whether he was conscious of this or not, Tony seemed increasingly to take on the role that had been given to him when he was named after Doreen's beloved cousin. He did not flourish at school but he found his place in Betar, where he, at an early age became a member of the Advance Guard that set up the annual camp. He thrived in the atmosphere of wide open spaces, absence of sophistication and the primitive conditions of the camp. He revelled in the stories of Jewish heroes and the homeland for Jews. He saw an Israeli film called Hill 24 Does Not Answer which related the story of four men and women of vastly different origins but united in an attempt to hold on to a post in the foothills of Jerusalem in the 1948 Israeli War of Independence. It is a film about friendship, passion and the ultimate sacrifice. It fired his imagination and his heart. Rugby too became a scene where he could shine. It was war in microcosm, a milieu that rewarded strength, endurance and acts of heroism.

The second world was music. Jack's family was not musical. David had no interest in music whatsoever. He never sang nor whistled nor hummed. He did not know the Beatles from Beethoven, Elvis from Elgar, Bing from Bach. The extent of his musical ability was his rendition of the lilts of the Friday night *kiddush* or the tones of *Chad Gadya* and other traditional songs sung at the Passover celebration. Neither Alvin nor Jack were much better. Jack had already embarrassingly discovered this at nursery school when trying to sing the nursery rhymes. It had been confirmed at

primary school with the hymns, around the campfire at Betar Camp and at his bar mitzvah rendition.

Doreen, on the other hand, was slightly more musical. Along with Come Back to Sorrento, she loved other sentimental songs like My Yiddishe Mamma by Sophie Tucker and Jan Peerce's Bluebird of Happiness. She had recordings of these songs which she played on the family's gramophone which was a large square box of shiny veneered wood. The gramophone also had a built-in radio with a dial spuriously listing tens of stations from New York to Moscow, Hilversum to Luxembourg whereas the most exotic place one could reach in practice, was Lourenco Marques. It was no doubt bought cheaply by David at some auction house but it encompassed the technology of the day by being able to play LPs as well as ordinary 78s. Jack heard the melodies in the background and remembered most of them fondly ever after. But no melody had etched itself so indelibly as the one Francina had sent fluttering through his window so many years before. Otherwise, Jack's only exposure to music were records of The Kingston Trio, Frankie Laine, Tex Ritter and Tennessee Ernie Ford that he and Alvin collected, the songs of Betar and trifles like the pop songs and advertising jingles for Jungle Oats and Eno's Fruit Salts which issued endlessly forth from the new commercial radio station, Springbok Radio that had started broadcasting in 1950 in opposition to the staid and dull national service, the SABC.

Jack's class teacher in Form I, Mrs Kopinsky doubled as music teacher. It was she who might have rescued Jack from his musicless desert and elevated him on wings of song. But she bore a sad visage and a lugubrious mien, hardly appropriate attributes for tempting him or other cacophonous youths into the realms of melody. Once, gloom-faced Mrs. Kopinsky was standing on a chair, conducting the school's singing in choir. Jack could not concentrate on the piece they were all torturing. All he could focus on were the suppressed giggles, unabashed guffaws and embarrassed asides that greeted the scandalous sight of thick tufts of black hair cascading from her unshaven armpits exposed to view via her sleeveless summer blouse as she raised her baton in the air. This certainly did not inspire Jack to pursue the joys of music.

Jack's first remembered exposure to classical music was when one of his classmates, Irma, played *Rondo alla Turca* on the piano a few months after he started at King David. For years after, each time he heard this melody, which was so commonly featured on the radio, often as a filler before the next news broadcast, he pictured Irma in her blue and white summer uniform dress, long blonde ponytail bobbing in synchrony with the pounding of her fingers on the keys and the tap dance of her black shoes on the pedals, her face aglow with the pleasure of her feat. Jack marvelled at mechanical effort being converted into sound, at sound, in turn, transforming into flashes of invisible light. He was filled with fascination. Fascination became awe. Envy displaced awe. A spark was lit and the seed planted originally by Francina, which had remained dormant for a decade, began to germinate.

Another girl in the class, Judy, played the flute. Jack could not comprehend how one could mingle flitting of the fingers with exhalations of breath to produce sounds of magic. His enchantment grew, his interest multiplied. As proof that music was not a sissy enterprise, one of the biggest boys in the class, Arnold, a rugby forward, played the violin. Besides the beauty of the music, Jack was fascinated by the callus the years of practice on the violin had left under the left side of Arnold's jaw. He wondered too, about the purpose of the white handkerchief he used to cover the chin rest. Was it to collect sweat or did the friction of the bow on the strings produce some kind of dust that might spill onto the shoulder of his black blazer? Jack never asked.

At some point, Judy presented Jack with his first ever classical music record. It was Beethoven's Fifth Symphony recorded by Cuba's National Symphony Orchestra. Later she gave him Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* played by Segovia. Soon afterwards, he heard a piece of symphonic music which was played as an overture to a radio serial. It reminded him of Beethoven's 5th Symphony but it wasn't that. He asked around and eventually it was revealed to be a part of the second movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. Jack was proud that he had at least recognized the composer. He rushed out to buy a recording. He enjoyed every note but when he got to the choral part, his mind exploded. He had never heard anything so powerful, so overwhelming. He played it over and over again. He learned the German words of the Ode to Joy and screamed them in his head. He didn't dare sing aloud.

It remained his favourite piece of music for many years. Over the next years, he filled out the gaps in the spectrum both to the left and to the right of Beethoven.

Friends for Life

A third consequence of the age gap between Alvin and Jack was that Jack was forced to make new friends. This he found difficult. He hadn't had any special friends at nursery school. He'd had friends at primary school but these were all superficial relationships and didn't survive his move to the new school. He was not good at chatter, banter, small talk. He preferred discussions rather than conversations. He was not funny nor entertaining. Yes, he had a sense of humour but this was dry and subtle and often based on word play and punning which others were slow to catch. But as the others got to know him and he was increasingly successful on the rugby field and his lessons, he became more popular.

One of the boys, Herbert, had been at nursery school with Jack but they had not been friends. Herbert had gone to a different primary school but he and Jack were now reunited at King David. He was shorter than average, had a shock of thick, straight black hair and a strong chin. His upper lip had the shape of a seagull in flight. He had sad brown eyes. He was very quiet but always appeared to be listening, observing. He came from a deeply Orthodox Jewish family and his religion was central to his life and way of thinking. Jack and Herbert slowly became friends. They were good at their school work and at rugby, so they were soon "in" with Mr Sandler. Another friend was Stanley, a tall, scrawny chap who was the clown of the class. He was no sportsman but later excelled as an actor in the school plays. A third friend was Martin who was very bright but never bothered investing much effort in studying. He played rugby and acted too. Friendship with these three boys would last the rest of his life.

The four of them had interminable discussions using pompous phrases, in their immature, proto-intellectual manner, on the meaning of life, the fate of the universe, the dilemmas of religion, the intrigues of politics, the mysteries of love and of lust.

"It's all a matter of willpower," Herbert said. It was his favourite phrase. The friends had long since

labelled him with a line from one of their favourite poems, Tennyson's Ulysses; "..strong in will To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

"What do you mean?" asked Martin.

"You can achieve anything you want to in this world, as long as you have the power of will to persevere," he answered.

"What about talent?" asked Stanley. "You can have as much willpower as you want but without talent, you can get nowhere. If you want to be a physicist and you're bad at maths, you'll never make it."

"I don't believe that," replied Herbert. "If you're bad at maths and have willpower, you can just put your head down and master maths."

"So if you only have one leg and want to be an Olympic high jumper, you just use your willpower to grow a new leg," Martin, the pragmatist, offered.

Herbert punched him.

"What about ambition?" asked Jack. "You can have as much talent and willpower as you want but without ambition, it is all wasted. Willpower is the engine, talent is the fuel but ambition is the high beam of the headlights leading you to the goal."

Defending The Six Million

Jack had experienced no anti-Semitism since the petty inanities of Brian at primary school. Occasionally, a remark was passed which Jack accepted as friendly banter, like once, in the showers after a rugby game. The fly-half of a visiting team was the most athletic and handsome member of the squad. He had gone through the gruelling match with his Elvis hair still immaculately in place and his togs pristine. He looked down at Jack's penis and said,

"Doesn't your knob get cold without a hat?" Hysterical hoots of laughter issued from the rest of his team.

"Never noticed," answered Jack. "If you painted two black dots on yours, it would look like someone wearing a Klu Klux Klan hood." The laughter was as boisterous.

The scrum half, as always the smallest in the team and its clown, added, "You can be damn sure the hood disappears when he meets the ladies." More joyous guffaws.

"*Ja.* but you're right. It is strange that our God tells us to keep our heads covered but our pricks exposed," added Jack.

Jack knew they were not attacking his Jewishness. On the contrary, the fact that they felt free enough to make silly jokes in his presence, meant that they did not regard him as different.

Visiting rugby teams travelled to their away games in the school bus. The extra space in the bus was filled with supporters. On one occasion, as Jack was on his way to the showers after a match, he saw in the distance, a bunch of opposition supporters walking towards him. They had apparently been spending their time illicitly smoking cigarettes behind the toilet building instead of cheering on their team. There were five of them. The biggest was over six feet tall and weighed at least two hundred pounds. Whether his weight was due to muscle or to flab was difficult to determine. Jack heard the others address him as Wessel. They sauntered along, ogling the girls and making snide remarks about breasts, buttocks and legs.

"Shit! She's got tits like a fucking dairy cow!"

"Fuck! She's got an arse like a PUTCO bus!"

"Christ! With legs like that she could get a job at the abattoir kicking the bulls to death!"

Each remark was followed by lewd sniggers.

When they were about ten paces away, Wessel shouted, "Hey, Jewboy, do you know how you get six million Jews into a Volkswagen?"

"Are you talking to me?" asked Jack.

"Are you talking to me?" he repeated, aping Jack's slightly less South African accent. "I mean, Jewboy, you're so clever that I am asking you a riddle. How do you get six million Jews into a Volkswagen?"

Jack continued on his way towards the showers.

To his back, Wessel shouted, "Two in the front, three at the back and the rest in the ashtrays."

He and his pack, bayed with laughter.

Jack turned pale. Within the flash of a single second, he saw dark lines of forlorn millions, bereft of hope, yellow stars emblazoned on their chests. He saw railway trucks crammed with human cattle. He saw files of creatures sorted to left and to right. He saw shower-heads spewing gas. He saw black smoke billowing from high chimneys. He smelt death.

He turned again and retraced his steps towards Wessel, who was bent forward slightly at the hips, both hands on his thighs. His eyes were half closed, his little red mouth stood open as he howled his glee. Jack saw only the open mouth that had spewed such hate. It was like the eye of a malignant cyclops. Without thinking, he raised his right arm above his shoulder, his hand clenched into a fist.

"Watch out!" yelled one of Wessel's sidekicks.

In the time that it took Jack to place his left foot forward into striking position, Wessel had already opened his eyes, closed his mouth, staunched his laughter, straightened his back and punched Jack soundly in the face. Before Jack could complete his blow, Alvin had miraculously appeared between the two combatants and held them apart like the statue of Christ the Redeemer on Corcovado. He looked at Jack and saw blood streaming down his face. Someone handed Jack a thankfully clean handkerchief.

Alvin said, "Put on your blazer and come." He lead Jack to his Lambretta scooter. Jack sat on the pillion holding the handkerchief to his nose. The makeshift ambulance started with a swift downward tread on the starter pedal. Alvin drove him to Dr Hurwitz's surgery.

The doctor viewed the bloody handkerchief. "Not the thumb this time?" he joked.

′′No, someone thumbed my nose at me, though," said Jack, his voice muffled by the handkerchief and the coagulated blood in his nose. The pun did not quite work.

Dr Hurwitz inspected Jack's nose and then prodded and probed. "It's broken, I'm afraid."

"Does that mean we have to go to the hospital?" asked Alvin.

"No, I treated lots of this kind of thing in the Western Desert between battles. Our boys were prone to fisticuffs when they were bored. We can handle it here if you're as brave as you were when you were a little boy, Jack."

"What does that mean?" asked Jack, his adrenalin rising.

"Well, a bit of local anaesthetic just like last time and we'll set things straight, so to speak. Think you can manage that?" Jack nodded. Alvin stood in the background.

The shiny syringe whose name he now knew, filled with clear fluid. The needle approached his face. He closed his eyes as he tried to place himself outside his body. Pain seared his brain. He opened his eyes. He felt, as he had when his thumb had been cut, that his body belonged to someone else. Dr Hurwitz chose an instrument from the tray before him. It was a pair of pliers. Its flattened jaws were covered with rubber. The doctor grasped it in his right hand. He opened the jaws of the instrument and inserted one jaw into Jack's right nostril and closed the other onto the outside of Jack's nose. Dr Hurwitz's right wrist made a minute anti-clockwise movement. Jack felt another wave of fire in his brain despite his attempt to extra corporealize himself. He heard a crunching sound like someone gnawing on a lamb chop.

"There. Done. I'll just pack it to stop the bleeding," he said as he stuffed a tapeworm of gauze into Jack's nostril. "You can pull it out gently tomorrow."

On the pillion on the way back to school, Jack was torn among four emotions; pride, humiliation,

gratitude, resentment. He was proud that he had had the courage even to attempt to punch the two hundred pound bully. On the other hand he was ashamed at having been humiliated without landing a punch. He was grateful for his brother's loving protection and responsible reaction. On the other hand he resented him for shattering his puny attempt to avenge the memory of six million.

Jew-ish

The confrontation with Wessel re-awoke in Jack the other episodes in his life when his being Jewish had been smeared into his face like a pie in a Marx Brothers film; Brian's cursing him monosyllabically for being a Jew, the hymn singing dilemma at primary school, standing in a city square singing Hebrew songs in his Betar uniform, the Rosenberg affair. He remembered too, the unadulterated fervour which the Suez Crisis had evoked in him a few years earlier when Israel, Britain and France attacked Egypt to defend the right of free navigation through the Suez Canal. He had been too young to register the Israeli War of Independence in 1948 but then, in 1956, with Suez, Jabotinsky's vision had been fulfilled for Jack. He had been proud to be Jewish and felt like one of Jabotinsky's princes.

Such experiences, which caused ebbs and flows in his feelings about being Jewish, left Jack groping for identity. Was he Jewish, South African or English? Was he a combination of all three or did one automatically exclude the other two? He had no doubt about the Jewish part of the trinity but what form should this take? Did Jewishness mean being religious, adhering strictly to the laws and the customs? Could one be Jewish if one did not practice the rituals of the religion? Could one indeed be Jewish if one did not believe in God? Jabotinsky claimed to be an atheist but championed the right of Jews to be a free nation in their own land. Did Zionism replace Judaism? Jack was not religious and did not believe in an omnipotent Jewish God. He was though, enthralled by Jewish history, was thrilled by Jewish heroes and ardently longed to become part of the Zionist dream. But he loved South Africa. It was the womb from which he had sprung, despite its history, and its culture of hate and its unjust hierarchy. The boundless beauty of its landscapes, its endless summers, its brief, thundering Highveld storms that brought the smell of wet tarmac on sun-drenched afternoons, the crude, clever mischief of South African slang, the coriander and nutmeg smell of braaiing boerewors and the salty tang of biltong, were all irrevocably intertwined in the spirals of his DNA. Springbok

sporting heroes inspired him as much as Jewish warriors.

But in the eyes of other South Africans, he would always be a Jew. And how he yearned to be English, to be part of the culture that had produced a glorious empire and the language that ruled the world, to belong to the nation that had nurtured Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson and Dickens. He savoured the feats of Neville Duke, Len Hutton, Eric Evans and Roger Bannister. But he could never be English. The first syllable he uttered, the very mention of his name, would reveal him as a lesser being.

He aired these dilemmas with Alvin and his friends.

′′Why would you want to be English?" asked Alvin.

"Because I love their culture and their language."

"The language is yours now and no one can ever take it away from you. And culture. Which culture? The culture that allowed them to bully, maim and massacre and starve to death hundreds of thousands of 'lesser' people like the Irish, the Indians, the Chinese and the Boers in the name of their King?"

"But they rid the world of the Nazis. Both of us worshipped their fighter pilots and soldiers."

"They could not have done that without the Americans and the Russians. And we have our own heroes now, Moshe Dayan, Yigael Yadin, Ezer Weizmann."

After the tussle with Wessel, he said to Alvin, "No matter how much you try to be one of them, no matter how hard you try to integrate into their culture, they still regard you as different."

"What's new in that?" replied Alvin. "That is the pattern of two thousand years of exile. German Jewish soldiers won Iron Crosses serving Germany in World War One. In the next war. these heroes were gassed together with the rest. Why should it be different here? And you still say to me that you would like to be English? How ever much the Afrikaner despises you, the Englishman despises you even more."

"I could understand if we were walking around with *peyot* and *shtreimels*," said Jack. "That might be seen as a provocation, an insult to their Christian society. But we don't display symbols of our religion, We don't trumpet our faith. We don't say we are better than them. We look like them, we

speak like them, we play in the same teams as them but still we are different."

"Look, don't try to find logic in it. You can look like William Holden but just say your name is Chaim Lewinsky and you get that 'Jew' look."

"So maybe we should go the other extreme."

"Meaning what?"

"Display our Jewishness. Wear a *yarmulka.*"

"What would that achieve? The only solution is to get out of here and go to Israel."

One day, Jack brought up a discussion about degrees of Jewishness with his friends. "If the religion is the basis of our being Jewish, why is it not a requirement that one practices the religion in order to be called Jewish?"

"But we all do practice it," said Stanley.

"Bullshit. You drive on shabbat. You gladly eat ice cream after eating meat."

"But I don't eat pork."

"Where in the holy books does it say that eating pork is a greater crime than eating shrimps which you guzzle with delight? Or where does it say that pork is less kosher than beef that has not been ritually slaughtered? You happily eat *treif* beef at steak houses."

"We each do what we feel comfortable with," said Stanley.

"That's exactly my point! We each tailor the religion to suit our convenience. About the only rules that are universally practised by every Jew, are circumcision and bar mitzvah."

"Except for the girls," Martin snorted.

"All Jews fast on *yom kippur*," added Stanley.

"You'd be surprised how many Jews don't fast on *yom kippur,*" said Jack. "I say, either you are Jewish and abide by all the rules and follow all the rituals or you are not," he added. "Even the word should be revised. Jew-*ish* should define what we four are, a bit like a Jew, like five-ish means around five o'clock or blueish means kind of blue. *Jew* should be reserved for one who practices the religion fully, in its entirety. An orthodox Jew is a Jew. All others are Jew-ish."

"I notice you include me as Jew-ish, with a hyphen," said Herbert.

"Yes, because even you, who eats only strictly kosher food and fully abides by the rules of shabbat, walk around with your head uncovered and don't observe the 'lesser' laws like fasting on *Tishah B'Av* and *Ta'anit Esther.* You don't wear *tzizit* and I doubt whether you put on *tefillin* every day."

Herbert blushed but said nothing.

"You're an extremist! Each person has the right to choose his degree of involvement," said Stanley.

"The religion is what defines us. Do we have the right to define the religion?" asked Jack. "To me it's like the traffic laws," he added. "You cannot choose which parts suit you and which don't. You cannot say 'OK, the parking laws are good otherwise there will be chaos, so I'll follow them but to hell with speed limits. I don't like them. I'll drive as fast as I like'. If everyone does not obey all the laws completely, it all becomes nonsense."

"So what you are saying is that there is only one kind of Jew, an orthodox Jew. All others are not really Jews? But there are also many degrees of orthodoxy. Which one will we choose? Should we all be walking around in black suits and funny hats and have our women wear long black dresses and wigs?" asked Herbert.

"I am saying that one has to make a commitment, one way or the other. I just can't stomach the hypocrisy of people who say 'I don't eat pork but I love prawn cocktail.' "

As a consequence of this discussion and after much soul-searching, Jack decided to become a Jew by his definition, rather than remain Jew-ish. He informed his parents that he henceforth would eat only kosher food. That was no great problem, for the household was, for all practical purposes, already kosher, including separate sets of dishes for dairy products and for meat. The only misdemeanour that was allowed, was the consumption of milk products, notably ice cream, after a meal of meat. The occasional delicacies such as slices of smoked ham, salami containing pork and non-kosher cheeses that David loved and occasionally brought home, were now banished to an outside refrigerator which until then had housed only meat for the dogs and for the black staff. The family did not observe the sabbath except for the lighting of candles, the reciting of *kiddush* and the

traditional Friday evening meal. Jack told the family that he henceforth would follow all the rules of the sabbath, which meant that he no longer would perform actions like turning electric lights on or off or even tearing toilet paper. He walked the two miles to *shul* every Saturday morning. He encouraged the family to celebrate the neglected festivals of *shavuot* and *succot* as well as the universally observed ones like *pesach* and *rosh hashana*. He even fasted on Tisah B'Av which commemorated the fall of both the first and second temples in Jerusalem. He put on his *tallit* and *tefillin* every morning before school and recited the morning service. Despite his previous protests about an all-or-nothing approach, he eschewed a *yarmulka* and *tzizit* in public. His parents thought all this was a bit strange but accepted it all with their wonted tolerance.

"He's going through a phase" was his mother's interpretation. Alvin and Tony thought him weird.

Jack was perhaps seeking some form of spiritual revelation, an epiphany in his search for identity. He found none. He thought that during the prayers, God might be revealed to him. It did not happen. Maybe by practising the rituals of the religion he would feel himself to be a better human being. He did not. He sometimes mumbled the words and hummed the tune of Elijah's song which Mrs Ben Ari had taught him. It seemed to bring him closer to a mystic omnipotent force than did the ritualized praying from a book. After many months, he found that all the rigmarole meant nothing to him. His prayers were merely a parrot-like repetition of obscure words that brought him neither comfort not enlightenment. He wanted to stop the charade. Then he invoked Herbert's favourite concept "willpower".

"If I give this up, it will mean that I lack willpower. I will persist to prove that I am strong. He held his course for about seven years.

Herbert, Stanley, Martin and Jack rarely discussed the subject that was uppermost in their minds, sex. Many of their peers were well into "chatting up the dames" and dating. Some even hinted at sexual encounters. But for the foursome, sex was an uncharted ocean, a thing of mystery and remoteness. The moral code of the time in puritanical South Africa and especially in conservative Jewish Johannesburg, was that sex before marriage was a cardinal sin especially for girls, that social

contact with girls was only to be done with an eye to "going steady", that fooling around and flitting from girl to girl was unacceptable behaviour.

Some of the girls at school arranged parties on Saturday nights which Jack and his friends attended. They heard the rock and roll music of Bill Haley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley and the slower more romantic stuff of Frank Sinatra and Pat Boone which allowed more intimate flesh to flesh proximity. Jack's dancing skills were as inept as his vocal ones, so he sat in the corner eating peanuts and drinking Coca Cola. Besides, he didn't dare. He watched the others' gyrations with envy and unsatiated lust.

In this atmosphere of sexual rectitude, disregarding the rules had dire consequences. In 1958, one of the girls suddenly disappeared from the class. She was a large buxom girl, a star of the netball team. Her academic status was somewhat lower. It was later revealed that she had "fallen" pregnant. Abortion was not an option. Marriage was the only solution. She was sixteen and had to marry the perpetrator of this unacceptable social misdemeanour.

School Dance

As Saturday, the 8th of November, 1958 approached, Jack realized he could no longer ignore two challenges. Firstly, he had to learn to dance and secondly, he needed to pluck up enough grit to ask a girl to be his partner at the school's annual Matriculation Ball, which, by tradition, the Fourth Formers (Jack's class), organized for the matriculating class. Attendance was not obligatory but anyone not doing so, would be regarded as a miserable failure. After weeks of teenage timidity, trepidation, trembling and frequent attacks of copious sweating, Jack had finally screwed his courage to the sticking place and asked Maureen, one of the most attractive girls in the class, to the dance. She bravely and unwittingly accepted, completely oblivious of what Jack had in store for her. Besides the burden of this being his first formal date, his even darker secret was that he had never danced before. Doreen gave him cursory dancing lessons only hours before he set out in his newly laundered school uniform. As the fateful evening wore on, Jack realized that his efforts were a disaster. Maureen was gallant and diplomatic and complained neither by word nor by grimace. She probably bears the scars of Jack's ineptitude on her toes to this day. Jack's scars were not physical but he very rarely was tempted to revisit a dance floor in the years that followed.

MATRIC
FAREWELL

INVITATION

Form IV of the King David High School cordially invite you and your partner to the ANNUAL MATRIC FAREWELL DANCE to be held in the King David High School Hall, on Saturday, 8th November, 1958, at 8 p.m.

Ticket:
7/6 Double

48

R.S.V.P.

Essays

Of all the chores at school, the one Jack enjoyed the most was writing English essays. Each week he waited impatiently for his exercise book to be returned by Mr Kahanovitz, who slapped them nonchalantly, one by one, onto their desks. Jack's eyes would scurry to the bottom right-hand corner of the last page. There Mr Kahanovitz would have left two notations in red crayon, a mark expressed as percentage and a remark. If Jack got above 80%, he was ecstatic but the remark was always the cherry on the top. This could be terse like "Good" or "V. Good" or "Excellent!" or a longer statement like “Brush this up for the school magazine".

The one Jack was most proud of was, "An excellent essay. Articulate, provocative, intelligent. A talent for writing lingers. Let it emerge".

Matric

In November 1959, the class sat their matriculation examinations. It was announced that the results were to be released on the 15th of December. They would be printed in all the daily newspapers. Everyone knew though, that one could go to the offices of any of the newspapers on the evening before and see the results displayed on the notice boards. So on the evening of the 14th, Jack, Herbert, Martin and Stanley were driven to the offices of The Star. They joined the throngs waiting for the door to be opened. The hordes rushed in. Jack sought the board labelled G-H. With heart pounding, he scanned the list past the Gallaghers and Garbers, through the Geldenhuyses and Gennaros, the Gides and the Gilberts, the Godfrieds and Goosens, then Hughes, the Hugos and a Humboldt.

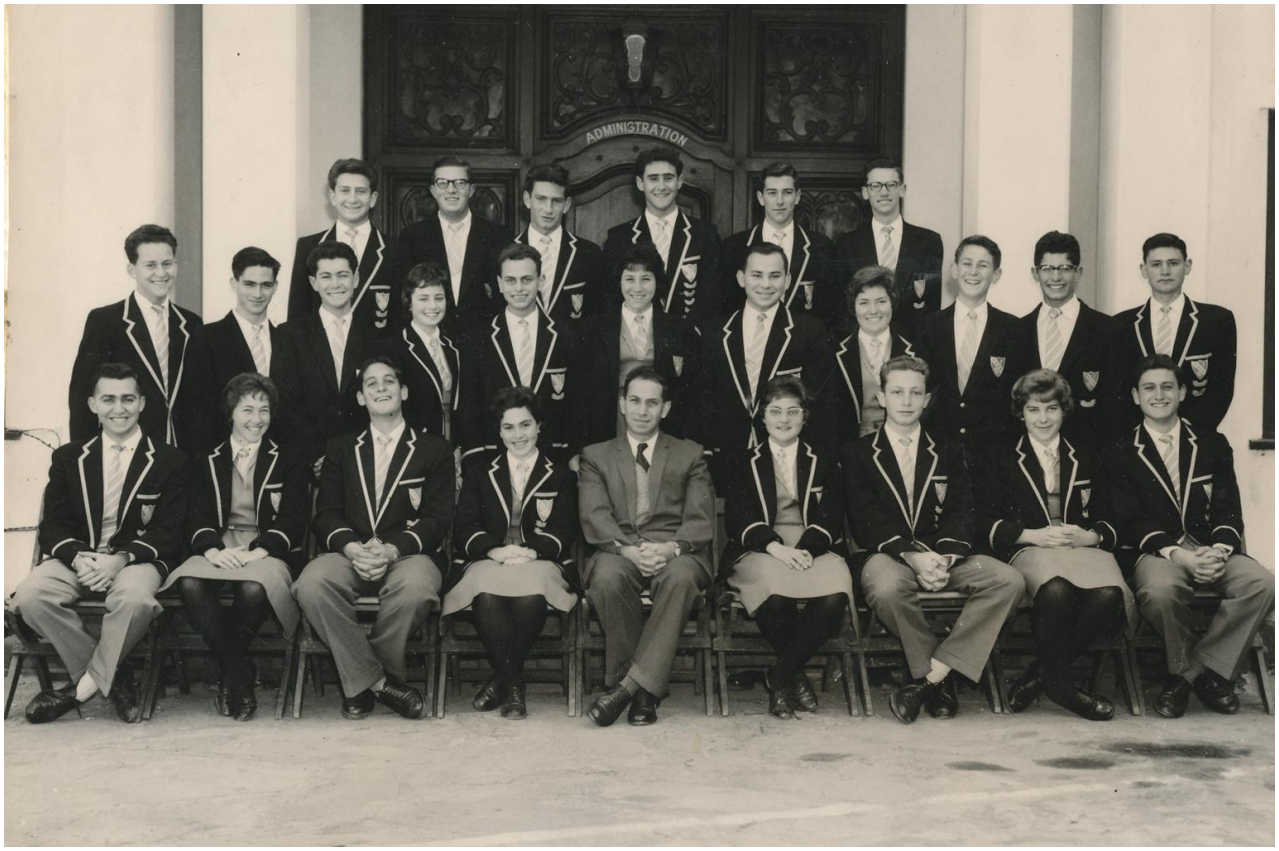
"Shit, I've gone too far!" Back to Hamilton, Henricks, Hicks and at last, Hoffmann A, Hoffmann R.S. And finally, Hoffmann V.J. He took a deep breath; two distinctions, in Hebrew and physical science and good passes in the other five subjects. Jack exhaled with relief.

"Good enough to get into medical school! Pity about English and history, though," he thought. He had been hoping for distinctions in his favourite subjects too. He soon saw the other three and could see from their beaming faces that they had also passed, Herbert and Martin also well enough to get into medical school. Stanley had chosen a different path. He would study languages in Europe and later, political science. As opposed to many of their schoolmates, they did not spend the rest of the evening downing Castle lagers. They returned home to celebrate with their parents.

Jack devoured the list of results in the next day's Star. Judy, the flautist, had won eight distinctions including her extra subject, French. Very few in the province had matched Judy's feat. All of his class had passed. Jack was struck by how few names there were like Dlamini, Maseko, Ngwane, Naidoo and Chaudry on the lists.

He applied for the Medical School of the University of the Witwatersrand, which was the best school in the country, rivalled only by the one in Cape Town. He was confident enough not to apply to any other school. He waited eagerly for the postman each day until the brown envelope arrived. He ripped it open. He was in!

He spent the long summer holiday reading. He ventured away from Dickens and Shakespeare that had dominated the previous five years. He read Steinbeck and Hemmingway and Dr Zhivago. He read Jewish history and two books that had been recommended by Alvin, the inspiring struggle of Ignaz Semmelweis to diminish the incidence of puerperal sepsis, in The Cry and the Covenant and A.J. Cronin's The Citadel, whose hero, Andrew Manson, chooses between using his medical profession to serve his fellow man or to become rich.



1959: Matriculation class.

Jack third from the right, front row.

White Water, Black Undercurrents

In February 1960, Jack entered the impressive portals of the University of the Witwatersrand. Witwatersrand means Ridge of White Waters. The rather cumbersome name was shortened colloquially to Wits. Jack gazed around the campus, the thronging students, the manicured lawns, the columned halls, the noble buildings, the famous playing fields. He felt small, insecure, insignificant. He had, until recently, been a big fish in a tiny pond. He was now a minnow in an ocean.

"Wits" - The University of the Witwatersrand

"Am I good enough? Will I make it? They all say it's so hard." he pondered.

With Herbert and Martin at his side, he studied the mysteries of physics, the complexities of chemistry, the intricacies of botany, the wonders of zoology. He had little aptitude or interest in the former two. He learned them by rote, like a parrot. He could not understand what botany had to do with medicine but was fascinated by the beautiful new universe he found under the microscope. He was awed by the shapes and structures of cells. Zoology was an endless list of organisms from evil viruses to disgusting nematodes, from flagellated bacteria to nasty disease-bearing insects. They had to learn their life cycles, their hosts, their habitats.

What he enjoyed the most was the weekly dissection of Xenopus laevis, the African clawed frog, a native of South Africa. They were originally kept as pets in the 1950s. They were hardy, proliferated heartily in captivity and lived as long as twenty years. These properties caught the eye of biological research workers and medical scientists. They were excellent for studying eggs, embryos and cellular biology. The frog achieved special fame when it showed its use as one of the first reliable pregnancy tests. When injected with urine from a pregnant woman, Xenopus produced eggs. Xenopus frogs that were set free in nature or escaped from captivity, subsequently avenged themselves on evil humanity by spreading diseases that destroyed ecosystems in other parts of the world.

Each student had his own pithing needle which had to be passed down the frog's spinal canal in order to kill it without damaging its other anatomical structures. It would give a shudder or two, reminding Jack of Rev. Levy's chicken and then lie still, ready to have its belly and chest walls opened to reveal a cornucopia of tiny organs that gave Jack his first insight into how the mammalian body is constructed. He was fascinated but also bemused by the fact that one of his first acts on the road to healing others, was the sacrificing the lives of frogs.

There were dozens of university activities that offered distraction from study; sports of every description, societies and clubs for drama, music, philately, bird-watching, debating, politics and so on. Jack was sorely tempted to play rugby but the pressure of work and his fear of failing the examinations put an end to such thoughts. Besides, the most important matches would be played on *shabbat,* which he would not allow himself to do. Because of the volumes of texts he had to master, he even felt guilty about reading books not related to his studies or going to the cinema. He never went out with girls but that was for other reasons. He occasionally visited some of his old school friends, like Judy and Stanley.

Herbert, who had not been an academic star at school, put his Tennyson quotation into highest gear and blossomed in the university environment. He soon showed himself to be among the top students in the regular tests. He eschewed all forms of extracurricular activity. Jack once asked him if he had read about something or other in the newspaper. He answered, "What! You have time to read

newspapers?" Martin plodded along, studying as little as possible, courting girls and living out his passion for cars and motorbikes.

Like all institutions in South Africa under apartheid, the universities were racially segregated. The University of the Witwatersrand had however, fought for the right to admit non-White students. A quota system was allowed by the government which meant that the so-called "liberal" medical schools were permitted to accept a handful of Chinese, Indian, Coloured (mixed race) and African students. There was a handful of these students in Jack's class. They usually kept to themselves. One of them was a very tall, extremely handsome Indian who, because his name, Ghosh, was alphabetically close to Hoffmann, came to be partnered with Jack in the chemistry laboratory. They chatted over the experiments but it was always about work and never about private matters. It was the first time that Jack had had contact with a "black" person on equal terms. It never occurred to Jack to cultivate a friendship with Ghosh nor vice versa but neither did he seek friendship with the "English" or the few Afrikaners in the class. He stuck with the two Jews he had befriended at school.

The three bumped into one of the boys who had been a year ahead of him at school, Geoffry, who was now in his second year. He said encouragingly, "You think first year is hard? Just you wait until you get to second year!"

Sharpville

On the 21st of March, 1960, an event occurred that made all speculation about bivalent cations, tricameral frogs' hearts and ciliated bacteria dissolve into pettiness.

Ten thousand Africans converged on the police station at the township of Sharpeville, forty-five miles south of Jack's university. The black township served the bustling industrial and coal mining town of Vereeniging. The ten thousand carried no weapons but more importantly, they carried no pass books. Their pass books were the embodiment of South Africa's hated pass laws, a cornerstone of the apartheid system. These pass books documented the bearer's right to be present in a given area. His right to be there was entirely dependent on whether he held legitimate employment or not. Anyone caught without a valid pass was subject to brutal arrest and deportation to areas of the country designated for blacks. The law promoted segregation of the population, restricted the individual's right of free movement and curtailed migrant labour. The document contained the bearer's name, address, photograph and fingerprints and the name and address of his employer. There was space for the employer's behavioural evaluation of the employee. An employer could, by definition, only be white. Tens of thousand of Africans were molested and arrested over the years for not carrying valid pass books. Blacks had been reduced to tagged work units rather than citizens of their own country and these passes had become the symbol of their oppression. Protests against the pass laws were the mainstay of the Blacks' opposition to apartheid.

By ten in the morning, the crowd in front of the police station at Sharpeville had doubled. The initial, somewhat festive atmosphere, had become increasingly menacing. This was possibly related to the fact that the original twenty policemen had been gradually strengthened by over a hundred reinforcements, armed with rifles and machine guns, as well as armoured vehicles. The air force sent in flights of F-86 Sabre jet fighters to fly low over the crowds in a rather exaggerated attempt at dispersing them. Stones were thrown, scuffles broke out, arrests were attempted. The mob surged forward. Policemen panicked. Shots were fired.

Sixty-nine Africans were killed and one hundred and eighty injured, including women and children.

There were no police casualties.

The following days saw an unprecedented outpouring of demonstrations, protests, strikes and riots amongst the Black population. The whites shivered in their boots and bolted their doors and windows. Nine days later, in response, the government declared a state of emergency and thousands of anti-apartheid activists were arrested. The Sharpeville massacre also focused the attention of the rest of the world on the iniquities of apartheid. South Africa was to become increasingly isolated. The massacre stimulated change from passive to armed resistance.

Barely two months earlier, the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, had made his famous speech in the South African parliament in Cape Town: "The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact."

His prophesy had come true rather sooner than anyone had expected.

Jack was deeply affected by the massacre and by what it portended. He mulled over his reactions and wondered what he could do about them. Herbert raised the issue with Jack, Martin and Stanley.

"I think the government's doing the right thing," Herbert said.

"How can you say that? They should be considering humane reforms rather than banning all protest and arresting thousands," said Jack.

"You are so naive. The minute you give them any leeway, the Blacks will take over this country in the flash of an eye," said Martin.

"No. If things are done gradually, violence can be prevented," said Stanley.

"The Blacks will never allow us to live here in peace. We will be massacred," was Herbert's response.

"But it's OK for us not to let them live in peace, for us to hold them down and deny them rights. It's OK for us to massacre them?" asked Jack.

"If the police had not reacted the way they did, it would have been the signal for uprising all over the country."

"How can you, as a pious, religious Jew think that way? That violent suppression of others' rights is acceptable?"

"It has nothing to do with religion. It is a matter of survival."

"OK, so the teachings of Hillel are bullshit?"

"Which ones are you referring to?"

"How about the one about not doing to your fellow what you would not have him do to you, to start with?"

"Well, he also said if I do not care for myself, who will care for me."

"Why don't you finish that aphorism? It ends, as you well know, 'and if I am for myself, what am I'?"

"Well, I'm certainly not going to join their struggle. I have only one agenda, to finish my degree and get the hell out of here."

They left it at that but the problem festered in Jack's consciousness and in his conscience for a while but then it gradually disappeared into his subconscious as the unrest gradually reverted to normal and he became again immersed in his studies.

Soon after Sharpeville, Stanley left for Lausanne where he was to study French and German. He would go on to study political science. Over the following years, he and Jack exchanged long letters relating their experiences, dreams and frustrations.

As the end-of-year examinations approached, Jack redoubled his efforts. Sharpeville was but a distant memory. He worked until well after midnight each night and started again early the next morning, weekends included. He was quite sure that he would be amongst the 30% or so that were expected to fail. He didn't. He and Martin received mediocre results. Herbert excelled.

During the long holiday in December and January, Jack was free to do anything he chose to. The capture of Adolf Eichmann earlier in the year by Mossad agents in Buenos Aires had exacerbated his

fascination with the Holocaust. He read Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich,* and Russel's *The Scourge of the Swastika*. He tried to fathom that which was unfathomable. He pottered around the garden. He increased his collection of classical music LPs. He visited Herbert and Martin from time to time. He did odd jobs at his dad's factory. He dreamed of going out with girls but could not find the courage to seek one.

Cadavers

In February 1961, Jack started what would be the hardest and most miserable year of his life. Geoffry had been right, "Just you wait until you get to second year!"

The class now moved from the university campus to the medical school proper. It was housed in a beautiful old building on the brow of a hill two kilometres north of the heart of Johannesburg. The lower two metres of the facade were built of roughly hewn yellow-brown rocks. The rest was light brown plaster. There was an array of mullioned windows, some plain and others slightly recessed and bordered by columns and topped by an arch. The unimposing entrance had windowed wooden doors above which, carved modestly into the wood, were the words Medical School. This was the portal through which had passed such world-renowned alumni as Phillip Tobias, anatomist and paleoanthropologist, Priscilla Kincaid-Smith, the mother of nephrology and Basil Hirschowitz, inventor of the first fibreoptic endoscope. It was here they had trodden their first faltering steps to fame. Jack was following them through that very gateway. Inside the building were four or five lecture theatres of different sizes named after history's famous anatomists like Galen, Vesalius and Hunter. There were seminar rooms and laboratories and rooms with collections of anthropological treasures and anatomical specimens and dissections.

Wits Medical School (Photographed in 1985)

The students were welcomed by the great man himself. Professor Philip Tobias was only in his mid-thirties but was already known across the world. He had taken over the Department of Anatomy from his famous predecessor and mentor, Professor Raymond Dart who had discovered one of the earliest hominid fossils, Australopithecus africanus. Tobias was a formidable, inspiring lecturer who, with clear, resonant voice and lively gestures and antics, could make the driest of bones regenerate their flesh and become alive again.

The new class of second year students were ushered into the dissection hall. The first assault on the senses was the penetrating, acrid smell of formalin which would come to permeate every stitch of clothing, every pore, every olfactory nerve-ending, every midnight dream for the next nine months of their lives. The next onslaught was the glaring bright light that reflected and refracted from glistening surfaces. The third was silence, the silence of awe, veneration and death. The spell was broken by the obligatory religious service for those, now soulless bodies who were dedicating themselves to the advancement of knowledge. Each body lay on a separate narrow table. The bodies were shrouded in cream-coloured plastic sheeting. The sheeting sagged between two apices, the head

and the feet. Some showed a bulge where breasts would be and others where a penis lay. Beneath each table was a steel bucket. From a hook on one of the table legs, hung a metal jug.

Tobias pronounced the rules: "These were once human beings. Respect them at all times. They are here to teach you the ancient science of anatomy, not to amuse you. There is to be no joking nor crude laughter. Anyone found removing body parts from the hall or using them for any other purpose than instruction, will be expelled summarily and permanently."

The stories of disgusting pranks perpetrated by previous generations of medical students were well-known but no one really knew whether they were fact or merely fable; penises cut off and placed in the handbags of female students, eyes gouged out and placed in someone's lunch box, intestines used as skipping ropes, skulls used at fancy dress parties.

"Once you have removed the plastic sheet, you will find a moist cotton sheet beneath." Tobias continued. "This sheet must always be replaced in a moistened state when you leave the cadaver and the plastic sheet replaced to cover it. If you do not do this, the cadaver will dry out or become infected with fungus."

This was the first time many of them had heard the word "cadaver". It sounded much more professional than "body".

"You will have noticed the buckets. They contain formalin. One uses the jug to pour formalin over the cadaver. The buckets will be replenished by the staff. When you have removed the sheets, they must be neatly folded and placed under the table. You are not allowed in the hall without a white coat and these coats must be laundered regularly. You will not be admitted with a filthy coat.
You must obey your Table Demonstrators and other members of the academic staff at all times."

They were then allowed to choose their tables and their dissection partners. Jack, Herbert and Martin placed themselves around a table. A chubby, jovial fellow with red hair named Selwyn, asked whether he could be the fourth.

When they were all positioned at each corner of the table, Professor Tobias said, "You may remove the sheets."

Now came the final assault. The sight of a dead human being was completely new to most of them. The cadavers lay rigid, their sightless eyes staring at the ceiling. Or perhaps beyond. Some mouths gaped, others sneered at Death. Their skin was wrinkled from the formalin. Though every organ in their bodies were soon to be revealed in minutest detail, their exposed genitalia seemed to cry out to be covered. The smell of the preserving fluid had increased ten-fold.

One student fainted. One or two others vomited, others gagged. Some just held their hands over their mouths. Jack simply stared. He tried to view the wretched thing before him from a distance, as if he were watching from above, as he had done when he had had his thumb stitched and nose re-aligned by Dr Hurwitz. He felt the scar on his thumb with the side of his index finger. His nose tingled.

The cadaver was to be their guide and their companion for hours on end every working day for the next many months as they dissected through layer upon layer of skin, subcutaneous fat, fascia and muscle. Every muscle, nerve, artery and vein had to be identified, named, dissected free and memorized. Organ after miraculous organ was to be revealed, its relationship to its neighbours ascertained and memorized.

Jack felt embarrassed when he confronted himself with the fact that the first time he had ever seen a naked human female breast, was here in the anatomy dissection hall. Black women breast feeding their infants on the pavements of the city or suburbs, did not count, of course. He was bemused by the astonishing fact that this endless source of delight and wonderment, the sight and feel of which he had ached for since the vision of Mr Morton's fingers scissoring against the side of Jean's breast seven years before, was in fact, only a bag of yellow fat streaked with white ducts and glandular tissue.

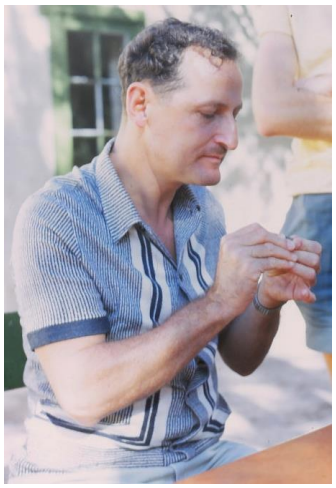
1961: Jack dissecting in anatomy class

As the weeks and months passed, multitudinous tomes of information and mountainous lists of facts had to be assimilated. As ten facts were propped in, three disappeared and had to be relearned.

However, anatomy dissection was but a fraction of what had to be learned in those nine short months. There were also embryology and micro-anatomy where Jack was once again fascinated by the celestial designs, the kaleidoscope of psychedelic shapes and colours that were revealed under the microscope. They also had to learn a sprinkling of anthropology which was made exciting by Tobias' inimitable talent as a lecturer. It was here that Jack was taught of the momentous trait that had propelled lesser primates on the way to becoming human; the development of a prehensile hand. This requires an opposable thumb, the ability which allows the the pulp of the thumb to touch the tip of each of the fingers. This was a milestone towards the development and use of primitive tools, paint brushes, pens, sculptor's chisels, machines and musical instruments. And weapons of war.

The other main subject was physiology with its subdivision, biochemistry. To Jack, this was a morass of concepts that were beyond him and he simply learned data by heart, without understanding.

He studied eighteen hours a day, He became depressed, desperate, morose. He was quite sure that he would never get through the year. He never went out socially, hardly saw his friends. But then came the results. Once again, he and Martin scraped by and Herbert starred. 30% of the class floundered.



Prof. Philip Tobias

Post Mortem

In 1962, Jack, Herbert and Martin started their third year at medical school. During the travail of second year, Geoffry, like a little black cloud, had once again drifted by and said, "You think second year was hard? Just you wait until you get to third year!"

But this time he was wrong. Third year, although tough, was a breeze compared with the previous one. They studied pathology and pharmacology. At last they had passed the almost insurmountable hurdles placed by the basic sciences and were doing subjects that vaguely resembled that which they thought medicine was all about, sickness and cure.

Witnessing post-mortem dissections of recently dead patients was a cornerstone of the study of pathology. The procedure also revealed in a most lucid way, the iniquity of their divided society. Two or three times a week, the whole class would troop from Medical School to the mortuary of the adjacent hospital. At the entrance, stood the chief mortuary assistant, appropriately named Mr Mortlake. If he had not been a mortuary attendant, his profession would have been serial killer. He was sordid and obscene. He was short, muscular and stocky. He had an enormous belly which, no doubt, was related to the fact that he always stank of beer. He was bald and had only slightly more teeth in his mouth than he had hair on his head. Those that he had, were yellow from the Springbok cigarettes that incessantly hung from the left corner of his mouth, spiralling smoke into his squinting left eye. He was never actually seen to touch the cigarette with his fingers. It merely sat there, its turd of ash growing longer and longer until it fell off onto his protruding belly or even worse, onto the body he was preparing. He had intricate tattoos on both his hairy, Popeye-like forearms. His fingernails were long and filthy and harboured a decade-long accumulation of desiccated bodily secretions and excretions. He wore a white T-shirt, white trousers, white gumboots and a red rubber apron tied at his back. The apron was always smeared with copious amounts of blood, bile and faeces, probably deliberately, to embellish his image. He was always grinning or leering evilly from ear to

ear, not in the slightest embarrassed to display his paltry dental collection. Many speculated on which depravities he inflicted on the female corpses. He was a ghoul. He was a creature out of Tolkien.

The reason he stood at the entrance was to seek the eyes of the "non-European" students. He would either nod to them, indicating "Yes" or shake his head from side to side to indicate "No". "No" meant that there was a white body on the slab and therefore they were not allowed in. Yes, apartheid extended even beyond death. God forbid that a bunch of Blacks be allowed to cast their eyes on the naked body of a white person, especially a woman. What immorality and lasciviousness that would release! Of course, white people gazing at naked Blacks would release no pangs of passion.

Jack was, for the first time since Sharpeville, made palpably aware of the gross iniquity of apartheid. Never before had he felt this evil so closely or so personally. He was appalled but remained silent. They all did.

He raised the issue with Herbert and Martin.

"Do you think it's right to segregate the post-mortems?"

"Missing one or two won't make any difference to them," was Martin's input.

"Well, I don't know whether it's right or wrong but it's the law of the land, so there is nothing to do about it," said Herbert.

"So it's OK that some of our fellow students are not offered the same opportunities for study as we are because they are not white? They have to pass the same exams as us."

"As I said, it's the law."

"So if there was a law that Jews were not allowed to witness post-mortems on Christian bodies, you would accept that?"

"Listen, we've had to endure worse things through the centuries, so it's nice to be on the winning side for once."

Jack wondered what he could do about this wrong but again he succumbed to inertia and buried himself selfishly in his work.

Two events that rocked their lives that year were the mysterious death of Marilyn Monroe who had

been the ideal of womanhood for their generation and the cause of millions of erotic fantasies and wet dreams. Then came the Cuba Missile Crisis. The latter occurred just before examination time so the fact that the world was on the brink of self-destruction, was a mere backdrop to the more important task of mastering the mysteries of carcinogenesis and tuberculous casseation.

Whispering Pectoriloquy

In the first three years of their studies, Jack and his fellow students had learned hundreds of thousands of facts but they had never seen a live patient, so they all eagerly awaited their last three years, the so-called clinical years, when they would at last be permitted actually to touch living human flesh for the first time.

They filled the pockets of their white coats with the regalia of the trade, like stethoscopes, patella hammers and tuning forks. These tools were also status symbols labelling them as a cut above the more junior, pre-clinical students. They eagerly learned the lexicon of words and phrases, a whole new language, that permitted them entry into an ancient brotherhood. There were words tailored to describe pain, suffering, disease and death. There were phrases of Shakespearian beauty like whispering pectoriloquy, percussion dullness, rebound tenderness and elevation pallour. Mean diseases were ironically described by words that related misery to food, like redcurrant jelly stool, sago spleen, anchovy paste abscess, café au lait spots and prune belly. They vied with each other in collecting the names of eponymous syndromes with which to display their erudition: Waterhouse-Friderichsen, Guillain-Barre, Crigler-Najjar, Dubin-Johnson, Peutz-Jeghers.

Fourth year gave them license to question other human beings about their most intimate secrets, their pains, their bowel movements, their urinary habits, their menstrual cycles. They were permitted to expose their nakedness, eavesdrop on their beating hearts, prod their abdomens, thump their chests, gaze into their eyeballs, probe their orifices. Jack marvelled at this inestimable privilege and resolved never to lose sight of the facts that the secrets he was revealing and the flesh that was being revealed to him, belonged to another human being and that he was there to help them rather than that they were there to serve him. He remembered Andrew Manson in The Citadel.

Contact with patients for the purpose of instruction was called clinical teaching. This took place at the patient's bedside or in out-patient clinics at so-called teaching hospitals. The letter were public hospitals run by the provincial administration where the Medical School had permission to "use" the

patients as teaching material. Medical students were not allowed in the privately run hospitals. The public hospitals, as with all things South African, were ruled by the principles of apartheid. There were hospitals which were scrupulously reserved for white patients. They were manned by white doctors and white nurses. They were run by white administrators. The only Blacks to be seen, were the sweepers, the cleaners, the kitchen assistants and the porters (for goods, not for patients). There were separate hospitals for the other racial groups. There was one for Indians, Coloureds and Chinese, and others for Africans. Here the doctors, nurses and patients were also of the appropriate colour. The big difference was that white doctors were allowed to work and treat patients at non-white hospitals, whereas non-white doctors were not allowed to treat white patients. The same rules of separation applied to medical students. Jack's mind went back to his dilemma at Mr Mortlake's mortuary but he made no protest.

The main white teaching hospital was the Johannesburg General Hospital, known fondly as "The Gen". It was a sprawling six-storey building with a turret-like structure on its roof. Multiple appendages had been added over the years, like the tentacles of a cancerous growth. It was adorned with flower beds and pine trees and fronted by lawns, where recuperating patients could warm themselves in the gentle Highveld sunshine. Across the road lay the Medical School. Next door to the Medical School, there was a much more austere, dark building that was called Non-European Hospital and known by its acronym, NEH. This was the hospital for the Blacks living and working in the central areas of the city. It was perhaps surprising that this black pimple was allowed to survive in the centre of the white city but it was of course, convenient for teaching purposes.

The main hospital for the Blacks was Baragwanath Hospital, known as "Bara". It was one of the biggest hospitals in the world. It lay fifteen kilometres from The Gen at the south-western extreme of the city close to the sprawling expanse of Soweto. The name Soweto was an acronym for South-Western Township. The word township, derived from Old English *tunscipe,* meaning inhabitants of a village. While in England, the word carried connotations of a picturesque parish, small town or village, in South Africa a township was anything but a rustic idyll. Every city, town and village in

South Africa was served by black people but these people were not welcome in the midst of the whites, so they were banished to ghettos of makeshift housing placed on the periphery of the white centres of residence. These ghettos were called "townships".

Baragwanath Hospital was built in 1941 as a military hospital to provide health care and convalescence facilities for Allied troops of The Middle East Command. Later in the Second World War, it was used as a tuberculosis hospital. It was christened "The Imperial Military Hospital, Baragwanath" because it was built at the site of a wayside inn, Baragwanath's Place on the road between Johannesburg and Potchefstroom. In 1948, it was decided to convert the hospital for the use of the city's black population. The black section of The Gen, except for what was to become NEH, was transferred to Baragwanath. The hospital was a series of one-storey, long, narrow buildings that resembled military barracks.

The hospital for Indians, Coloureds and Chinese was situated on the western outskirts of the city. It was called Coronation Hospital, "Coro".

Jack, Herbert, Martin and their classmates immersed themselves in this vast new world of endless horizons. Knowledge stretched to infinity and they strove after this knowledge like gluttons at a banquet. The main courses on offer were surgery, internal medicine and gynæcology with dozens of side dishes, sub-specialties like anaesthetics, orthopaedics, haematology and neonatology.

Jack compared the contesting pros and cons of the various specialties. To him, internal medicine consisted of eternal discussions, repeated consultations, the ordering of endless blood tests, urine analyses and x-rays. Finally, after everyone had had his or her say, a tentative diagnosis would be proffered and a course of treatment instituted. The treatment might last days or weeks before a final diagnosis could be confirmed or refuted. Surgery was different, especially in the acute situation. A diagnosis had to be made here and now and a plan of operative treatment decided upon immediately. At the operation, one's diagnostic skills or lack thereof would be revealed immediately. With internal medicine, the patient might get better or not without the doctor's being able to take much credit for success or accrued blame for failure. In surgery, if one's diagnosis had been correct and one's

operation successful, the patient did well and would go home smiling after a few days. No reward could be greater. If one's diagnosis had been incorrect, one faced the immediate disapproval of one's chief and the patient himself. This was the price one paid. After every operation one would visit the patient a few times a day to read signs of recovery or to detect the earliest signs of things going wrong, like the redness of an incision, a spike of temperature, a delay of normal bowel function. Each of these ominous symptoms would, once again, demand immediate diagnosis and action.

Internal medicine was for thinkers, philosophers, intellectuals, procrastinators. Surgery was for men of action. Although Jack did not consider himself a man of action, he was attracted by the specialty that encompassed logical planning and immediate reaction. He never doubted that he would specialize in surgery. Had the seed been placed there by Rev. Levy's thrashing chicken and Dr Hurwitz's neat stitches?

The most illustrative example of Jack's analysis of the surgical specialties was the common condition of acute appendicitis. Acute appendicitis has a set of classical symptoms and clinical signs. If these are all present, the likelihood of a correct diagnosis is very high and immediate operation is required. At operation the diagnosis can be confirmed or invalidated immediately. Verification of the diagnosis trumpeted success. However, acute appendicitis was a capricious condition. Even in a patient displaying most of the classical signs and symptoms, the diagnosis would be incorrect in close to half the cases operated upon as the symptoms and signs could be mimicked by a myriad of conditions that did not require an operation. These varied from gynæcolocical infections, to kidney stones and viral infection of the abdominal lymph nodes or even to exotic conditions like sickle cell anaemia. The revelation of an uninflamed appendix, known by those who wished to mock, as a "lily-white appendix", was proof of a failed diagnosis and was a black mark on one's reputation. Statistics were kept on how many lily-whites one had removed. There was an obvious way of avoiding operation on a lily-white appendix. If the clinical signs were equivocal, the surgeon could institute a period of observation during which the patient's signs could be reassessed at regular intervals to see whether they abated, suggesting that he or she had some other cause for the symptoms, or became

worse, which pointed towards a diagnosis of acute appendicitis. The problem with this approach was that an inflamed appendix might burst during this period of delay which had negative consequences for both patient and the surgeon. When reporting this diagnosis at the next day's ward round with the chief, the delay between the time of admission to hospital and the time of operation would be immediately apparent and embarrassing questions would be posed. Allowing a patient's appendix to burst during a period of observation was a worse sin than removing a lily-white one. Some young surgeons, whose arrogance exceeded their distaste for a poor lily-white statistic, operated on patients even with the most tenuous signs of appendicitis in order to increase their operative experience. It was known, that if they found it to be lily-white, they would surreptitiously massage the appendix vigorously before removing it, in the hope that the pathologist, who as a matter of routine had to examine all tissue removed from a patient, would perhaps be misled into diagnosing inflammation under the microscope. However, this was a futile exercise as pathologists and microscopes are not so easily fooled.

Examination of the Breast

In this heady world which revealed new facts and challenges every hour, Jack and his colleagues hardly noticed or discretely ignored the iniquity around them, the iniquity which denied their non-white colleagues equal exposure to patients. However, on occasion, this inequality was seared into their consciousness like a branding iron on a bull's rump.

The class was assembled in the Vesalian theatre for at a lecture and demonstration on pædiatric neurology. A long-winded, poorly illustrated lecture on cerebral palsy pushed most of the audience into the arms of sleep. All were rudely aroused by the opening of the door and the entrance of a wheelchair bearing a little child who was to be used as a clinical model. The child was white.

The lecturer said, "I must ask Group C to please leave." The Black, Indian and Chinese students bundled their belongings together and started for the exit. They said nothing. This was their usual lot.

One of the white students looked at his exiting colleagues and then at the lecturer and shouted at him, "You can be damned sure that the person looking after this little kid at home, is a black nanny." Some applauded, one or two hissed. Most remained silent. The gesture changed nothing but Jack wished it had been he who had made the protest.

"Is this right?" Jack asked Herbert and Martin. "How long can we go on turning a blind eye to this iniquity, this evil?"

Martin suggested, "Why don't you join the ANC and wave spears at the Union Buildings? And end up in prison."

Herbert agreed, "Yes, you are always such a liberal."

" 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing' ", quoted Jack.

"We put on our bloody *tefillin* every morning but we are not good men."

"Would you offer your life for their struggle?" asked Herbert.

"In principle yes, but I am not sure I would be brave enough."

"Why would you want to die for someone else's cause?"

"Is that not one of the most basic tenets of Judaism? Love thy neighbour as thyself? Doesn't the Torah say 'You shall not stand by the blood of your fellow.' ? ”

"But our fellows don't give a shit about us. They hate us just like everyone else. Why should we help anyone who would never help us?"

"What about the so-called 'Righteous Gentiles' in the War? By the way, isn't that a rather discriminatory term? Doesn't it imply that the average Gentile is *not* righteous?"

"Well, there were a damn sight more gentiles who killed Jews than saved them."

"Yes, but what if some Christian organization had a fund for "Righteous Jews"? Wouldn't we say that it is anti-Semitic to suggest that some Jews are not righteous? But I'm straying from the point. There were many Christians, atheists and even Moslems who risked their lives, even gave their lives to save Jews from the Nazis. The Danes saved most of their Jewish population."

"A lot of them made good money shipping the Jews to Sweden," said Martin with a snort.

"How petty can you be! They risked their lives! Even if what you say is correct, is it wrong to be compensated for a good deed, for their risk, for their time? They were not blind to the iniquity around them. We are!"

"I'm just trying to say, that saving Jews was not always done for bleeding heart, altruistic reasons."

"Shouldn't we follow 'Righteous Gentiles' ' examples and help the Blacks evade their fate?"

"Even if it means death?" Herbert asked with a smirk.

"Well, our religion celebrates martyrs doesn't it? Isn't it a *mitzva* to die for *kiddush hashem*? This commandment to die in the name of God is something I have never understood. How is this compatible with the concept of *pikuah nefesh* which says that any law of Judaism becomes null and void if this is required to save a life. So you can ride in an ambulance to hospital on shabbat in an

emergency to save your life but, paradoxically, you are a hero if you die to honour your religion. How do you explain that?"

Later the same year, the class had just had a lecture on clinical examination of the breast. The lecture hall was old-fashioned with row upon row of wooden benches and lecterns rising in a gradient so steep that the back row seemed as high as a storey above the lecturer's dais, the examination couch and the mediaeval epidiascope. The rows were bisected by a single median aisle.

The interim between the fourth years' lecture and the one for the second year students to follow, was typically abuzz with post-lecture activity. The lecturer was replacing chalk at the blackboard and packing his notes into a battered leather briefcase. The brightest students, who pretentiously, always occupied the front rows, studiously noted a few extra points. The rowdy rugby chaps in the back rows previewed tomorrow's game. The bawdy boozers slightly further down reminisced about last night's escapades. The faceless majority, who sought the anonymity of rows half way up the slope, began ambling out while the lowly second years meekly filed in and sought places. They tried not to disturb their seniors, the lofty fourth years.

In the corner to the left of the lecturer at the front of the hall, the corner furthest from the door, is a young black woman. She sits alone in her corner on an uncomfortable chair of wood and metal amidst the sea of white-coated students. She is a patient from the adjacent NEH. She had been conscripted to function as the model for the demonstration of breast examination. She waits to be collected for return to her ward. Her face cast down, she hides her eyes from the tumult around her. She is naked from the waist up. The top half of her coarse, navy blue, hospital-issue housecoat lies in folds around her waist. No one has bothered to tell her that the demonstration is over and that she may now cover up. But she needs not try to hide the tears of humiliation that have welled up in her eyes, for she is ignored by them all; the lecturer, the bright front-rowers, the rugger chaps, the boozers, the faceless majority and even the meek second years. She is as invisible and inanimate as the epidiascope beside her.

In the queue of second year seat-seekers, there appears a beautiful, slender Indian student. Her

shoulder length hair is as black and as radiant as a raven's wing. Beneath her white coat, she is clad in a sea green woollen jersey and a grey skirt. She glances over to the corner of the hall and notices the black woman. Then she glowers up at the rows of her colleagues above her with a look of such intensity that somehow, instantly, every eye in the hall is upon her. It is a look of disdain, contempt, scorn. Apart from the scintilla of a crease between her eyes, her face is of stone. Her lips do not twist in anger. All the power of her furious gaze springs from the incandescent coals of her eyes.
Without a word, she turns to her left and walks over to the black woman. She helps her pull up her housecoat. She stoops gently and whispers something in her ear. The black woman smiles shyly, gratefully.

The bustling hall has become motionless and silent. Downcast eyes, recently seen only on the face of the black woman, are now features of all the white countenances above her. Her shame at her exposed body is now their shame at their exposed consciences. Her ignominy is now theirs. The Indian student takes her place in one of the middle rows.

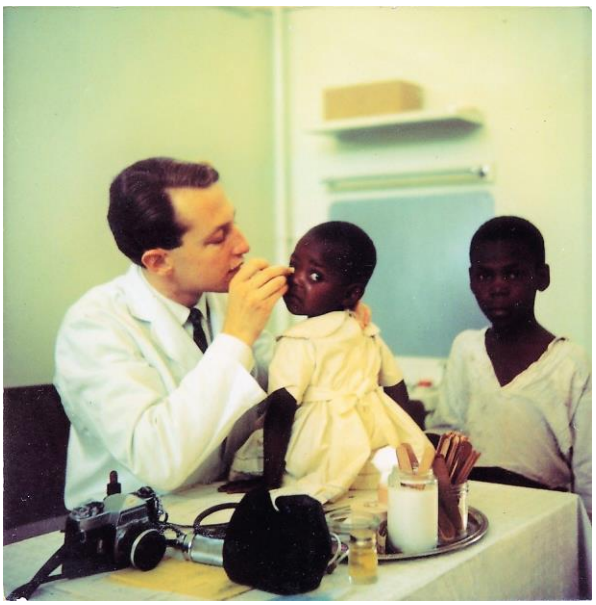
They had learned that day to examine breasts. And perhaps their own hearts.

Over the next few years, Jack glimpsed the Indian student at a distance or passed her in the cold corridors of the medical school. He avoided her eyes. He feared her forbidden beauty. He feared the scorn of her gaze. He had learned that her name was Anjoli Patel.

On the 22nd of November, 1963, at the end of his fourth year, Jack was studying for his final examination in psychiatry. His mother, who had been listening to the radio, rushed into his room with the news that President Kennedy had been shot. He turned on his own radio to try to fathom what had happened. All was a riot of hysterical reports, conflicting information and garbled opinions. Jack was convinced that the perpetrators must be right wing activists reacting to Kennedy's stand on Black civil rights. He tried to see the event in a South African context. If speaking up for equality in the United Stated of America ended in assassination, what hope was there for South Africa? Was anyone who opposed apartheid doomed to the same fate? Jack buried his depression in his psychiatric texts.

Nearly There

At the end of 1964, Jack, Herbert and Martin were about to enter their final year. As part of their training, they were sent to man a clinic in one of the townships which was incongruously named Alexandra. They resided there and functioned as fully qualified doctors. Each morning they awoke to find endless queues of patients respectfully awaiting their turns. There were mothers with howling infants who received medicine for diarrhoea, young women who received antibiotics for gynaecological infections, youngsters with broken bones that needed setting, men with wounds that needed stitching. It was here that Jack stitched his first patient. His fingers trembled a little and his mind flashed back to the tiny ants and bow-ties produced so nimbly by Dr Hurwitz so long ago. He had come a long way in eighteen years. There were other patients whose problems were beyond the meagre expertise of the medical students and they were referred to hospital. Jack felt proud and exhilarated by the fact that at last, after five years, he was in a position to treat people without supervision, that at last all his accumulated knowledge was being put to practical use. This positive feeling was slightly sullied though, by the thought that he would never have been allowed similar freedom with white patients. In the end, he compromised, by telling himself that if his unqualified self was not treating them, they would be getting no treatment at all.



1964: Jack treating a patient at Alexandra Township

In 1965, their final year, Jack, Martin and Herbert spent three weeks of resident training at the city's main (white) obstetric department. It was here they were to be trained in the science and art of delivering babies. All male medical students looked forward to this residency with unrestrainable eagerness because the same institution housed young women who were training to be midwives. It was rumoured that the environment infected them with some strange hormonal cocktail that made them amenable to the act that precedes the giving of birth. Having both groups under one roof was an opportunity for profligacy not to be missed. Jack, still a virgin at twenty-three, dreamed that a new era was dawning but he lacked the courage to make his move.

At a social gathering at the hospital, that included both groups of trainees, much beer flowed. Jack, whose main experience with alcohol was the four ceremonial cups of sweet, syrupy wine at the traditional *pesach*, meal, downed a beer or two for the fist time, in order to build up his courage. He soon felt the telltale tingling in his face, slurring of his speech and blurring of his vision. He picked up his green can of Amstel to take a final swallow before confronting the midwifery student he had had his eye on since day one. He swallowed. He found that the taste had altered since his last sip and in addition, the fluid had taken on a powdery consistency and had developed solid bits. In the semi-darkness, he had picked up a can that had been used as an ashtray. He hurried to the nearest toilet

consumed by nausea. It was occupied. He opened the door of the adjacent, unlit room, noticed gratefully that it contained a washbasin and vomited copiously. He flushed away as much as he could see in the dark and went off to his solitary bed.

The chief obstetrician of the institute was an obese, humourless man. His obesity was of such a degree that his tie, resting on his belly, lay almost parallel to the ground. Jack dubbed him Horizontal Tie and he was known henceforth as HT. The next morning before the scheduled teaching session, HT asked, "Which swine vomited in my handbasin last night?"

They all remained silent looking suspiciously at each other. No one looked at Jack because they all knew that Hoffmann did not drink.

It so happened that the Chief Matron of the hospital was a friend of Doreen's best friend. The Matron was as dour as the chief obstetrician but in contrast to him, she was as thin as a whippet in keeping with her cold spinsterhood. Jack did not bump into her during his stay but she must have been observing him from some invisible perch, as she told Doreen's friend, "Tell Mrs Hoffmann that her son is a real gentleman. He is the only medical student I have seen in years who is more interested in his work than in the student midwives."

Doreen was proud of her son. Jack was not proud of himself.

At some stage during this year, Jack decided to drop his practice of the religion.

"Why?" asked a shocked Herbert.

"Because it no longer means anything to me."

"But it is your identity, your badge of belonging."

"I have tried it for seven years because I believed just that. I also believed it would bring me an understanding of the concept of God. It hasn't."

"But it makes you a better, more moral person."

"I think that is the main reason for my opting out. I am frustrated at religious Jews' focusing on the symbols of the religion rather than its spiritual essence."

"What do you mean? Aren't they the same thing?"

"No, definitely not. For many, it seems to be more important to be *seen* to be performing the rituals, like eating kosher food and observing the sabbath or wearing a *yarmulke* and letting their *tzizit* hang out rather than emphasizing the moral aspects of the religion like simply being a good human being. I have come to the conclusion that the trappings of the religion mean nothing. It is more important to practice the kernel of all religions, namely being good and doing good. This can be done without the rituals. When I started out with this experiment, for that's was what it was, I hoped that people would look at me and say, 'He is a good man because he is a religious Jew'. Now it is enough for me if they say, 'He is is a good man'."

"But the rituals are part of being Jewish. Are you rejecting your Jewish identity too?"

"No, not at all. We have learned from history that we cannot escape our Jewishness, just as an African cannot escape his blackness. Do you remember the discussion the four of us had many years ago about each one's tailoring the religion to suit oneself? Well, I now choose to drop all the trappings and will simply try to be a good person who happens to be a Jew."

At last, the ward rounds and out-patient clinics, the lectures and the tutorials, the reading and the studying, were behind them. They had mastered subjects from psychiatry to paediatrics, from neurosurgery to nephrology, from oncology to obstetrics. Before them lay the final examinations, the last arduous climb to the final goal of the journey they had started six years earlier. At this lofty summit they would at last be allowed to grasp the Staff of Aesculapius.

Herbert graduated with distinction. Jack was among the top ten in the class. Martin passed well too despite the minimal effort he had expended on the climb.

1965: Jack on graduation from Medical School

Zionists

After a short stay in Israel at the end of 1958, Alvin had started medical school, two years earlier than Jack. At the end of his second year, he suddenly announced, "This is not for me. I'm going to Israel." David was disappointed and tried to persuade Alvin to persevere but he was not surprised at his decision. The family had been speaking about emigrating to Israel for years. For David the concept of *aliya* to the Jewish State, was a natural consequence of the Holocaust. Only in Israel could Jews be free of the burdens that had plagued them for two millennia. But David was also a pragmatist and realized that his business could not be transferred to Israel. He noted too, that Alvin was about the same age as he had been when he left his family home. Young men take momentous steps.

The vaguely remembered proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948, became the cauldron in which Alvin's Zionist dream had been concocted. The cooking oil was provided by his increasing knowledge of the Holocaust and his own occasional petty anti-Semitic experiences Flesh was provided by Betar. The Suez Crisis, books like My Glorious Brothers and Exodus and the revelations of the Eichmann trial, had provided the heating fuel.

Alvin arrived in Israel in 1961 and went straight into *Nachal*, an army unit that combined army service with work on a kibbutz. He graduated as a paratrooper. A year later Tony, aged sixteen, inspired by his big brother, left for Israel as well. He finished school there and followed Alvin into the paratroopers. David sold his business some years later and he and Doreen joined their two sons in the Holy Land.

David's feelings were mixed. On the one hand, he was disappointed that after spending thirty-five years building a successful business from scratch, it had been sold to outsiders. He had often dreamed of the day when he would hand it over to one of his sons. He rued the fact too, that the house and rustic idyll he had built for them, was now inhabited by strangers. On the other hand, he was proud that his sons had chosen their own paths, as he had always encouraged them to do. Alvin gradually

took over the role of head of the family. He had gently guided Tony through his first fumbling years in the new country and now spent hours and days nurturing his parents in their difficult transition from South Africa to Israel. Jack had fulfilled his father's dream of becoming a doctor and Tony seemed to be gravitating towards fulfilling the other of David's frustrated dreams by becoming a farmer. He rejoiced too, in the fact that each of them had been free to choose his own path and not have fate force them in directions decreed by others.

After graduating from medical school, Jack rewarded himself with a visit to his family in Israel. He had been looking forward for years to visiting the country that had for so long been a part of his dreams, his Eldorado. Alvin now sported a flaming red beard. He had long since graduated from the university in Jerusalem in philosophy and English and was working as a journalist. His main passion however, was rugby, a relic of his time at King David. Very few people played rugby in Israel and Alvin invested much effort in trying to make the game more popular. Tony was still in the army but managed to get some leave. Jack hadn't seen him for over three years. He had grown from a gawky sixteen year old to a handsome young man. He was now the tallest of the three brothers and looked remarkably like the photograph they all knew of their grandfather Herman, with heavy eyelids and a bushy, orange moustache. On his chest he wore the badge of a paratrooper. His red beret was tucked through a flap on his left shoulder. He seemed shy in Jack's presence, as if unsure how to reconcile his new self with this relic of his previous life. Their parents had settled in a new house on the coast. David was once again using all his waking hours laying out a garden, planting trees, creating rockeries and levelling paths which he artistically paved with mosaics of slate and tiles. He had set up a little workshop where he constructed items out of wood. He was still obsessed with trying to create physical permanency out of a world that for him, had been so beset with shattered hopes.

Doreen had blossomed. She seemed, surprisingly, to have gained confidence in the new environment and had taken over the practical running of things like dealing with bureaucracy, banking and making new friends. They both had difficulty learning the new language and in fitting into the

brash Israeli culture but at least two of their boys were close by.

Alvin knew Israel like the back of his hand and took Jack on a fourteen day tour that encompassed the vast five hundred kilometre north-south expanse from Metulla to Eilat and the tiny east-west sliver from divided Jerusalem to the Mediterranean coast. The stories of the *Tanach* he had heard since he was three and the songs of Betar from his teenage years, were suddenly made real for Jack. Here were the hillsides where the one song's red anemones grew. Here was the Jezreel Valley, where another song's tired workers had been homeward bound. Here was the Negev where a third song's hero had fallen in the dew. Here were the burned-out armoured cars lining the road to Jerusalem as silent monuments to the heroes of a fourth song. Here was the Valley of Ajalon where Joshua had slain the Amorite kings and Elah where David slew Goliath and Gilboa, cursed to remain ever barren because Saul and his three sons had perished there and Mount Tabor where Deborah and her general Barak slew Sisera's Canaanites. He saw Tel Hai were one-armed Trumpeldor had fallen. He saw the ultramarine Sea of Galilee where Peter had fished and on whose waters Christ had walked. He saw the ruins of Megiddo waiting for the final battle between Good and Evil. He saw Jerusalem severed through its middle, its heart awaiting unification. All these scenes set his spine ashiver and his heart aquiver and brought tears to his eyes.

But these ancient glories, these rousing songs were not the reality. Remembered tales of muscular youths, suntanned, khaki-clad maidens tilling the soil and making the desert bloom in harmony with both nature and their fellow man, were but an illusion.

Yes, there were *kibbutzim* living the Zionist ideal, striving to fulfil the ideals of Ben Gurion and Jabotinsky but there was dissension, division and disharmony too. The Israelis all shared the same heroes from Joshua to the Maccabees. They took pride in the wisdom of Moses, Rambam, Spinoza and Mendelssohn but yet were they disparate. This shared heritage had welded them together for the two millennia of their dispersion and spawned a common vision. But each group now interpreted the vision differently. The socialists had, as a paradox to their ideal, become an elite. They were the

European Jews, the Ashkenazim. The more swarthy North African and Yemenite Jews were relegated to a tier below them. The Ashkenazim were divided amongst themselves too, between Levi Eshkol's socialists and Menachem Begin's revisionist-nationalist-liberals. The secular Jews looked upon their religious brethren as remnants of the ghettos, relics of their generations of subservience to European masters. The religious regarded the secular as just another batch of *goyim* who had forgotten from whom they had arisen. The ultra-orthodox refused even to use Hebrew as daily speech; it should be reserved for communicating with God, they claimed. Some of the extremely religious even went to the extreme of denying the very existence of the Jewish State as this, they maintained, could only be proclaimed after the coming of the Messiah. And then there were the Israeli Arabs of whom no one spoke. They were strangers in a land where they had lived for generations.

In the much vaunted melting pot, the meat, the vegetables, the beans, the potatoes were still clearly discernible entities. They were far from having coalesced into a palatable stew. Jack looked at the raucous sellers of fruit in the market at Jerusalem's *Machane Yehuda*. Were these his brothers? He saw the ultra-orthodox Jews sweating in the baking sun of the Middle East in their archaic garb from Northern Europe. Could he identify with them? He met arrogant, brash, pontificating Sabras. Were these his fellows? He encountered sanctimonious, self-righteous immigrants from the USA. Was he a part of them? He found that he had as little in common with all of these, as he had with the Greek community in Johannesburg. Yes, he felt at home with expatriate South Africans with their familiar accents and succulent South African slang. But they too, dreamed of rugby, *boerewors, biltong,* Cadbury's chocolate and the smell of summer rain on hot tarmac.

Jack concluded that the Israel he saw about him was a palimpsest. His ideal of Israel that had buoyed him through his childhood was but a dream, written in faded letters. The new text he read about him, revealed a harsher reality.

January 1966: Tony, Alvin, Jack in Jerusalem

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Back to God

Jack returned home from Israel bearing his disillusionment and his disappointment but relishing the idea of working as a qualified doctor for the first time. The first year after graduation was spent in an internship, known colloquially as housemanship. This meant that one had to work under supervision as the most junior doctor in a hospital environment. Housemanship was divided into six months of internal medicine and six months of surgery. These jobs were allocated according to academic merit. The best jobs were at the central teaching hospitals while the least prestigious ones were at the more peripheral, usually non-white, hospitals. A black or Asian houseman could, of course, not be placed in a white department regardless of how well he or she had done in the finals.

Jack started with medicine at Coro together with Martin, in February 1966. The large wards, segregated into male and female, each held thirty or forty beds. There was such a need for beds that the demand exceeded capacity and the overflow spread out into the corridors and storerooms. Jack and Martin worked a ten hour day when they were not "on-call" for emergencies and worked all night and through the next day when they were on-call. There were countless cases of heart failure, pneumonia, mysterious infections and severe complications of diabetes. The challenge was to record the patient's case histories in full detail without irrelevancies, make a tentative diagnosis, order the necessary ancillary investigations and propose a treatment strategy. Success was registered if the doctor of immediate seniority, the registrar, found no gaps in the notes, agreed with the diagnosis and approved the proposed course of treatment. Although neither Jack nor Martin found medicine an exciting specialty, the time passed rapidly because of the burden of work. However, it gave an enormous sense of accomplishment to be able to put into practice all that they had learned in the previous six years.

The next six months Jack spent in the most prestigious surgical job available, the Professorial Surgical Unit of Professor D. J. Du Plessis at The Gen. The professor was in his early fifties. He was

a formidable man in every respect. Physically, he was tall and well built. He had a rugby forward's shoulders and ears. He had receding silvery white hair and cold blue eyes. His lips, especially the upper one, were very thin. They very rarely smiled and gave him a forbidding look. The two features that most characterized him, were his imposing nose and his prominent cleft chin perched on a protruding jaw. The large nose was not a Jewish one. It was a bulbous affair which on any other face, would have been a catastrophe but on this noble head, it was a sign of power, like the horn of a rhinoceros. One of the crueller of his many nicknames, was Potato Nose. He was known to all as The Prof as if he were the only professor in the medical school. He was more fondly known as Dup. His closest colleagues were allowed to call him Sonny but when a junior addressed him, he or she would never dare to call him anything but Professor or Sir. His other nickname was God. And he truly was a god. He was the creator, the father, the shaper of surgery in Johannesburg. He produced generations of disciples who spread his surgical credo throughout South Africa and to far continents. His lectures on surgery were masterpieces of clarity, precision and logic. His bedside teaching on his weekly ward rounds, were paragons of excellence and attracted an entourage of acolytes. He rendered the most complex clinical problems into gems of simplicity by applying basic surgical principles. Each word that emerged from his mouth was a pearl of wisdom, a jewel of logical reasoning. His sage opinions would be delivered in the form of quietly spoken monologues. When, on seldom occasions, he deigned to ask the opinion of others, he listened to them with closed eyes and jutting jaw. He would address only his senior colleagues, the ward sister or the registrar. More junior beings were ignored unless he was berating them. He was dogmatic to the extreme. No transgression of the guidelines was tolerated, even when well-founded. His anger at shoddy presentation of cases or failure to adhere to du Plessian principles, was revealed by the iciness of his tone. He never raised his voice. He never handed out compliments. Success was registered by lack of criticism.

Professor Du Plessis' ward was divided into two sections. The male section was on the ground floor and the female section on the first floor. Each section had precisely the same layout. Each was long and narrow. Each contained thirty beds. Fifteen lined the one long wall and fifteen the opposite wall.

Railings, suspended from the ceiling, surrounded each bed so that curtains could provide some privacy. Just beyond the entrance to each ward, stood a desk which was the work-station of the Ward Sister. From this eyrie, she could survey the entire ward. However, she was seldom seated there. She was constantly fussing about an irregularly folded blanket here or a speck of dust there. She supervised, cajoled and instructed the student nurses in their duties, encouraged the patients, directed the visitors and regulated the junior medical staff like a traffic policeman on point duty. If Professor Du Plessis was Zeus, the sister was Hebe, his cup-bearer. In his introductory remarks to the housemen he said: "If there is ever a confrontation between you and the ward sisters, know that I will always take their side. You are dispensable. They are not."

Sister McDonald was the Hebe of the male ward. She was about sixty years old but appeared years older. She had never been married and served her Zeus with a devotion that would have survived the fires of Hades. She was short and slight with a incongruously matronly bosom. She had a wrinkled face which was decorated by a hairy mole on her upper lip slightly above the angle of her mouth. She must have been proud of this protuberance, for she never trimmed the hairs. Perhaps she could not see them. Despite this blemish, she had a face that exuded love and compassion. Her eyes were as deep and warm as a spaniel's. Her voice was buttered with a Scottish lilt. Her perfect teeth, when she smiled, took all focus away from her mole. As opposed to most other ward sisters, she was kind and considerate towards the junior medical staff and would unbidden, offer them support and advice. No one had ever seen her hair as she still wore the shoulder-length nurse's veil that had been worn by generations of her predecessors all the way back to the origins of modern nursing in the convents of Europe. This old-fashioned veil had long since been eschewed by her less traditional colleagues and had been substituted by a more comfortable, and more hygienic cap. On her shoulders she bore the maroon epaulettes of her rank. Sister McDonald's counterpart on the women's ward was somewhat younger. She was large and bespectacled. She pranced and preened in the Professor's presence like a debutante at a ball She had chosen a cap rather than a veil. It perched precariously atop her highly piled, lacquered hair.

Jack, back row, first left. Dup, middle of front row

One could read the ranks of the nurses from their uniforms. They all wore white uniforms which buttoned down the front and were always strictly sealed to the top button. The nursing students wore black stockings and black shoes. The belts of the first year students were white. With the subsequent years of study, the only discernible changes were in the uniform's belt. A pure white belt progressed to one blue stripe, then two and finally, to a fully blue belt. On graduating, they reverted to a white belt but they now displayed the maroon epaulettes and wore white or flesh-coloured stockings with white shoes. In a pocket above her left breast, the nurse carried ball point pens of various colours and a pair of scissors. Some bore the scissors in the second buttonhole of their uniforms. Some of the older nurses wore fob watches. Each nurse displayed a lapel badge which denoted her school of nursing. Their caps bore the hospital's initials, JH. When off duty, the nurses wore navy blue capes

which were lined in scarlet. They were held in place by two straps crossed enticingly between their breasts.

One could read the same information from doctors' attire. Consultant surgeons discarded their suit jackets and replaced them with white coats. The pockets of these coats were entirely empty, except perhaps for their well-manicured hands. A surgical registrar's white coat bore a single ballpoint pen in the breast pocket. In the right hand side pocket, a small notebook lay discretely hidden. In the opposite pocket, a stethoscope was even more surreptitiously placed. God forbid that he should be mistaken for one of the internal medical persuasion by displaying his stethoscope too overtly. An internal medicine registrar carried his or her stethoscope ostentatiously, but nevertheless nonchalantly, draped around the neck like a dowager's fox fur stole. A houseman's coat was loaded like a pack horse. The breast pocket held an array of pens of different colours as well as a small torch and a collection of wooden spatulas. It also held a plastic covered, dog-eared table for calculating intravenous fluid requirements, another listing the normal levels of laboratory investigations and a third containing the month's work schedule. A fourth piece of paper listed the telephone numbers of the consultants, the registrar, the laboratory, the X-ray department and so on. Both side pockets bulged to ripping point with pocket books on surgery, medicine and pharmacology as well as notebooks containing gleaned morsels of knowledge, lists of instructions, and to-do lists. Amongst all these, place had to be found for a stethoscope, a tuning fork, a reflex hammer, a rubber tourniquet, a forceps for clamping the latter and odd strands of suturing material for practising surgical ligatures. Into the final recesses were squashed bits of chocolate, a peppermint or two and perhaps a half-eaten apple.

On one ward round, Dup looked at a houseman, squinted his eyes and communicated via the registrar, "Why hasn't he shaved?"

"We were working most of the night, Sir."

"Did he have time to sleep?"

"About ten minutes, Sir."

"Then he had time to shave."

One hot summer's day, a female houseman had the temerity to appear before the Professor in sandals. She had added audacity to temerity by having painted her toenails. He glowered disdainfully, disgustedly at her naked feet.

″Sister, please find that houseman a pair of socks.″ The houseman turned the colour of her toenails.

The ideal case presentation by a houseman would be a brief one that signalled that everything from diagnosis to operation had gone successfully: ″The patient presented with abdominal pain. There were clinical symptoms and signs of acute appendicitis. She was operated upon and an inflamed, non-perforated appendix was removed. "

This would evoke an almost invisible nod of approval, a jutting of the jaw and the entourage would move on to the next bed.

Where no diagnosis had been made, the presentation would be longer. Here the houseman was in a dilemma; too little information would elicit the ignominy of impatient supplementary questions from the Professor. Too much information would provoke an equally embarrassing, curt interjection, "Get to the point." These more complex cases would reveal the professor at his best. He was in his element when a myriad of complicated and apparently unrelated facts needed to be refined into a perfect bead of gold. He would sift and sort, weigh pros and cons, balance fact against fact. At best, he would make an erudite diagnosis. At worst, he would lay out a logical algorithm of supplementary tests and investigations. Sometimes he would turn to the cohort of experts, his consultants, at his side. Each of them had been coaxed into a separate sphere of expertise. One had honed himself as a specialist on diseases of the gall bladder, liver and pancreas, another on cancer of the breast, a third on problems of the large intestine and so on.

"What do you say Myron?"

Myron might say, "I perfectly agree with you." This would be a sign of defeat. Or Myron might say, "Yes, excellent summary but I think, with that high alkaline phosphatase and the serum calcium in the upper range of normal, we should add a 24-hour urinary calcium measurement to eliminate the possibility that we might be dealing with hyperparathyroidism."

Dup would smile and say, "Of course. Is that noted?" he would ask the registrar. Myron's week would be made.

Some case presentations would end in fiasco: "The patient presented with classical symptoms of acute appendicitis but on abdominal examination no tenderness was found so it was decided to observe him closely."

"Temperature?"

"38.9, Sir."

"White cells?"

"8,900, Sir."

"Rectal examination?" Silence. The houseman reddens and stares at the floor.

"Rectal examination?" This time the question is addressed to the registrar.

"I thought the houseman had done it, Sir."

"It is your responsibility to make sure it was done. Surely you realize it is crucial here? This patient has a retrocaecal appendicitis."

This meant that his appendix was hidden behind the caecum, which is the first part of the large intestine, rather than lying in its usual place alongside the caecum. In this situation, the inflammation of the appendix would be masked as its signs of inflammation would not be transmitted to the front of the belly where they could be easily detected. However, an examining finger inserted into the rectum and directed toward the caecum would usually be able to detect the tenderness of the inflamed appendix.

"Sister."

She knew what to do without being told. She drew the curtains around the patient's bed. The Professor disappeared behind the curtains. Sister followed with a kidney-shaped bowl holding a latex glove and a tube of lubricating jelly. Sister informs the patient about the procedure to be expected. There follow sounds of the patient changing position in his bed, of a latex glove being pulled into place.

"Just try to relax."

A short gasp is heard from behind the curtains as the anal sphincter is breached. A brief cry of pain follows as the finger probes toward the caecum. The slapping sound of the glove being removed echoes through the silent ward. The professor emerges. Sister stands with a bowl of warm soapy water and a towel draped over her right arm. While washing his hands, he glowers coldly at the registrar.

"Book the operating theatre. "

The registrar reddens and hurries sheepishly away. Smirks twist the faces of some of the less kind consultants. The houseman is still staring at the floor, hoping to be swallowed up by the floor boards.

Jack knew that simply surviving the six months without putting a foot wrong would be a badge of merit. Nevertheless, he longed for one tiny nod of approval, one small word of praise, one scintilla of a smile from the great man. One of the houseman's most important chores, was to write the case summary of the patients on their discharge from hospital. It had to typed on a single sheet of size A6 paper by the ward secretary in time for the deadline at noon on Saturday. If the secretary could not manage it in time, it had to be written by hand by the houseman. As with the case presentations, it was a balancing act between providing all the necessary data and excluding irrelevant details. In complex cases, it was almost impossible to find space for all the facts within the space provided by an A6 sheet. The Professor checked each summary minutely. If it was not up to scratch, he would tear it in two without a word. If it was accepted, he would place it without comment on the pile in front of him. One of Jack's patients had had an extremely complicated course. She had undergone an enormous barrage of tests and three operations. Jack spent most of the Friday night rendering the multitudinous array of facts into a coherent kernel.

The Professor picked up the sheet of paper. He read every word. Jack was sure his heartbeat could be heard across the room.

′This is a damn fine summary, Hoffmann," Dup said as he added it to the pile.

Table Doc

The hectic year of housemanship ended and they were all now free to choose how they wanted their futures as doctors to be spent. One could go into practice as a general practitioner or one could choose to spend the next six to eight years specializing in any of the myriad of possibilities from cardiac surgery to dermatology. If one chose surgery, one would first have to pass examinations in the basic sciences of anatomy, physiology and pathology which was a repetition of what they had studied five and six years previously. The examination was known as the Primary. It was an extremely difficult hurdle with failure rates of 60-70%. It was regarded as an entrance examination into the specialty of surgery and was purposefully made difficult in order to sort the wheat from the chaff. Most would seek a job for the year after housemanship that allowed them time to study. The ideal post was to become a Demonstrator, known as a Table Doctor, in the Department of Anatomy, where one had access to a cadaver for dissection while teaching second years students. This job was in great demand. Both Jack and Martin applied for it and were accepted.

Herbert decided to emigrate to the USA. Jack was surprised.

"What about Israel? You have always said that you would end there to fulfil your role as a religious Jew."

"Well, I have two dreams. The one is as you say but the other, which you are also aware of, is that I want to reach as high as possible in surgery and to do that, I must go to America."

"So your ambition to be the top surgeon in the world takes precedence over your obligation to be a full Jew? Doesn't that, once again, confirm the point I made many years ago that each Jew hypocritically tailors the amount of religion he practices to suit his own comfort?"

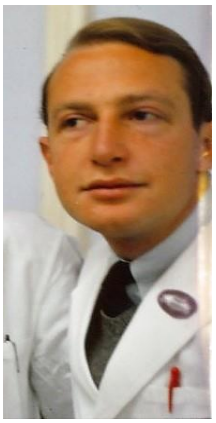
"Are you saying I'm a hypocrite?"

"I am saying that your desire to hit the top in surgery is greater than your love of Judaism."

Jack and Martin started work in Professor Tobias' department of anatomy in February 1967. Jack stepped into the introductory session in the dissection hall with a vivid feeling of déjà vu. Had six years passed so quickly? He saw the scene through the eyes of his nineteen year old self and his

twenty-five year old self felt deep sympathy for the tremulous souls before him.

Throughout the previous seven years, Jack and Martin had been lowly underdogs in the strict hierarchy of the system. There were always layers of superiors sitting on their heads. As housemen, even the senior nurses were more highly placed in the pecking order than they. Now, suddenly, for the first time since the final year of high school, they were in a position of authority. They were looked upon in awe by the lowly second years to whom they seemed to be inexhaustible repositories of knowledge, although, in fact, they had revised the necessary section of anatomy only hours before. It felt good to be held in esteem and to impart one's knowledge. Jack relished the role of teacher. The months passed rapidly with his head buried deeply in the tomes he had to master and his heart floating with the joy of teaching.



1967: Jack as a Table Doctor

On the 5th of June, the Middle East and Jack's idyll with it, went up in flames. Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt, had a few weeks earlier begun massing troops along the Sinai border with Israel. He then expelled the United Nations observers who had been stationed on the Sinai Peninsula to oversee the armistice that had been in place since the Suez Crisis eleven years previously. He proclaimed that he had closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping thereby blocking Israel's only access to the Indian Ocean. Jordan, on Israel's long eastern border, invited both Egyptian and Iraqi troops into its territory. Syria amassed troops along its border with Israel.

Israel responded by calling up 214,000 reserve soldiers. Amongst them was Tony's paratroop unit.

At 7:45 on the morning of the 5th, almost two hundred planes of the Israeli Air Force attacked Egyptian airfields. Within hours, close to three hundred and fifty Egyptian aircraft were destroyed even before they had managed to leave the ground. Runways, radar facilities, missile sights, fuel and ammunition dumps were blown away. The procedure was repeated in Jordan and Syria. In the air, the Israelis encountered pilots and aircraft from Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Kuwait and even Pakistan who had rallied to aid their threatened Moslem brethren. Israel stood alone.

As soon as the war for the skies had been won, ground offensives began. The Old City of Jerusalem had been held by Jordan since the 1948 war. The northern approaches to the city were guarded by a strongly fortified post on Ammunition Hill, *Giv'at HaTahmoshet*. The hill housed underground bunkers, well-secured gun emplacements and a network of concrete trenches. The fortifications were connected to the buildings of a nearby police academy by such a trench. In order to minimize civilian casualties, the Israelis had decided against an aerial attack of this vital strategic position. Instead, it was bombarded by artillery and tank fire.

Then Tony's paratroop company was sent in. They did not float silently down from the heavens like seeds of dandelion as they had been trained to do. They had trundled noisily up from their base camp on the Plain of Sharon in khaki trucks along they winding, hilly road to Jerusalem. They sat side by side on hard wooden benches. Most of them had known each other since basic training three years earlier and had become close friends. They were dressed in creased and shabby khaki, their armpits stained black despite the coolness of the night air. They wore neither their proud red berets nor their paratrooper wings. These were for ceremony, not for battle. Instead, they carried battle helmets covered with nets of webbing. They wore brown boots, high at the ankle. Packs were on their backs. Their belts carried an array of accoutrements like hand grenades, water canteens, knives or binoculars. Most carried FN FAL rifles. Others bore Uzi sub-machine guns or M2 Browning .30-calibre machine guns and belts of ammunition. They sat in silence, their usual devil-may-care banter replaced by introspection. Tony envisaged his namesake passing similar pine-covered, rocky hills on his way to meet his death near another ancient city a generation earlier.

Exactly sixteen days before, Naomi Shemer had written a song called Jerusalem the Golden. Its words were, paradoxically, simultaneously both prophetic and nostalgic. It sang of mountain air as clear as wine, the smell of pines, of chiming bells, of a city in whose midst was a wall, dried out cisterns and empty market places. It sang of Jerusalem of gold, of bronze and of light. Its melody was so heart-wrenchingly beautiful, that even without the poetic words, the song brought tears to the eyes. It had already become a hit before the war but it was to become a national anthem during and after the war. Some of Tony's comrades hummed the tune as the Holy City approached in the night.

It was just after midnight on the 6th of June. Tony knew where they were going. He pondered the fact that it was exactly twenty-three years, to the day, since the Allied D-Day landings in 1944. Tony recalled pictures of American soldiers attacking the fortified German gun emplacements on top of the bluffs with their labyrinths of concrete trenches. Before him lay a similar scenario. They went in at 2:30 am.

When it was all over, he could not recall events in any coherent, chronological order. Static pictures were etched by adrenalin into his brain like acid on copper. Each still picture was accompanied by sounds and smells.

He sees the expressionless looks on the faces of his fellows. He smells their fear, the closeness of their breath, the oil of their rifles. He feels the dryness of his mouth awaiting the order. "*Kadima chevra!* Forward guys!" As before every rugby game, he thinks "Will I be good enough? Will I shine? Or will drop the ball?" He knows that this time there will be no referee keeping order, no half-time oranges, no cheering on the sidelines. He knows that he might not hear the final whistle.

The artillery barrage has ended. It is suddenly so silent that the silence is like thunder. Then bangalore torpedoes send snarled coils of barbed wire showering in all directions. Explosions of mortars and machine guns are punctuated by shouts and screams. Smoke, cordite, dust fill his nostrils.

He watches in awe as the dark silhouette of the city turns from the black of death to the purple of a bruise, to the pink of a smile, to the bronze of hope, to the shimmering gold of victory. Like in the song. He hears the incessant tattoo of gun fire and the snarl of tank engines and the squeal of their

tracks on the rocky ground.

They run onwards on bent knees and shoulders crouched forward to keep their helmeted heads below the concrete walls of the trenches. An explosion. Before him, the head of his platoon commander is replaced by two pulsating fountains of red and then the body falls. Tony is now at the head of the column. "*Kadima!"* he shouts. A lonely Dassault Ouragan, sky blue Stars of David on its wings, trails fire towards the east.

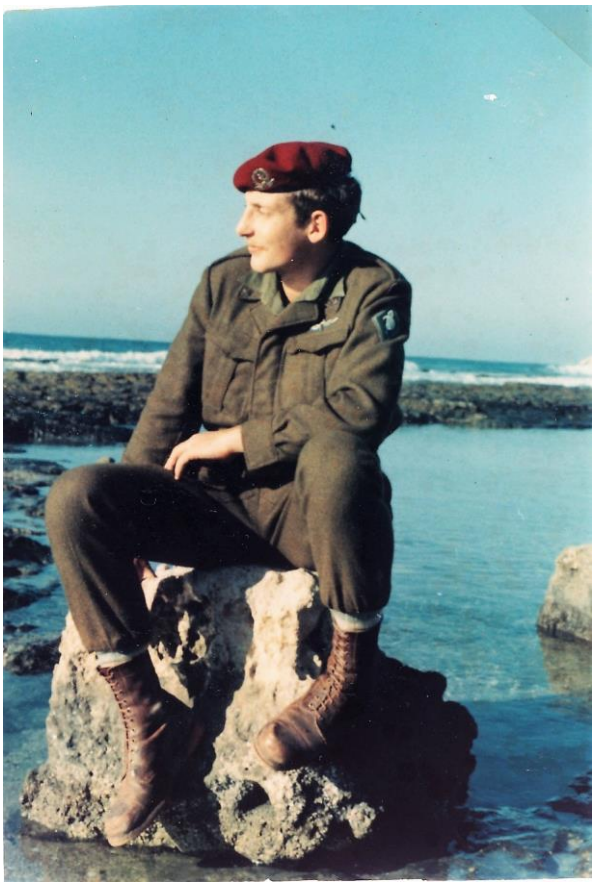
He sees Moti fall beside him, a red blossom on his breast where his paratrooper wings should have been. Tony supports him with his left arm, half carrying, half dragging. He slings his Uzi onto his shoulder. With his free hand, he grabbles blindly for a dressing in his backpack. His groping fingers encounter nothing soft. Instead, he fishes his handkerchief from his right-hand trouser pocket. David had taught them that a man always carries a clean folded handkerchief, not sissy paper tissues. The handkerchief was not clean but he knew Moti would not die of infection. He presses it to Moti's chest where the blossom has grown into a tree of flame. Moti's weight on Tony's shoulder grows heavier. The handkerchief is soon a lump of raw liver. Blood congeals between Tony's fingers. Then Moti suddenly grows lighter as his soul soars heavenwards. His final words are not of Trumpeldorian nobleness. He whispers simply, "*Eema,* Mother".

He sees red-chequered keffiyehs that spit flashes of light towards him. He hears bees buzzing against the concrete walls. Another comrade falls at his side, an eye socket replaced by death. He hears Shuli Natan sing of the pines he had smelled earlier but the air is no longer as clear as wine. No bells are ringing.

He hears his mother say, through her tears "Take care" and feels his father's firm hand clasping his, his eyes expressing both fear and pride. All his life Tony had dreamed of living up to his famous relative for whom he was named. Now here he is, here is the other Tony, hovering in the smoke above his head, far from his grave on the outskirts of Florence. He had died liberating a continent from armies which fought for Aryan purity. He now guides his younger incarnation liberating a city that had been held *Judenrein* for nineteen years.

Suddenly before him are giant blocks of granite, remnants of Herod's temple. Tortured vegetation protrudes from the crevices, like weeds in a long-unused cobblestone path.

"Behold, to all your songs, I am the lute."



Tony in Paratrooper uniform, 1966

The newspaper headlines screamed the Israeli triumphs and offered full-page photographs of Egyptian aircraft reduced to black stains on tarmac and Israeli tanks advancing into the Sinai. Egyptian soldiers' boots lay scattered in the desert sands.

Jack's primary emotion was deep anxiety. He knew that Alvin was safe as he was, by chance, on holiday in Greece. He knew that Tony belonged to an elite reserve unit which would be one of the first to be called up and would soon be in the thick of the fighting. But what of his parents? His anxiety was though, all but consumed by a Zionistic fervour so powerful that it seemed as if it would explode in his chest. Put aside were the cynical conclusions of his visit to Israel. He felt that he had to be there. He had to be part of the fight. Surely they must need doctors? Even phlegmatic, pragmatic

Martin was gripped by Zionistic frenzy. On the third day of the war, they could no longer contain themselves. They trooped off to Professor Tobias and told him that they wanted to leave for Israel immediately. He all but exploded.

"You are behaving like a pair of hysterical schoolgirls. A, you are showing lack of loyalty and responsibility to the department at a very busy time just before the mid-year exams. B, Israel has more doctors than they need. C, the war will be over before you have even packed your bags.
Now, get back to work you silly, silly boys." They backed away, muttering uselessly.

Jack pondered his situation. He drafted a long-winded letter of resignation listing his reasons for his decision. To be sure that he was doing the right thing, he decided to wait until the following Monday before submitting it. By then the war was over.
He spent the rest of the year studying for the Primary and thriving in his role as teacher. He fondly fed morsels of knowledge into the ever-gaping red mouths of the chicks under his wing. He avoided the gaze of Professor Tobias where he still read disapproval. Martin cavorted around on his ninth-hand Harley Davidson, collecting chicks. They both passed the examination.

After the war, his brothers paid Jack a visit in Johannesburg. Alvin was full of frustration at having missed his opportunity of playing his part in the war. He had written some excellent analyses of the conflict and its aftermath. He was concerned about Jack's solitude in South Africa and tried to persuade him to accelerate his emigration to Israel. Alvin was the ultimate altruist. He lived a Spartan life and cared very little for his own well-being. He lived his life through his devotion to his parents and his brothers. Perhaps he had seen his mother's tears and felt his father's pain all those years ago, despite his reticence then.

Tony was reluctant to talk of the war but it was clear that it had tempered him and matured him. He was only twenty-one but appeared much older, intellectually, not physically. His mind duelled with philosophers and debated with prophets. He had written a few poems which he revealed shyly. He was ardently committed to the purest form of Zionism, tilling the land and sharing its bounty.

Jack now felt that he had two big brothers.

The Rainbow Has Seven Colours

The next five years lay before Jack mapped out in minutest detail. He would rotate through all the major surgical specialties from orthopaedics to paediatric surgery, from urology to plastics from cardiothoracic to vascular and trauma surgery. Jack had decided that he wanted to specialize in general surgery. The adjective "general" here was a misnomer as the specialty had long since shed all the many sub-specialties from itself. The age of the omniscient, omnipotent surgeon, who could as deftly remove a kidney or half a lung as he could a gallbladder or uterus, had passed. General surgery now meant largely, surgery of the gastrointestinal organs. Martin had decided on paediatric surgery. Towards the end of the five years, they would have to write the final specialist examination in surgery, the so-called Fellowship.

Most of Jack's teachers had been schooled in the perfectionist principles of Professor du Plessis and had supplemented their training at centres of excellence in Great Britain or the United States. The clinical "material" available to Jack, was vast and varied from typical Western diseases to rare tropical infections. The violence bred from the unequal society made Johannesburg one of the trauma capitals of the world. In a single weekend at Baragwanath, there would be more stab and gunshot wounds of the abdomen than small peaceful countries like Sweden and Denmark would experience in a year. Working eighty or ninety hours a week with caseloads of these dimensions under excellent teachers, the training was of international standard.

One of Jack's first jobs, in 1968 on the way to specialisation was his six-months of training in paediatric surgery. The highlight of his stay was his miniscule role as an assistant in South Africa's first successful separation of conjoined twins. This was Wits' attempt at stealing some headlines after Groote Schuur had hogged them all a few months earlier by performing the world's first heart transplantation.

In 1969, Jack returned to Coronation Hospital where he had been a medical houseman three years earlier. He was now on the third rung of the surgical ladder. He was a registrar. He was responsible for the day to day running of the ward under supervision of senior surgeons. He was in charge of the housemen and the medical students who were attached to the ward.

Anjoli Patel, the woman who had frozen a whole lecture theatre with a single white-hot glare after the lecture on examination of the breast six years earlier, was working at the same hospital as a senior houseman in the paediatric department. Their paths crossed in corridors and on stairwells, silently, anonymously, worlds apart. She ate in the canteen for Non-white doctors. He lunched together with his privileged white colleagues.

On occasion, he was called to examine a child in the paediatric ward. Once, it was she who presented the clinical details of the case and accompanied him during the consultation. For the first time, they had come face to face, had spoken to each other. Had she ever before been aware of his existence? Her attitude, her look, was professional, icy. Jack gave his assessment of the case. No words were spent beyond that.

On a second consultation, Jack thought he discerned the glimmer of a smile on her lips. Her words were less clipped, her mien less rigid. By the third meeting beside the bed of a sick child, they greeted each other as friends. Afterwards, they shared a cigarette break in the corridor. She smoked Consulate from a flat green tin with silver writing that announced that the content was "filter cork tipped virginia". Jack smoked unfiltered cigarettes from a soft pack on which was printed a large five pointed red star on a blue background encircled by a yellow rope. Black letters across the star proclaimed the content to be Texans and smaller italics boasted that they were toasted. They spoke of this and that. This was the first time he had spoken socially to a "black" person since Francina.

Jack began to seek Anjoli out whenever he could, tentatively at first. His feelings were clear. This was a beautiful, intelligent, interesting woman to whom he was deeply attracted. But where could it lead? What could it achieve in this land of laws against the mixing of races, where physical contact between those of different colour was a crime? No, it was worse than that; a man and a woman of

different colours alone together, even without physical contact, could lead to arrest. That was considered an "immoral act". Jack persuaded himself that his feelings for Anjoli were purely platonic. He wondered what she thought of him. Was he not merely a white fascist like all the others? Why should she regard him as any different from all her other oppressors? Did she think of him at all?

One day, he plucked up enough courage to invite her to the White doctors' common room. None of his colleagues seemed to care but one never knew whether someone would report such an infringement of rules. One or two of them chatted friendlily with her. Then Jack started to eat his lunch in the non-White dining room. This was smaller and more intimate than the big one for Whites. The buzz of conversation silenced when he entered it the first time and they looked warily at him. Anjoli made place for him next to her and welcomed him. The others soon accepted his presence and spoke freely to him even when Anjoli wasn't there. Besides a single remark from one of them, "Playing with fire, boy," none of his white colleagues said anything about his crossing the line.

Jack tried to analyse his reasons. He found that the action was completely spontaneous and uncomplicated. He was not trying to make a point, not trying to make a political statement, not trying to ingratiate himself to his Indian, Coloured and Chinese colleagues. He just felt it was a natural thing to do. He did it because he *felt* like it. He was sure that he was not trying to score points with Anjoli. She was too smart for that. He did it because it felt right.

Once, in the common room, sipping tea and smoking, Anjoli said, "You're Jewish, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am".

"Why do you ask?"

"Because there is an affinity between us."

"What do you mean?"

"We Indians and you Jews. We are in the same boat."

"I thought you meant between you and me."

"The two are connected."

"How?"

"In more than one way. The Jews have been downtrodden and reviled for centuries. The Indians in South Africa have suffered the same way for a hundred years. Most Jews, despite the discrimination, managed to overcome adversity and achieve relatively decent lives by becoming small businessmen. That's what many Indians have done here in Johannesburg."

"You said more than one way."

"Yes. Both the Jews and the Indians dream of a better future for their children. They push them to become educated, to aspire to higher things, to become doctors and dentists and lawyers and architects. Even their daughters."

"And that's how you ended up up here."

"Also you. But I will not end here. The future for my sort in this country can only be bad. No matter who wins in the end. We are anathema to both the whites and the blacks. Remember what happened between Zulus and Indians in Durban in 1949? But I'm getting away from my point. When we strip our two cultures of the trappings and the bigotry and look at the essence, we value the same things. We revel in family ties. The family is our refuge especially at feasts and festivals. We feel that God wants us to enjoy our stay on his planet. The Christians are obsessed with self-flagellation, repentance, The Afrikaners' religion teaches that their god will treat them well if they eschew luxury and colour and brightness."

"I had no idea that Hinduism and Judaism are similar."

She laughed. Her laugh was brief and controlled, like one who was not accustomed to laughter.

"I'm not Hindu. I'm a Moslem."

"Moslem! I thought most Indians are Hindu."

"Yes, you are right, especially since the partition in 1947. Back in the 1860s, when the British first started bringing Indians to Natal, most were Hindu but some were Moslems and even Christians. Funnily enough, the British brought them to Natal because they believed that the Zulu lifestyle of hunting, warring and raising cattle made them poor labourers. That's why they brought poor, timid, hard-working Indians as indentured labourers to work on their sugar plantations. Ironic in the light of

today. Many chose to stay here even after they were free to return to India. They became railway workers, grocers and sellers of vegetables, fishermen and gradually clerks and interpreters. Then waves of Indians started arriving in Natal of their own accord, as British subjects. Many of these were Moslems from Gujarat and it is from them that I am descended. At one stage, Durban was said to be the biggest Indian city outside India. When gold was discovered, many Indians, like the Jews, moved to Johannesburg and started small businesses here. But we were centred in crummy suburbs like Fordsburg and not allowed into the classy ones, like you were." She smiled.

"My mother has lots of Jewish friends." Anjoli added. "She feels the connection. Where are your ancestors from?"

"Lithuania, like most South African Jews. And talking of connections. You mention Gujarat. That's where Ghandi was born. My dad was born in Zemaiciu Naumiestis. Hermann Kallenbach, a Jew who became one of Ghandi's closest friends and most devoted followers, was born in the same town".

"So we are almost family," laughed Anjoli.

"Lots of rabbis on my mother's side. More secular on my dad's. My mom was born here. My dad arrived here when he was twenty-one. He was studying medicine in Strasbourg but then the money ran out."

"Why Strasbourg?"

"After a nationalist Lithuanian coup in 1926, Jews were barred from studying medicine and law at Lithuanian universities."

"See what I mean? But you are free now and I'm still second class. I am just a Coolie."

On another occasion, they came to speak about racial purity.

"Strange," Anjoli said, "how the Afrikaner, whose apartheid credo is based on the concept of racial purity, totally ignores the fact that they are themselves, a mixed race."

"You mean they are intermarried with the Huguenots and the Germans?"

"No, I mean the Hottentots and the Malays. And the Blacks."

"Yes, I read once, that for the first many years after 1652, there were hardly any Dutch women at

the Dutch East India Company's colony at the Cape and that the settlers were not only allowed but even encouraged, to marry the slave women the company had imported from Batavia and their other Asian possessions."

"As long as they converted to Christianity of course!" added Anjoli, "and they couldn't hold their fingers and other organs away from the local Hottentots either."

"But of course, at some stage, such behaviour was no longer considered socially seemly although cohabitation with one's slaves and black servants, continued for many generations," said Jack.

"Yes, I've heard it said that when the results of miscegenation were born, the colour of the baby was assessed. If it was light enough, it became a member of the white family but if it was too dark, it remained with the slaves."

"Well, the Jews too, frown deeply on intermarriage and claim racial purity but that too is a myth. Throughout biblical history, they eliminated many of the opposing tribes' menfolk but they weren't averse to assimilating their women. Alexander Jannaeus, king of Judea at one of its apogees of territorial expansion a hundred years before Christ, was a master at converting his conquests, like the Itureans and Idumeans to Judaism at the point of a sword and circumcising them with other blades. And after their expulsion from Judea by the Romans, when the exiled Jews settled in small groups over the whole swathe of southern Europe, they happily allowed their neighbours easy entry into the fold of Judaism. You just have to look at the variation in colour tones among Yemenite, North African, South European and North European Jews, to see the degree with which genes were mixed."

"Yes, and what about the Khazars? Their king was so impressed with Judaism that he converted himself and the whole population."

"Great story, though denied by many historians. But that kind of thing is universal. Despite the most vicious nationalism and trumpetings of racial purity, there is hardly a nation in the world that can claim to have unadulterated genes."

During conversations at the lunch table, Jack learned that his non-White colleagues earned ten or twenty percent less in salary than the white doctors did. He should have already known this but he

hadn't. He was shocked. They had all had exactly the same training as he, had passed exactly the same examinations as he, did exactly the same work as he, worked the same number of hours as he but were paid significantly less. He felt an indignant rage blossom in his chest. This was utterly illogical because he had been aware of much grosser aspects of apartheid's discriminatory iniquities for years. He had recognized them, disapproved of them but then simply looked the other way. For the first time now, he felt this inequality personally. He knew that that was because he never before had sat together with people of another colour than his and interacted with them as equals, had never *honestly* seen them as equals, had never acknowledged them as equals. Equality until this moment, had been a theoretic concept.

He decided to react. He drafted a letter. He had speculated for hours how to phrase the iniquity he saw before him without sounding too emotional, too passionate. It ended up like this:

TO MY "WHITE" COLLEAGUES

Are you aware that our "non-White" colleagues receive up to 20% less in salary than we do?
This is despite the fact that they have the same qualifications as we do and do the same work as we do.
If you believe that this is wrong, are you willing to set aside part of your salary each month and pay it into a pool to be shared amongst our colleagues who earn less than us?
I specify no sum. The amount you wish to donate should be in proportion to what you can afford.
I am willing to be responsible for this fund and will administer it honestly.
Yours faithfully,

Jack Hoffmann

He had it typed, he signed it and had it Gestetnered. He handed a copy personally to as many of his colleagues as he could and left a pile of them in the common room table next to the tea and coffee

cups.

There were many reactions from his white colleagues:

"Jolly fine initiative."

"Helluva an idea. Sure I'll support you."

"You're farting against thunder."

"It's like pissing into the sea."

"You're going to get into shit."

"Are your facts correct?"

"Their lifestyles are not as expensive as ours."

"It's OK for you. You're not married but I've got a family to feed."

Rumours of the initiative soon spread around the hospital. As he went about his business, he met frowns and looks askance or smiles and nods of approval. One of the Indian doctors said, "Do you really think we will accept your charity?"

Anjoli smiled at him, patted him lightly on the shoulder and called him Snoopy, alluding to Charles Schultz's naïve dreamer. He smiled shyly at first but as the meaning of the reference sunk in, he blushed.

Some days later, Jack was summoned to the office of the Superintendent of the hospital, Dr Marius Swanepoel. He sat behind a desk the size of two ping-pong tables. He was an overweight man with a shiny bald pate and huge hands. He wore the obligatory three-piece suit, white shirt and tie. Jack had never seen him before. He was red with anger or perhaps he was always red. A tiny Oliver Hardy moustache seemed his face's only feature. Jack focused on that.

"Did you write this shit?" he said waving a sheet of paper in his pudgy hand.

"I can't see it from here."

"Don't play bloody smart with me. You know exactly what I'm talking about." Jack stepped closer and took the paper.

"Well, it's got my signature on it so I guess that was a rhetorical question."

"OK, so listen here, you smart bugger. If you don't retract this piece of toilet paper and destroy every copy that has ever existed, you will be out of a job as quick as a Kaffir can take a shit. And you will never ever get a job again at any of the hospitals run by the Transvaal Provincial Administration. You will never finish your training. Do you understand me? Or is that also a rhetorical question? Now fuck off."

Jack left without a word. He sought out Anjoli and told her of his meeting with Swanepoel.

She said, "Your action was a kind and honest display of empathy and friendship but it was naive and futile. It will change nothing. You must not give up your career because of this. You can find other ways of fighting apartheid," she said with a warm smile. "Leave it at this. Your gesture was brave and will be remembered."

He spoke to one or two of the other colleagues that he trusted and to one of the consultant surgeons whose opinion he respected. They all more or less echoed what Anjoli had said. He did nothing further and the episode spluttered out.

His fight against apartheid, as had his fight with Wessel over a decade earlier, fizzled out like a damp squib.

A month or two later, Joe Variava, the doctor who had dismissed Jack's idea of a salary pool as charity, invited Jack to his wedding. All the Indian doctors had been invited. Jack felt deeply honoured as he was the only White to be included. The wedding was to be held in the nearby city of Pretoria. Anjoli and one of the other female Indian doctors, Zainab, asked if Jack would give them a lift in his car.

When the day arrived, Jack picked them up at the hospital. Both were wearing beautiful saris. Zainab's was deep blue with broad bands of gold. Anjoli looked magnificent in a turquois sari with small and larger orbs of silver and yellow. Her usually straight hair now hung in cascades of lustrous, ebony curls. She wore a broad gold bracelet on her right wrist.

Jack offered Anjoli the front seat but she said, "No reason to create suspicion. Better safe than sorry."

His two Indian colleagues climbed into the back seat. Anjoli's remark reminded Jack that this outing, so innocent and ordinary in any other society, was here a contravention of norms and bordering on a criminal act. He drove carefully, so as not to provoke traffic controls and kept his eye open for police cars.

The ceremony and celebration afterwards was a dazzle of exotic sounds, scenes and smells but that which struck Jack most, was seeing Anjoli relaxed and wearing a joyous expression as she revelled in an environment in which she wasn't a victim.

Anjoli's carefree, smiling behaviour at the wedding, set Jack thinking: How must it be having constantly to try to discern the attitudes of the Whites around her? What must life be like for her, never being allowed into a white household without arousing suspicion, talk, gossip? How it must hurt never to be admitted into white cinemas, theatres and restaurants? What thoughts go through her head when she sits on benches or uses public toilets marked "Non-Whites" or sees signs on buses and trains announcing "Europeans only"? How must it be, to be this woman who was his equal both intellectually and professionally but was regarded by her society as a second-class citizen?

Next time they met, he asked her about this. She smiled the wry smile she reserved for such questions and said, "I am better off than millions of others."

"But how do you cope with the restriction, the exclusion, the rejection. the humiliation?"

"One suffers it."

"Have you ever been out of the country and done all the things you are not allowed to do here?"

"No."

"Then come with me. Let's go to London together. I want you to experience that freedom even if it's just for a fleeting moment. I want to experience it with you. I want to give it to you."

She smiled her wry smile again and said softly, "Snoopy."

Jack thought more and more about it and a few days later he repeated, "I want to buy you a trip to London. Take it as a fulfilment of my aborted attempt to share salaries." She smiled and said, "OK." They flew to London on separate dates to obviate attention.

He arrived two days before her and booked into a cheap hotel near Goodge Street.

They spent the days exploring the city. Although it was but a few blocks away from the heart of the bustling metropolis, Goodge Street had the atmosphere of a village high street. Around every corner were pubs, small restaurants of every conceivable ethnicity, tobacconists, greengrocers, makers of musical instruments. They gambolled around like lambs on a meadow. At some stage Anjoli took his hand. They had never before had any physical contact, except, perhaps, for a fleeting brush of white-coated forearms and her perfunctory pat on his shoulder in acknowledgement of his letter of protest. His heart soared. They saw other "mixed" couples walking hand in hand. No one cared. But in the back of his mind, questions dampened his joy. "Will they be watching us? Are they following us? What if we bump into someone we know?" The patina of fear still hovered above them.

They explored the city from end to end, enjoying the same things, laughing at each other's jokes, well-knowing that this was nothing but an unrealistic dream. They returned to their real lives in separate aeroplanes.

At the hospital they tried to behave as if London had never happened. Anjoli visited at Jack's flat a few times but fear of the blare of sirens, a battering on the door, overshadowed all. They had both read in the newspapers of leering police invading bedrooms, stripping off bedclothes to be used as evidence, of couples being marched off to police stations. Then came rumours from here and from there, "The cops are on to you." He feared exposure, trials, imprisonment but most of all he feared the ignominy of the banner headlines and full-page photograph that would inevitably be gloatingly offered by the tabloid press.

At the end of 1969, Anjoli announced that she no longer could stand the situation and was leaving for Canada. She presented Jack with a photograph of herself. On the back she had written:

For Jack.
With love and gratitude.
I'll always remember the rainbow has seven colours.
Yours,
A

Colour-Blind

Jack was doing a short stint at the trauma unit of NEH, the hospital for blacks adjacent to the Gen.

At three in the morning, the telephone screamed.

'Sorry to bother you, Jack. Henry speaking.'

Dr Henry Williams was the houseman on duty. 'I know you are not on call tonight but we have a problem,' Henry continued.

'That's OK, Henry. What's up?' answered Jack clearing his sleep-filled throat.

'Well, Special Branch has brought in a prisoner. He is battered and bruised all over. They say he was pushed down a flight of stairs by another prisoner.'

'What's he in for?'

'Terrorism. And that's just the point. That's why I'm phoning you. He's in profound shock with obvious intra-abdominal haemorrhage but Theunis Joubert refuses to operate on him.'

'What? Refuses?'

'Yes. He said, "Let the fucking black kaffir terrorist *vrek*. Let him die like the animal he is." '

'What! Get him ready for surgery! I'll be there in ten minutes.'

Jack splashed cold water onto his face. He placed a blob of toothpaste on his tongue and rinsed his mouth. He dressed hurriedly. He rushed to the operating theatre, changed into green pants and shirt, placed a green cap on his head and put on a mask. He walked to the scrub room and started his scrub. Henry, already masked, sterilely robed and gloved was there to meet him.

'Everything ready?'

'Yes, he's on the table, anaesthetised, fully draped and prepped.'

'Is his blood pressure up?'

'The anaesthetists have been working like hell and his BP's up to 100 over 80 and stable.'

'Does he have any other serious injuries besides to his abdomen?'

'He has a fractured right ulna, probably from warding off a blow. I've splinted it temporarily and arranged with the orthopods that we'll call them when we're finished and they'll deal with it properly. Besides that, he has multiple haematomas but nothing more serious.'

'No intracranial injuries?'

'No.'

'What's your diagnosis?'

'Well, his abdomen is distended and dull to percussion. Probably full of blood. He has a massive bruise on his left flank. So probably a ruptured spleen.'

'Blood in his urine?'

'No, so I guess his kidneys are OK.'

'Well done, Henry. Ever made a midline incision?

'Once.'

'So get going while I finish scrubbing. Start right up under the xiphisternum and go to well below the umbilicus.'

'He's a good chap. He'll go far,' thought Jack as he continued scrubbing his forearms with Betadine soap. He loved the iodine smell of it.

Incongruously, he smiled as he was taken back to scrubbing with Dup. Dup scrubbed for exactly seven minutes. Not five or eight minutes. Exactly seven. The problem was, that Jack, as the houseman, had to be busy scrubbing by the time the Professor arrived. If he arrived when Dup was already scrubbing, he would be icily reprimanded. As Jack never knew exactly when Dup would pitch up, he would sometimes end up scrubbing his forearms for ten minutes or more before Dup's arrival. Moreover, he had to continue for a minute or so after Dup had finished his scrub and had entered the theatre. This meant that occasionally, Jack ended up scrubbing for more than twenty minutes. After a day in the theatre with Dup, Jack's forearms looked and felt as if they had been attacked by nettles.

A black nurse helped Jack on with his gown.

'Good morning, nurse,' he said.

'Good morning, Dr Hoffmann,' she answered as she tied the gown closed at his back.

Jack entered the theatre to the beeping of the monitor and the puffing of the respirator.

The anaesthetist said, 'Step on the gas, Hoffmann. His BP is dropping again.'

The black theatre nurse greeted him. 'Good morning, Dr Hoffmann. Thank you for coming. We all appreciate it'.

'Hello Phumza. Glad it's you today.'

Henry crossed to the left side of the table. Jack took his place on the right. Henry had incised through the layers of the abdominal wall down to the peritoneum which was bulging ominously, like a purple balloon.

'Good, Henry,' said Jack. 'Suction ready?'

As Jack opened the peritoneum, deep violet blood gushed out in torrents. The suction bottle was soon full and had to be replaced. Jack passed his right hand, palm downward along the inside of the abdominal wall towards its left corner, under the diaphragm. He reached the spleen. Its normally smooth surface was breached by a deep crevice into which Jack could insert a finger.

'Your diagnosis is correct, Henry. His spleen is a mess. Continue suction.'

'Deep Balfour retractor, please Phumza.'

Phumza handed him an instrument with a short handle and a long, broad, horizontal blade. Jack placed it deeply into the abdomen towards the spleen.

'Retract as hard as you can,' he said to Henry.

Jack packed the coils of intestine away towards the right. He returned his hand into the abdomen keeping the back of his hand against the abdominal wall until he reached the space between the spleen and the diaphragm. He felt for the folds of peritoneum that tethered the spleen to its nest.

'Long scissors.' he requested.

Phumza was already holding one ready and placed it firmly into Jack's open palm. Jack carefully

severed the spleen's attachments and raised the organ out through the incision.

'You can relax the retractor,' he said to Henry.

The spleen looked like a huge purple plum which had been dropped from a height. It was still attached by its pedicle of blood vessels. From multiple fissures and cracks, scarlet arterial blood spouted and deep purple venous blood oozed. Without Jack's asking, Phumza handed him a heavy artery forceps. Jack clamped the pedicle carefully, making sure not to damage the pancreas which abuts on the spleen. The arterial bleeding stopped immediately. He placed a similar forceps a centimetre away from the first and cut between the two. Phumza had a kidney-shaped metal bowl ready into which Jack placed the severed organ. It continued to seep dark blood onto the shiny metal. Jack now dissected the pedicle carefully in the cleavage between the artery and the vein. He placed a more delicate artery forceps on the splenic artery and another one on the vein. He removed the large forceps and then ligated the artery with thick silk. Henry removed the smaller forceps. The same procedure was repeated with the vein.

'Not bad, Hoffmann. Only four minutes,' said the anaesthetist. 'His BP is starting to rise.'

'Not finished yet. We just have to check the rest of his abdomen,' replied Jack, 'and remember the bones people have to fix his ulna.'

Jack replaced the retractor and painstakingly examined each organ for further injuries. He sucked away pockets of accumulated blood as he proceeded.

'All clear,' he announced. 'Let's close.'

He removed his gloves and his blood-stained gown. He thanked Henry, Phumza and the anaesthetist.

He said to Henry, 'Please beep Joubert and ask him where he is.'

He felt more apprehensive about the coming confrontation that he had about the operation.

'He's in the tea room,' Henry replied.

Jack found him there, a cigarette in one hand, coffee in the other. There was no one else in the room. He was a tall handsome man with long black hair speckled with grey. He had a day-old stubble of

beard. A deep frown clouded his blue eyes.

'So? Did you save that fucking kaffir?' he asked, as he took another lungful of Camel.

'How could you possibly refuse to operate on a patient in dire need of your help?'

'He's not a patient, he's a fucking terrorist and I don't have to answer to you, Hoffmann. You're not my boss.'

'Yes, you're right Theunis. But I am a few months further ahead of you in this sausage machine and I think I have the right to question you, especially because you got me out of bed at three in the morning when I was not even on call.'

'So what do you want to know?'

'What right do you have to decide who to operate on and who to allow to die?'

'That bag of shit is a terrorist and was planning to kill white people like me and you.'

'How do you know that? Did you see his charge sheet?'

'The cops told me he's a known terrorist.'

'OK, let's accept he's been arrested for terrorism, but has he been tried and judged guilty? You are employed to make surgical judgements, not legal ones.'

'Cut the crap, Hoffmann. You Jews...'

'Oh, oh. Here it comes,' thought Jack.

'We Jews what?'

'You Jews are always so bloody self-righteous, so high-minded, so sanctimonious.'

'It has nothing to do with moral judgement and most certainly has nothing to do with being Jewish. It's a matter of medical ethics, universally accepted medical ethics. The primary guideline of our profession is *primum non nocere*, first, do no harm. You did harm by refusing to help him.'

'The rules were made for human beings, not animals.'

'But now *you* are making a moral judgement. You have judged him an animal. What right do you have to categorise your patients? What about the Hippocratic oath you swore?'

'That's all a load of theoretical *kak.* It has no place in complex situations like this one. It doesn't apply to people who think like him.'

'OK. Even if you regard the oath as shit, there's a line or two about this issue in an internationally accepted Geneva declaration. Something about respecting all human life. And yes, even kaffir terrorists would be defined as human. And then there is something in the declaration about not permitting considerations of the patient's age, ethnic origin, religion and so on to influence our decisions.'

'OK. So would you operate on a wounded Palestinian terrorist who just blew up a busload of Israeli kids?'

'Yes. Without hesitation. As I said, we are trained to make medical decisions, not moral judgements, even in extreme situations.'

'It's all hypocrisy,' answered Joubert. 'Let's say a prisoner who is condemned to death, attempts suicide. We are called to give medical treatment to save his life. Why bother if he is to be executed anyway?'

'I agree Theunis, that this would be a ridiculous situation. But that's not our decision.'

'So we are just obedient puppy dogs? What about war? Soldiers stand firing at the enemy. Their declared aim is to kill them. A minute later, the enemy retreats, leaving wounded behind. Now they are no longer the enemy. Suddenly they are prisoners of war. They may no longer be shot. They have to receive medical help. They have to be saved. Bullshit. Illogical hypocrisy. Moralism taken to a ridiculous extreme. *Reductio ad absurdum*.'

'Are you saying you would simply shoot prisoners of war like you chose to let your "terrorist" patient die?'

'I'm saying that lily-white principles aren't always appropriate. I think it's called ethical paradox.'

Jack drove home replaying the conversation with Joubert in his mind. Had he been sanctimonious? He was in a hurry to get home, have a shave and a bath, change his clothes and get a bit to eat before

he was due to start his workday at seven. He came to a red robot, as traffic lights are known in South Africa. There was no traffic at five-thirty in the morning. He looked left and then right. Nothing in sight. He crossed against red.

A traffic cop emerged from behind a tree, holding up his right palm. He was dressed in black leather from shoulder to boot. The visor of his matching helmet was open to reveal the obligatory sunglasses. His white motorcycle, Jack could now see, was parked further along. The cop approached with deliberate slowness. With slow, elaborate gestures, he flipped open his book of pink tickets and demonstratively clicked open his ballpoint pen.

'Good morning, officer,' Jack greeted.

'Colour-blind?' asked the cop.

'I like to think so,' replied Jack

Jerusalem Revisited

The highlight of Jack's rotation through the various departments, was his return, in 1971, to the High Temple of Professor du Plessis, this time as a registrar rather than as a lowly houseman. He was now addressed directly by the revered professor as "Hoffmann" rather than through a third person as "The Houseman". This post was considered to be the pinnacle of the training circuit. If one survived the rigorous requirements here, one would be assured a future in South African surgery. If one faltered at this hurdle, one could still become a surgeon but one would evermore be labelled with a tag of inferiority.

On Wednesdays, the grand teaching ward round started alternately in either in the male or female section. Off the staircase landing between the two wards, was the department tea room. The whole retinue stopped here for tea between the two ward rounds. The Professor sat at the head of the table with his consultants and the two registrars seated around the table in pecking order. The housemen stood on the periphery of the room, against the walls. The ward sisters served tea and neat sandwiches or slices of home-baked cake. The housemen poured their own tea. They were not allowed access to the sandwiches or the cake. As the lowly tail of the retinue, they might surreptitiously gobble the leftovers on the way out.

The conversion at tea time was strictly non-medical. Dup would have chosen a subject for the day's discussion but it usually ended up as a discourse rather than a discussion. For example on Wednesday 24th April, 1971, he started, "I see there were more protests against the Vietnam War in Washington during the weekend."

This produced a flurry of nods around the table although most had probably not been aware of the fact before now.

"They say a half a million marched," he continued. More nods.

"Veterans ripped off their service medals and threw them down the steps of the Capitol building.

He addressed one of the senior consultants. "You've been to Washington, haven't you Cedric?"

"Yes, Professor."

"Beautiful city," continued the Professor. "Noble, unpretentious buildings. Glorious blossoms in April. Pity to spoil it all with such behaviour. I can understand protesting the war on moral grounds; an atomic superpower against a mainly peasant population but I also think that those who fear the domino effect in the whole are, are also right. Allow one of those countries to become communist and the whole of South-east Asia will follow. It's also a matter of patriotism. One has to support the decisions of a democratically elected government."

There was a subtle emphasis on "democratically".

"One has to be prepared to defend one's country. So burning draft cards and dishonouring medals is not the way to go about it. And everyone is just jumping onto the band wagon to promote their own interests. Hippies, black civil rights agitators, women's liberation movements. the whole bang shoot."

Jack saw the discrepancies between these statements and the well-known fact that Dup generally disagreed with his own government's apartheid policies and moved in subtle ways to oppose them. But Jack's station in the hierarchy did not allow him to comment and it was not acceptable to discuss South African politics in such situations. He had often debated the Vietnam dilemma with himself. He completely disagreed with the concept of dying blindly for King and Country but wondered whether he would be prepared to die for something he believed in.

Dup went on for some minutes. There were occasional banal interjections from one consultant or another but no one would dare come up with concrete opposition to the words of the Professor. Finally he would glance at his watch, stand, thank the sisters for tea and lead the procession to the next ward.

1971: Tea break between war

Dup at the head of the table. Jack front row, second from right.

Joss Lannon

Every Saturday morning, the capacious lecture hall of the Johannesburg General Hospital was filled to the last seat by the staff of the professorial surgical unit, the staffs of the other surgical departments of the Gen, Coro and Bara, surgeons in private practice from the city of Johannesburg and the surrounding towns, casualty officers, registrars, housemen, medical students and nurses. The rows were occupied according to this hierarchy. Three or four cases were presented for discussion. The discussion usually involved a monologue by Dup, who would throw a few questions to the audience. Wise or relevant responses were received with a half-smile of approval. Nonsense was rejected with jutting jaw, a look of withering disdain and silence. Very few dared to utter an opinion, especially uninvited, in the presence of God.

There was one exception. His name was Joss Lannon. He was a dapper, not very tall man with silver hair. He had a never-fading sun tan so that he always looked as though he had just returned from three weeks on the French Riviera. He always had a somewhat mischievous smile on his face which revealed a slight gap between his upper medial incisors. This added to his roguish air. He had a quick and pithy humour. Whereas all his colleagues dressed in customary dark suits and sober ties, he often wore relaxed flannel trousers, blazers with brass buttons and colourful ties. He had the reputation of being the best surgeon in Johannesburg. He was no match for Dup when it came to knowledge of the science of surgery and the analysis of complex problems but technically he was a genius. They said he had golden hands. He wasn't a scientist like Dup was but his crisp mind, sense of logic and his vast clinical experience, gave him enough fire power to face the Professor. He greatly respected Dup but refused to be like the bunch of poodles that followed obediently at Dup's heels.

A case was presented of a patient with severe, constant abdominal pain. She had already undergone a vast battery of blood tests, urine examinations, endoscopies, x-rays, scans and periods of observation. Even the Professor of Internal Medicine had been called in to assess her. Dup, as usual, proposed an algorithm of profound insight. Esteemed members of the audience suggested an extra blood test here,

another x-ray there.

″What about a psychiatric evaluation?" suggested one.

Joss raised his hand, stood and said, "This poor woman has been investigated from Dan to Beersheba, from Beitbridge to Cape Point. She's had every test in the book. Now some of you are suggesting she's nuts! Why not just go back to basics? Take a knife and open her abdomen. I'm sure you'll find what you're looking for."

Even Dup bowed to this impeccable logic. She subsequently underwent a so-called exploratory laparotomy, the jargon for Joss' suggestion. A small tumour was found in her adrenal gland that had invaded into the surrounding tissues. This was ample explanation for her symptoms.

On another occasion a case was presented illustrating post-operative death by pulmonary embolism. After surgery, various factors such as changes in the coagulability of the blood and torpid flow of blood through the veins of an inactive calf, can lead to the formation of a clot of blood in these veins. This can cause a spike of fever, pain in the calf and swelling of the ankle. In extreme cases, the blood clot loosens and is carried along the venous system through the heart and into the lung where it blocks the circulation. It is then termed a pulmonary embolus, a condition which can be fatal. Dup sagely enumerated the known methods of preventing such a catastrophe. One or two in the audience added their tuppence worth.

Joss stood up and said, ″My patients never get pulmonary emboli. I just give them a little shot of heparin (a substance that prevents coagulation of the blood) before the operation."

Dup asked, "Do you have statistics to back up your claim?"

"No, you'll just have to take my word for it." Sniggers rippled across the hall.

"But surely the patient must bleed excessively during the operation if you've filled them with anticoagulant?"

"No, it never happens because the dosage is too small."

"How much do you give?"

"Oh, I don't know. My nurse just gives them a little." More sniggers.

"So you have no documentation of how many emboli you have per number of patients operated nor on the incidence of excessive bleeding nor of the dosage you recommend. I am afraid that we cannot take your claim seriously." Overt laughter now.

"You're right Prof. Not very scientific. But it works."

A few years later, after others had stumbled on the idea and tested it clinically, prophylactic peri-operative heparin would become standard surgical practice throughout the world. None of the users would ever have heard of Joss Lannon.

A few months later, Jack started the last eight-month segment of the circuit. It was the zenith of his training. He was now the senior registrar. He was lucky enough to have been allocated to the ward of which Mr Lannon was the part-time head.

Mr Lannon welcomed him. 'I've heard good things about you, Hoffmann.'

Jack blushed. He longed to ask whether it was Dup who had given him some words of praise, but he said nothing besides 'Thank you, Sir.'

'Let's stop that "Sir" business. Call me Mr Lannon, or Joss, if you feel like it, Jack.'

He continued, 'I leave the ward entirely in your capable hands. You are in charge of its day to day running. You do the ward rounds. You supervise the housemen. You teach the medical students. You call in the elective patients. You make up the operation programmes. The other consultants and I can be reached by phone whenever you need us. I will do grand rounds every Wednesday, though not as grand as the Prof's, no doubt,' he added with his impish smile, 'and I'll pop in unannounced from time to time to see how you are getting on. Any questions?'

'Thank you for your trust, Mr Lannon. I will not let you down. Am I also to decide the allocation of the cases to the various surgeons?'

'Yes. All the cases are yours, so to speak. You operate independently on those cases you feel you can handle alone. You ask a consultant to assist you with those where you feel you need help. You ask

me or one of them to do any case which you feel is beyond you, with you as first assistant.'

Jack was ecstatic. This was light years away from the practice in Dup's ward, where Dup chose the cases he wanted to operate on, and the consultants grabbed the rest. The registrars acted as assistants.

He spent the following months performing the entire range of surgery of the gastrointestinal organs. He was helped through the most complicated ones like total gastrectomy, (removal of the entire stomach), low anterior resection and abdomino-perineal resection of the rectum, Whipple's operation, (removal of most of the pancreas), and partial hepatectomy, (removal of parts of the liver). He assisted his housemen with simpler procedures like appendectomies, removal of gall bladders and repair of hernias.

During these months, Jack enjoyed three things beyond all others. The first was teaching the medical students. He took them on rounds and gave them tutorials. He read in their eyes the awe and respect he knew he had shown his teachers. The second was the exciting challenge of emergency surgery. He had to decide whether a gastrointestinal bleed needed acute surgery or conservative medical treatment, whether an acute abdomen required an immediate operation or frequent reassessment, whether an intestinal obstruction had to be operated on here and now or should be observed awaiting spontaneous resolution. In each of these scenarios, he trod a fine line between operating too early and finding that the operation had not been necessary or too late causing the risk of complications, and even death, to increase.

The third thing was watching Mr Lannon operate. He was like a ballerina; rhythm, synchrony, precision. Each stroke of his scalpel, each movement of his forceps was a masterpiece. His dissections were like the illustrations in Sabota's famous Atlas of Human Anatomy. And he never spilt a drop of blood. He anticipated, he knew, where each artery, where each vein was hiding and clamped them before they could bleed and obscure his field of dissection.

Jack could not avoid comparing Mr Lannon's operative skills with those of The Professor. Dup operated like a battalion of soldiers in battle. Each step had been carefully planned; secure that road,

bomb that bridge, explode that building. It was effective, but it was not elegant.

Mr Lannon was cricket. The Professor was rugby. Joss was Chopin. Dup was Wagner.

Joss Lannon

Patrick Lee

One lunchtime, late in the autumn of 1971, Jack happened to sit down at the same lunch table as Patrick Lee who had been a year or two behind him at medical school and was now also studying to be a surgeon. He was an Aryan looking young man who, had he been a few centimetres taller, would have fitted the stereotype of a Luftwaffe fighter pilot. He spoke with the accent of one who had attended an expensive, exclusive, private, English language boarding school. The flattened South African vowels had been replaced by cultured pronunciation, known locally as "Oxford English", the accent Jack admired so much. Where Jack said, *"Glohws o warrer,"* Patrick said, "G*lahss of wahter."* Jack said "*Sethefrica,"* Patrick said *"Souhth Ahfrica"* .

They started chatting about this and that.

*"*Where are you now?" asked Patrick.

"Dup's circuit."

"Oh. Where have you got to?"

"I'm doing thoracics."

"Bunch of cowboys aren't they?"

"*Ja*, not as disciplined or as scientific as Dup. And you?"

"I'm at Coro. Great place. Lots of cutting but never enough."

Jack's mind flashed back to Anjoli.

Jack and Patrick became close friends, drawn together by their bachelorhood and their inability to find the loves of their lives, while most around them had long since disappeared into the arms of matrimony. He was attracted by Patrick's quiet, unassuming demeanour which contrasted with the typical loud, brash, conceited bearing of the average surgical registrar. Besides their interest in surgery, they shared an interest in music. Patrick had a highly sophisticated sound recording and reproduction system involving impressive reels of magnetic tape onto which he had recorded a whole library of popular and classical music. They spent many free evenings discussing the challenges and exhilaration

of surgical registrarship, their lack of success with women, the problems of the world and the subject usually taboo in South Africa, politics. They found that they had similar views on almost everything. They went to restaurants together and Jack gradually acquired a taste for good food and good wine.

One evening, Patrick switched on his sound system. From the giant speakers emerged a sound that immediately took Jack back a quarter of a century, to his room in Kensington, to the notes of Francina's singing. He felt the same creeping of icy fingers down his spine, the bubbling up of warmth beneath his diaphragm, the prick of tears in his lachrymal glands. He held his breath at the excruciating beauty of what he was hearing.

A female voice emerges. No, two female voices, one whose tones are of silver, the other a scintilla darker. At first, the two voices oppose each other. Then they embrace and then part again. They continue to ebb and to flow, buffeting to and fro. They start as a fragile breeze no stronger than an exhaled breath. Then the voices grow stronger, causing small zephyrs of gentle sound. They gain momentum. Leaves tremble on trees. Then the bough gently sways. The whole tree shivers. The breeze is now a vortex, spiralling two angels heavenwards. Their long hair and their very beings are intertwined in bliss. They are an image from Botticelli. Finally, a single autumn leaf drops silently to the ground.

"Hoffmann, you're blubbing!" Patrick shatters his ecstasy bearing two glasses of Brunello de Montalcino.

"That's the second most beautiful thing I have ever heard."

"What was the first?"

He tells him about Francina.

"I didn't know you liked classical music," said Patrick. They had spent their time listening to Joni Mitchell, Cat Stevens, Carole King, Jacques Brel, Peter Sarstedt and Charles Aznavour.

"Very much so, but symphonies, concertos, Beethoven, Bach, Handel, Sibelius, choral stuff. What was that?"

"It's the duet from the third act of Mozart's Marriage of Figaro. It's called *Sull'aria.* I think it's Freni and Scotto singing."

Jack bought the LP and wore out the grooves hearing the magnificent duet over and over again. Each time his first reaction was repeated but however many times he heard the aria, he was never able to hum the complicated melody to himself. He proceeded on to Puccini, Bellini and Verdi, picking out especially, the magnificent soprano arias and gorging himself on them like a little boy in a cherry tree.

He was enthralled by the celestial glory of the female voices he uncovered. Then he became enchanted by the sopranos' magical names. Each one sounded like a melody in itself. As the wondrous syllables tripped off the tongue, the names themselves created small arias; Luisa Tetrazzini, Amelita Galli-Curci, Teresa Berganza, Renata Tabaldi, Tatiana Troyanos, Katia Ricciarelli, Giulietta Simionato,Victoria de los Ángeles. Jack was seldom able to re-create in his mind the melodies these divine women presented to him. Instead, prolonging each syllable to the utmost he sang his own micro-arias, this operatic onomatopoeia of sopranos' names. Could these magnificent names actually be real? Or had they spurious origins like the one of the nice Jewish girl from Brooklyn, Belle Miriam Silverman who remodelled herself as Beverly Sills.

Once, Jack asked Patrick what he liked best about surgery. "The technical aspects. the actual operations. The feeling of power I get from restoring hurt organs back to health. What about you?"

"*Ja*. I enjoy that too obviously, otherwise I would be doing something else, But what I enjoy most is teaching, giving back some of what I have learned both theoretically and operatively, to the ones who follow after."

"Yes, and I hear from your students that you are very good at that."

Jack blushed. "I don't dream of making a fortune from surgery, nor do I believe that I will ever be famous. What I truly hope for though, is that one day, one or two of those whom I have taught, will look up to me and regard me as I today see my role models, men like Dup and Joss Lannon."

Jack had long since discovered that the easiest way to anger people and to make enemies was to

discuss religion or politics with those who disagree with oneself. He and Patrick loved to talk about South African politics because, besides nuances of difference, they agreed with each other.

Jack said, "I think that if one intends to continue to live in this country and if we believe what we both believe, that apartheid is wrong, then we have to take a stand."

"A stand?"

"Yes, at the very least join protests, join a political party."

"A political party? The Progressives? They only pay lip service. They preach democracy but they stand for qualified franchise. The Liberals were banned a few years ago. What's left? The ANC?"

"Yes, the ANC. Join their struggle."

"And end in jail? Would they even let us in?"

"You're right of course but what else is there to do? This in an evil system and I cannot live with it. I feel like I am living on an enormous mountain of shit. I see only three alternatives: Stay where I am and pretend the stink is not there. Take a shovel and try to remove the shit. Move away from the shit pile."

"Good analogy. The first is what most white South Africans are doing. The second represents the futile efforts of the dissidents but shovelling shit is a dangerous pastime. One can pick up fatal bacteria. The third is what more and more people of good conscience and poor courage are choosing. What will you choose?"

"I don't think I am brave enough to fight the system but I cannot stand the stench so I guess I'll leave when I finish the circuit at the end of next year. What do you feel?"

"There is in fact a fourth alternative. Finish one's training and serve the black community with one's surgical skills rather than physically supporting their struggle. I guess that is merely a salve to one's conscience and a way to excuse continuing the good life here but I think that's what I will do."

"I think it's a little different for me, being Jewish," Jack said. "The history of the wrongs to my people makes it hard for me to sit by and let similar things happen to another people."

"I'll tell you something few others know," said Patrick, reddening slightly. "My father was Jewish. His name was Levy. He removed the *vy,* added an *e* and with that, he discarded three thousand years of history. He achieved a new identity, if not for himself, then at least for me."

Jack was astounded. He would never have guessed.

"My mother was Christian and very 'English' ", continued Patrick. I learned nothing of Judaism and was not even aware of my history until just before my father died a few years ago when he told me. I have an uncle on a kibbutz in Israel and a cousin who was a fighter pilot in the Six Day War.

"So I now do feel some Jewish identity and would like to meet my Israeli family some day."

"If you ever were called on to do something for 'the struggle', how would you react?" Patrick asked.

"You know, that's something I have turned over in my brain a million times and I have yet to find a conclusion. On the one hand, in every discussion I have had through the years with people I trust and admire like my brothers and Herbert, whom you remember, I have been told that it is not our, the Jews', struggle. We have our own. And even if we take it up as ours, like Slovo and Goldreich and Wolpe have done, when the Blacks come to power, will they accept us, the Whites, the Jews, as equal partners? My answer is that exactly because we are Jews and often claim moral superiority, we are obliged to help others in their struggle."

"But blood is thicker than water. Your obligation is to your own kind," said Patrick.

"We do not use that argument when we complain about how few have helped us with our struggle through the generations, especially thirty years ago."

"But where does one draw the line? How remote may a struggle be before one may morally ignore it?"

"This one is not remote. It is so close that our comfortable lives, sitting here drinking Châteauneuf-du-Pape and eating juicy steaks, is gleaned from the backs of the Blacks. But my other doubt is about how I would react under fire."

"What do you mean?"

"I believe that I should join their struggle but how would I react under pressure if the Security Branch arrests me as they are most likely to do? I have had this thought in my head ever since I played Second World War games with my brothers. If I was a bomber pilot flying over Germany with a full load of bombs, with anti-aircraft fire all around me, certain death staring into my face, would I have the balls to carry on to the target or would I just jettison the bombs and get the hell out of there? If I was on Omaha Beach on D-Day, would I face the machine guns and zigzag bravely across the beach to the cliffs after my comrades or just piss in my pants and bury my head in the sand? If I was caught by the Gestapo for smuggling arms into the Warsaw Ghetto, would I reveal the source of the arms under torture or die with my mouth shut? And so on, in fifty scenarios on Masada, in Spain, at Gallipoli, in the Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967."

"Christ, Hoffmann. You've really thought this through. What is your conclusion?"

"I just don't know. In my heart I am a hero but my mind tells me otherwise. Someone once said I was like Snoopy."

The End of the Beginning

During the first four months of 1972, Jack was extremely busy at the hospital with its monstrous work load of ward rounds, out-patient clinics, elective and emergency operations, night duties and teaching more junior colleagues and medical students. In addition to all this, he was studying for the final part of the examinations for his Fellowship which was a requirement to qualify him as a surgeon. Every minute of free time was used studying the thousands of pages in the text books that covered all aspects of surgery. The most daunting was the fifth edition of Rodney Maingot's classic two volume work, Abdominal Operations. Volume 1 had 1092 pages and volume 2, 1855 pages. And that was just the start. He had to master texts on vascular surgery, endocrine surgery, breast cancer surgery and head and neck surgery, in total about 4000 pages of text. He had worked out a time schedule; if he got through at least ten pages an hour and studied at least six hours a day, he would have covered everything by the time the examination came up.

In May, he flew to Cape Town to sit the examination at Groote Schuur Hospital which had been made famous five years earlier when Christiaan Barnard had carried out the world's first heart transplantation. He was only slightly more confident than he had been when confronting the primary examination in 1968. He suffered through the three hour long written part, sweated through the orals and worked his way through the clinicals. He passed and was presented with his diploma by Professor Jannie Louw, Dup's eternal rival. He could now write F.C.S. (S.A) behind his name. He was a Fellow of the College of Surgeons of South Africa.

1972: Jack receiving his Fellowship diploma from Prof. Jannie Louw

In June, he flew to Edinburgh to write the equivalent British examination. This was simply as a back up. This British degree was internationally recognized as opposed to the South African one. He might need this extra security if he left the country. He passed and was offered a glass of sherry in the hallowed halls of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. He could now add a further string of letters after his name.

Patrick congratulated him on his success. "Well done. So it's all over after all these years of slogging. It must be such a relief."

"Well, I see it only as the end of the beginning."

Two days after he had returned from Edinburgh, Professor Du Plessis' secretary summoned Jack to his office. Such a summons always produced a patina of sweat. He knew that Dup would not have called him to congratulate him. Passing the Fellowship was expected and thus not a cause for jubilation or handshakes. Had he done something wrong?

Jack knocked and entered. He stood before the great man's desk.

″Ah, Hoffmann," said the Professor with the slightest shadow of a smile.

His palpitations diminished an iota. "Could that be a smile of congratulation?" thought Jack.

"Good afternoon, Sir," he said.

"You'll be finished the circuit at the end of the year. What have you planned to follow?"

"I haven't had time to think about it yet, Sir.'

That was not quite true. After all his conversations with Patrick, he was sure he would be leaving the country but he could not decide where he wanted to go or how he would go about it.

"Well, listen here, Professor le Quesne at the Middlesex Hospital in London has kindly offered us a registrar post in his department for next year. Are you interested?"

Jack could hardly disguise his excitement. Firstly, this was a stamp of approval from God and secondly it was the miraculous opening he hadn't dared dream of.

"That would be wonderful, Sir. I am most grateful."

Dup said, "Don't let me down". His cold blue eyes had already returned to the article he had been reading in the maroon-covered British Journal of Surgery. The conversation was over.

Jack was overjoyed. The future had opened its arms to him. A path of flares had been lit. The months pranced by.

On the 2nd of January, 1973, two weeks after his thirty-first birthday, Jack boarded a Boeing 747 bound for London's Heathrow Airport. He left behind the land of his birth, its magnificence defaced by the wound of apartheid.

His future beyond London led, he knew not where.

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It was the end of the beginning.

December 1972: Jack, shortly before departure from South Africa

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