

## *Contents*

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Poem for Michel</i>	2
<i>Your Great Grandparents</i>	5
<i>Your Grandparents</i>	10
<i>Your Ma and Pa</i>	12
<i>Photos of Delhi</i>	20
<i>Memories of Delhi</i>	56
<i>Photos of Bhutan</i>	62
<i>Memories of Bhutan</i>	71
<i>Photos of Somalia</i>	77
<i>Memories of Somalia</i>	88
<i>Photos of Yemen</i>	105
<i>Memories of Yemen</i>	117
<i>Photos of Tanzania</i>	136
<i>Memories of Tanzania</i>	145
<i>Photos of Holidays</i>	155
<i>Our Christmas Cards</i>	177
<i>Photos of Nepal</i>	179
<i>Memories of Nepal</i>	180
<i>Pa Retires from UNICEF</i>	181
<i>Your Letters to Pa on his Retirement</i>	182
<i>Pa's Retirement Speech</i>	186



*A*mong the pages of this book are images captured through Papa's lens, evoking memories that have shaped our lives and made us the people that we are today.

*Living and working for UNICEF in India, Bhutan, Somalia, Yemen, Tanzania and*



*Nepal exposed us not only to diverse cultures and varied living conditions but gave us the opportunity to travel and to embrace life to the full!*

*We had to adapt to new cultures, languages, people and places, and we had to do this with no support from family or friends. There were no mobile phones, no internet and no Mr. Google to answer questions or give advice. Frequently, we lived without creature comforts and in Somalia it was without electricity, cooking gas, petrol and essential food items such as flour and cooking oil. Very often it was tough going but the lessons we learned and passed on to you could*

*never have been learned in a classroom or from books and the friends we made for life, we count as family.*

*We learned to evolve, to embrace change and accept differences. We learned that people, who lived with less and never went to school were our teachers. They taught us about life's greatest lesson, Love. We learned from them about forgiveness and acceptance, about music and dancing about the inherent good in every person no matter their religion, race or colour. We learned that nature renews the spirit everywhere, that language is never a barrier to communication that Love permeates Life but above all we learned to trust in the Universal Spirit, Love, which consistently meets every need.*

*And so our beloved Michel, may you enjoy the memories of your childhood that these pages will evoke, put together with love by parents who have been blessed with the greatest gift of all - YOU.....*

## *Michel*



*Rock with me baby, just you and I  
While I sing a lullaby  
Rock with me baby your spirit divine  
Free forever to shine, shine, shine*

*Your velvet skin, your angel smile  
Your hair your starry eyes  
Reflect the light of God, Michel  
My sweet and perfect child*

*Rock with me baby, just you and I  
While I sing you a lullaby  
Rock with me baby your spirit divine  
Free forever to shine, shine, shine*

*The joy you bring lives in my soul,  
However far you roam  
You'll always be eternally  
In my heart, your home*

*Rock with me baby, just you and I  
While I sing a lullaby  
Rock with me baby your spirit divine  
Free forever to shine, shine, shine*

*March 1973*

## *Your Great Grandparents*



*Your Maternal Great Grandparents  
Adolf and Hedwig Gimmi*



*Your Paternal Great Grandparents  
Mohsin and Tahira Tyabji*

## *Your Great Grandparents*



*Your Paternal Great Grandparents  
Mehra and Nowroji Pundole*



*Your Maternal Great Grandparents  
Jehangir and Tehmina Lalkaka*

## *Your Great Grandparents*

### *Mohsin Tyabji (1866-1917) and Tahira Fatehally (1882-1973)*

**T**ahira and Mohsin Tyabji lived in Bombay and had one son Amin, your grandfather.

*Excerpt from "Random Reminiscences" - Mark Devereux.*

*"The Tyabji clan was founded by Bhoymeeah Hajeebhoy (strictly "Tayyib Ali ibn bhai Miyan"). He was a Sulaimani Muslim (Shia) who came to Bombay from Surat, a sea-port north of Bombay, in the late 1700's, and established himself as a merchant. His son Tyab Ali improved the business and became an important person in the community. Tyab Ali's very modern outlook on life induced him to send two of his sons (Badraddin and Camruddin) to England. Tyab Ali changed his name to "Tyabji" following the practise of the local people in addressing him with the "ji" suffix, a term of respect. He became known as Tyabji Bhoymeeah.*

*Badraddin managed to have 14 children, three of whom died young. Of the remainder, 5 were boys and 6 girls.*

*Badraddin's eldest son, Mohsin (your great-grandfather) was a brilliant scholar and, after receiving his legal training in England and seeing the new opportunities for Indians in the Senior Services of the Indian Government, got himself a place in the ranks of the elite Indian Civil Service (ICS). His talents had marked him for reaching high in his career, but his life came to a tragic end. He drowned in the sea in Kihim when he jumped into very rough waters to save two of his young nephews. He managed to push the youngsters into the shallower part, but a strong high wave sucked him in and dashed him against a rocky outcrop. Unfortunately, he drowned before he could be rescued."*

*Tahira Tyabji (your great grandmother) was widowed when your grandpa was only 14 years old - she was a woman way ahead of her time! Smart and astute, she was the first woman to trade in stocks and shares at the Bombay Stock Exchange. Grandpa was the apple of her eye and papa undoubtedly her most favourite grandchild.*

*She owned a building in Chowpatty (Bombay) and rented an apartment to my grandfather (J A Lalkaka) who used it as his studio, long before papa or I were born!*

*Granny Tahira lived with Dadima and Grandpa and was at our wedding - she was also alive when you were born Michel, and she was so happy to hold you in*



her arms. She wanted us to call you Badruddin..... she died before meeting either Farhad or Adil.

### ***Adolf and Hedwig Gimmí***

Unfortunately, no one in the family remembers their dates of birth and death. They lived in an apartment in Zurich and had 5 children, Hedi, Clarli, Alice (your grandmother), Adolf and Bethli.

Adolf (your great grandfather) was a tradesman and a very strict father. He took care of the home and fixed everything and anything that needed to be fixed (sounds like Pa!). He was a staunch Christian and took the family to church every Sunday.

Hedwig (your great grandmother) had to work very hard to keep the family together. With five children and no machines to help with the housework, it seemed like she was always cooking, cleaning, sewing and mending.

Dadima was a sickly child and often had to stay home from school. Her most vivid childhood memory was having to help her mum scrub clothes on a washboard. Her little hands used to freeze in the cold water and often they turned blue!

### ***Nowroji Pundole (1882-1947) and Mehra Nariefwalla (1889-1971)***

Mehra and Nowroji lived in Bombay and had 5 children - Maki, Naju, Noshir, (boomp) Kali and Russi.

Nowroji's family came to Bombay from Surat and his ancestors were called "Ghadiali" which meant watch-maker. In those days, all Parsi families carried the name of their profession as their surname.

Nowroji's father Dadabhai moved to Bombay with his family and started a business repairing and selling watches and clocks. He and his brother were trained in Switzerland in watch making at La Chaux de Fonds. He was a trusted and well-respected watchmaker and his business flourished.

In 1886 he opened a store in the fort area of Bombay called D R Pundole and Sons. He also ran a wholesale watch business called Sincer. His son Nowroji took over the business and ran it successfully till he died suddenly of a stroke in 1936. Boomp was 15 at the time.

Mehra's family also lived in Surat, they were traders and had a small boat business. Around 1850 one of her uncles was in Travancore when he was summoned to the court of the Maharaja there. The Maharaja's daughter was ill and he was convinced that the uncle (Not a doctor) would be able to cure the girl and miraculously he did!!!

*The Maharaja was so thrilled by this that he gave the uncle a large piece of land with a small house on it in Alleppy (Kerala).*

*Mehra's father moved his family from Bombay to Alleppy and they lived on the land which they converted into a coconut plantation. Mehra spoke fluent Malayalam. She moved to Bombay after she got married to Nowroji.*

*Mehra (my favourite grandma, she knew all my secrets) was a fantastic cook and a mild-mannered woman who accepted whatever life threw at her and never complained.*

*When she heard that my parents were not allowing me to marry papa because he wasn't Parsi and didn't have a "good" job she said to them "you have raised this child well and have taught her to use her mind and make her own choices. Now she has made her choice and you must trust her judgement."*

*She was bed-ridden at the time and quite ill but she summoned my parents and all my papa's siblings around her bed and made my father promise that no matter what, my wedding would take place on the 8th December 1971 as planned.*

#### ***Jehangir A. Lalkaka (1884-1967) and Tehmina Kharas***

*Tehmina and Jehangir had three children, Cavas, Sarosh and Roshan your granny.*

*Excerpt from the Open University Website "J. A. Lalkaka began his artistic training at the J. J. School of Art in Bombay (Bombay) in 1903. In 1908, he arrived in London after being sent to Europe by his grandfather Sir Navroji Vakil to complete his artistic education. Lalkaka attended the St John's Wood and Westminster Art Schools, both seen as preparatory institutions to gain admittance to the Royal Academy Schools. He also travelled to Europe to complete his artistic education and spent time at the Louvre in Paris. In 1913, Lalkaka returned to India and set up his own studio in Bombay. He painted mainly portraits which were popular with the governing elite. Lalkaka's work was supported by Viceroy's Irwin and Willingdon in particular.*

*In 1929, it was decided that the Viceroy's Palace (now the Rashtrapati Bhavan) in New Delhi should be decorated with paintings and an exhibition was held of 1,500 works of art by 200 artists. Edwin Lutyens, the architect, in consultation with the Viceroy chose Lalkaka from this exhibition, along with Atul Bose, to travel to England to paint royal portraits. Lalkaka's portrait of George V was particularly prized. He returned to India in 1931 and was honoured by a reception given by the Art Society of India. He was closely associated with the J.J. School of Art and became the first Indian to be appointed its Vice-President in 1931. His work can now be found in galleries in Delhi and Bombay"*



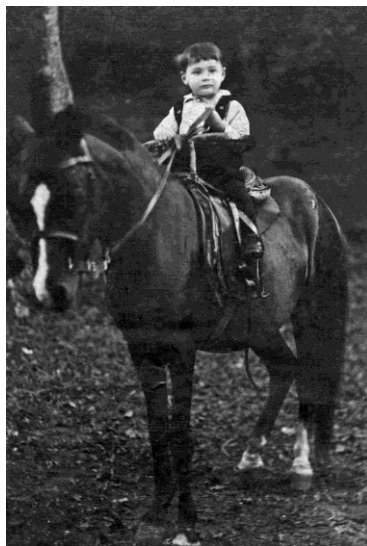
*I understand that the copy of an original portrait of King George V painted by my grandfather in 1930 hangs in the South State Drawing Room at the Buckingham Palace.*

*His paintings of Mahatma Gandhi, Queen Alexandra, Marie Adelaide and Dadabhai Naoroji can be seen at the Rashtripati Bhavan and Rajya Sabha New Delhi*

*Tehmina Kharas (your great grandmother) was a formidable lady who made no bones about the fact that she preferred boys to girls. She never forgot to remind granny of this fact and would often say things like “why would I waste my money on your education” and “If you don’t behave I’ll throw you out of the window!” Granny was fearful of her and there is a funny family story that goes like this:*

*When granny fell in love with Boompa she took many days to build up the courage to talk to her mother about her newfound love.*

*Tehmina irritably asked “Konu Khandan che” (what family does he come from) “nathi malum” (don’t know) came the reply. “Soo Kam karech” (what work does he do) “Nathi Malam” (don’t know) “Soo Kamaych” (How much does he earn) Nathi malam” (don’t know) “Kevo Lagech” (what does he look like) a huge smile covered granny’s face, this was one question she could answer! With a flourish, she pulled out a photograph of my dad sitting on a pony in Matheran when he was 4 years old!!!*



## *Your Grandparents*



*Your Paternal Grandparents  
Amin and Alice Tyabji*



*Your Maternal Grandparents  
Roshan and Noshir Pundole*

## *Your Grandparents*

***Amin Tyabji (1902 - 1994 and Alice Gimmi (1911 - 2003)***

*Amin and Alice had two children, Ursula and Robert, your papa.*

*Amin Tyabji (your grandpa) was born in Bournemouth UK and grew up in Bombay. He had an English governess and lived in a beautiful bungalow called Somerset Cottage next to Sophia College. Amin went to Switzerland to study and obtained a doctorate in Organic Chemistry. While at University he went on a blind date with a friend. His blind date was Dadima, whom he fell head over heels in love with. As he was leaving imminently to work in the UK, he got permission from her parents and quickly married her. Dadima spoke no English, and had never travelled outside of Switzerland, but she was ready to take on the world with her new Love and she did this with grace, style and aplomb!*

*So, they moved to London in 1936 in the middle of the Second World War. In those days of the Raj Indians were looked down upon and referred to as "Natives" Dadima told stories of how difficult it was for them to rent a place. She would look for a home, go see it and fix everything up with the landlady but when she took grandpa over, they refused to rent their place out.*

*Dadima had never experience such blatant racial discrimination and she hated living in England. They finally managed to find a small flat and Aunty Ursula was born there. A year later they decided to return to Bombay where they lived happily till the mid 80's when they moved to Australia to live out their twilight years with Aunty Ursula and Uncle Bruce.*

*Alice Gimmi (your dadima) - was born in Zurich and was a frail and sickly child. She went to school till she was 12 and (as was the custom then) she needed to learn a trade. Her father bought her a sewing machine and she learned to sew. She became an amazing seamstress and did the finest cross-stich, crochet, knitting and she made the most beautiful bead mats which all of us use to this day. When she told her parents she wanted to marry an Indian and move to India, they were alarmed and wrote to the Swiss Consul in Bombay asking them to enquire about the Tyabji Family. They got a quick response stating that the family in question was one of the most illustrious in the country and they should not fear for their daughter's future.*

*Grandpa and Dadima celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary in Australia and led a wonderful, happy life together.*

***Noshir Nowroji Pundole (1921-2016) Roshan J Lalkaka (1922-2016)***

*Noshir (your grandfather) was the eldest son in his family and when his father died prematurely, he had to take on the family business and support his five siblings. He learned business through experience but always had a yearning to finish his education. He fulfilled his dream by acquiring his Master's degree in business from the University of California long after his three children had left home!*

*Noshir introduced Lionism to India, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. He was affectionately known as "The Father of Lionism in India". He was also actively involved in the Boy Scout Movement and in 1944 he organised a charity event to raise funds for the Second World War. Roshan "The Nightingale of India" sang at the concert and Noshir was smitten – their love story lasted a long time and we were privileged to celebrate their 71<sup>st</sup> wedding Anniversary at our home in Shah Alam on 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2015.*

***Roshan J Lalkaka (your granny).***

*She was the favourite child of her father, the artist. When she was born he held her in his arms and admired every tiny bit of her, covering her in kisses. He found a tiny feather in her armpit and believed she had been an exquisite bird in her previous life, a Nightingale perhaps? She was blessed with a beautiful singing voice. She performed regularly on All India Radio, as a playback singer for Bollywood and at many concerts and on several stages. She sang in Carnegie Hall in New York where she received a standing ovation. She was loving, kind and compassionate but also out-spoken and she never minced her words!*

*She insisted on being truthful and loved quoting proverbs. She never spoke ill of anyone and silently helped all those she came across who were less fortunate than her or who simply needed a friend to talk to or a shoulder to cry on. Her motto in life was "Everything happens for the best and in its time" and "Life is what you make it, make it bright and true; if you say its gloomy, it's not life, it's You!"*





## *Your Ma and Pa*

### *How we Found Each Other Amongst 3.7 Billion People in 1969*



*P*apa and I first set eyes on each other in 1969 at Western Outdoor Advertising Agency, where there was a state of the art Audio Recording Studio that Pa helped the owner Suresh Nanavati to set up. I worked there part-time in the afternoons after my college classes. The first time I saw Papa he had his legs stretched out on the console with a cigarette dangling from his lips and he recalls me walking into the studio in a green mini skirt ... the rest is history!!!

...but for the record, here is the full story. We lived close to each other, papa at Breach Candy and me at Nepean sea road; he had a car and offered me a ride home. He was the perfect gentleman, and I was most impressed with his good manners and the attention I was getting. We started seeing each other off and on at Bombelli's where we drank large amounts of strong black coffee and talked about nothing. We also loved sitting on the rocks at Breach Candy, looking out at the ocean, and I remember once being rudely evicted by a policeman, how we laughed!

In 1970 papa was gravely ill - He had a lot of abdominal pain and discomfort and his stomach kept distending. No doctor could figure out what was wrong with him. After suffering the pain for almost two weeks, he insisted on being taken to the

*Nanavati Hospital owned by Suresh (his boss), where he was confident he would get the best treatment. On seeing Papa's critical condition, the hospital called Dr Lawrence Desa, one of Bombay's top intestinal surgeons and gastroenterologists. He immediately ordered the staff to put pa in a tub of ice to bring his fever down and then he operated not knowing what he would find! As he made the first incision Pa's liver burst and pus flowed out in copious quantities. He had a liver abscess that was caught in the nick of time!*

*After the surgery he was in hospital for over 6 weeks, being nursed night and day by the staff and Dadima and Grandpa. He had tubes and needles stuck into him and had become very weak! He began calling out for me so Dadima rang to ask if I would come, and I recall the long bus ride after college classes with Aunty Ursula from Warden Road to Vile Parle.*

*I remember being shocked the first time I saw Pa lying on his hospital bed. He had lost a lot of weight and looked like a skeleton. He was so weak he could hardly speak or keep his eyes open. Eating a bite of a biscuit took a huge effort and a long time. There were large holes in his abdomen stuffed with cotton into which tubes were inserted to drain out the pus, and the wounds had to be carefully cleaned every day which was most painful for him.*

*While Pa was in hospital I read an advertisement in the local newspaper. Actors and actresses were wanted to audition for a play which was to be performed at an International Theatre festival at the Aldwych Theatre in London. I was excited by this and decided to audition without my parent's knowledge. There were over 2000 applicants and I didn't think I stood half a chance of getting a part, but to my utter amazement, I did! I got a letter offering me a tiny role, that of Mandodri, the servant girl to Sita in a grand production of "The Ramayana."*

*I was thrilled by the offer, but rehearsals were in Delhi for 6 months prior to the performance in London. This meant I would have to take a year off University and I knew my parents would never agree to that! But it was worth a try and imagine my delight when against all expectations they agreed to let me go. My mum made all the relevant enquiries and learned that the Tata Centre for Performing Arts had put money into this venture and everything seemed proper and above board. She was really proud that I had been offered a small part in this prestigious show, so off I went to Delhi wide-eyed and excited at the prospect of acting on the Aldwych Theatre stage in London!*

*Papa was happy to hear my news and by the time I left Bombay he was home recovering slowly but going back to work was out of the question for many months to come. He had no idea what the future held for him, so we said goodbye and off I went to Delhi with stars in my eyes!*

*Delhi was exciting, and I loved working in the theatre. I was the youngest in the group and not bothered by all the promises that the production company was consistently breaking! Instead of being given an apartment I was given a room at a Yoga Ashram. In addition to my acting role, I was asked to do secretarial and*

administrative work and the very little money we were promised monthly, gradually stopped being paid altogether. Six months into rehearsal, things began to fall apart! It was clear that the producer/director had been embezzling funds, and when a British official came to see a rehearsal of the play he was appalled! It was supposed to be performed and presented in Hindi, none of us had been told this, because none of us could speak the language well enough to act in it.

The Aldwych Theatre withdrew its offer, and everything came to a sudden end. Gopal Sharma and his wife Jalabala Vaidya who were running the show were taken to court and we were dismissed having wasted 5 months of our lives!!

I loved the freedom I had of living on my own and being in Delhi and did not want to return to Bombay, so I looked for work and as luck would have it, I landed a job with Delhi TV. Kabir Bedi a famous personality in the advertising and film world hired me to produce a weekly program called "Mirror of the World" I had no experience at all but learned quickly on the job and loved what I was doing. I visited various embassies and picked up their weekly newsreels which I then edited into a 25 mins program and presented live. I focused on culture rather than politics! I didn't know anything about film or editing but had a professional editor to work with and learned on the job!

Over six months passed and Pa and I lost touch with each other. Then one day, as I was walking out of a cinema I heard someone shout my name and to my utter amazement there was Pa!

He had recovered well, had only half a liver but was able to work again and had landed a job in Delhi with a company called Cinema Workshop. They made educational and documentary films mostly for American Universities. Papa was in charge of the studio and did all the audio work for the films.

So, we re-connected this time in Delhi and very soon we were madly in Love and spent every free moment with each other.

Pa proposed, and I accepted, but I wanted him to ask my parents for my hand in the good old-fashioned way.

By now I had finished the TV job and was working with a company called Hindustan Garments. We made the first jeans in India called Van Heusen jeans and though I knew nothing about sewing or marketing, I learned quickly on the job once again, and I loved it!

Fortunately, Pa and I had to go to Bombay on work at the same time, so this was the perfect opportunity for him to tell my parents he wanted to marry me.

Pa was daunted by granny who made no bones about the fact that she did not approve of him! For starters, he had visited me on his motorcycle and walked on her green carpet in his muddy boots leaving foot-prints all over! Secondly, he was not a Parsi and he did not earn enough money to keep her daughter in the style she was used to! It was definitely not going to be easy to win her approval and so the



days went by and the question went unasked. Finally, on the last day, Pa invited my parents out to breakfast but said nothing about marrying me, then lunch, still nothing and finally at the airport as both his parents and mine came to see us off he realised this was his last chance so very quickly he took them aside and told them that he wanted to marry me. Granny looked at Pa and then at me and asked, "Do you love this man?" I nodded she shook her head and said, "Love is Blind" and walked off! We took that as a yes, heaved a huge sigh of relief and boarded the plane to Delhi utterly delighted!

Dadima and Grandpa had no issues with me and were happy to hear our good news!

Soon after we got back to Delhi, the parents decided to meet and get to know each other in Bombay. Dadima and Grandpa invited Granny and Boompaa over to their place. Granny never one to fake it or hide her emotions, walked into the flat with attitude - the first thing she said to Dadima and Grandpa was "I think your son is sleeping with my daughter!" to which Dadima smiled and sweetly replied "Mrs. Pundole, I assure you my son wouldn't do anything your daughter didn't want him to do" this floored mother who accepted the truth when she heard it and there were smiles all around, and a good tea was had while plans were discussed for the wedding.

Before we got married, Pa and I talked about children and how we would raise them Both of us felt strongly that we wanted our children to grow up without prejudice of race, colour, religion or culture. We wanted to nurture you in a way that would allow you to think independently and act according to your perceptions of right and wrong, good and bad. Neither of us was overly patriotic to any country, we believed that our planet belonged to all of us equally, that nature should be nurtured, and we believed in Peace and Love. Our children would respect all religions, cultures and peoples. They would be World Citizens and we would never stand in the way of their dreams.....

We decided to have a Parsi engagement ceremony at our family home in Nepean Sea Road in April and I wore a sari for that. I wore the proverbial white wedding dress my aunty sewed for the wedding in December.

A large wedding was planned for the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1971 in the Taj Hotel at their newly renovated Crystal Ballroom

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Dec 1971 the Indo-Pakistan War began. It was a military confrontation between India and Pakistan in which India assisted in the liberation of East Pakistan which later came to be known as Bangladesh. Bombay began preparing for war. There were strict curfews in place and all windows had to be covered with paper. The Taj hotel announced that our function would have to be cancelled as no large gatherings could take place.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December my beloved Granny passed away. Her death, just three days before our wedding, was devastating and I was not in a mood to celebrate;

*but Boompa was resolute, he had given his mum a promise and he intended to keep it. The wedding would have to take place no matter what!*

*My dad persuaded the Taj Hotel to permit us to have the function with 50 rather than 500 guests, and so my granny's wish was fulfilled, and we got married as planned on the 8th of December 1971.*

*When I was a little girl, my dearest Auntie Roshan who was an amazing seamstress would sew many of my pretty dresses, and she always told me she would make my wedding dress for me. She lived in Switzerland and had flown to Bombay to sew the dress but had promised my Uncle Cavas that she would drop everything and fly back home if war was announced. So, she flew back on the 4th of December leaving my dress mostly done but the long zip at the back was left out! My ma sewed me into the dress (probably one of the few wedding dresses without a zip!); and papa had to carefully remove the stitches to avoid destroying the lace and hurting me on our first night together as man and wife! He did a splendid job in spite of my giggles!*

*I walked from the back of the grand Crystal Room on my father's arm with Lale and Clara walking behind as my bridesmaids. We went up to where the stage was set with Papa waiting in his smart, shiny suit with his best man Uncle Rui and his witness Uncle Qais. My dearest Uncle Jimmy (auntie Gitanjali's dad) had a few days before, slipped some money to the registrar of marriages, Mr. Wani, for him to get his suit laundered and spick and span for the occasion! We said the "I do's" and signed the register and at that instance the air-raid sirens went off and all hell broke loose!*

*The sky was ablaze with ack-ack fire and the sound of fighter planes overhead - the hotel and wedding guests were quickly rushed into a makeshift bomb shelter where a Japanese tourist with his instamatic camera insisted on clicking a photo of pa and me in our wedding finery!*

*In the ensuing chaos somebody stole the photographer's exposed film, so we only have a few photographs of our wedding which were on the film in his camera!*

*Our Love Story is a very special one and every day, many times a day, I thank God for bringing pa and me together.*

*There are many invisible threads binding us, little coincidences that lead us to believe we were meant to be.....*

*We found each other in Bombay, then lost touch and bumped into each other again many months later at a cinema in Delhi.*

*My grandfather Jehangir Lalkaka, rented studio space from Pa's grandmother Tahira Tyabji never knowing that our families would be related through marriage after his passing.*

*Both our families came to India from other lands - Papa's from the Yemen, Mine from Iran.*

*Both families chose to live in Surat on the West coast of India, giving up their mother tongues, Arabic and Persian to speak Gujarati the language of their adopted land*

*My great grandfather Dadibhai and his brother went to Switzerland (Dadima's place of birth) to learn watch-making*

*Our great love for each other resulted in the three of you being born, and you are our most treasured and precious gifts, Michel, Farhad and Adil.*





*Your Aunt, Uncle and Cousins*



*Your Aunt Ursula (Fui) and Bruce*



*Your Fui with your Cousins Clara and Tariq*

## *Your Aunts, Uncle and Cousins*



*Your Aunt Shehernavaz (Masi) and Shannon*



*Your Aunt Judy (Mami), Uncle Kershasp (Mamu) and  
Cousins Jehangir and Sheherezade*



*Moments After Your Birth*  
*St. Elizabeth Nursing Home, Bombay, 7 December 1972*



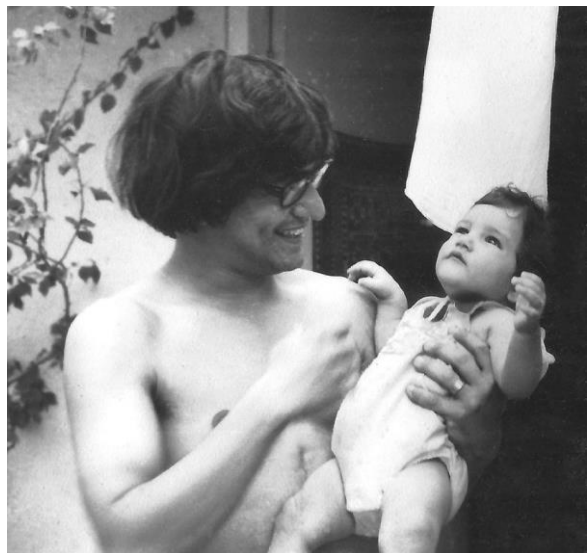
*With Great Grandma Tahira and Grandma Roshan*

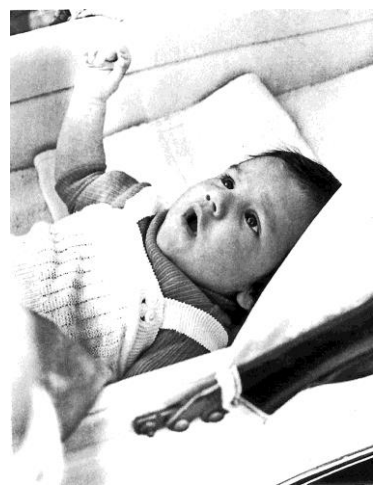
*Your Baptism at the Scots Kirk, Bombay*  
*28 December 1972*



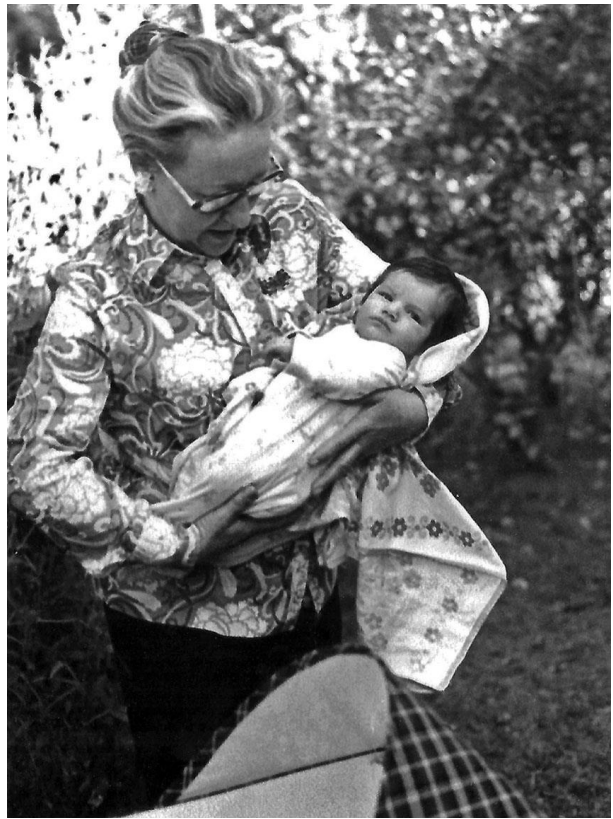


*At Home*  
*C-399 Defence Colony, New Delhi*



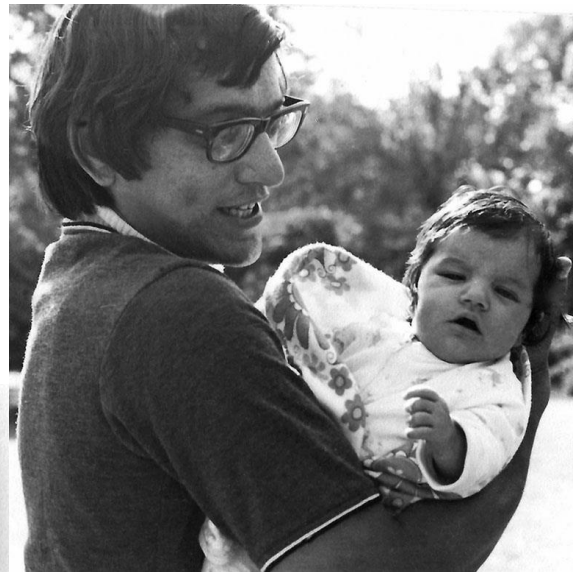


*Dadima Enjoys her Precious Grandson*

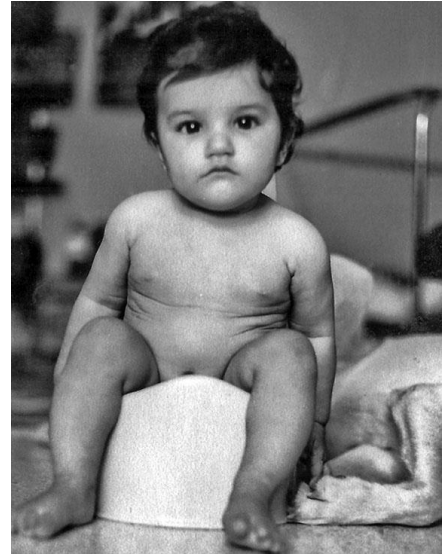




*It's a Wonderful World*



## *Sunday and Nooky*





*Your First Birthday*  
*7 December 1973*

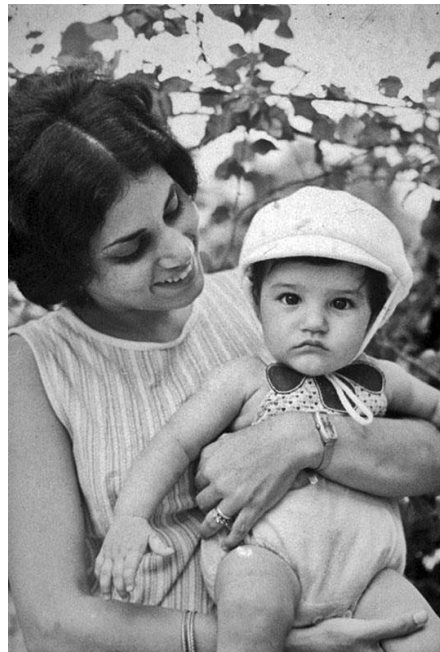


## *Happy Days*

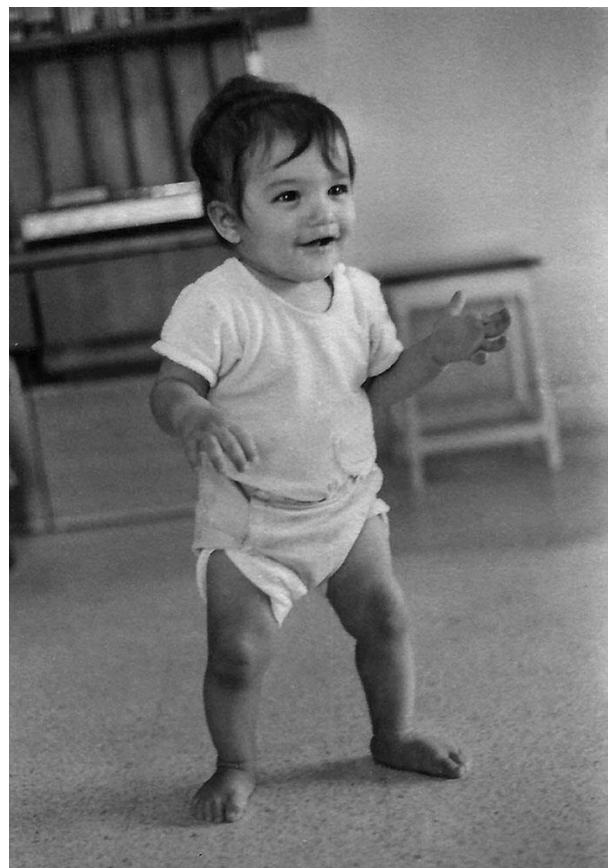
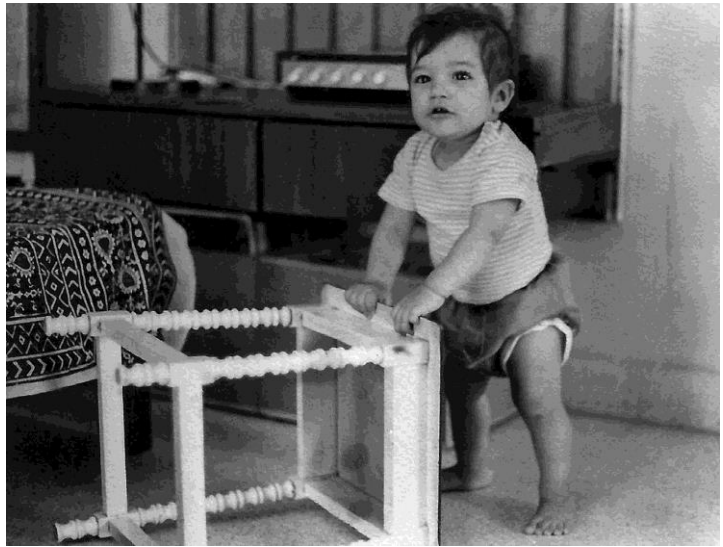
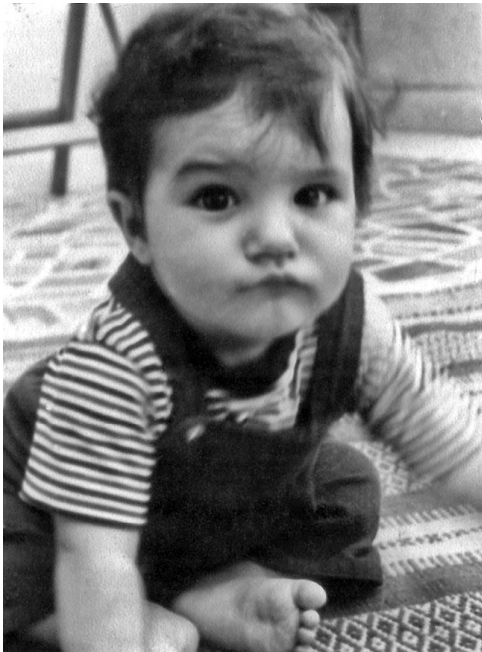




*Out and About*



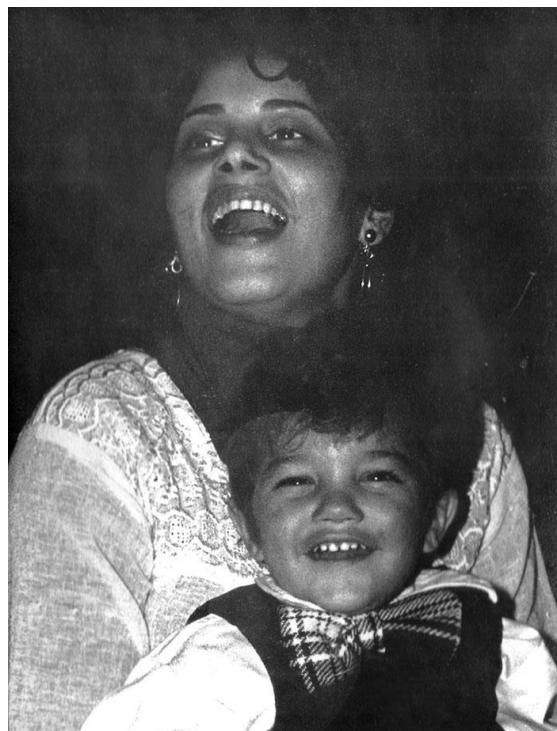
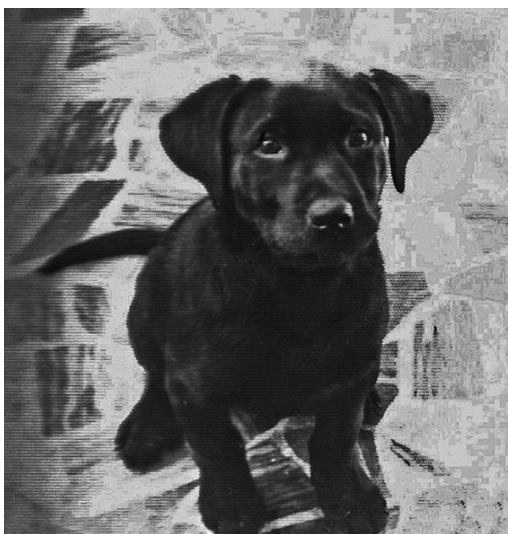
## *First Steps*





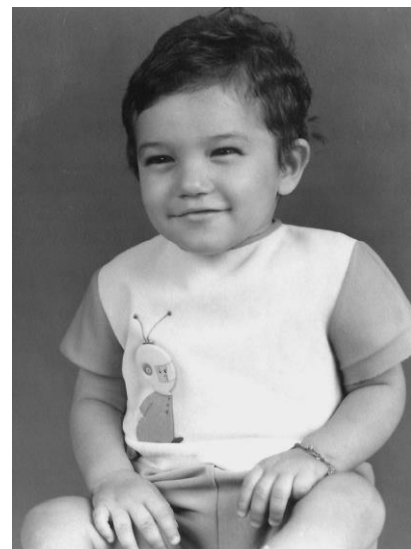
*Your Second Birthday  
With Masi*

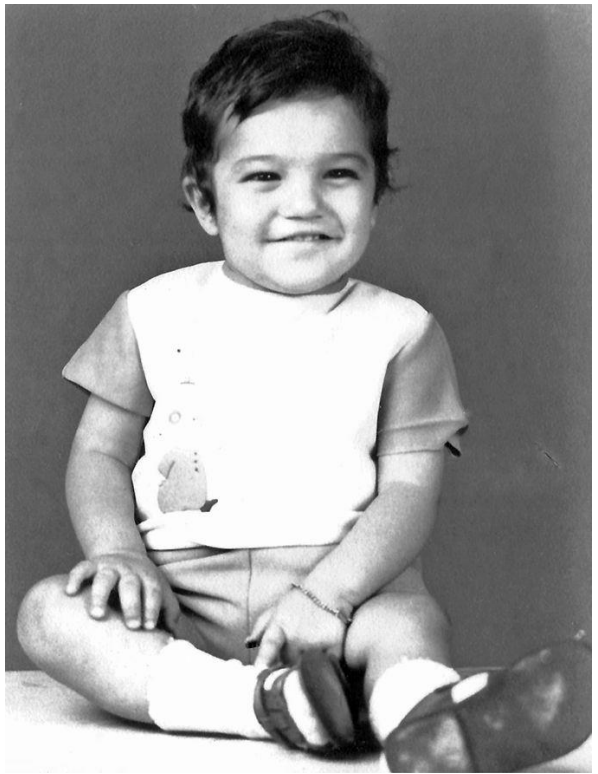
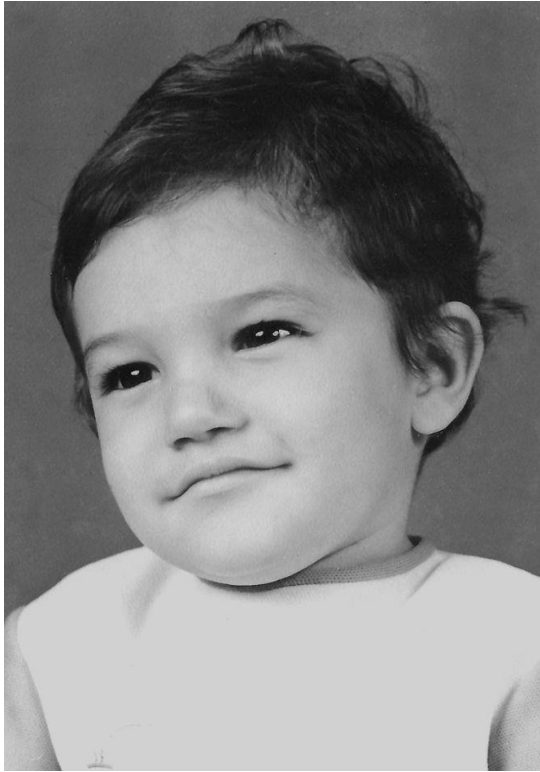




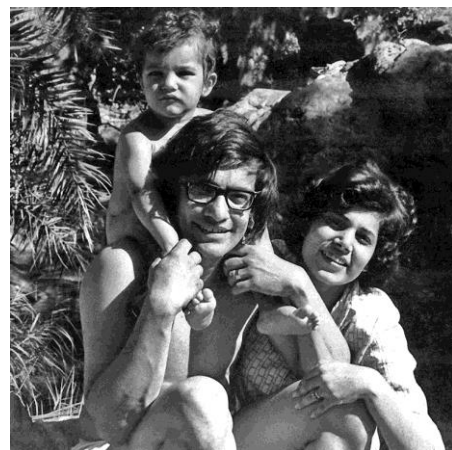
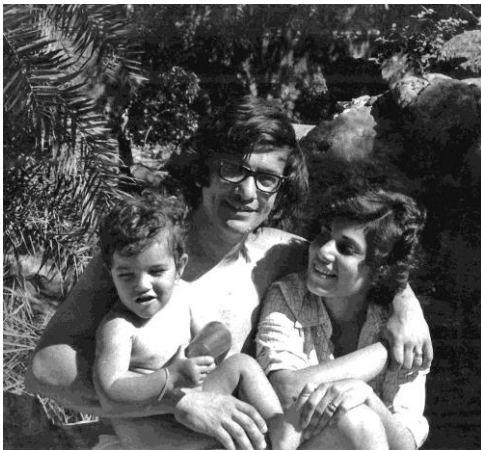


*Photo Op at Kingsley Studio, Delhi*





*Picnic with Raghu and Ellen  
Pandu Pole, Delhi*





*Fun in the Sun*





## *Fun in the Sun and Music*



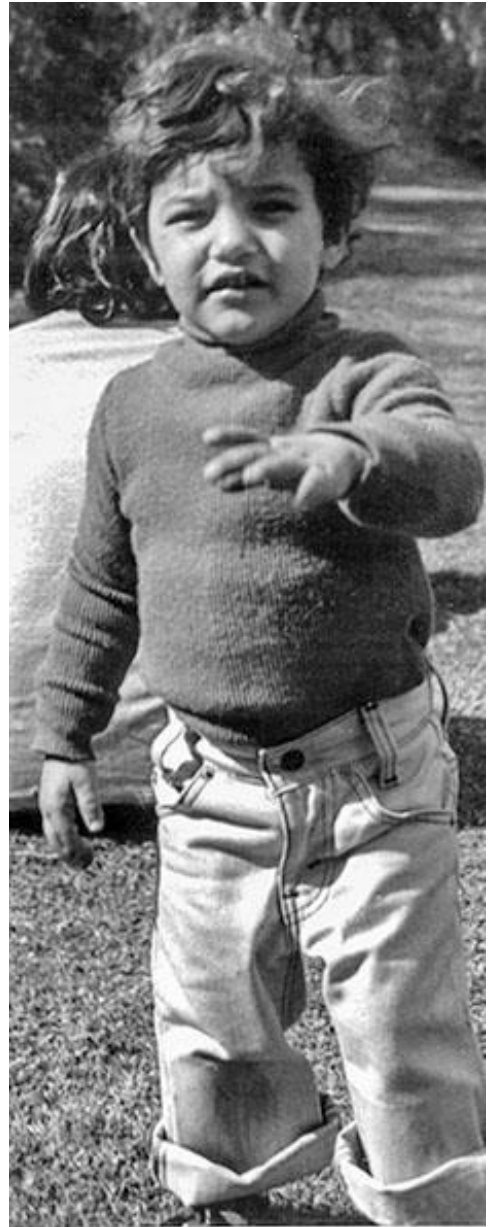
*With Goetti Ronni*



*With Uncle Rui*

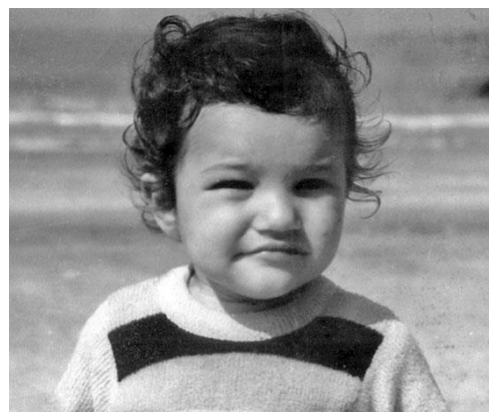


*Lodhi Gardens, Delhi*

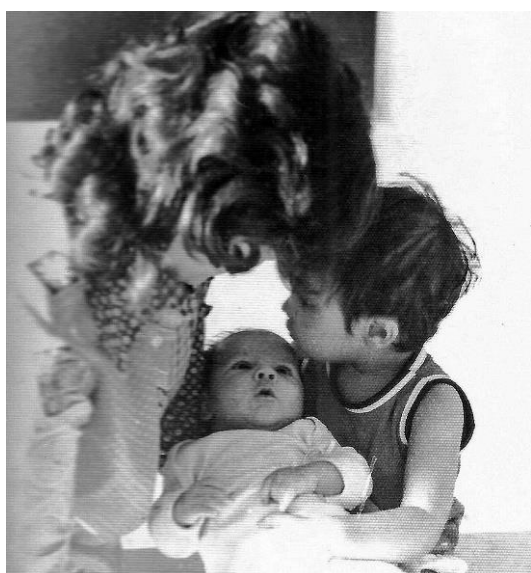




*It's a Good Life!*



*Farhad is Born*  
*7 May, 1975*





*On the Train to Tilonia, Rajasthan*



*In Tílonia*



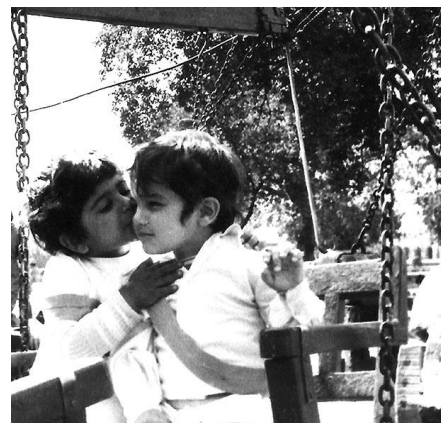
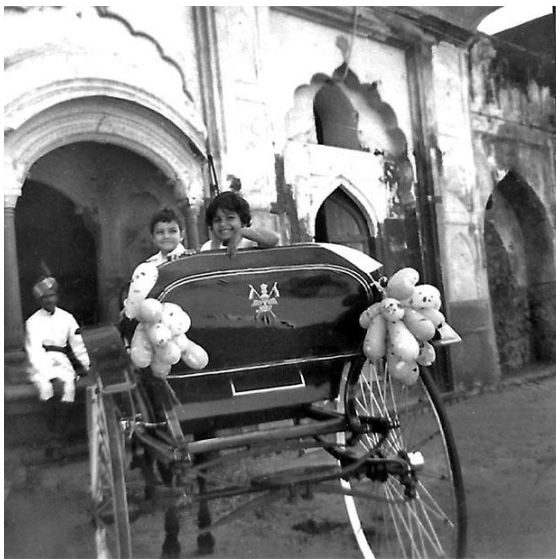
*Pa's windmill*



*Sports Day - Happy Hours School, Delhi*



*Shonali and Shalini Bath*



*With Zuli*



*Lodhi Gardens, Delhi*





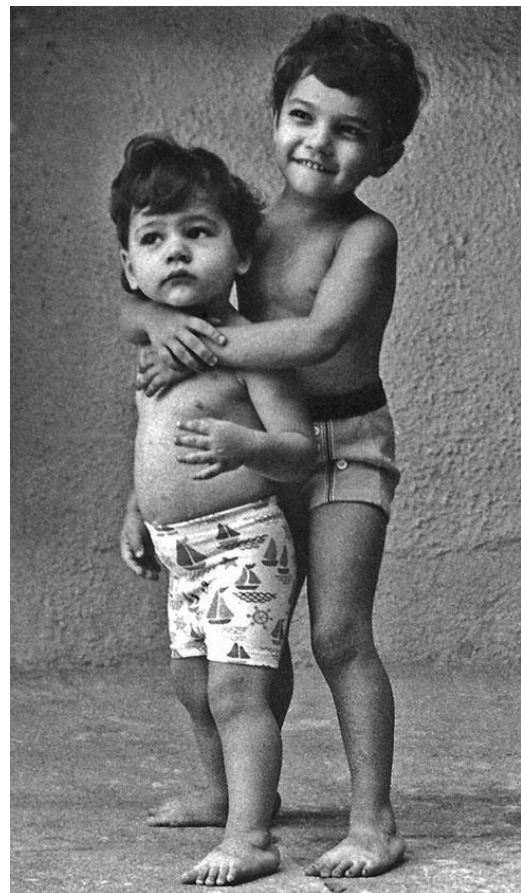


*On Pa's BSA*



*Washing Bubbles*

## *Your Third Birthday*





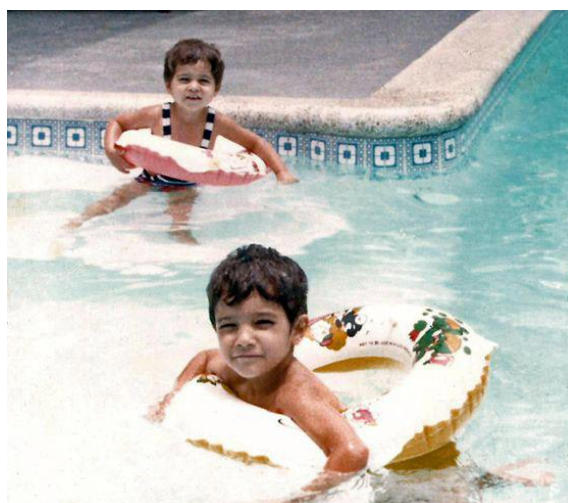


*At Delhi Riding Club*





*Cousin Jehangir is born*  
*Manila, July 11, 1977*

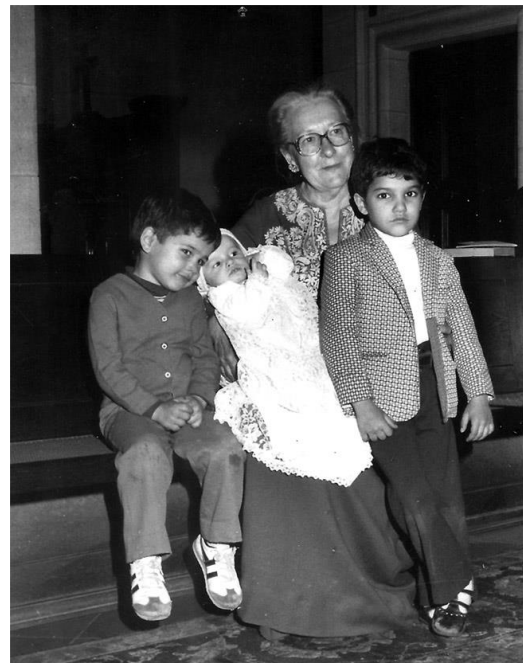


*In Manila on Mamu's Bar!*





*Adil is Born*  
*31 October, 1987*





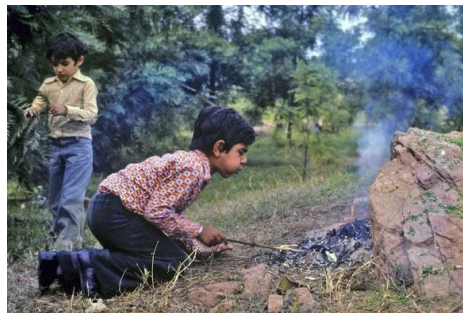
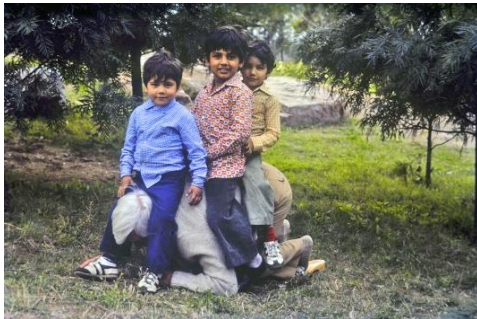
## *Music and Stage, Delhi*

*As Dennis in Dennis the Menace*





## *Games with Uncle Dolf, Delhi*



*Your buddy Vikram*



*Tante Erna, Uncle Dolf and Dadima*

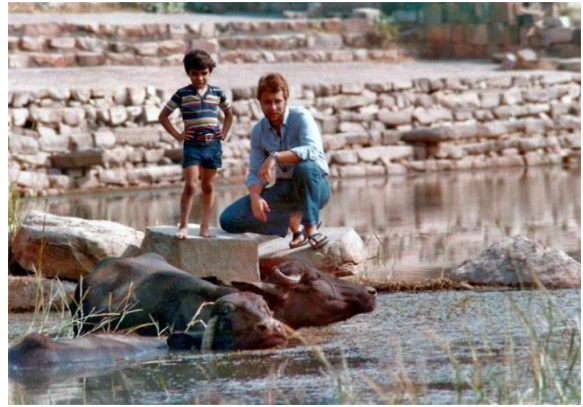


## *Your Fourth Birthday*





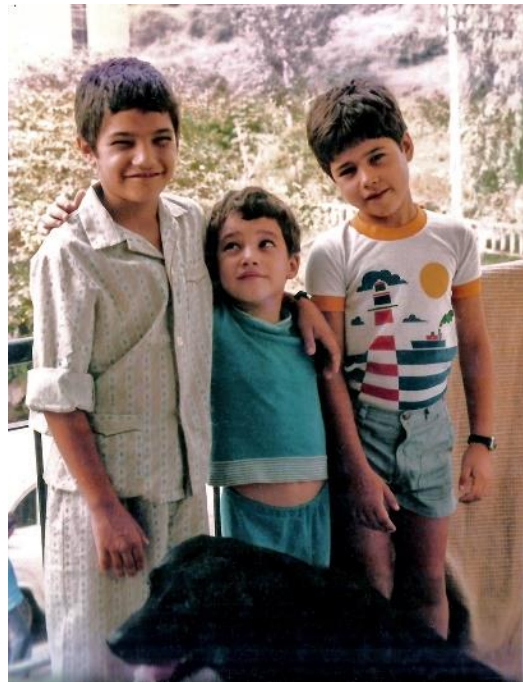
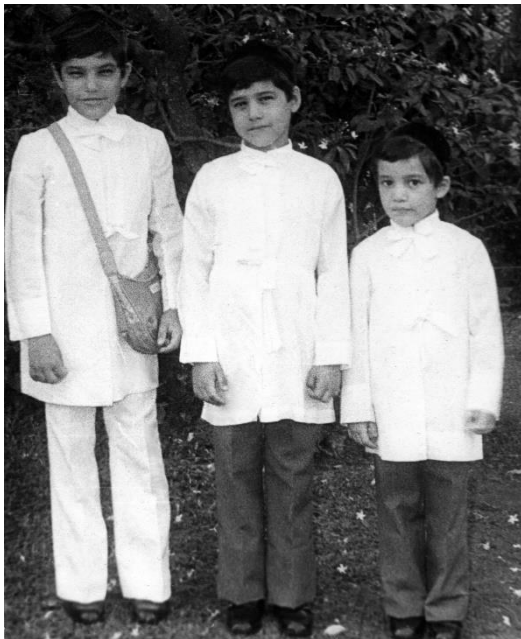
## *Picnics Around Delhi*



*With Rishab and Shomi*



*Cousin Rashne's Navjote, Bombay*  
*March 1984*





## *Memories of Delhi*

*1972-1980*

*You were born in Bombay at the St Elizabeth Nursing Home where both Papa and I were also born. You and I spent your first three months of life at Granny and Boompa's apartment at 20, Nepean Sea Road. We then flew to Delhi and spent the next 8 years of your life in a rented apartment at C 399 Defence Colony. It was a three storied house owned by Mrs Tej Vir Singh who lived below us on the ground floor.*

*Across the street from us stood a rickety old wooden cart covered with a blanket which served as an ironing board. All day long, the couple who owned it ironed clothes for all of us who lived in the area, C Block, Defence Colony. The iron they used, was huge and heavy, the top came off and had to be filled and re-filled with burning coals from a fire they kept going all day long beside them. They were called Presswallah and Presswali, or ironing man and ironing woman. Along with their eight or nine-year-old son, they came each morning and evening to collect and deliver clothes. It was a superb service! They also had three younger children who happily played all day long in the mud beside the cart.*

*Presswali and Presswallah were amused by us and our home which was filled with children, dogs, cats, fish and tortoises. One day one of their children was playing beside a drain when he saw a beautiful rock and climbed down to pick it up when it began to move! Frightened, he started screaming and when Presswallah picked it up he saw it was a turtle. He brought it to us and papa put it into our bath tub which he filled with water. Immediately a string of bubbles floated to the surface and we saw a tiny face and three Flappers the fourth one was missing! We called the turtle Bubbles and were able to find her a beautiful home with friends who lived on a farm in Gurgaon. She happily slipped into their pond leaving a string of bubbles behind her! I wonder if she is still there?*

*Our landlady Mrs. Tej Vir Singh was a Sikh woman of large proportions with a loud voice and a dictatorial bearing. She managed the Cottage Emporium which was Delhi's premier establishment for arts and crafts.*

*Her Sunday ritual included the washing of her long hair which she proceeded to dry while lying in the sun in her car parked in the driveway directly below our balcony.*

*One Sunday, you were playing on the terrace and either you Michel or Farhad, (don't know who it was to this day) lobbed a stone over the wall which landed on Mrs. Vir Sing's windshield and smashed it into a million pieces. She was very gracious; we were hopping mad, she could have been badly injured and, of course, we had to replace her windshield at our cost!*

*Remember our cat Nooky? One day you Farhad, came running to me all upset and crying and said: "mama look, Nooky is not working." Nooky had died and Farhad discovered him! He kept poking at him and calling out to him and had a difficult*



*time trying to understand why he would not get up if he wasn't sick. That was his first introduction to death, a concept he found difficult to understand and I found difficult to explain.*

*Outside our gate lived a very affectionate dog who would follow us every time we walked out and would wait to greet us when we came home. One Sunday Pa and I decided to adopt her, so she came upstairs with us. We gave her a good scrub and called her Sunday and she became our faithful family pet. She would walk beside me when I took you out in the pram Michel and would sit and guard the empty stroller if I went into a shop with you. She was gentle and let you climb all over her and pull her ears and tail. She never growled at you, just tried to paw you off!*

*When Papa started working for UNICEF he was a National Officer on a local salary and we couldn't afford a car. He had a motorcycle, a special army model BSA, and all five of us would ride on it, as many other families in Delhi did. My parents were appalled when they heard this, they thought it was dangerous and so they decided to gift us a second-hand Ambassador car. That was wonderful but we could barely afford the fuel to run it and so we used it very sparingly. Pa drove his bike to work and he bought me a little Moped with a pedal starter! When all of us went out together we rode in the car, a promise made and kept to granny and boomp!*

*On your 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday we gave you a black Labrador puppy and we named him Akbar after the benevolent and great Mughul Emperor. He lived up to his name and was your closest and best friend. The two of you were inseparable and did everything together. I can clearly see both of you laying on the floor with a pair of headphones each, listening to Micheal Jackson on a Walkman! Do you remember how he always carried a stone around in his mouth? When he was 11 years old, on our return from Bhutan to Delhi, he became quite ill and we discovered that he had cancer. The Vet in Delhi advised us to put him down but we decided against it and he travelled with us to Somalia where we enjoyed him for two more years. The last few months of his life were difficult and you and I looked after him, cleaning the discharge from his nose and other parts of his body, he couldn't walk anymore but would always wag his tail when he saw you; this time we felt we had to listen to the vet and end his suffering but we wanted you to understand what was happening and so we told you that you would have to decide when you were ready to let him sleep forever. That must have been the hardest decision you have had to make in your life and it took you a while to make it. We all stood around our beloved pet and the vet, a compassionate American lady told us that she barely inserted the needle into his paw and he was gone, directly to dog heaven where he undoubtedly still carries a stone around in his mouth!*

*In 1977 I was finishing my college degree through correspondence, but I had to attend a few lectures at the Delhi University which was miles from where we lived. I would ride there and back on my Moped. On this day, I was running late to pick you up from school, so I grabbed the car keys and jumped in the car. As I drove I noticed people were looking and laughing at me and I couldn't figure out why. I drove up to the school gate which was surrounded by a gaggle of children and when they saw me they started pointing and laughing as well! Michel and Farhad, as soon as you got into the car looking most embarrassed you said, "mama you look funny wearing your crash helmet in the car!" OOPS I had forgotten to take it off!*

*Michel and Farhad, you went to The Happy Hours School in Greater Kailash New Delhi. One day I got a call from a very irate head-mistress who asked me to come to school immediately as Farhad was in grave danger. I rushed over and found all the teachers standing looking up at the roof dressed in their lovely saris and too afraid to climb up to get you down! There was some construction work going on and the workers had left a ladder against a wall which you decided to climb. There you were on top of the roof clutching your lunch box and water bottle. You refused to come down and no amount of cajoling seemed to work "baba good baba, come down, see there is chocolate for you, come, come" This approach was clearly not working so I used my stern mama voice and you were down in a minute! On the way home, I asked you why you climbed up to the roof and you said "because I don't like school and I don't like my teachers. They never let me play!"*

*Once when Papa was in New York on work, I fed and put Adil in his crib, tucked you both Michel and Farhad into bed, and went out to dinner leaving Rajamma (our maid) in charge.*

*No sooner was I out the door when the two of you decided this was the perfect opportunity to have some fun!*

*You lured Rajamma into the bathroom pretending you needed her help and once she was in, you shut the door and locked it from the top, reaching the bolt by climbing the ladder of your bunk bed! She started yelling and banging on the door which woke up baby Adil who started to cry. To shut him up, you threw some toys into the crib and proceeded to turn on the stereo to drown out the noise of his crying. You then decided to melt candles on the gas stove and put them into cookie molds to make new candles.*

*Rajamma kept yelling and shouting to be let out of the bathroom, Adil started crying again and to drown out all the noise, you cranked up the music even louder. This alerted our neighbour Kulu who was taking his dog for a walk and heard the commotion. He came upstairs and rang the doorbell, but you would not open the door as your mama had told you not to open it to strangers. Uncle Kulu reminded you that he was not a stranger and when he heard the baby bawling and smelled the gas, he knew something was very wrong and sternly instructed you to open the door or he would smash it down! You knew your game was up and within minutes Uncle Kulu took charge of the situation and you were back in bed with a stern warning and a very angry Rajamma!*

*I was traumatized by the thoughts of what could have been! Kitchen fires, gas explosions and the baby smothered or knocked out cold by a toy! You apologised profusely to Rajamma and said to me “we will never be naughty again” a promise that was never kept!*

*In 1975, Papa took us with him by train from Delhi to Tilonia a village in Rajasthan where his friend Bunker Roy had established a rural development and training centre (SWRC) Papa was teaching village folk how to use photography for communication. He also built a large windmill with local technicians to harness Tilonia's breezes for pumping water, grinding grain, and to otherwise do useful work. Michel, you thoroughly enjoyed your time at SWRC whizzing around on a tricycle and riding on tractors! Farhad you had a good time as well being carried around and hugged and cuddled by everyone on campus!*

### *Ratan Lal Subha aka Rats*

*In 1984 Pa finished his UNICEF assignment in Bhutan and we had to move temporarily to Delhi till the office found us another posting. Our trusted helper Rats expressed interest in coming along with us, so we put him on a train in Siliguri along with Akbar, our beloved black Lab. Rats had never left the mountains, never been on a train or lived in a big city and when he got off the train two days later both he and the dog had glazed disbelief written all over their faces having survived the long journey over two nights!*

*I can see RATS clearly to this day, standing on our balcony in our rented apartment in Greater Kailash gazing up at the sky. When I asked what he was looking at, he said “I see that big air plane every now and again. It must be on its way to Siliguri”*

*Rats had a very calm and placid nature and he took a long time to grasp and follow instructions. About two months after we arrived in Delhi he asked me if he could go to Nepal for a few days to see his wife and two children. I asked if there was some special occasion and he said: “yes my wife is having a baby and I hope it is a boy this time, we already have two girls” He was beaming and oh so pleased with the news of his wife's pregnancy! We went out and bought gifts for the family, got him a train ticket but just two days before he was due to leave he came out of the kitchen brandishing a knife and screaming loudly “I'm going to kill her, I will Kill her just you wait and see” I took the knife from him and managed to calm him down. “What's the matter?” I asked. “I haven't been to Nepal in 5 years so how can she be carrying my baby? It took him more than two weeks to figure that out!*

*We did not know how long we would have to wait for our next posting and we were concerned about your education, you were in class six at the time. After much discussion and heartache, we decided to send you to boarding school in Panchgani, a hill station close to Bombay. Our friends in Bhutan had spoken very highly of a Baha'i School called New Era where their children studied. Sadly, it turned out to be a disaster, you had a horrendous time with the boys ragging and terrorizing you. Fortunately, you had to tolerate the misery for only six months (two terms)*



*and then we were able to scoop you up and take you with us on our next posting Somalia.*

*Getting admission into good schools in Delhi is very difficult if not impossible. Babies are registered at birth and toddlers must be interviewed with their parents before being admitted. We were fortunate to get admission in the British School for you both Farhad and Adil. The school was a long way from our house in Greater Kailash and every morning Rats walked you to the bus stop which was just beside the apartment we had rented. The School did not have its own school bus but hired a Delhi Transport bus which had "British School" printed in small letters in the front.*

*One morning about 2 months after you started school, Rats put you on what he thought was the British School bus but to his horror the "pan wallah" (betel nut seller) informed him that it was an ordinary Delhi Transport Bus! Rats ran home and was banging on my bathroom door yelling, and completely incoherent! He kept repeating "they are on the wrong bus, I put them on the wrong bus"*

*I was frightened and began to panic! 20 minutes had passed since you boarded. What bus were you on? Where was it going? What was the bus registration number? Papa was out of town, so I ran to our good friends and neighbours Sanjay and Sonya and they drove me to the central bus depot where we managed to find out that the bus you were on was a coach going to Agra 145 miles away! The bus depot had no radio contact with the driver and could not intercept the bus as it was a "non-stop" Delhi to Agra video coach.*

*The news spread like lightening all over the area of Greater Kailash where we lived! We photocopied pictures of Farhad and Adil and handed them out. Two little boys were on a wrong bus bound for Agra! Total strangers kept telling me not to worry they would stop the bus and get the children off it and bring you safely home. They went on their scooters, in their cars, some went to temples to pray and some stood around waiting to bring you home if you happened to turn up! Sanjay and Sonya drove along the bus route and I stayed home by the phone with strangers in our house comforting me and bringing me glasses of water. We had no cell phones in those days!*

*Two hours later I saw Farhad and Adil, holding hands and walking home surrounded by a bunch of happy men, women and children. You had been dropped off at the Archana Cinema on the back of a scooter and folks were waiting there to bring you home - This was your story.....*

*As soon as you got on the coach Farhad, you realized you were not on your school bus. There were no children on it and it was blasting a Bollywood movie. You tried to tell the conductor of the bus to let you out, but he took no notice of you. A fellow traveler tried to help, but as we had only just moved from Bhutan, you did not know our address or phone number, but you were able to tell him that you lived close to a cinema called The Archana.*

*When the bus stopped at a petrol station, the passenger found a man on a scooter who was willing to drive both of you to the movie theatre and let you off there.*

*When you arrived at the cinema, there were lots of people waiting to bring you home.*

*Fortunately, neither of you was traumatized by the event, Rats was in a state for days, crying, cursing, and banging his head against a wall (literally) in remorse. I had nightmares for weeks afterwards!!!*

*In Delhi I was involved with the English Theatre and I met aunty Sinia on stage when Farhad was just a year old. She and I became the best of friends and her family became our family. She is Adil's Godmother and remains a very dear friend to this day.*

*We left Delhi for Bhutan in December of 1980. In the summer of 1984, we returned to Delhi for nearly a year until we moved to Somalia in 1985.*



# BHUTAN

1980-1984



*Our home*



*Aerial view of our home*



*Akbar*





## *Trips in Bhutan*



*With Pa at a national event*



*In my school uniform*



*Pa's Matchless*



## *Building Our Duck Pond*





## *Karate and Other Stuff*



*Aunty Sinia*



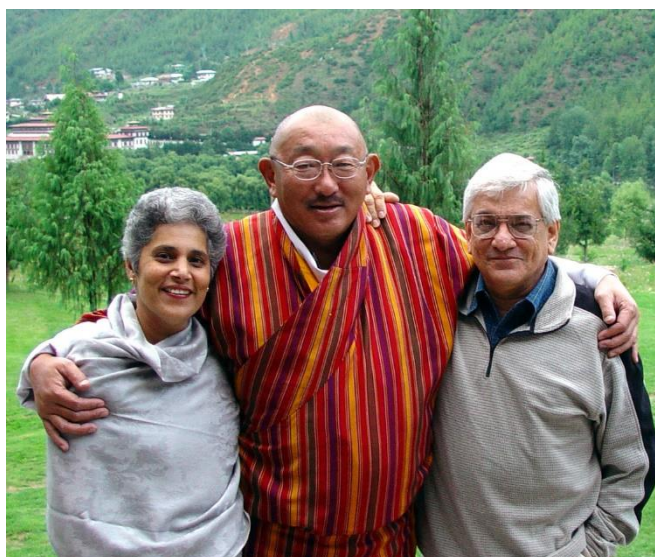
## *Friends*



*Damian, Ray, Kizzie and Sandy Miles*



*Sanjay and Sonya*



*Dasho Benjy*



*Kizzie and Damian Miles*



*Our Landlord Lyonpo Dawa Tsering*



## *Chickens, Ducks and Puppies*



*Chook*



*Rattanlal "Rats" Subba*



*Jigme*

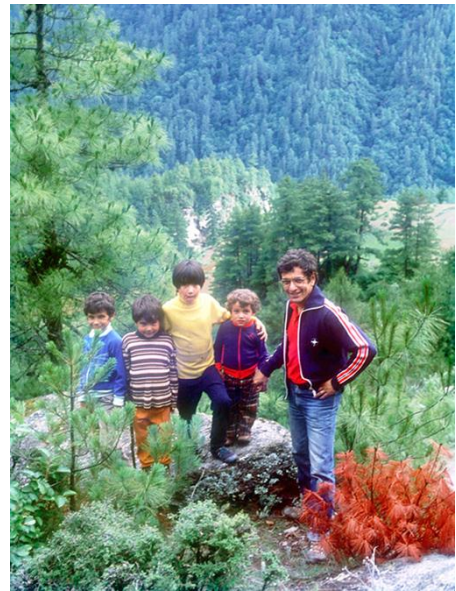
## *Photo Ops, Theatre, and Garden Parties*



*Jer & Robin Cox*



## *Fun Times*





*Lungtenzampa Primary School*  
*Class IV and V*



*Class IV with M'am Lhaden*



*Class V with M'am Chooki*

## *Memories of Bhutan*

*1980 - 1984*

*P*apa writes "For Hootoksi and me, Bhutan was a life-changing experience. Strangely enough, we got there almost by chance. One day in 1978 fate took a turn for us when I was at a UNICEF planning workshop and I impulsively offered to show slides of a trip I had just made on my motorcycle to Ladakh high up on the Indo-Tibetan border. I went on a UNICEF assignment to test Solar powered radios to be used in Primary schools in areas where there was little or no electricity. The Indian Army had just opened the passes between Kashmir and the Ladakh plateau to the public, and I was one of the first tourists to use it.

*My slides must have impressed the bosses, because the next morning I was asked if I would go to Bhutan to help the government there make a film! The film was to be about children and national development and would be Bhutan's contribution to the International Year of the Child, which was the following year, 1979.*

*So, I made my way to Bhutan a few months later. I was stunned by the untouched beauty of the countryside, even in and around the capital town, Thimphu, and the unique architecture. An aura of profound respect for living things pervaded everything and everybody. Being a street-wise dude from the big bad city, I was quite disorientated by the unfamiliar atmosphere of peace and harmony!*

*Anyway, we later shot the film, called "A Tale of Bhutan", which was based on a story Hootoksi wrote about the sacrifices made by the king for his people, in keeping with his promise to the Moon. It was released in 1979 and within a year it became a centrepiece in UNICEF's development education programme in Canada and Europe. For Hootoksi and me, it was the beginning of a relationship with Bhutan and the Bhutanese people which never stopped deepening. It wasn't long before I was offered a UNICEF posting in Bhutan!*

*In December of 1980, Hootoksi, our three young boys and I bid farewell to New Delhi, packed our bags and took a journey into the unknown. After a 5 day-day safari by train and Land Rover, we moved into a converted farmhouse on the wooded slopes overlooking Thimphu, Bhutan's charming capital. It was minus 18 degrees Centigrade, there was snow everywhere, and we had no heat!"*

*Our good friend Sanjay Acharya along with Kinlay Dorji from the Ministry of Information were at the railway station in Siliguri India, to welcome us. Kinlay got a shock when he saw the five of us, Rajamma our maid, lots of luggage a huge black Labrador and tortoises in a basket! His welcome smile turned to a nervous twitch as he announced that the Royal Government of Bhutan had sent him to pick us up in a Mahendra Jeep and a VW Beetle! We squeezed into the two small vehicles and our goods and chattel followed a few days later.*

*Among all the images that flash through my mind of that two-day drive on winding mountain roads to Thimphu, one stands out and must be recorded. Papa was in the jeep ahead of us with Akbar who had his head and half his body stuck out of the*



window, with his ears flying in the wind and his tongue lolling out! He seemed to be telling the world "Look, see and envy me! Does life get any better than this?"

Adil you were sick most of the windy road up, and we had to keep stopping to clean up and let you out for some fresh air! It was an amazingly LONG journey from Delhi to Thimphu and all three of you were stellar! We could not have had three better behaved and uncomplaining children!

The Bhutan Government offered me a job to help develop the English writing skills of young Bhutanese who had been recruited to work for an organisation called DSCD (Development Support Communication Division) which would be working very closely with papa (UNICEF) to prepare communication materials for development programs. I did not get much of a salary, but I got perks! The furniture and furnishings in our house were paid for by DSCD and our landlord insisted on importing a bathtub for us from India which rode up on a truck by itself for 10 hours or more to the great amusement of many Bhutanese who had never seen one before!

While our house was being renovated, the government put us up at the best hotel in Thimphu, the Bhutan Hotel. We had a suite of rooms, beautifully furnished with ornate, carved wooden furniture and a very expensive wall to wall carpet with dragons all over it. We settled in nicely along with Rajamma, Akbar, and the two tortoises, Margaret and Schroder. Sanjay and Sonya had also arrived in Bhutan for work around the same time and they were staying in the room next to ours at the hotel; beside them was Nataji.

Nataji was papa's do it all, fix it all Sardar technician who accompanied us from Delhi to help set up the new UNICEF office in Thimphu. Pa was the only UN person in all of Bhutan at the time.

One evening we were invited to dinner by the Chief Justice of Bhutan Dasho Benji Dorjie. He lived very close to the hotel, so after putting you all to bed we left for the party. On our return, we found a worried looking Rajamma wringing her hands outside the front door, still very much awake at 1 in the morning. This is what transpired in our absence.

About an hour after we had left the hotel Auntie Sonya and Uncle Sanjay smelled smoke and went outside to check on it. They were most alarmed when they saw that the smoke was coming from under the door of our suite! They woke up Rajamma and discovered she had left some of your nappies Adil, to dry across a chair below which was an open electric rod heater. Akbar's tail knocked the chair over and the nappies were burning on the heater which had also fallen face down on the carpet and created a big hole in it.

I still get goose bumps when I think of what could have been and thank God for Sanjay and Sonya who came in and saved the situation!

*But what were we to do about the hole in that fabulous plush carpet? We were guests of the Government and treated as VIP's about to take on a new assignment in their beautiful country. This was a terrible way to begin!*

*We woke Nataji up, and after gazing at the charred carpet for a few minutes he said: "Don't worry, this is no problem, I can fix it!" He strode into his room and returned with three razor blades and a large bottle of hair fixer which Sardars use to keep their long beards in place. He gave pa and me a razor blade each and the three of us spent the rest of the night shaving wool from the back of the carpet around the edges of the room. When we had enough of this "Fluff" Nataji painstakingly put a layer of fixer on the charred carpet and placed the shaved wool fluff on top of the hole made by the fire. As dawn broke, we were done, and the carpet was beautifully restored....you couldn't see the damage unless you went down on all fours to look! All three of you slept right through this drama!*

*Do you remember our camping and fishing trips in Bhutan? When you caught your first trout, Farhad, you insisted on holding it in your hands all the way home from the river, a half day's drive, because you wanted to send it to Dadima. We did our best to try and explain that this was not possible as she lived in Australia and we were far away in Bhutan but none of that made any sense to you. So, you and I wrapped the fish in a shoe box and addressed it to Dadima and I promised to mail it. Once that was done you were quite content!*

*Fresh produce was only available once a week at the Sunday Market, if you missed getting your fruit, vegetable and meat on that day, then you went without for the rest of the week! The produce came on trucks mostly from India, and in addition you could also find yak butter and dried cheese (churpi) wool, trinkets, prayer beads and prayer wheels, statues, old coins and paintings.*

*The Sunday Market was a social event and the highlight of the week for many. It was also a good place to pick up news and gossip.*

*We moved into a traditional farmhouse on the upper edge of town with two acres of land around it, forested slopes behind, and farms stretching to the river below. We very quickly acquired three stray dogs, and a cat who we thought was male. Farhad you announced one day that "he" was going to have babies and we took no notice till a few days later the kittens arrived! You were the one who regularly predicted when she was pregnant, and she routinely had kittens on your bed! We also had half a dozen ducks, a fighting cock we rescued from the Nepali labour camp (his aggressive nature soon obliged us to return him to the battlefield) chickens and one particular hen who is the star of this story.*

*Each animal had its own individual quirks and traits, except for Akbar, who undoubtedly was the saint among them. As his name suggests, he had a regal bearing and an incredibly kind, patient, tolerant and compassionate nature. He loved the world and all living things in it and handled everyone with his special brand of care and consideration.*



*Bhutan is a Buddhist country where everyone eats meat, but nobody will actually slaughter an animal. We went to the weekly market on Sunday mornings to buy vegetables and meat that came from India and live chickens that we had to slaughter ourselves if we couldn't find a Nepali "kancha" to do it for us.*

*Friends from Australia bought a chicken from the market one Sunday and Greg knocked it on the head amidst loud wailing and protests from his two young children. He tied its legs together and put a pot on the boil when the chicken began to move! The children wanted to keep it as a pet and Greg taking this to be a sign of divine intervention, relented and she became the household pet till it was time for the family to leave Bhutan. They figured our zoo would be a safe place for their chicken and soon Chook (that was her name) joined our menagerie with a promise from us to the Sharples family, that she would never be eaten!*

*Chook settled in very nicely and laid us some fine eggs. She even obliged by hatching one of our duck eggs but looked somewhat surprised when a rather ugly duckling emerged from one of her eggs! There was only one problem we had with her and that was trying to get her to understand that she should not nibble out of Akbar's bowl when he was eating.*

*The other creatures large and small had understood nature's pecking order and waited patiently for Akbar to finish eating before pecking his bowl clean. But with Chook no amount of shooing from us or growling and snapping from Akbar worked. She would rudely push against his head to make room for herself at the bowl. She must have believed herself infallible, but one day, the inevitable happened, Akbar snapped at her and all hell broke loose!*

*It was a Sunday. Rob and I were upstairs in our bedroom when we heard this commotion from the three of you with Rajamma shouting the loudest! Rushing downstairs, we saw Chook standing on one leg looking very sorry for herself with her stomach and intestines lying on the floor around her and a big gaping wound in her side! Akbar had disappeared in fright.*

*Quickly assessing the situation, Pa scooped up Chook and her bits and marched upstairs to our bathroom with the lot of us trailing behind him. He placed the chicken in the basin and stuffed her bits back into her, then poured half a bottle of hydrogen peroxide into the cavity and bound her tight with a long gauze bandage! I was certain she wouldn't make it through the night, but she did! Not only did she make it, but she was back the next afternoon peck, pecking away at Akbar's food while he ate!*

*Now the story does not end here. A week later, Farhad (always the first to notice the slightest change in any animal or bird) reported that Chook had something hanging from her beak and it was not a worm! On closer inspection it turned out to be a bit of bandage. Off she was carried into our bathroom again by an irate Robert who pulled and pulled and pulled yards of bandage out of her that she had swallowed!*

*Chook was not at all harmed by this major mishap. Papa theorized that the action of pulling the bandage had bottle-brushed Chook's insides, rearranging and thoroughly cleansing them! Whatever the truth, she laid the finest eggs and continued pecking around Akbar's bowl as he ate, exasperated but tolerating the dumb bird!*

*Sometimes when Papa drove for work to Siliguri (India) or to Phuntsholing (the border town) he would come back with a jeep load of meat as we were one of the few in Thimphu to own a freezer, so we were able to keep and enjoy it for over a week at a time.*

*This once there was a long power cut and the freezer was full of meat. To prevent losing it all, I decided to hang it in the freezing cold outside, on the upstairs balcony. That night while you were all asleep and papa was out of town there was a huge commotion with the animals that we had downstairs. The ducks and chickens began to squawk in their coop and the dogs kept barking. No sooner had they started when they stopped, and everything was eerily silent again for a few moments. Then Akbar who slept with us upstairs began barking at the front door. I held on to his collar, opened the door and turned on the light. To my utter amazement there was a full-grown leopard right there on the porch. He bolted when I turned on the light! He had probably been attracted to the smell of the raw meat I had hung out. I promptly put it in the freezer as thankfully the power was back on again!!!*

*One morning we woke up to a horrific sight - some of our chickens and ducks who had not been penned for the night were attacked by a civet cat. They were horribly mutilated -we also found large black bear footprints in our corn patch - the bear ate only the ripe ears of corn but in doing so destroyed the rest of the crop!*

*Our landlord, Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, was the Foreign Minister of Bhutan and a wonderful, humble man who became a very good friend of ours. He loved to come to our house for a cup of tea after he had been on a long walk in the forest behind us on the hill. All three of you were always busy, running in and out of the house, playing tag, shouting and screaming outdoors.*

*One day while Papa, Lyonpo and I were having tea you were exceptionally loud and boisterous, and I kept yelling at you to tone down! Lympo patted my arm and said "don't be upset by your children and don't worry about them, let them shout and fall and play. Remember Hootoksi, small children, small problems, big children big problems" We never forgot those words, they were prophetic!*

*Lyonpo suggested we hire Ratan Lal Suba (later affectionately called Rats) to work for us when Rajamma left. Rats was a Nepali gentleman who had spent all his life outdoors in the mountains and had been working for Lympo on a construction site. He had never worked in a home doing house-work and he was very simple minded but honest and loved playing with the three of you, he seemed to be about 45-50 years old with a mind of an 8-year-old.*

*I was never able to train him to do house-work or to cook, he had no appetite or aptitude for either! He often ironed only half of a shirt and when I asked why, he would say "I got tired of doing it, so I started something else."*

*One day I heard Rats talking loudly in the garden. I popped my head over the balcony to see who was there but found nobody, so I asked him who he was talking to. "My shoes" he said as he proceeded to scrub them at the tap. "I am telling them not to run away when I set them in the sun to dry as I have spent a lot of time and energy cleaning them. So, I am instructing them to stay put!" Rats was a part of our family in Bhutan.*

*Do you remember the driveway to our house? It was long and unpaved with a mountain on one side and the valley on the other. Behind it was a Nepali labour camp where people lived in tents and were very poor.*

*One day when we came home from work we found the three of you along with two of your Bhutanese friends sitting at the top of the driveway with a mat spread out in front of you covered with all sorts of things which seemed to have come from our house. On closer inspection I discovered pots and pans, cutlery, nick knacks and some clothes. You had set up a "shop" and were selling these things for a few ngultrums each. There was a crowd of happy Nepali labourers scooping things up for a song! Fortunately, I managed to save my pressure cooker and hauled you and what was left of our stuff home by your ears!*

*You were quite confused by my outburst; after all, you were only trying to help papa raise money for poor children. Wasn't that what Pa did at UNICEF?*

*All three of you went to the Lungtenzampa Primary School in Thimphu. The headmistress was an English lady called Carolyn who was married to a Bhutanese government officer. Your school uniform was the traditional Bhutanese Gho and it was quite a challenge in the beginning for papa and me to get you dressed quickly in time for school.*

*The Gho is a long robe made of traditional woven cloth of red and black checks. It is hoisted at the waist and tied with a woven fabric belt called a Kera - a large pocket is formed at the waist into which you can put all sorts of things. Do you remember wearing it?*

*All good things come to an end and we left Bhutan for Somalia in 1984 moving from the sublime to the most challenging....*





*SOMALIA*  
*1985-1989*



*Nomads moving to fresh pastures*



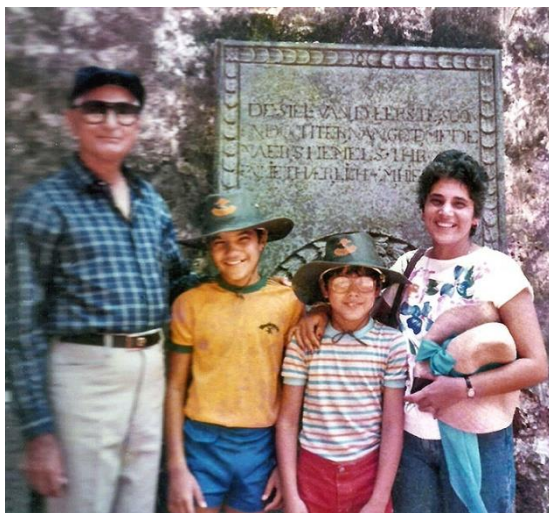


## *The Tide Pools*





*The Equator with Granny and Boomp*





## *At the Beach*



*Beached whale shark, Shark's Bay*





## *Trips Around Mogadishu*





## *At Home and on the Street*



*Boompa teaching Ashem Vohu*



*With Alex McKee*



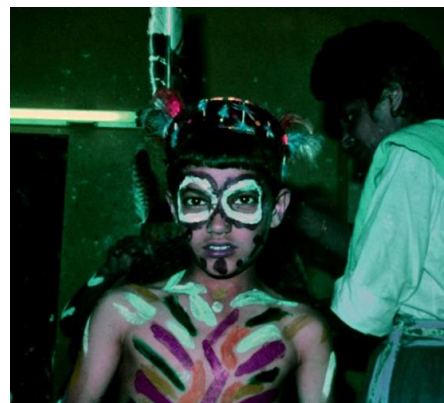
*Ready to take on the stone throwers!*



*American School Mogadishu (ASM)*



*With Robert Whittingham*



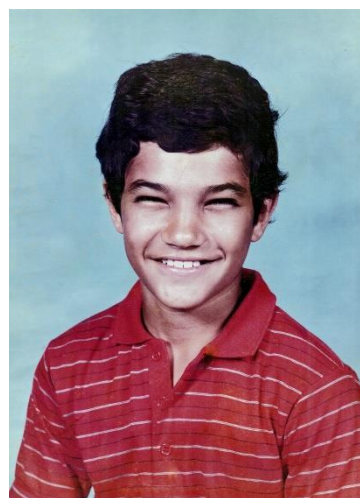
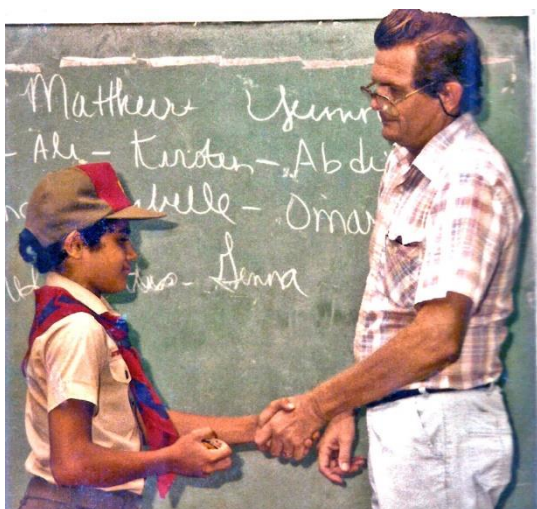


## *Your Class*



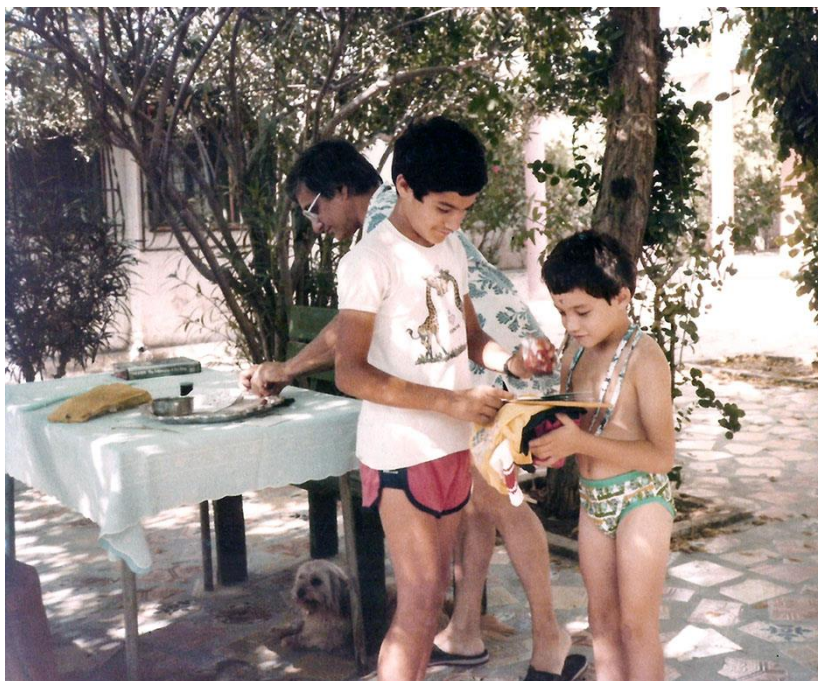


## Boy Scouts

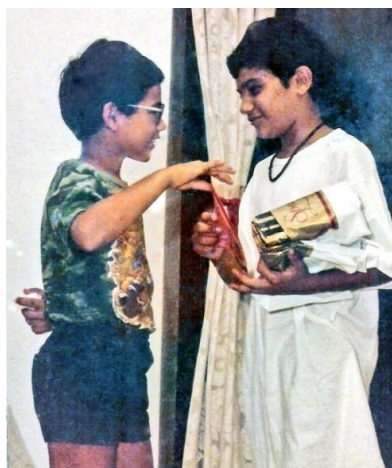
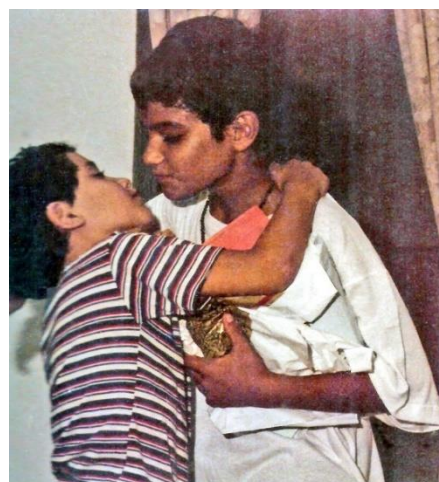




## *Sagans*



*Murayo*





## *Friends*



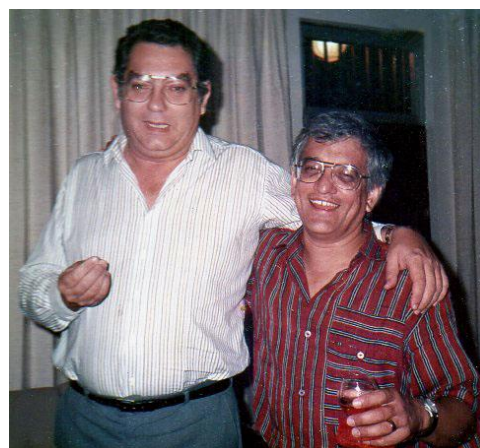
*Di and Stewart*



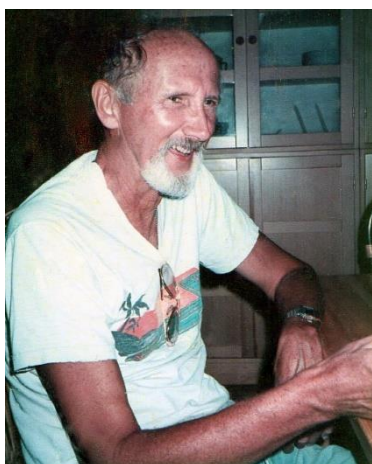
*With the Lobo family*



*Madelaine and Abdullahi*



*Raymond Marchand*



*Ray Carpenter*



*Jackie Singleton, Elizabeth and Tom McKee*



## *Memories of Somalia*

### *1985-1989*

*Whenever I reminisce about our times in Somalia, this proverb comes to mind - 'Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise!'*

*When Papa accepted a posting to Mogadishu we were so excited!*

*Africa was a continent I had always dreamed of visiting and here we were being given the opportunity to live there for a few years! I had absolutely no idea about the difficulties and the hardships, the frustrations and the hostilities, the deprivations we would be faced with and the challenges of running a home and feeding three growing and hungry children and an ageing Labrador. In spite of it all, Somalia turned out to be an experience of a lifetime and a period of growth and understanding that for me remains unparalleled to this day!*

*We learned about tolerance, forbearance, accepting, sharing, caring, laughing, crying, being hot, being frightened, being loved, being hated, being isolated, we learned it all and we learned it well so that we were able to carry "The Somali Experience" with us wherever we went. From then on, Robert, Hootoksi, Michel, Farhad and Adil were ready, able and willing to live and be happy anywhere on the planet, something we all do quite nicely to this day.*

*Below are some of the experiences we had and the lessons we learned as I remember them some 33 years later.*

### *Landing at Mogadishu Airport*

*Our flight from New Delhi to Mogadishu via Nairobi was comfortable and smooth. Apart from Papa, none of us had ever set foot on the African continent and my knowledge of Africa consisted of dreams of the vast plains of the Serengeti and herds of zebra, giraffe and lions in trees! I am ashamed to recall that I knew nothing of the geography, history, or culture of the Somali people and had no expectations of any kind*

*As we disembarked there was an officious looking man at the bottom of the stairs who brusquely directed every passenger to form a single file. Confused and bemused, all the passengers shuffled into a ragged line under the burning equatorial sun. Then we were made to march into the terminal building and once we entered the arrivals hall, in reality a tiny room with bare cement walls, our "leader" disappeared. We were left to fight our way through a sea of bodies and piles of baggage before we could get to the Immigration booth. There were no signs and people were shouting instructions and yelling at each other. All around us was chaos - bags, people, trolleys some with 3 wheels some with 2 all bumping along going higgledy-piggledy every which way.*

We managed to push through to the immigrations officer who asked us for our immigration forms. When we replied that we did not have any, he indicated that we had to buy them from "over there". "Over there" turned out to be a booth where the forms were sold but only in Somali shillings. If you did not have any, try the bank located outside the arrivals hall. Of course, you could not go outside till you had completed the Immigrations process and just as we were beginning to panic Michel you distracted us by pointing above. "Look ma" you yelled! My eyes followed your little finger and what I saw was unbelievable! It looked like a cage with some sort of wire mesh around it through which we could see a crush of people. Some were leaning over the top and yelling instructions to passengers newly arrived below, others were gesticulating wildly and suddenly we found a Somali gentleman beside us yanking papa's arm and yelling "I am the UNICEF fixer, follow me" we did and miraculously a few minutes later we had cleared customs and immigration and fought our way through the crowd to the luxury of an Air conditioned Toyota Land cruiser that whisked us off to the best hotel in town, The Juba. We soon learned that nothing could be done in Somalia without "the fixer" as the name suggests, someone you hired to fix things.....not broken things, just all official things!

### *The Juba Hotel*

Soon after we arrived at the Juba Hotel Di and Stuart McNab came to welcome us with jars of jam and an invitation to visit their home in the evening. Stuart was the UNICEF Representative in Somalia and that was the beginning of a long and enduring friendship with the family which we treasure to this day. Those jars of jam were a lifesaver and used to bait all three of you to do my bidding every day of the week!

Our room on the second floor was of a decent size and the bathroom was well appointed BUT there was very little running water. Often insects flowed out from the taps along with the trickle of water, everything smelled of mould and there was a general sense of decay all around. There were lots of roaches and flies scurrying about and lizards and ants hunting them!

The lift was a creaky, jerky aluminum box which we risked using only when we absolutely had to! The power randomly kept going on and off which made using the lift even less attractive. Soon after we arrived, Pa asked the staff why the power had failed and was told that the low water level in the Juba River was to blame. He soon learned that was a blatant lie!

On our first morning at breakfast we were joined by an Italian gentleman who was in the pest control business and had been given the contract to service the hotel. He graphically described what he found in the pantries and kitchens and ended his tirade with "we just cannot get rid of all the pests because they are everywhere, and they keep coming. There are even cockroaches in clusters under the tablecloths and they are almost as big as mice!" we had a hard time getting the three of you to eat at the Juba after that!



*We had hardly been in Somalia a week when my 34th birthday came around and I remember the day quite clearly. In the morning I had been to the American International School (the only English medium school in Mogadishu) to enroll all three of you and to my disbelief I was told they only had place for Michel and Farhad but not for you Adil. Later in the day I went looking for a supermarket and could not find one, I tried to buy a loaf of bread and went to several shops but couldn't find any and by evening when we were trying to celebrate, I was reduced to tears at the thought of spending the next 4 years in Mogadishu.*

*We walked along the streets, a forlorn family with no idea of where to go to find a decent restaurant to celebrate and as we ambled along a little lane Farhad you tugged at my arm and shouted: "Look mama, spaghetti!" and so we ate at this little dive and celebrated my special day with pasta, a hot favourite with all the family! We soon found out that spaghetti and pasta were on every menu in restaurants around Mogadishu because Somalia had once been an Italian colony. Many Somalis spoke fluent Italian!*

*The following morning while Papa was at work we roamed the streets till the hot sun forced us back into the shade of the Juba where you played happily, and I started tackling my correspondence. The first letter I replied to was Mother St. John the principal of my old school Presentation Convent in Kodaikanal, India. I described what little I had seen of Somalia and how I was so fearful of having to cope with living there. About a week later, I received a telegram from her at UNICEF which said "contact ex PCK-ite Elizabeth McKee nee Rustomji whose husband heads ICAO. She will help you" I did as I was told and soon after our first meeting with Elizabeth, Tom and their young son Alex, things improved drastically. Liz introduced us around, we made new friends, began to learn the ropes and life became more bearable. We even managed to find a place for you at the American School Adil, through a friend of a friend who put in a word for us with the Principal!*

*Samuel Johnson said, "Adversity leads us to think properly of our state, and so is most beneficial to us" and I noticed this was especially true of the expatriate community in Mogadishu which was a closely knit one. It didn't matter what nationality you were or who you worked for, we all looked out for and helped each other. We gave each other food, carried letters back and forth when we travelled, called each other's relatives to deliver messages overseas (telephones never worked in Mogadishu) and exchanged news on what shipment had come in where, and which store shelves were stacked, and which weren't. We even tried organizing trips to Nairobi to buy essentials. One of us would go and load up for the rest. This only worked in the short term, but it was good while it lasted!*

*Most expatriates went away in the summer on home leave and it was fun meeting up at the Frankfurt airport to catch the flight back. Everyone's hand baggage was stuffed with food. Salamis, sausages and bread loaves stuck out of zippered bags*

*and the overhead compartments on the plane smelled like a delicatessen! The Somali customs officials never dared open our bags for fear of coming across pork products and other items deemed “haram”*

*Elizabeth organized film shows at the UN Compound. She procured the films from Nairobi and the shows were open to all UN personnel and their families. We watched films on a large screen under the stars and carried our own chairs, food and wine. It was magic and the highlight of our week!*

### *Our Home*

*There were no proper estate agents in Mogadishu, most folks found a house to rent by word of mouth. One of Pa's colleagues at UNICEF had a relative who had a friend who wanted to rent his bungalow. We went to see it, loved what we saw and settled on it right away!*

*It was an old fashioned Italian style bungalow on the main road leading to the airport. It sat in a rambling garden with large trees and tiled patios. It had an empty swimming pool and the kitchen and dining room were separated from the rest of the house but connected to it by covered corridors. It had lovely large rooms and passages with windows, so the garden seemed to come into the house. It was in these passages that we did the ironing and watched the monkeys playing in a beautiful, spreading Chikoo tree just outside the passage window.*

*Do you remember the house? You had a lot of space to run around in and it was light, cool and airy. We did not know when we rented it that the plaster work especially on the ceilings was shoddy and we often found chunks of the ceiling on the floor! This seemed to be the norm in many buildings and homes around the city.*

*Papa walked into his office one morning and found the entire cement roof had fallen on his desk leaving the iron bars in the ceiling exposed! Thank God he hadn't been at his desk when that happened, or he would have been badly injured or even killed!*

*Soon after we moved into the house we hired a wonderful boyessa (maid) called Morayo. She was an attractive cuddly sort of lady who did everything at snail's pace and always smiled. She and I were terrorized by a large baboon with a blue bottom who would visit us and stroll around the compound baring his teeth whenever he saw us. We had to wait for him to choose his perch before we could walk across the courtyards! He took great pleasure in masturbating in the Chikoo tree while Morayo was ironing and she was convinced that he did this to embarrass her!*

*...And speaking of baboons, Papa was standing in line waiting to check in for a flight at the airport when he noticed a large baboon standing along with everyone*



*else with a scrap of paper in his hand, his "ticket" to board! The same baboon would sometimes turn up in the UN compound and hang out with the drivers.*

*Because our house was along the main street to the airport every time a dignitary passed, they closed the road for hours on end and we couldn't get in or out of the house!*

*More than forty Danish men lived right next to us in a compound and worked for the construction company Kamphil. We shared a common wall and the first Thursday night after we moved in (weekends were Fridays & Saturdays) we heard loud music and the raucous sounds of drunken men and women coming from our neighbours. The din went on till the early hours of the morning and kept us all awake! The following day we walked over to complain and were met at the canteen by Torben, the company chef. He explained that we would have to put up with the noise as it was company policy, blessed by the Somali government, that "the men" needed one night to hang loose and that one night was a Thursday night each week.*

*Busloads of Somali women were invited, and a good time was had by all. To compensate us, Torben (who later became a good friend) would slip us ham, cheese, sausage, salami, jams and even a real fir tree one Xmas. Best of all, he managed to give us an illegal connection to the company's huge generator when all of Mogadishu was without electricity for five months. We were able to run a few lights, the refrigerator, the microwave oven and one fan. All five of us and Akbar, would sleep outside on mattresses on the floor. We strung up a large mosquito net under the Chikoo tree and blessed Torben as we slept in relative comfort to the whirr of that single fan.*

*The Somali are forthright people and they make no bones about the way they feel and are never shy to express their thoughts seemingly in a very rude manner. Foreigners were seen to be barbaric unbelievers and children often threw stones at us and our car!*

*One Friday afternoon we were in our new Toyota Tercel driving along the beach when Papa decided he had had enough of this aberrant behaviour. When kids lobbed stones at our car he stopped, got out and chased them up and down the sand dunes and they ran as fast as their little legs could carry them to the delight of you three! Remember arming yourselves on your bicycles with a bag filled with stones slung across your chest? You were not going to be frightened by those kids and you didn't hesitate to throw stones right back at them!*

*Petrol was rationed (UN staff could buy a quota supplied by the office once a week) and finding food on shop shelves was one of the many challenges of living in Mogadishu. Sugar and flour, cooking oil and gas were in constant short supply and butter was never available. If you found bread it always had ants and weevils in it; remember we told you, they were a great source of vitamins? However, one*

*could buy wonderful fresh fish and vegetables if you braved going to the fish market, which we often did.*

*I also went to the wet market where I bought our fruits and vegetables. I would park my car outside and was mobbed by a throng of children all wanting to carry my basket for a few shillings!*

*One morning as I was buying my vegetables, from the corner of my eye I saw a Somali man walking towards me and staring with disgust written all over his face. He carried a mug of tea and was sipping it as he strolled along. He stopped in front of me and spat the tea in my face. Then he continued on his way as if nothing untoward had happened. He clearly believed that his behaviour was appropriate for an unbeliever! Everyone around who saw this, continued doing what they were doing, and I wiped the saliva off my cheek, swallowed my anger and hoped there was water at home to have a good wash!*

*Another time, I tried to visit a friend in a public hospital but was not allowed in the premises for reasons unknown to me to this day. I was rudely pushed out of the gate by a soldier who shoved the barrel of his gun into my stomach to get me to move on!*

### *Our Danish Neighbor Torben*

*Our neighbor Torben would often stroll over for a beer and a chat. Once he asked if he could use our house to entertain some of his friends. He wanted to have a special sit-down farewell dinner and he would do all the cooking, I just needed to provide him the space. We were more than happy to oblige, and I got out my best silver, set and decorated the table and all five of us piled into our car and left the house to Torben.*

*The next morning, I asked him how his party went, and his face contorted as he told me the story after extracting a promise from me not to divulge any of what he was about to tell me to papa.*

*After we left he brought over platters of cold cuts, salmon, caviar and salads and laid everything out on the table and took off for a shower. On his return he discovered that our cat Boofy had helped himself to the food and done a Roman number. He ate, vomited, ate some more and vomited some more all over the table, the floor, and the dining chairs. The room was a right mess and the food a disaster. Fortunately, Torben held the keys to the stores and was able to keep the beer flowing while he rushed off to prepare a whole new meal. I asked if had cat on his menu?*

### *Note from Pa on Dealing with the Government*

*Having interacted with government officials in India and Bhutan on a daily basis, my apprehension about working with Somali counterparts was understandable.*



*However, I soon discovered to my delight that by and large, the government officials I met were informal, approachable and accommodating. Even the customs officers! As the months passed and my relationship with key information and health ministry officials became more familiar and relaxed, I got to meet people to ministerial level and would often be invited to their offices for discussions over cups of a strong concoction of tea and coffee. Official communication was almost always face-to-face and very rarely were letters or any form of formal communication exchanged, so much so that a written communication from government was received with apprehension! Since the phones never worked (and there was no internet), this system was appropriate and worked for everyone, although it did mean spending hours visiting government offices and locating the right people.*

### *Note from Pa on Driving in Somalia*

*In Somalia, one is supposed to drive on the righthand side of the road. However, as I learned the hard way, this is more a guideline than a respected rule. One day, soon after we had arrived in Mogadishu, I was driving a UNICEF Fiat through town. The streets are narrow so one must drive slowly and carefully to avoid various obstacles, meandering pedestrians and people shaking hands in the centre of the road. In front of me was a Suzuki 4WD Suddenly, the Suzuki stopped in the middle of the road (without a signal, of course) and so I stopped behind him. Then without warning, he backed up and crashed into me! Stunned, I just sat there wondering how to react (Somali is possibly the world's most eloquent and difficult of languages and my use of it was zero. All attempts to learn Somali were fruitless). Then, without any indication that the driver was aware of what he had done, he drove off and disappeared, leaving me to explain the damaged radiator to a skeptical UNICEF transport manager.*

*Only the major roads in Mogadishu were paved. All the side streets were unpaved sand and there was no drainage. In the monsoon, the rain would turn the streets into rivers, leaving behind huge potholes and piles of sand on the shoulders. One day I was driving home in the rain when a car swerved dangerously alongside, and the driver shook his fist at me screaming that I had insulted him by splashing his car!*

*The main roads connecting the towns had been built by the Italians as single-lane highways without any center line, markings, or drainage. They were dangerously eroded and potholed, so driving to Merka or Kismayo or anywhere outside Mogadishu was a daunting experience. One had to weave between potholes and be careful to stay off the shoulders while avoiding any oncoming traffic, as well as the occasional camel which may be approaching on the wrong side of the road) and occasional wildlife such as wild boar and dik dik. The Somali bush is undulating semi desert with a thick covering of acacia thorn trees, which camels love to feed on. This is where the nomads roam with their large herds of camel and goats. One has to be on high alert to avoid at all costs an accident involving nomads or their livestock. Hitting a camel would certainly cripple it and if it was a female one*

would have to pay a huge sum of money in compensation for an untold number of future generations lost.

*At beach parties my little Toyota Tercel 4WD station wagon looked puny and weak beside those brawny Land Cruisers and humongous Chevy and Ford wagons belonging to our more well-heeled diplomatic and oil industry friends. But (like urinals) the sands of the beach can be a great equalizer. In the sand, our little Tercel would sail past those brawny beasts floundering and skidding and eating our dust!*

### *Tide Pools and Sharks*

*Somalia has a beautiful coastline and the most fabulous beaches. On Fridays we went wading in the tide pools where we would try and catch fish in our nets. Michel you were undoubtedly the family expert, and once you caught a nudibranch (a shell-less mollusk) which was such a wonderful addition to our little fish tank! I loved watching it as it swirled and moved. It reminded me of the dress of a flamenco dancer!*

*We had friends who worked for CONOCO and they had a lovely holiday cottage perched high on a cliff with a 360-degree view of the ocean. We would often go out with them and their kids. Masuda and Raymond, Bill and Jackie and all of you children would go fishing while we sat on the balcony overlooking the ocean with drinks, shooting the breeze. Farhad, you once insisted I try to fish and on my very first throw of the line I caught an eel! It is the only thing I have ever hooked (apart from Pa) in my life!*

*Though the beaches were spectacular we were wary of the sea and forbade you to swim in it as it was shark infested. Many years ago, the Russians had built an abattoir in the city and the offal and blood went straight into the sea attracting the sharks that came in shallow waters to feed.*

*One Friday at the Conoco guest house we were all sitting around and looking out at the ocean when someone spotted the dorsal fin of a shark on the surface of the water. It must have been quite a monster; we all saw it and were amazed by its size.*

*That evening soon after we got back home and were in the shower, Michel you ran into the bathroom and agitatedly asked us to hurry! Uncle Abdullahi was at the door crying and very upset. We were out in a flash and all he could say was "Nirura is in the morgue."*

*Nirura was the 13-year-old daughter of Abdullahi and Sandra Haji Ahmad who worked with papa at UNICEF, and with whom we had struck up a friendship. You must all remember Nirura, she was in your class at school, Michel.*



*Papa drove Abdullahi to the morgue and called Chris Bentley, a colleague who was a doctor with UNICEF. Chris told us later that in all his years at medical school he had never seen anything like what he just saw! The shark had bitten off the lower half of the child's body in one single bite and the tear was horrendous!*

*That morning, Nirura had kissed her parents goodbye, and had gone to the beach with two of her school friends and their mum and dad. The children spent a wonderful morning swimming and playing in the sand while the adults lay around on the beach. They were all set to come home when the three girls begged to be allowed to go into the water one last time. They were holding hands and splashing in knee deep water when a monster shark rolled in on a wave and attacked Nirura who was in the middle between her two friends. The girls began screaming in terror and their father ran down to the water and dragged out what was left of Nirura as the shark came in for a second attack.*

*The other two children were utterly traumatized and all they heard Nirura say was "Ouch". After the funeral which was very well attended by local dignitaries, school children and expats, we saw some of those same people who were at the funeral, swimming at Sharks Bay where the attack had taken place. Those are the ones who believe "That could never happen to me" but it did, and the attacks continued. Somalia had the second highest known incidence of shark attacks in the world.*

*We believe that the monster fin we saw that afternoon from the Conoco guesthouse belonged to the same shark that took Nirura.*

### *Easter Sunday Mass at the Mogadishu Cathedral*

*Mogadishu Cathedral was a Roman Catholic cathedral located in Mogadishu, Somalia the seat of the Roman Catholic Diocese. It was built in 1928 in accordance with the Italian plan for the development of Mogadishu as capital of Italian Somaliland. It was built in a Norman Gothic style. The last Bishop of Mogadishu, Salvatore Colombo, was killed while saying mass in this cathedral by armed insurgents in 1989. After some years, the building was completely destroyed by Muslim fundamentalists': Wikipedia.*

*It was 1986 and I was invited to sing a solo during the offertory at the Easter Service in the Mogadishu Cathedral. Several Bishops and Cardinals were arriving from neighbouring countries and I was asked to sing 'Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring' by Bach. Though I knew the song well and was happy to sing it, I had to find someone to accompany me as this piece has an equal amount of accompaniment as it does singing! I asked around the American School where I worked and discovered that Elizabeth Okafo, an African American teacher/friend was a talented musician who was more than happy to accompany me.*

*We made enquiries about the organ and were told that the cathedral had recently updated their instruments and was now in possession of a brand new electric organ to replace the old one which had bellows that had to be pumped to produce any sound. We rehearsed with the new organ, the acoustics at the cathedral were beautiful and I was all set to sing.*

*The Easter Service began with all its pomp and pageantry, the cardinals and bishops were decked out in their finery and the cathedral was packed to maximum capacity. I was to sing during the offertory so as it began Elizabeth started playing the introduction on the electric organ and I was poised to sing when the electricity went off and Elizabeth's loud "Oh Shit" echoed through the cathedral and had everyone a flutter! Elizabeth was not to be deterred! She whispered, "follow me" and we marched across to the bellows organ where she set up her music and pumped away heroically coaxing some sounds out of the old box. As she did, clouds of dust floated up into the rarefied atmosphere of the Cathedral, but she played beautifully and that is one solo I will always remember singing.*

### *The Visit of Anne Princess Royal*

*Princess Anne is involved with over 200 charities and organizations and she visited Somalia while we were there in her official capacity as President of the NGO Save the Children. As a British citizen I was a member of BLLIS (British Ladies Living in Somalia). It was a fun group and the ladies in it were all aflutter because the embassy had requested BLLISS to host a tea for the Princess. There was panic in the ranks when it was discovered that none of us had sugar cubes, essential for the princess' tea.*

*One of the ladies travelling to Nairobi offered to bring some back, a silver tea service was found and the menu for the tea was endlessly discussed and often changed according to the ingredients we had at hand. Wardrobes were aired, clothes borrowed, hats made and little Gemma Clarke and you Adil were chosen as the children to present the all-important flower Posey's. You were both given lessons in the proper way to curtsy to a Princess and finally on the appointed afternoon, we showed up in our finery and stood at our predesigned spots at the British Embassy.*

*Princess Anne arrived in a very ordinary dress minus hat and shoes. She wore sandals and graciously accepted the flowers from the children who performed perfectly. As she was going around greeting each seriously overdressed BLLISS member (I borrowed Masuda's blue suit and stupid hat) you ran up to me Adil, tugged at my skirt and loudly announced "Mama she is not a Princess because she doesn't have a crown!" Everyone burst out laughing, including the Princess!*

*The Princess was very gracious and spoke to every member of the group. She talked to me about sharks in Somalia and then proceeded to ask for a glass of orange juice as she did not drink tea! So much for the sugar lumps, silver tea service and food*



*which she hardly ate .....we polished it off and had a good laugh over the incident for many years to come!*

*We met Princess Anne again in Dar es Salaam at a launch of a new model of the Land Rover car. She was gracious as ever and again attended the function minus her crown!!!!!!*

### *The Beginnings of Mohammed Siad Barre's Tribal Cleansing*

*'Mohammed Siad Barre, third President of Somalia from the Marehan clan, took over the reins of power in a military coup in 1969. He was installed as the leader of the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) the new Government of Somalia, which arrested former members of government, banned political parties, abolished the National Assembly and suspended the constitution. He was in power for 21 years and had one of the worst human rights records in the world. During our time there, his government began to feel the pressure from rival clan groups especially the Majeerteen, Isaaq and Hawiye who were being systematically terrorized under his regime. His famous "Red Beret" elite units smashed water reservoirs to deny water to the Majeerteen and Isaaq clans and their herds. "More than 2,000 members of the Majeerteen clan died of thirst, and an estimated 5,000 Isaaq were killed by the government. Members of the Victory Pioneers also raped large numbers of Majeerteen and Isaaq women, and more than 300,000 Isaaq members fled to Ethiopia.' (Wikipedia).*

*One afternoon during the end of our stay in Somalia I was with my friend Renu Senagama, having tea in her living room when we heard a terrific banging on the gate and a rumbling and rattling down the street. We ran out to check what was going on and as we did Renu's watchman bolted into the compound and disappeared in a flash!*

*We stood at the open gate and saw a Municipal truck lumbering along that was used to round up dogs, but it was jam packed with men. We had heard rumours that government troops had been roaming the city streets in these vans hooking men from rival clans in the same way they hooked the stray dogs! Now here was proof in front of our very eyes. As the truck rumbled past we saw two men being dragged by steel chains behind the moving vehicle their legs dragging along the muddy road. I never believed the stories, now I saw it for myself and it was a horrific sight!!*

*We had friends from different clans and tribes and constantly heard their stories about the terrible state of affairs. People we knew went missing, and we heard the occasional gunshot on the beach not far from our house where men and women were routinely killed and thrown into the sea. I kept wondering why the world was silent and why organizations such as Amnesty International did not take any action and then one day on the eve of my departure on vacation to New York, a*

friend Amina, asked if I would hand-carry an envelope to Amnesty International in New York.

Her husband, an artist and writer, had disappeared and she explained that Amnesty could only act if they had specific names and addresses of people missing and precise numbers. She had put a list together but could not mail it out. If her letter was intercepted or found on a person carrying it out of the country, many heads would roll. As I was a UN spouse I would probably not be searched, and she thought it would be safe for me to carry this information out of the country. I discussed her request with Pa and he decided it was too dangerous not only for me but for him as well and I was going to have to refuse my friend; that night I could not sleep, I put myself in my friend's shoes and knew I had no choice. I would carry her letter, but I would do it without Papa's knowledge.

I carefully put the envelope under the cardboard base of my hand carry bag, piled books and other essentials for the flight on top of it and prayed. Adil you and I were travelling on our own so Pa took us to the airport checked us in and we said goodbye to him.

As we walked into the departure area I saw Dominique our Irish friend, he and I sang in a choir together, he represented Concern Ireland in Somalia. I greeted and walked towards him. As I approached, I was surrounded by army and police personnel who looked menacingly at me. I immediately thought of the Amnesty package in the bottom of my bag and was wild eyed with fear when I saw Mr. Senagama, Rob's colleague from UNICEF who very calmly walked up to me and said "Go with them and answer their questions. I will look after Adil"

I was taken to a small holding room where three officers kept repeating the same question over and over again "How you know that man?" and I kept replying "I sing with him" for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, they asked to see my tote bag. I now had visions of being bumped off at the beach as they began removing things slowly, one by one out of the bag. Any printed material or anything that had writing on it they destroyed and put into a bin including my telephone and address book. When the bag was empty, they turned it upside down and tapped it on the back to let out any last bits of paper that might have been left in the cracks.

My heart stopped but the Gods were smiling, the cardboard held and the letter for Amnesty International was not discovered. I was able to hand deliver it 48 hours later to an Amnesty representative in New York.

I was finally marched out of the room and escorted to my seat on the plane, the last passenger to board. I was so relieved to see you Adil and I noticed Dominique sitting in a seat with an armed police escort beside him and he pointedly ignored me as I walked by. I had no idea what was going on, but I knew I must not associate with him till we were out of the country and in Nairobi, the first stop on our journey out of hell!



*I later heard that Dominique had been made persona-non-grata and was given 24 hours to pack up and leave Mogadishu because he had sacked an incompetent employee with connections to some very powerful people. Concern Ireland subsequently closed its operation and further assistance to Somalia was withdrawn. Sadly, Amina's husband was never found.*

### *The Power Situation in Mogadishu*

*The power situation was getting from bad to worse. People believed that oil from the transformers made their skin white, so oil was routinely stolen, and this added to the chaos and confusion at the power plant. We had heard stories of folks driving their cars onto the runway at the airport and turning their headlights on to help pilots land their planes!!*

*Our electricity randomly went off till eventually in 1987 the plant shut down.*

*We had no electricity for well over 5 months and even when it was restored, most of the time there were long power cuts so folks who could afford a generator had a small one. They made a hellish noise and created their own pollution. UNICEF gave us a small generator but, often, we chose not to use it because we preferred peace to power and we had Torbern's line to keep us going!*

*Our good friends Mariyan and Chris Von Karlsenborn found a solution to the problem of the noise of generators. They brought back from Germany two sets of construction ear muffs. Once on, they completely blocked out all the noise and they could listen to music and enjoy the bliss of quiet.*

*One evening, Chris went downstairs from his study to get a drink from the kitchen. As he descended the stairs he was shocked to see that the living room, dining room and kitchen were completely empty! The furniture and appliances including a very large refrigerator and stove were missing! He called Mariyan who couldn't believe her eyes when she saw the bare rooms! In the few hours that they had been upstairs in their study with their construction earmuffs on, they had been robbed blind!*

*When the police began investigating they spoke to people in the neighbourhood all of whom said they had seen a removal van parked outside with men moving things out of the house and hadn't thought anything of it! They presumed that the Von Karlsenborn's were moving out!*

*We discovered a good way to beat the heat was to go to the pool after dinner and stay there till late. We were members at a sports club not far from our house. After a few hours in the water when we came home all of us were exhausted and slept like babies, heat or no heat!*

*One day at the pool I noticed a lady having a rather long conversation with Adil and the conversation went something like this:*

*Lady: Hello little boy, where are you from?*  
*Adil: Bhutan*  
*Lady: No NO, Bhutanese children don't look like you, they have slit eyes! Where are you from?*  
*Adil: Somalia*  
*Lady: No, your skin is not black, tell me where are you from?*  
*Adil: India*  
*Lady: Indians have brown skin and you are white. Are you trying to make me guess? Tell me where are you from?*  
*Adil: Switzerland*  
*Lady: No, No, No, you can't be Swiss, I am Swiss....*

*At this point you Adil, came running out of the pool and with a very worried expression asked "Mama, where am I from?"*

### *The Post Office*

*For over three months we had not received mail through the Somali postal service. Many of us went to complain and were told to be patient, there was a backlog of mail and a shortage of sorting staff - it would soon be delivered. Those were the days when we had no computers and we depended on the mail to communicate, pay bills, receive cheques and other important documents.*

*One morning Chris Von Karltenborn ran out of patience and walked into the main post office demanding his mail. He was not one to be put off by excuses and insisted on seeing where the post was stored. He was shocked by what he saw, literally a mountain of letters and packages piled and scattered all over the room.*

*He complained to the German Embassy who in turn put pressure on the Foreign Ministry who ordered the postmaster to have all letters sorted within the next 3 days at the end of which there would be an inspection.*

*Two weeks later we still had no mail, so Chris went back to the post office and found the mail room empty. The postmaster had ordered all the mail to be burned so he passed the inspection of the Ministry and to hell with letters and the deliveries!*

### *Teaching Air Traffic Controllers functional English*

*A good friend Tom McKee was the director of ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organisation which is a specialized agency of the UN that codifies the principles and techniques of International Air Travel.*



*Tom wanted me to give elocution lessons to Somali Air Traffic Controllers who spoke a Somali English that pilots from around the world found difficult to understand. This was a short term well paid assignment and I was more than ready for the challenge.*

*I was issued an official pass which allowed me to drive our Toyota Tercel right on the runway and through to a set of rooms and offices on one side of the airport. There was absolutely NO security and the gates were always open. One day I almost had a heart attack as I drove onto the tarmac and came face to face with an enormous airplane, its nose a few feet away from my car! I don't know who got more of a fright, the pilot or me!*

*After three months of working with the manuals and getting nowhere with my "students" I decided I had to change tack.*

*There was no official writing script in Somalia till 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 1972 when a national script was devised. The Somalis had a thriving oral literature with many genres of which poetry was the main one.*

*Somalia-born hip-hop artist, K'Naan. K'Naan said "everything revolves around poetry. Conflict resolution is written in poetry ... our laws are. Everything about Somali people, the only way we know how to communicate is poetry."*

*I decided to use poetry to teach Air Traffic Controllers how to pronounce words correctly in English and the strategy was most successful. My students were engaged, energized and utterly creative in their compositions and in their desire to recite them out loud. They were keen to learn how to pronounce words correctly for them to fit into the cadence and rhythm of their poems. I made sure they included vocabulary from the manual that they needed to know, and the poems were composed around these.*

*At the small graduation ceremony, Tom and the rest of the ICAO staff were utterly flawed by the progress that the Air Traffic Controllers had made. They could perfectly pronounce in the Queen's English phrases such as 'after departure climb straight ahead' 'turn right on bravo' 'follow the greens' and other specialist terminology that they were expected to know as Air Traffic Controllers.*

### *Our Somali friends*

*Somalis are a handsome proud and resilient people. They look down their noses at Bantu Africans whom they consider "dark and black" anyone who is not Muslim as unclean, and most humans other than Somali's as inferior beings. The Somali considers himself to have a direct line to God.*

*Although Somalia was a very hard duty station and living conditions were atrocious, Somalia and Somalis are very dear to our hearts. We had some wonderful friends whose simplicity, honesty, resilience, hope and drive touched us in ways I find difficult to describe and we were so fortunate in the friendships we forged and the times we shared.*

*We were able to talk and have discussions on all manner of subjects from literature to politics, from female circumcision and genital mutilation to ecology, from world economics to family values and cultural differences. Our conversations and debates were lively and passionate, and we spoke to each other not just from our minds but from our hearts.*

*We knew men and women who suffered degradation and hardship and yet were able to carry on with their lives with hope. I was forever being showered with generosity, gifts given freely from friends who had very little to give. In this respect, friendship to the Somali is like being a part of the family; and the family belongs to a clan to whom one owes total and complete allegiance. When clan members arrived at our friends' doorsteps destitute from the war in the Ogaden, they were welcomed unconditionally, irrespective of their numbers, taking up residence and becoming part of the household. When a Somali friend "borrowed" something, there was never any expectation of it being returned. In the beginning I found this hard especially when my mattresses were borrowed and never returned but I soon learned to accept another way of living. I could have borrowed anything from my Somali friends and never returned it and that would have been just fine for them!*

*I have lost touch with all my Somali friends, but I will never lose the memories I have of them for they dwell in my heart and will remain there forever.*

*Nobody and nothing can prepare you for being "A good parent." You learn on the job, you grow in age and wisdom along with your children, and life's circumstances often dictate the course of actions that you take in the way you raise them.*

*As parents Papa and I wanted to teach you how to be truthful and good human beings. We wanted you to know the value of Love rather than hate, peace rather than conflict, compassion rather than indifference and understanding rather than intolerance...judging from the way you live your lives as adults and as parents, we seem to have passed these values on to you and for that we are thankful.*

*In 1986 the school you were in, The American School of Mogadishu, only had a middle school and you Michel, were getting ready for High School the following year. We did not know how much longer we would be in Somalia and we did not know where our next posting would be and if there would be an American school so that you could continue in the same stream of education.*

*In the interest of stability and continuity in one stream of learning we thought boarding School was a good option and we were fortunate to be able to afford to send you to the best schools because UNICEF funded part of the costs.*

*We talked and debated about this long and hard, had discussions with friends and colleagues in similar situations and researched boarding schools in the UK to find one that would be multicultural and suit you best. Since I went to boarding school when I was 9 and was happy there, I told myself that you would be fine too - but in hindsight we know it was a wrong decision and we have always regretted it.*

*We also decided that it would be good for Farhad and you to go together so that you would have the comfort and company of each other while you were far away from home.*

*We chose St Christopher's in Letchworth and you Michel went there in September 1987 when you were 15 and Farhad you were 12. Adil you were alone with us for two years but were very lonely and kept insisting that you too, should be allowed to join your brothers in boarding school. We finally relented, and you went to St Christophers as well in 1989 when you were 11 years old for one term. We then moved you to Cheltenham College from where you finished High School. It broke my heart in ways that you will never know to have to part with you and as much as you missed home I missed you so much more!*

*We stayed in England for two weeks after we first admitted you in school Michel and Farhad. A few days before we were leaving for Mogadishu, we took you out of school for tea. Michel you seemed to have settled in well and had found a good friend, Zack. Farhad you seemed very unhappy and at the end of a list of things that you did not like you sobbed and said ".....and I can't even drink the water in that school. There are no water filters there"*

*All your lives we had drummed it into your heads that drinking water out of a tap was never an option as it was unsafe and would make you sick, you were always reminded to drink water out of a water filter.*

*From the time you were born you had lived in countries where there was no potable water and we had forgotten to tell you that this rule did not apply in the United Kingdom!! It must have been terrible for you Farhad, to have been miserable and thirsty at the same time, forgive us for putting you through that trauma!*

*UNICEF paid for you to come home three times a year during the holidays, so you continued to experience the different places that we were posted in and your lives were enriched by these experience...*

*We also ensured that on our paid home leave every summer, we took you on a holiday to different destinations and these times together were invaluable, precious and memorable for us all!*



*Yemen*  
*1990 - 1994*



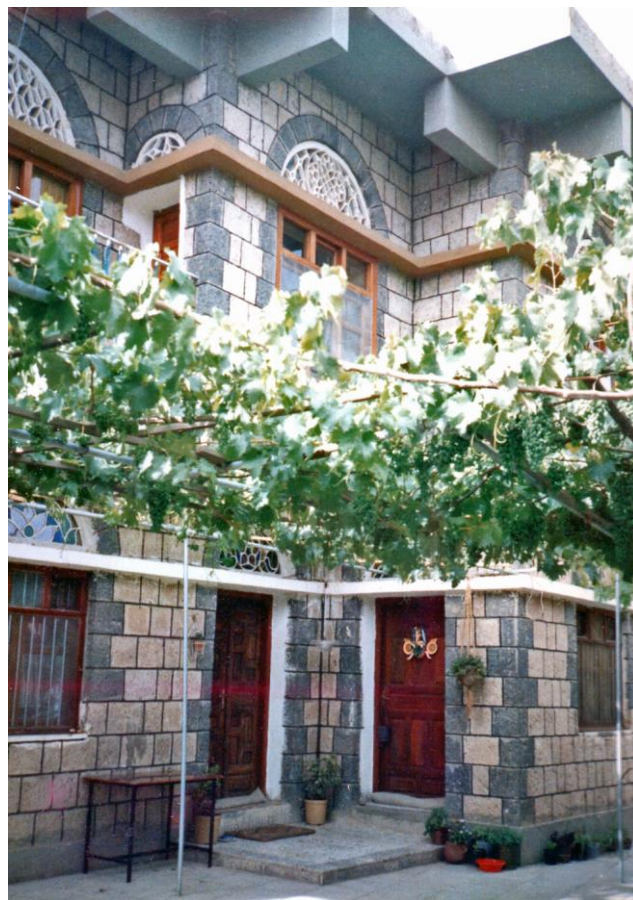
*Downtown Sana'a*



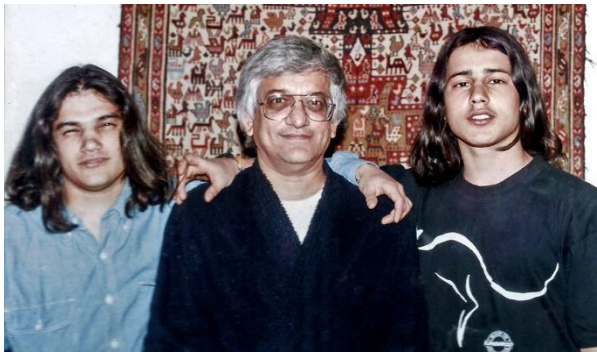
*Celebrating a marriage*



## *Our Home in Sana'a*







*Mohamed*



*With neighbours Alan and Blanca*



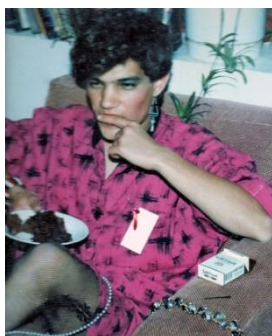
## *Dinner Theatre at Home*



*Stewart McNab*

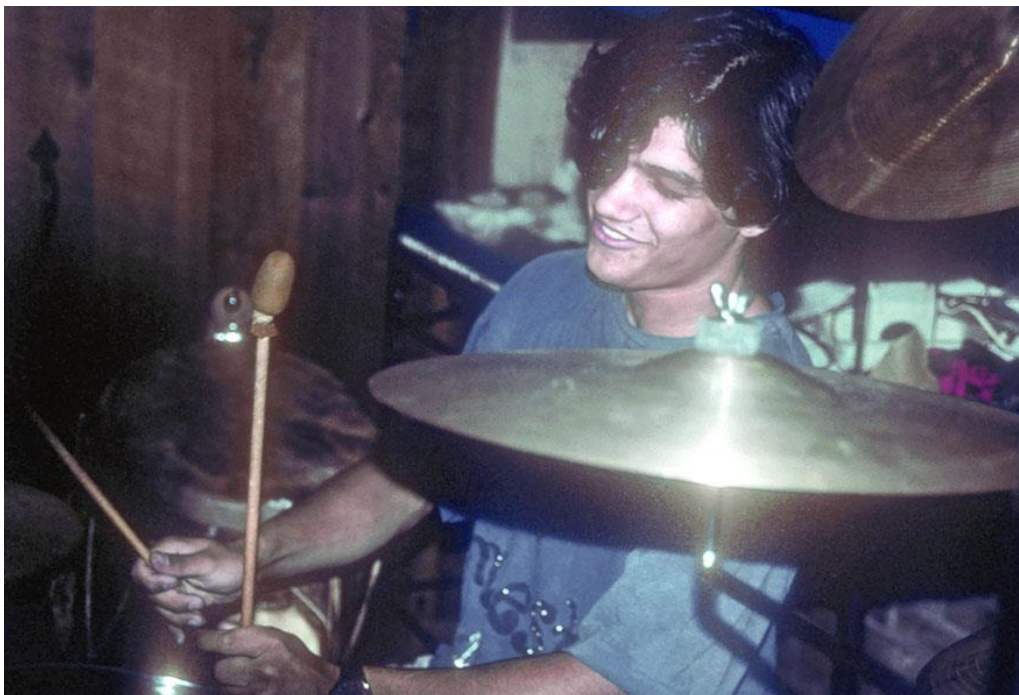


*Dancing with Zack*





## *Jamming at the British Club*





## *Parties*



*Steve and Zarine Watson*

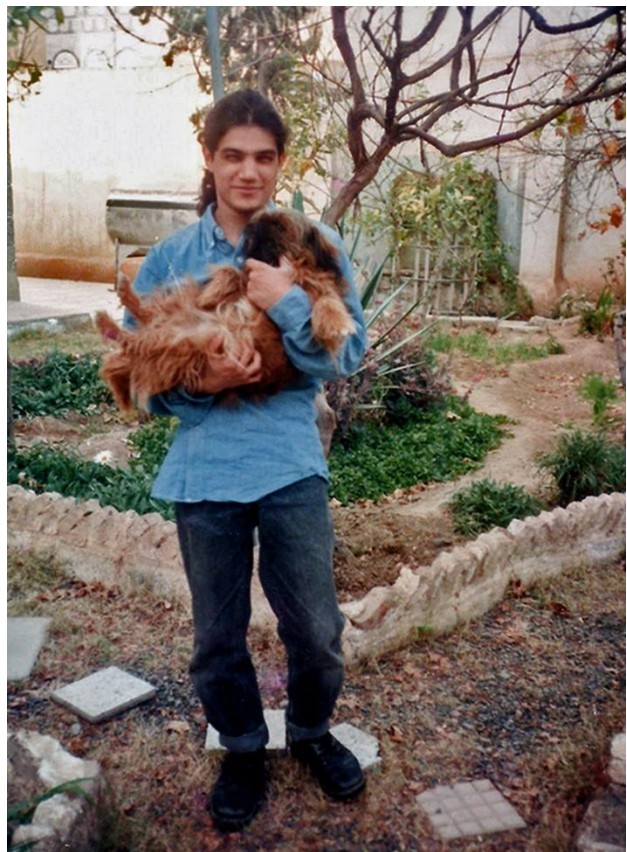
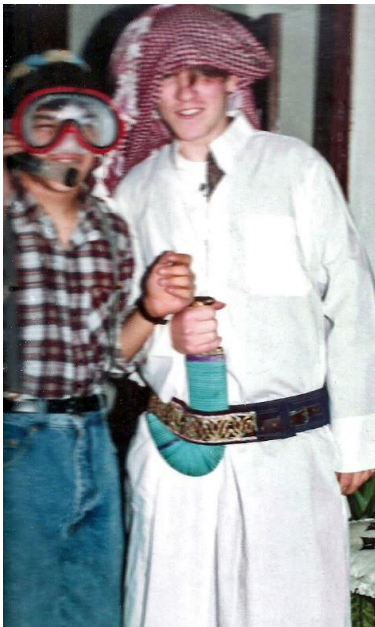




## *Making Wine and Hanging Out*

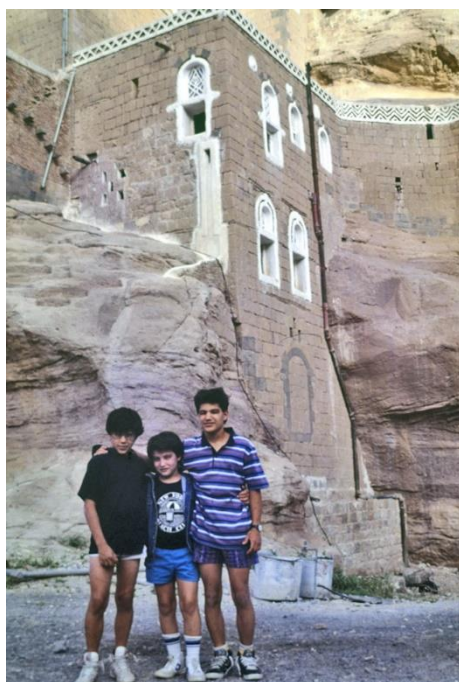
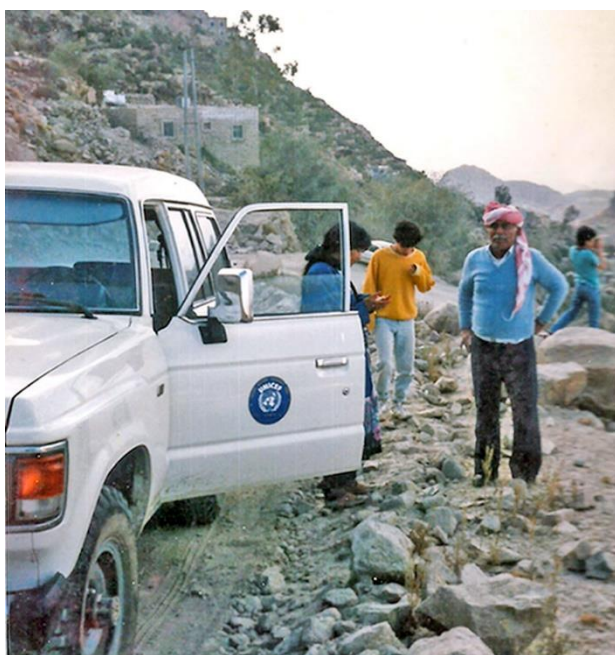


*Matt*



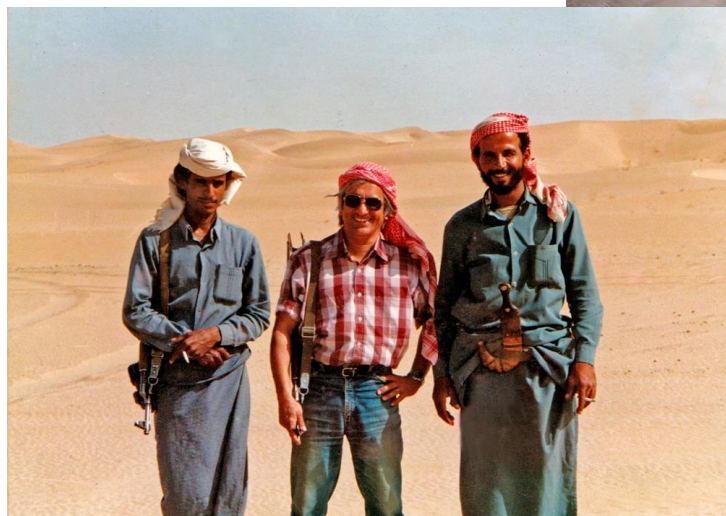


## *Excursions Around Sana'a*





## *Crossing the Rub' al-Khali*



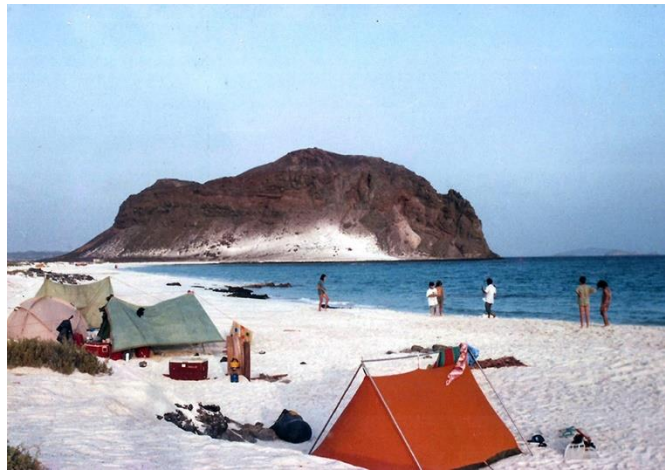
*Our guards Allawe and Radman*



## *Shibam and Bir Ali*



*Shibam, "Chicago of the Desert"*



*Bir Ali*





## *Your 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Bash*

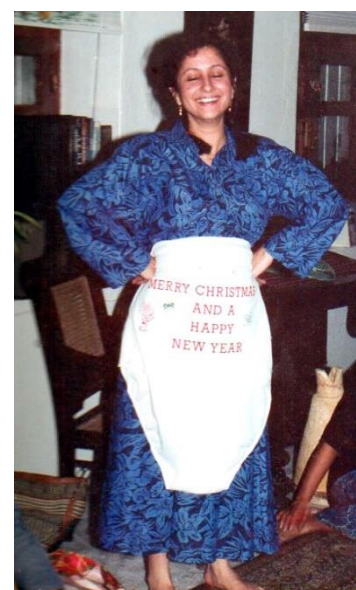
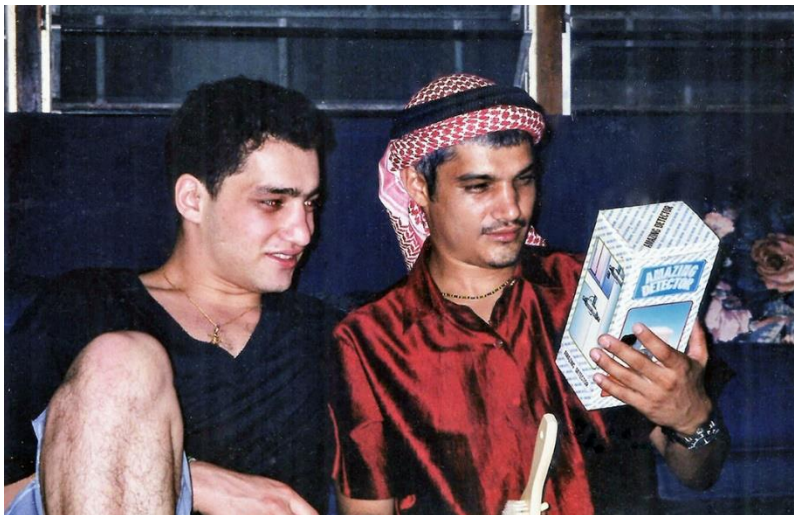
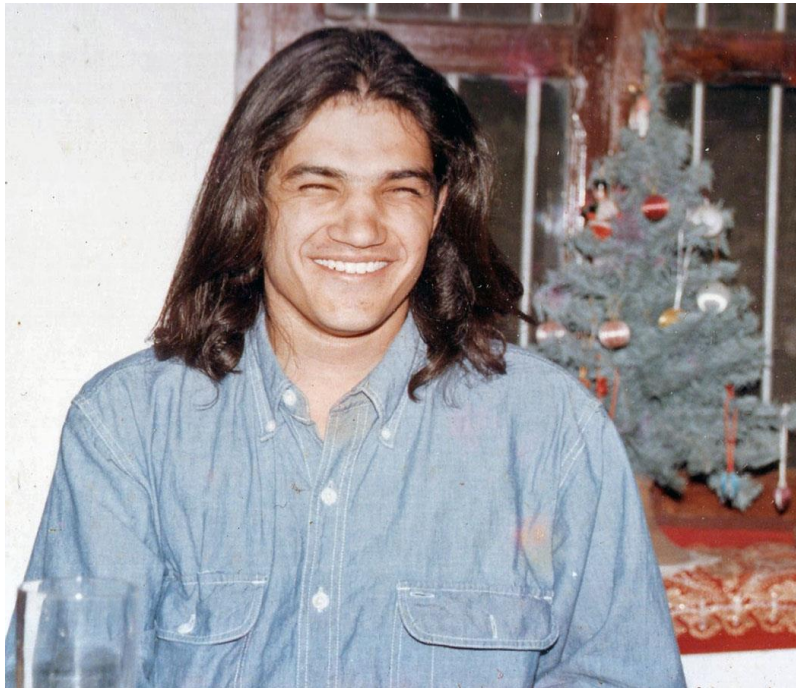


Come celebrate Michel's 21st  
birthday with the Tyabjis,  
on 6<sup>th</sup> January at 8.00 p.m.  
Dress as you were (or will be) at 21  
R.S.V.P. tel: 248477





## *Christmas*



*Zarine Watson*



## *Memories of Yemen*

1990-1994

*Once again, I had no idea what to expect and no notion of what it would mean to live in an Arab culture; nothing I read, came anywhere close to what I experienced. I learned so much about relationships, honesty, openness, affection, respect, about caring and sharing, and most importantly, about love.*

*When I first set eyes on the capital Sana'a, I was stunned by the architecture of the Old City. It is a city inhabited for over 2500 years where people live even today, in the homes of their ancestors.*

*When we arrived in Sana'a and were looking for a place to rent we were shown around by an estate agent who took us to see a home he was convinced we would like. All houses in Yemen have tall iron gates that obscure them completely. This one was no different and when our agent knocked loudly, a petit young lady with dark black hair and smiling eyes opened! She was clearly irritated with the agent and told him in no uncertain terms that they were not about to leave and had rented the home in question for the next few years. As she was shutting the gate Pa asked her "Are you by any chance a Parsi" she said "yes" and so began a wonderful and close relationship that we treasure to this day with Zarine and Steve Watson.*

*After a long and hard hunt for a suitable home we eventually found a wonderful traditional stone house with coloured glass "qamariyas," (stained glass semi-circular panes) above the windows. The garden was beautiful and filled with fruit. We had grapes, apples, peaches, quince, pomegranate and figs. Remember making wine with papa out of the grapes and the quince? We used to harvest a lot of fruit and on Granny and Boompa's first visit, I was complaining about not knowing what to do with it. Granny had a great idea! we bagged the fruit and handed it out to urchins on the street. Little children soon recognized our car and would come running to it at a stop light to collect the fruit and packets of UHT milk that we handed out - what a great idea that was!*

*We rented the house unfurnished; the kitchen came with no cabinets or counters, and as you could not buy them ready made in Sana'a, we decided to go to Dubai for 5 days to buy a car, a kitchen and some furniture. As school had just started, you Adil, stayed with our good friends Di and Stewart McNab, who were also posted in Yemen at that time.*

*When we got back Di gave us the terrible news that Alisha, Zarine and Steve's beautiful 5-year-old daughter was involved in a terrible car accident and was in hospital, brain dead.*

*She was being driven home by Kathy, a friend of Zarine's who also had her two sons along with Alisha in the back seat of the car. The children were strapped in, but Alisha was in the middle and suffered the full impact of the crash. The two little boys and Kathy were fine, Alisha sadly died after being in hospital for 10 days.*

*Constantly being there for Steve and Zarine during that trying and most difficult time of their lives strengthened our bond of friendship, and they remain our closest friends to this day.*

*A couple of years later, their son Pearce was born in Dubai and Zarine drove directly from the airport to our home with the baby who spent his first day in Yemen with us while his mum went home for some much-needed rest!*

*Adil, you went to the Sana'a International School (SIS) which followed the American curriculum and you joined and enjoyed the Boy Scouts Programme and were actively involved in sports. The school was located outside town and consisted of a set of traditionally-styled Yemeni buildings laid out in landscaped gardens tended by Chinese gardeners!*

*At one of your annual Sports Events Pa and I were among the spectators along with other excited parents cheering and jumping up and down! Adil you ran like the wind, won the race and bagged a medal! Behind us was a Yemeni lady shouting and cheering her child on. It was a hot day and she was covered in black from head to toe. She wore a cloth across her mouth and her eyes were obscured by a trendy pair of shades. She may have dressed and looked very traditional, but she was operating the most modern equipment and was filming the event! We later got to know the lady, her name was Zabora Zabara, she owned and ran a photo shop in town!*

*"Shamlan" and "Hadda" were the brand names of the most popular mineral water. At a shop you didn't ask for bottled water you asked for "Shamlan" or "Hadda."*

*Once we were at the airport waiting for our bags to arrive, our eyes glued to the carousel following the luggage on the conveyor belt as it went around and around. Suddenly we did a double take for there among the bags was a battered cardboard "Shamlan" carton tied together with rope and a goat in it! He bleated every now and again but looked none the worse for his ordeal and was soon claimed by a Yemeni gentleman who walked through customs with his goat and his gun as if that was the most natural thing to do and indeed in Yemen, it was!*

*Remember Zubin the cat? One of my students at the American Language Centre gave him to me and I couldn't resist bringing him home. He was beautiful, grey with blue eyes and as soon as I put him down on a couch and turned on the music, he started purring, and made himself utterly comfortable! The music which pleased him was a Mozart symphony conducted by Zubin Mehta and so we named the cat Zubin after the Maestro!*

*One day Zubin went walk about and we couldn't find him anywhere. He seemed to have disappeared! Around 10 PM when there was still no sign of him I decided to search for him and began walking the streets in our neighbourhood calling his name; but I felt somewhat uncomfortable and irritated because every time I passed people shouting "Zubin" they went into spasms of laughter! I eventually found the cat and it was only days later while relating the incident to a Yemeni friend that*



*I found out why all those folks had been laughing! "Zubi in Arabic means 'my penis'!"*

*Michel and Farhad you were home for your Xmas holidays and we went on a wonderful trip across the dessert, remember it? Here is an account I wrote soon after...*

### *Journeying Through the Rub-Al-Khali*

*On the 22nd of May 1990 the Yemen Arab Republic in the north and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south pledged to bury their differences of 300 years and unite, creating the Republic of Yemen. For travel enthusiasts like the Tyabjis, this opened vistas only dreamt of before. The fabled, poetic, bandit-infested desert, the Rub Al Khali, was beckoning and we intended to heed its call and drive through it.*

*When we first threw the idea around, several of our friends politely told us to dream on! Had we heard of so and so being shot at and did we not know of the deadly tribal feuds that plagued the region? Did we want to lose our car at gun-point? Were we crazy to put the lives of our children at risk?*

*On Boxing Day, 26th Dec 1992 at 6 AM after much soul-searching, procrastination, careful planning and a whole lot of bravado, we set off on a trip of a lifetime with two other families.*

*Our good friends Stewart and Di McNab from our Somalia days, their daughters Fiona (15) and Kate (13) and their son Mehan (4), joined us. They brought along their trusted Yemeni driver Abdullah who hails from the north but for whom this trip was as much of an adventure as it was for us. They rode in a brand-new Toyota Land Cruiser and theirs was the lead car.*

*Behind them came the Jurrjens family, in their 1982 Toyota Land Cruiser. In the car was Carl the first Secretary at the Dutch embassy, his wife Pauline (not terribly fond of roughing things out!), his 79-year-old mum whom we all called granny and his 12 and 19-year-old sons.*

*Bringing up the rear was the "Winning Team" (we claimed the title as we only got stuck in the sand once) riding proud in our Mitsubishi Pajero. In addition to our family of 5 we had our 8-year-old dog Chooki, surely the first Bhutanese pooch to cross The Empty Quarter!*

*Each car carried the essential gear for desert travel"-- camping equipment, jerry cans of fuel and water, a spade, tow-rope and plywood boards for crossing stretches of deep sand.*

*We could not have planned and executed this journey without the help of our dear friend Steve Watson who was the Manager of Halliburton at that time. They had staff stationed in Marib and in other remote parts of the dessert and he organized for us to follow one of the crew cars through the most difficult and bandit infested parts of the dessert crossing. He also organized two armed guards to accompany*

us. We picked up Allawe and his son Radman who drove with us through the Rub-Al-Khali and over to the Hadramaut on the other side.

Allawe was a fierce looking Bedouin dressed in a futaḥ, (traditional Yemeni dress), turban, jambiah (traditional curved knife), and a Kalashnikov casually slung over his shoulder. He was in the front seat of the lead car scanning the endless vista of sand. His eyes constantly searched the horizon and his stance conveyed a readiness for action at a moment's notice! He exuded a confidence that was infectious and made us all feel totally "protected" and at ease.

His son Radman, a younger version of himself and a quiet travelling companion, was in the last car in the convoy, ours, and sat in the back seat with the three of you. Adil you were into guns in those days, and in awe of the AK 47 he carried and kept at the ready!

Marib is in north-central Yemen and is at the eastern most point in the desert approachable by road. It was the capital of the ancient city of Saba' - Do you remember visiting the Marib dam and the remains of the temple of the Queen of Sheba on another trip we made from Sana'a? The dam supported a flourishing culture for more than a thousand years!

We arrived in Marib a distance of 173 Kms from Sana'a at 9 AM It was an easy drive along fairly good road. We stopped at the Halliburton Office and followed their Toyota Landcruiser driven by Ali a veteran desert driver with Mitch and Prose, both technicians, in the back seat. They were on their way to service equipment in the middle of the desert at a place called Al- Ogla, a 400 kms drive over sand dunes and flat plains of hard sand.

As far as the eye could see, from horizon to horizon, there was sand and more sand. There is quite an art to driving in the desert and Ali was our champion and teacher. He began by letting air out of all our tyres and expertly dug both Carl and Stewart out of the sand when they got stuck several times along the way. Pa mastered the skill of driving in the desert in no time and we only got stuck once! He was undoubtedly the best driver in the group!

We arrived in Al-Ogla at the prefabricated camp of Crest Service Co. at around 5 pm having driven all day. We were welcomed by the crew who were so happy to have visitors and thoroughly enjoyed our company. They talked about their work and told us stories about the desert. Many of them had found arrow heads hewn out of stone and probably thousands of years old, in dry river beds. One man found an ostrich egg in the sand but there have been no ostriches in that region for hundreds of years! They took us for a walk to the river bed and all of us searched for arrow heads but didn't find any. They also showed us some amazing rock art and what looked like an ancient script carved on stone. As the sun was fading fast and we had yet to find a place to set up our camp for the night we reluctantly bid our new friends farewell. As we were leaving one of the men gave me two ancient arrow heads which I have to this day. I would love to get them dated someday.



*We drove for another hour or so and then decided to stop and pitch our tents in the sand. It did not matter that our gas stove didn't work, or that the food we carried was not entirely palatable, or that some of us were freezing cold. There was a beautiful moon smiling down on us, the sky was clear, and a billion stars shone upon fifteen adventurous souls camped on a dune in the Rub Al Khali.*

*Just before I closed my eyes looking up at the night sky and the sparkling stars a line from one of Byron's poem's flashed through my mind, "I love not man the less, but Nature more."*

*Our guards stayed up most of the night watching out for bandits and woke us up at first light. After spending a good hour churning a large pot of porridge on a kerosene stove that did not work, one of us remembered a kind invitation from our friends at the camp in Al Okhla. Showers and breakfast!*

*We drove back to a full American breakfast and cool, clean water to wash the sand off our bodies! All tanked up and in great spirits we set off once again for the second half of our journey through the desert.*

*We did not have Ali and the Halliburton vehicle with us now, but we had been trained in desert driving and were moving along nicely. Now we were crossing pure desert terrain. Cars driving in the sand are quite a sight! We enjoyed watching the car in front of us strain up a dune and almost fly off when it got to the top and down the other side. Often the wheels spun in the air and there was always great excitement as we never knew what was on the other side of the dune! The desert was littered with old, discarded ammunition boxes, rusted missile launchers and an ex-Soviet ammunition dump still manned by a few old Yemeni men. Once or twice, we spotted camels but never saw the Bedouin who were herding them!*

*We were all on high alert watching out for bandits as we surveyed mile after mile of sand, fearfully awaiting the excitement of encountering one.....and then just as we thought the whole bandit thing was a myth, way over the horizon we saw what looked like a plume of smoke but was in fact sand, and behind it an old Land Cruiser barreling along making its way directly towards us.*

*Everyone was very tense in our car and our guard had his gun in position and at the ready. When the driver was close he shouted something in Arabic at Abdullah, the driver of the first car in our convoy who stopped and so did the rest of us behind him. There was tension all around as a wild looking kabeili (desert Bedouin) leaped out and very excitedly started relating a long story to Abdallah who began to smile and relax - He translated that the man lived in the desert with his family. His wife had been very sick, so he took her to Marib where she was treated and given several injections. The last one was to be given after a month, so he brought it to the desert hoping to find someone who could administer it. When he saw our convoy, he thought he might be lucky and imagine his joy when he saw several white women in the car. Surely one of them could help? The Bedouin couple were in luck! Pauline*

*had been a nurse a long time ago and was game to give the Bedouin lady her injection.*

*We couldn't see anything of the woman except for her eyes; she was completely covered in a colourful long skirt and top with a turban on her head and a cloth across her face. As there was no shelter around, no trees or cover of any sort, the women in our group surrounded her, she unceremoniously lifted the copious layers of her skirt and unabashedly stuck out her bare bum for Pauline to give her the shot! That done, she hopped back in the car and away they went in a plume of dust and sand.*

*We drove on and on and on but made one stop at a dry river bed where all the children looked for arrow heads and you found some between you!*

*The lead car was charting the course and we followed. Our guard Allawe had no GPS but he knew exactly where we should be heading and would point the way out to Abdullah and we were always right on track!*

*Ten hours later we arrived at an old army checkpoint at Qa'udah Dahri, the entrance to Wadi Hadramaut 620 KM from Sana'a. The soldiers on duty were more interested in Chooki our little dog, than they were in us!*

*We were exhilarated! We had crossed the southern part of the Rub Al Khali from west to east without losing our way, running out of fuel or encountering bandits!*

*Just after the checkpoint in the town of Seyoun, we said goodbye to Allawe and Radman and to the Jurrjuns Family who were not coming with us on the rest of our journey. Granny had survived the crossing! She set a wonderful example for all of us who were struck by her stamina and cheerfulness always and in all temperatures!*

*We were now beginning the second phase of our exciting trip. We drove through Wadi Al Ain, the home of kings who for centuries controlled the frankincense trade in Arabia. This region in the southern part of Yemen is famous for its fertile plains, honey and tobacco, and the sister cities of Shibam, Seyoun and Tarim with their spectacular sky-scraper architecture. For our family, it was even more exciting as our Tyabji ancestors are supposed to have migrated to India from the Hadramaut valley, and there is even a village named Bait al Tayeb! They came to India from Yemen and a senior colleague always wanted to take Pa there because he was convinced that had been the ancestral home of the Tyabji's. Unfortunately, we were never able to visit the village.*

*We spent two nights at the Al-Qubba summer palace hotel on the outskirts of Tarim. It was the ancestral home of the Al-Kaff family which had been converted into a hotel. We had one double room and a dorm for seven! The plumbing left a lot to be desired, the shower was icy cold and came spurting out in all directions and the flush leaked every time you used it! There was a swimming pool filled with frogs and the garden had rambling flowering bougainvillea. The house and garden must have been spectacular in days gone by.....*



Once, Tarim was the spiritual center of the country and there were as many mosques as the number of days in the Islamic year! After seeing the few sights on offer we drove to Seyoun which is the main town in the Hadramaut valley. Here we visited the museum located in the former sultan's palace which overlooks the town.

From Seyoun we drove on to Shibam, famously known as the Chicago of the desert. What a spectacular sight! The settlement dates to the second century AD and the houses (still inhabited) are over 300 years old! They look like they are reaching for the sky and some are 8 stories high and built of mud and clay. Surely the concept of high-rise buildings began here in Shibam?

That afternoon we walked around the buildings in the old part of town. The architecture harks back to pre-Islamic times, and the structure of homes is that of a square, tall tower. Narrow windows are slit in stone walls for ventilation and there were some exquisite specimens of carved, wooden box-like structures that jut out of the building from where women watch the comings and goings without being seen by the outside world! Women and children occupy the lower levels; higher up is the men's domain. Uppermost is the mafraj with large windows set beneath qamariyas, which cast an ethereal light on the men as they chew qat (a leaf rich in amphetamines which most Yemenis chew) and draw on the hookah (hubbly bubbly). Several of the houses had original alabaster windows! Some of the facades were ornately decorated and all of them had some form of carving or painting. As we walked along, dodging goats and collecting a gaggle of curious children, we felt we were in a time warp!

All of us wanted to capture the perfect photograph of this amazing town so we drove around it for quite a while before Papa directed us to the right spot! The timing is important in terms of the light and we waited till we had the background of a setting sun! We walked along a water channel running in the middle of fields of Alfalfa. Women in their black habayas and completely veiled were harvesting the crop. They wear these incredible straw hats that are about 18" tall with a wide brim to keep their heads cool!

We spent two nights in Tarim and the next morning, we drove directly to Bir Ali along the coastal road, stopping off at Mukalla for lunch. It was a long and picturesque drive and we were quite amazed by the large, beautiful old homes we saw on the way.

At this stage of our journey, Chooki developed diarrhoea so we had to stop every so often to let her out. Though she never messed the car, her emissions assaulted our noses and brought out the most paternal instincts in all three of you! She was fussed over and given ORS and smothered with love so, happily, she soon recovered.

From Mukalla, we drove to Bir Ali where we planned to camp for the night. This was the old port of Qana, from where incense of the Hadramout was shipped to other parts of Arabia.

*Arriving at the beach long past dark, we couldn't see the ocean but could hear it! The sand was a long way off the road and we began driving between huge rocks looking for a good camping spot. We soon realized the futility of the exercise as we could not see very much, and we unanimously voted to camp where we were and look for the beach in the morning.*

*Abdulla had never been camping and was quite bewildered by all of it! He had never encountered people who drove miles to find a spot to be uncomfortable in, in the middle of nowhere! We had great difficulty pitching our tents in the sand, but we managed somehow and all of us rested very well despite the rocks that poked at us all through the night!*

*We struck camp after a sandy and hasty breakfast and went in search of Husn Al-Ghurab which is a huge out-crop of rock. To the right of it we found the most wonderful beach where we set up camp for the next two nights. Abdulla decided this was a good opportunity for him to find some decent food and company, (this camping business was not for him!) we swam, lazed around, played games, built sand-castles and snorkeled.*

*We explored the area, went for long walks and collected coral and shells. There were some interesting fish that we could see in the shallow pools. Your passion at that time Adil was your ball which went wherever you went so out it came and you introduced us all to the delights of rugby*

*That night we sat around a camp-fire under a star filled sky grilling fish (bought not caught) with a sense of achievement and well-being and in the morning as we struck camp there was this feeling of sadness at having to leave this little bit of heaven. There was a silence around the camp, no one was talking, we were all enjoying the sound of the waves and the shrill cry of the gulls as they dived in and out of the water when all-of-a-sudden Michel shouted "Look! Dolphins!"*

*As always Michel is the first in our family to see things and you spotted a whole school of over 15 dolphins snorting, gurgling and frolicking in the sea close enough for us to clearly see them. They seemed to be saying goodbye as they flapped their fins and dived in and out of the water! What a wonderful ending to a perfect holiday!*

*The drive back to Sana'a was long and hard. 14 hours, and the scenery seemed dull and un-interesting after the awesome terrain of the past few days! It was endless beaches, low hills and barren scrub covered with black lava rocks. Most of the area we drove through must have been ocean at one time. We had driven a total distance of 2,207 kms from Sana'a*

*Once home Pa and I were thankful to have experienced this wonderful, challenging and exciting journey with all three of you. No education we could buy you would ever come close to the vacations we have had and the times we have shared in some of the most challenging parts of the world!*



## *When Hamburgers Came to Town*

*I taught English at the Yemen American Language Centre in Sana'a and one day when I walked into my classroom there was a lot of chatter! A new American-style fast food restaurant had opened in town and many of my students had been there. Yemeni women were not permitted to go out on their own. They had to be accompanied by a male family member and the burger café was the talk of the town! When I asked my students, what was so special about a burger they laughed and one of them said "Oh teacher, when I hold the bun in my hand I feel like Michael Jackson!" So off I went with my fellow teacher Maree to try out the burger joint that was the talk of the town!*

*We arrived at Jamal Street and parked the car among a row of shops jammed with fabrics, ready-made clothes, cosmetics and bric-a-brac. Right in the middle of all those shops, was this new brightly painted Hamburger cafe. It was set up like a McDonnell's and we placed our order, paid up, collected our burgers and drinks on a tray and sat down. Five minutes later a Yemeni woman walked in on her own. She wore a black hijab, black gloves and the niqaab, a veil that covered her face and entire head; only her eyes could be seen. She placed and paid for her order and sat at a table opposite us. Both Maree and I were curious, how was she going to eat but she managed beautifully with her gloves on and her veil intact by putting the food into her mouth under the veil. She then unclasped her Gucci handbag, took out a gold cigarette case and lighter and proceeded to place a cigarette through a button hole in her Niqaab. She was this black form with smoke emitting from a hole where her mouth must have been, and she was undoubtedly laughing at the incredulous expression on our faces as she nonchalantly continued to puff away and enjoy her cigarette!*

*My students often brought snacks to share in class and once I ate and enjoyed roasted dragon flies which tasted like potato chips! I also had a Russian student who never attended my classes but a few days before the exam brought me this huge bouquet of flowers convinced that his gesture would give him the marks he needed for a pass!*

## *Michel's 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday*

*You were home from boarding school for the Xmas holidays in December 1993 the year you turned 21! We decided to celebrate by throwing a big party (mostly our friends) to highlight this milestone! Our house was perfect for outdoor entertaining in the summer, but December is too cold for that, so we put our heads together and came up with this plan.*

*We would rig up a tent and rent some large heaters that would make it warmer inside. We had no idea where we would find such a large tent and after searching for a few days and getting nowhere your friend Mohammed, Farhad, led us to a wonderful store on Taiz road that rented just the stuff we needed.*

*They had all sizes and shapes of canvas, complete tents, ropes, coal burners, lamps, sofas, chairs, cushions et al. We picked out three pieces of tarp and some large electric heaters and after much bargaining settled on a daily rate to be paid in advance, and in full.*

*Pa counted out the money and handed it over to the owner of the store, a wild-eyed looking Yemeni, his cheek bulging with Qat. The shopkeeper took the cash and asked Papa to hand over his gun as additional security. When Pa explained that he didn't own one, the man laughed at what he thought was a poor joke! Boys in secondary school carry their guns into the classroom and a man unarmed is no man at all! He was incredulous when he realized Papa was serious and proceeded to inform us that if there was no gun there was no deal!*

*We begged and pleaded and offered all sorts of things in lieu of the gun. Our car registration, Rob's UNICEF ID, some extra cash? No, no, no none of these would do! He was adamant - no gun, no deal! What sort of man doesn't own a gun?*

*By now, we were all getting a bit tired of the saga and decided that we would have to manage without the tarp when I noticed a sudden gleam in the shopkeeper's eye! He pointed at the four gold bangles that I always wear on my right arm and indicated that those would do as security. A quick family conference resulted in my reluctantly handing them over in the interest of your 21'st birthday celebration! they were wrapped in a scrap of newspaper and thrown into a drawer. Would I ever see them again? Tarp for gold? Were we all MAD?*

*The party and our "tent" were a great success and on the day the tarp had to be returned, we went to the shop with bated breath. Would the owner have disappeared? Would the shop still be there? Would the bangles? I needn't have given it a second thought! They were returned to me wrapped in the same dirty scrap of newspaper and we were left with yet another memory of life in Yemen!*

### *Hijackings*

*Nothing is impossible in Yemen, all questions are answered in the affirmative and everything is "Bokhra Inshalla" ... tomorrow, God willing!*

*There had recently been a spate of hijackings. 4-wheel drive cars were being targeted and the hijackers made off with the vehicle leaving drivers and occupants standing by the road unharmed. All sorts of wild and wonderful stories abounded, here are some of my favourites!*

*A young German couple and their infant daughter were visiting friends in Yemen and decided to take off on their own on a short-day trip in a borrowed car. They packed a picnic lunch and secured the baby in a bassinet in the back seat. They had a wonderful picnic but, they were stopped on their return by a couple of men brandishing Kalashnikovs and clearly wanting their car. They were more than ready to hand it over but tried to communicate that they had a sleeping infant in the back and could they please get her out. The macho men were not about to listen to these driveling foreigners and they drove off, baby and all, leaving a cloud of*



dust and two utterly devastated people by the roadside. Ten minutes later, just when the man had managed to calm down his hysterical wife, there was a roar of a motor engine and a screech of tires as the bandits returned and came to a screeching halt just beside the couple on the road. They shoved the baby out of the car window to its relieved parents. Hijacking a car is one thing ... hijacking a baby is just not on!

A friend working for an oilfield subsidiary company had just returned to Sana'a from home leave in Ireland. He was on his way to a business meeting in a suit and tie. Along the way he was ambushed by a rough lot of chaps who not only took his 4 WD car, but also his new shirt, suit and vest. They left him standing by the side of the road in his new underwear and tie!

And then there was this land dispute. Often you would hear shots ring through the air as one clan tried to settle a land claim with another clan, group or neighbour. Seldom was anybody hurt but sometimes someone got in the way and then all hell broke loose. On one such occasion the body of the deceased was put in the back of a Toyota Landcruiser and the family was on their way to the burial ground. They were hijacked on the way, and they tried desperately to let the hijackers know that there was a body in the car, but would they listen? Their car was speedily driven off, body and all!

As the hijackers were barreling along they were stopped at a police check point where the car was inspected, and the body found. They were booked for murder before they were found out to be the hijackers!

### *A Son is Your Wealth*

While in Yemen my expatriate female friends were always incredulous of the fact that I went around the city on my own. I loved the old Suq with its labyrinth of side streets packed with all sorts of interesting and exciting things. Though crowded and smelly, I was never bothered and began to recognize several of the shop-keepers especially in the silver and carpet shops which I loved to browse through.

Yemeni men though wild looking and armed, their cheeks bulging with Qat, never scared me as they did my expat friends! To a Yemeni man, a woman must be respected and taken care of, and in the five years that we lived in Sana'a, I never had a negative incident, no bag snatching, wolf whistling, cheating, or eve teasing; and if I wanted to cross a busy street, all I had to make was a gesture with my hand and all traffic would stop to let me through! A far cry from New Delhi, New York, Rome or London! I learned the meaning of the word trust in Yemen. I could walk into a grocery store and take anything I wanted without paying for it and once it happened in a jewelry store where the goldsmith (who had never seen me before) insisted I take a pendant home without paying for it. "Bring me the money when you can" he said grinning at me from ear to ear.

One beautiful, bright and warm Friday morning we decided to pack a picnic lunch and go off on a jaunt with you and your friend Matt Michel, who was visiting from New York at that time. We drove out of Sana'a for an hour till we spotted a

waterfall, a nice picnic place, where we stopped. The four of you decided to climb a rather steep and rocky mountain, while Pa and I walked around and took in the spectacular beauty of the place. There were craggy mountains and terraced fields surrounding us. Somewhere in the background we heard a stream and in the far distance the occasional bleat of a goat. Time seemed to stand still but the peace was suddenly shattered by you Adil, running down the cliff screaming "Is there rope in the car? Come quick! Farhad is stuck and we need to help him down."

Is there a rope in the car when you need one? Of course not! Pa ran out on the road and flagged down the first vehicle that came along, a 4WD Hilux pickup truck. It was full of Yemeni men, their cheeks stuffed and bulging with qat, their futas (Yemeni dress) stained with mud and rubber flip-flops on their feet. Pa with his rudimentary Arabic was somehow able to communicate what had happened and within moments they scuttled up the cliff like sure footed mountain goats, their jambiyas and Kalashnikovs securely strapped across their bodies.

Farhad you were stranded on a ledge at the very edge of the cliff and you were too frightened to move as there was a sheer drop into the valley below on the other side. The men from the truck formed a human chain and coaxed you to walk over them to safety. As soon as you were safe they began to let off a volley of gunfire which meant that all was well. Gunshots are fired to express victory, success and happiness. They are used to announce a wedding, the birth of a child, success at work, or a job well done.

We were totally overwhelmed by the men who had saved your life and Pa pulled out all the money from his wallet to give to them in gratitude. When they saw the cash, they were terribly offended and one of them opened his belt to show us the money he had stuffed inside. Shaking their heads in a definite "NO" they climbed into their truck and drove away in a cloud of dust! The Yemeni believe that offering money for a life is ridiculous as no amount of money can ever buy you a son and isn't that the truth!

One day my friend Farida called. She needed me to drive her some place, it was an emergency. In the car she told me we were going to visit one of the richest families in Sana'a where the unthinkable had happened. The eldest and only son of the millionaire businessman had been hijacked three days earlier. He was 19 years old and the hijackers had given the father a final ultimatum. Pay a HUGE ransom within the next hour, or the boy would be killed! The police and other family members had gathered at the house we were now entering, through huge iron gates.

Farida asked me to go with her and we were ushered into the ladies' quarters. The house was a palace and the room we entered was the dewan where Qat chews take place. It was vast and covered with expensive carpets and the mafraj (mattresses on the floor) lined two walls on opposite ends of the room. There were over a hundred women seated on the floor and we took our place among them. The grandmother and the mother were wailing and crying and were being comforted by a host of women who were all visibly upset.



*Suddenly there was a flurry outside the door, a lady came in and whispered something to the mother who announced that her husband had decided not to pay the ransom, and that she stood by him. I nudged Farida and whispered, "But can't these people afford it?" and she replied "Of course, but you probably wouldn't understand. For us, a son is priceless and by paying for his life, you cheapen it."*

*There is a happy ending to this story. The boy was released unharmed a day later and the hijackers, two Egyptian teachers, were deported back to Egypt!*

### ***Papa Remembers: Bombs, Ack-Ack and Scuds***

*We'd retired early the previous night because Sana'a had been in darkness, a precautionary blackout, as tensions between the separatists in the south and the government in the north had reached boiling point and war now seemed imminent.*

*The next thing I was conscious of was an explosive avalanche of noise which literally threw us out of bed. Crouching on the floor, I realized that jet fighters had just swooped over the house, very low and perhaps at supersonic speed, and anti-aircraft guns were firing continuously close by. Their racket was so loud and jarring it seemed to emanate from inside my skull, and it physically shook us. I found out later that the guns were located at a military compound about 500 meters away.*

*It was just after 6 am. Civil war had begun.*

*What happened that morning, seconds after the jets tossed us out of bed, is both inspiring and tragic.*

*The jets had flown in low from Aden, former capital of south Yemen, in a daring dawn raid on Sana'a airport. At that moment the Royal Jordanian morning flight to Amman was on the runway, waiting for clearance to take off. The flight was packed and some of the passengers whom we knew told us later what had happened. It seems that the leader of the attacking squadron noticed the Airbus in the nick of time! The jets swung aside and released their bombs well away from the runway. The Airbus, badly shaken but unharmed, returned to the apron and the passengers were evacuated using the plane's emergency slides.*

*According to news reports, the squadron leader was shot out of the air and killed a few moments later, but the others returned safely to Aden.*

*Sana'a airport suffered some damage, most of the glass frontage had shattered, and the Royal Jordanian plane had to remain parked there for many weeks, waiting for the war to end.*

*Fearing more air attacks, Hootoksi and I moved out of our upper floor bedroom and set up temporary sleeping arrangements in the ground floor passage.*

*Over the next few days, there was a mass evacuation of foreigners and Hootoksi along with hundreds of UN staff and dependents was flown to Amman on a UNWFP transport (that's another story!). As a UN security warden, I stayed on*

till the end of the war while Hootoksi went to her parents in Kuala Lumpur. A few weeks later, I bagged a new assignment and began making preparations to leave for Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I didn't know it then, but humankind's most heinous acts were being carried out in Rwanda, and already half a million Rwandans fleeing the violence were flooding into Tanzania.

### *When Dawn Gave Way to Mayhem*

*Thursday 5th May 1994 - 5.30 A.M*

Pa and I were awakened by the most terrifying, earth shattering noise as we leaped out of bed! My first thought was, "it's finally happened. The war has begun." Robert said, "it sounds like ....." and I heard no more because of the sound of returning fire. We ran downstairs, keeping away from the windows and we stayed in the passageway for the next 4 days with the deafening sounds of war all around us.

Pa was the designated UN warden for our area, so he immediately got on his radio and tried to communicate with the UN emergency coordinator to find out what was going on. All the wardens had been issued radio's only a couple of days ago and they had their first check to see that they were in good working order and to ensure that the wardens clocked in at regular intervals with the UN emergency coordinator. Rob's radio name "Romeo Tiger" often commanded a chuckle on the airwaves, especially when tensions were running high!

The previous night around 10 PM the entire city had been plunged into darkness. As power cuts were not the order of the day, this was very strange, and we began to get warnings of impending bomb attacks from the South. We went to bed troubled, half expecting something to happen and yet when it did, we were shocked and stunned!

Through the sound of the heavy artillery fire, Rob was able to decipher that there had been a missile attack on one of the presidential palaces located not far from our house.

All the power and water connections were immediately cut, and the phone lines went dead but fortunately our telephone continued to work right through the war! I grabbed the phone and tried to call our families. I managed to speak to my sister-in-law Judy in the US and later to my mum in Malaysia. They in turn contacted Pa's family in Australia, Michel and Farhad in New York, and my sister and Adil in the UK. Our families were assured that the UN had a good evacuation plan in place and that we would be safe and well looked after.

The gun-fire went on continuously for 7-8 hours on that first morning. One of our UNICEF colleagues lived very close to where the Yemen Socialist Party premises were being pounded by tank cannon and automatic gun-fire. He could see all this happening outside his window and was able to radio in and give us first-hand information of what was going on. Several buildings surrounding the Palace were partially destroyed and many more virtually ceased to exist.



*On the evening of the first day it was relatively calm, and we went to bed and tried to sleep; but soon we were woken by a deafening noise and this time I could feel my heart beating against my chest and the blood pounding in my ears! it was one in the morning and the sky was ablaze with anti-aircraft fire, sonic boom sounds and other frightening noises that echoed all around us till morning. As Sana'a is in a basin and the firing was coming from the hills surrounding it, the noise was magnified and horrific! A Scud missile had been fired and exploded not too far from our house. There was no damage to life as it fell short of its target and landed in an open field.*

*Sleep for the next 3 days and nights was difficult, and my thoughts were dominated by all of you and our friends. The darkness augmented the feeling of insecurity and fear and our UN Coordinator decided to put in motion plans to evacuate dependents and non-essential staff. We were told to pack a bag weighing no more than 5 Kgs and to be ready to leave for pre-determined gathering points at short notice. UNICEF asked Robert to stay on in Sana'a as he was a senior officer with emergency experience and the UNICEF Representative was abroad at the time. I would have liked to stay with him but was told this was impossible.*

*"Romeo Tiger" spent much of the next four days on his walkie-talkie and the phone, keeping his wards informed, comforting and warning them alternately, and speaking to the outside world. It was a miracle that our phone line remained open through the first few days (I suppose the fact that our landlord was a senior official in the Home Ministry had something to do with it) and soon ours was the only working expatriate phone line in all Sana'a! Rob received call after call from overseas capitals wanting news of their embassy staff and was even able to talk to you in New York, Michel.*

*We kept in touch with our Dutch neighbours by yelling across the wall exchanging radio news, BBC for Dutch news! The electricity had been cut off since the night before and we were concerned that our water would run out, so I went about filling every receptacle in sight. The radios had to be charged and we were fortunate to be living in an embassy area so that Robert was able to charge his radio at the German embassy close by.*

*All our American friends had been evacuated by 5pm on the 6th of May. They flew out on army transport planes that took them to Middle East destinations and then onwards to the US. We were not able to say good-bye or exchange addresses with any of them! Zarine and Steve were most upset at having to leave without us!*

*That same morning, amidst gunfire, our front door-bell rang. Rob went to the gate in a helmet and found your Yemeni friend Mohammed, Farhad, standing there. In broken English he communicated that he was concerned about our safety and would like to buy us some candles or anything else we may need as it was dangerous to move about on the street. He knew you were away and he wanted to take your place and ensure we were safe. Both Rob and I were overwhelmed by this gesture of kindness. 17-year-old Mohammed had risked his life to walk to our home with this offer of help!*

*Saturday 7th May was your 19th birthday Farhad 'and we could not speak to you but were with you in spirit more than we would have been under normal circumstances. That afternoon amidst sporadic gun fire and bombardment, the Mullah who had not been preaching for a couple of days suddenly started shouting from the loudspeakers in the mosque. We felt this was a good sign and assumed that people were being urged to stop the fighting but that was not what he was saying at all! In fact, it was quite the opposite! he was the head of a fundamentalist party urging people to attack their southern Yemeni brothers who in his opinion, were responsible for the war and its subsequent suffering! Hearing this made us fearful for our Yemeni friends from the south who suddenly became targets and "the enemy" in Sana'a.*

*That night there was another scud attack which did not do as much damage as it might have. It landed near some shops destroying them completely and damaging a hospital nearby. Several people were wounded but we heard that by some miracle there were only two fatalities.*

*Sunday 8th May we were told that a World Food Program transport plane had been sent to evacuate us. The Yemeni government had promised safe passage to all UN staff and their families and we were asked to report at the UNDP office by 8 AM. Special buses to the airport and armed escorts were arranged and though there was some damage to runways, the main one was functioning and was obviously kept busy judging from the number of aircraft moving about. Ours was a huge and ugly Antonov heavy transport plane that looked like it would never get off the ground!*

*The evacuation process went smoothly and was beautifully executed by the UN emergency coordinator and his team and the old Russian transport plane leapt into the sky with its sorry load at exactly one in the afternoon on the 9th of May.*

*Most of us had never flown in a transport plane and given the fact that our emotions were charged and battered, nobody was talking and the silence in the aircraft was eerie. We boarded through a huge door in the tail end of the plane and all 220 of us were seated on four benches along the length of it. Two long rows of people were belted in from one end to the other; the other two rows hung on to their fellow passengers as we took off and landed. There were no windows and no toilets on board and the journey to Amman, Jordan took four hours. At one point my gloom was lifted, and I had to suppress a guffaw at the sight before me!*

*There was a gentleman, a portly middle-aged Arab on my left traveling with several small children who made constant demands on him. He seemed at his wits end with the baby in his arms and his wife shouting instructions from the other end of the plane. "There is too much formula in the bottle, you must dilute it" she shouted. The feeding bottle was full to the brim and there was nowhere to drain out any of the milk to dilute it and the baby's screaming was becoming unbearable. The irate father shoved the teat of the bottle in his own mouth and drank some of the milk to make room to add more water! He then diluted the milk and shoved it into the wailing babies mouth. The winded and frantic baby gulped the milk in one go*



*and immediately vomited everything out all over everyone and everywhere! This started a chain reaction of vomiting which mercifully stopped just short of me.*

*We landed safely in Amman, a bunch of anxious, tired, stressed-out people of all ages, shapes and sizes and UN organizations were at the airport to meet us as were the TV crews of CNN and Jordan TV. It was such a relief to see the friendly faces of our UNICEF colleagues who greeted us warmly and organized our visas and took care of other official business. We were driven to a 5-star hotel and every effort was made to take care of our needs and provide for our comfort. In the days and weeks that followed while we waited to be told what to do next, I came across many people on the street, in stores, service staff and so on who had all at one time or another been affected by war. They empathized with us and what we had been through and their kindness will never be forgotten. The Taxi driver who refused to accept the fare from me, the dry cleaner who wouldn't let me pay and the shopkeeper in the grocery store who added food I had not paid for, to my basket.*

*The worst part of the ordeal of evacuation, was having to walk away from Pa and our Yemeni friends and colleagues. Leaving and not being able to say goodbye, there was no closure. It was an abrupt end to five wonderful years of living and working among friendly, caring and interesting people. The war was soon over but our love affair with Yemen and its people and the memories are vivid and alive and will always live within us!*

### *The Human Side of the War*

*Report filed by Robert Tyabji in Sana'a, June 13, 1994*

*Yemen has earned a new image since international television began reporting the civil conflict. Lighting up television screens across the globe are flashes from tanks, cannon, rockets and other weaponry. Jet fighters scream by. Soldiers in mahwas (Yemeni style "lungi") and rubber slippers hoist thousand-dollar ammunition shells. In just a few seconds of reporting, audiences thrill to the spectacle of fortunes literally going up in smoke. Not exactly the kind of imagery to cause the international community to reach for the cheque book! Especially donors weary of the intransigence of governments.*

*Yemen is in the Middle East. It has oil. It is fighting a costly civil war. Who would believe that Yemen is poor?*

*But most people in Yemen ARE poor, desperately so, and getting more impoverished by the minute. Ask anybody on the street. If you can find anyone to talk to, that is.*

*The second Scud to land in a densely populated part of Sana'a, Yemen's fairy-tale capital citadel, triggered a mass exodus from the city. By the end of the first ten days of the war, an estimated ten thousand foreigners had already left the country. Two thirds of Sana'a's million or so inhabitants are not native Sana'anis - those who could retreat to their home villages and towns wasted no time doing so. Overnight the city was reduced to a mere shell of its old, vibrant self. The reality now is deserted streets, rows of blue shutters. Dark, empty apartments. A ghost town.*

*To make matters worse, the scarce supply of petrol, reduced to a trickle by the exigencies of war, keeps vehicles off the road. At traffic intersections, red changes to green, but where are the cars? A cruel blow indeed to Yemeni drivers who are accustomed to buying petrol at half the price of drinking water.*

*Sana's is not alone in its agony. Other missile, bomb and shell targets such as Aden, Zingibar, Lahj, Taiz and Hodeidah, and Damar and Amran where pitched tank battles had raged, suffer also. Tens of thousands of men, women and children, traumatized by the banshee din of war headed for the sanctuary of their ancestral mountain homes. But the people of Aden, under attack for weeks now, are trapped between the mountains and the sea. Their electricity and water supplies, the refinery and the airport, all located in populated areas, are the primary targets of attack. For the Adenis, there is no relief, no hope of escape. Must they fight to the death?*

*Fatima, age 55, hasn't eaten for three days. She has been in a state of shock since the low-flying jets attacked Sana'a at dawn on May 5<sup>th</sup>. The terrible noise from the anti-aircraft emplacements on the mountaintops around the city and from the military camps nearby, saturates her being. The pyrotechnics are indelible images in her mind's eye. The roar of the nightly scuds leaves her trembling, out of control. She is dehydrated. Water only makes her throw up.*

*The children are terrified. They wake up stiff, wooden. They cling to her at every sound, the rumble of a passing truck, a thud from the construction site next door. Her husband, a driver, waking at 4 am, disoriented, scared, braces himself for the attack he knows must come. Suddenly, like thousands of others, he decides to leave the city. He will take the family to the village.*

*His ancestral home is perched on a cliff's edge, a twisting five-hour drive from the city. It is a serene, beloved place, full of memories of childhood and youth. He remembers balmy afternoons spent there in the company of his cousins and uncles, relaxed against the pillows of the mafraj, the qat fat in his cheek, the dusk spectacular in the valley below, the muezzin's distant call to prayer waxing and waning. The house has five rooms, comfortable for a family of eight. Crowded with twelve. Intolerable with twenty-four.*

*His cousins are all there, with their children. Also, people he has never seen before. The whole clan seems to have gathered. It is hot, there is no air. The women are crowded into two rooms, the children are everywhere. There is no water, the sheikh has searched for two days for fuel for the pump. The village shop has run out of supplies, especially sugar. The children's heads and limbs itch. Lice and scabies thrive on human misery. Perhaps the scuds were not so bad, after all.*

*The story in Zanzibar, capital of Abyan, is quite different. Here, ground battles have raged for weeks. The population is pinned down, cowering under the arcing shells. The din fills the air like concrete. People disappear, blown up at random. The land mines ensure there is no escape.*

*The town's water system has run dry, the pumps useless without fuel. Tanks and heavy vehicles have destroyed many water pipes. The ageing sewage system is clogged, damaged in parts by the vibrations of war. Stagnant pools are everywhere, the stench unbearable in the soggy heat. A virulent form of diarrhoea spreads like wildfire. Life teeters on a razor edge. Death by explosion, death by dehydration, lingering illnesses. And there is always the fear.*

*But the people have yet to realize that their real enemy, more than the shells and bombs, is disease. In the end, diarrhoea, pneumonia, measles and malaria will likely have killed more children than the explosives. It remains to be seen how this potential tragedy can be prevented, and for how long the suffering will continue.*

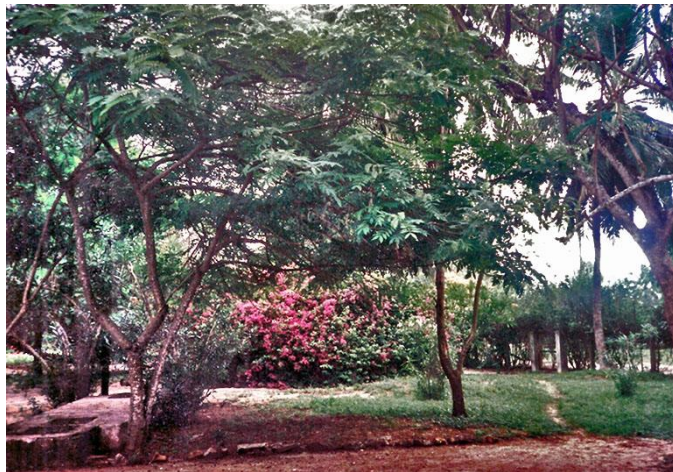




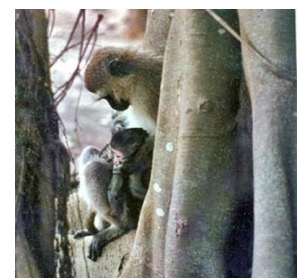
*TANZANIA*  
*1884 - 2001*



*Our Home in Dar es Salaam*



*Bobby*





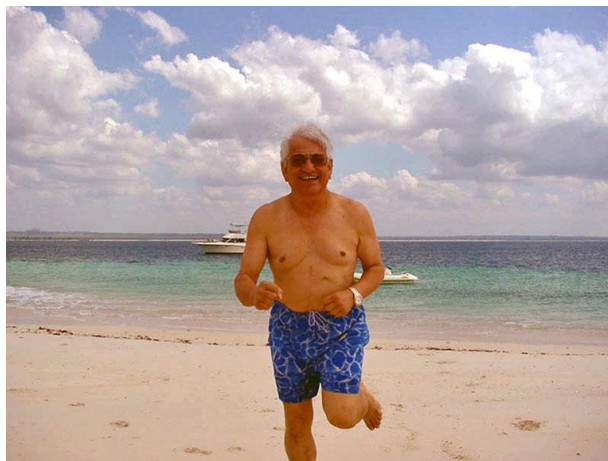


*Isaac Chuma*





## *Sailing 'The Dogs'*





## *On Safari*



*Ngorongoro Crater*



*Selous Game Park*



*Ruah National Park with Dadima and Simran*

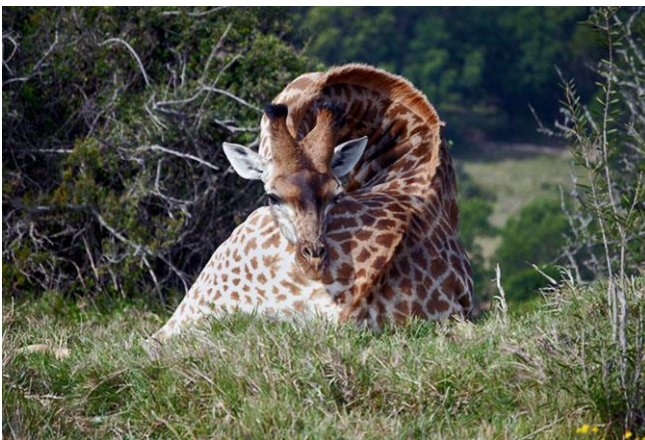




## *The Wonder of Africa*







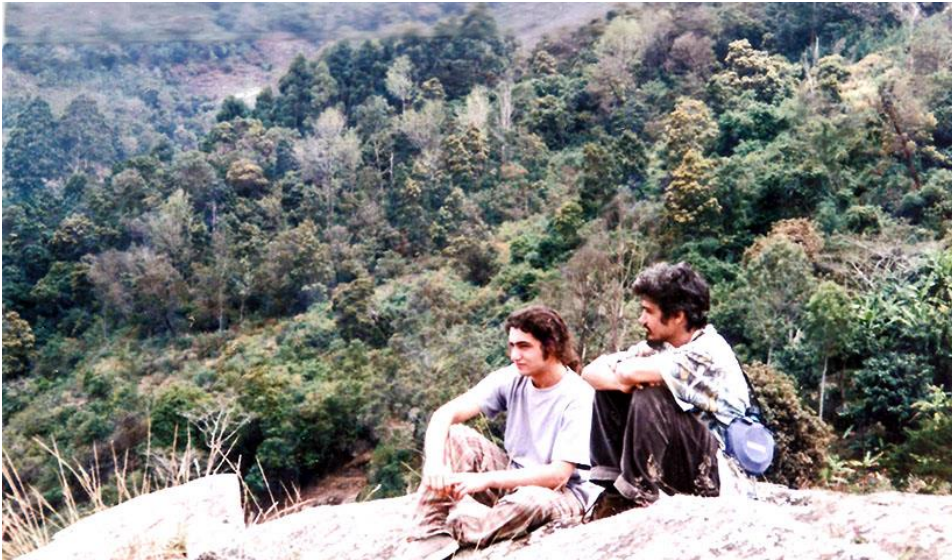


*On the Train to Goma to See the Chimps*





*Visiting Mama Mdoe in her Village*





*Our Silver Anniversary, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1996*



## *Memories of Tanzania*

1994 - 2001

### *How we Found our House in Dar es Salaam*

*F*inding a house to rent was a challenge in Dar - rents were exorbitant and often you paid for a fancy house and then had to pay every day for a "water truck" to come and fill water in your tank! Electricity was erratic, so everyone looked for a place to rent that had a generator or a converter.

*I saw many homes that were unsuitable and then Mr John, an estate agent called, claiming he had the perfect house and we arranged to meet in the lobby of the hotel at 10 AM. Most of the agents I had been with had no car, I had to rent a cab to go around with them, but this gentleman said he would drive me in his car.*

*At 11 AM there was still no sign of Mr. John and I was about to give up on him when I saw a man at reception and he seemed to be asking for someone's room. I ran up and asked him "Are you Mr. John?" and he said "yes" so I introduced myself and not wanting to waste any more time, I walked out of the front door and he followed, but there seemed to be no car, he said he didn't have one! There were no taxis around and I was beginning to want to wrap it up when I noticed he was carrying a crash helmet. "Shall we go on your bike?" "Yes" he replied where shall we go?" I was beginning to get annoyed but held my tongue and said, "Take me to the house that has both water and a generator" "OK" and so I got on the back of his rather rickety, old scooter and we drove, and we drove and we drove. I began getting worried, we seemed to be leaving town and I had no idea where we were going so I tapped him on the shoulder and got him to stop. "Where are you taking me?" I asked "anywhere" he replied "but where is the house? Are you Mr. John the estate agent?" "no," he replied, "I am Mr. John the taxi driver" "So where is your taxi?" "Broken" he smilingly said. I never did find out what happened to Mr. John the estate agent!*

*John kindly offered to drive me back to the hotel on his bike and on the way, he said "I can show you a very nice house. I used to work there as a security guard. It is on Old Bagamoyo road, shall I take you there?" I had nothing to lose having wasted my entire morning, so off we went and after a 30-minute ride we arrived at the house and drove through a gate and along a driveway into a compound filled with bamboo, Ficus and Flame trees. Set in the back of it was this lovely, old, colonial style bungalow. There was a big, elderly and very friendly African mama who greeted us outside and told Mr. John in Swahili that she and her dog Bobby, were caretakers of the house. It belonged to her daughter who lived in Brussels with her German husband.*

*Bobby was a very sorry looking dog covered in mange and he smelled from the ooze; but he had the most fabulous, fierce sounding bark and mama told us in no uncertain terms that the dog came with the house and if I agreed we could continue talking. I promised her that if we did rent the place, Bobby could stay, so Mama*



*quoted a figure which was way above our budget! I told her I loved the place but could not afford to rent it. She asked me to make her an offer which I did, and she said she would ask her daughter and let me know.*

*I went back to the hotel and excitedly told papa about my find but we both figured that the difference between what they wanted and what we could pay was too great and so I continued my house hunt and tried to forget about Old Bagamoyo road!*

*Meanwhile, we were getting fed up of the hotel and fortunately our friend Andrea Singh needed someone to house-sit for her while she was away on holiday, so we moved into her home and the heat was off the house hunt momentarily. Then out of the clear blue, Pa got a call from a lady in Brussels saying she was the owner of the house on Bagamoyo road and she would be happy to rent us her place if we could up the rent by just a little. She brought the rent down a bit we went up and viola we had a beautiful home to move into.*

*As promised we kept Bobby on the premises and I tried to get him treatment for his condition, but nothing seemed to work. He was a fabulous guard dog, the slightest sound at the gate and his bark made people think he was a fierce Rottweiler rather than the sorry looking dog he was, and it would scare folks away!*

*The house was perfect! It was large and airy and was set in 2 acres of sandy garden with the beach but a short walk away from the back of the house. Outside the kitchen window was a beautiful Laburnum tree that had vivid yellow flowers and the flame trees were awe inspiring when they were in full bloom! There was a disused tennis court which we converted into a badminton court. On Sundays our friends would come over for a game after which we had sun downers, good music and food.*

*The electrics and plumbing were of a very high standard (German) and we had an electric inverter which worked seamlessly every time the power went off!*

*The magnificent trees were home to a tribe of around eleven Vervet monkeys and it was a joy to observe them from the house. They came through our garden everyday around 7 in the morning, foraged till 10 AM then went away and came back around 5pm and stayed till 7 or thereabouts. We saw tiny babies grow into adolescents and adults. The family stayed together, and mothers were very attentive to their babies for the first few weeks of their lives. As time went on, mama encouraged the little ones to venture out on their own while the older siblings watched and waited chattering and screeching their encouragement or displeasure.*

*It was so much fun watching them! Once I observed a baby trying to dislodge his own tail while it dangled below him. He kept tugging at it while his siblings chattered and jumped up and down with glee! His mum scooped him into her arms and put an end to his quest!*

*...and there was a time one of the young ones was caught by someone who put a leather thong around its waist. As the monkey grew, the thong began to cut into its flesh and we had to find a way to remove it or else it would have killed him.*

*Elton our "house-boy" from Malawi used an ingenious method to trap the monkey using bamboo, string and salt as bait. As soon as the creature reached for the salt, the string looped around his wrist and he began going crazy, chattering, jumping and barring his teeth.*

*Elton was afraid to catch him, so I began talking to him first from a little distance and then coming closer, all the time trying to reassure him that we wanted to help. After a few minutes he calmed down and allowed me to grab and hold him. Elton was able to cut off the leather thong while I sang him a lullaby. As soon as I let him go, he bounded off into the trees chattering and screeching. It must have been such a relief for him to be rid of that horrible, constricting thong!*

### *From Dar to Goma*

*When you came home from boarding school for holidays we made sure to take you on safari. There is no place on earth like Tanzania for wildlife and we were so fortunate to see the migration of the wildebeest, lions in trees, leopards on rocky outcrops, hippos, giraffe, zebras and much, much more. In addition to the animals, the natural beauty of the country is unimaginable. Vast plains, mountains, valleys and forests and the most beautiful sun-sets!*

*We went several times to Mikumi, Ruaha, Serengetti, Tarangiri, Selous and of course the Ngorongoro crater.*

*Remember our holiday in Ruaha National Park with Dadima when our car got stuck in the mud and at 95, she helped to push it out? What a trooper she was! And that time you frightened Simran in her tent by making sounds of a roaring lion just outside it?*

*Another memorable trip was from Dar-es-Salaam to Goma National Park where Jane Goodall conducted her pioneering research on Chimpanzees in the wild. Remember that journey?*

*From Dar to Gombe is a distance of 4832 Kms - we decided to take the train. We took the Central Tazara line to Kigoma via Tabora. The journey takes around 38 hours, but the train is always late and ours was no exception! We arrived in Kigoma ten hours late!*

*The train was very crowded, and I am glad I took the time and trouble to buy first class tickets. I spent the better part of a day getting them in Dar, but I am so thankful I did. We had decent berths to sleep on and running water for the first few hours of the journey. The train was so slow, you could walk alongside it! There was no restaurant car, you had to carry food or rely on what people sold along the way which was mostly bananas and casava. We passed through many pretty villages and saw some wildlife in the distance a couple of times. The train would*



make unscheduled stops along the way. One evening when we had been stationary for a very long time, I asked a fellow passenger what was wrong, and he replied "Oh nothing. The driver of the train has gone to visit his mother in that village over there!" at some of the stations we heard wonderful groups of singers and musicians who entertained the passengers for a few coins. Many of these minstrels in that area are blind because of an acute lack of Vitamin A in their diet.

From Kigoma we took a *daladala* (a rickety over-crowded mini bus) to Kabarizi from where we got on a lake taxi sailing on Lake Tanganyika to Gombe National Park.

'Lake Tanganyika is an African Great Lake. It is the second oldest freshwater lake in the world, the second largest by volume, and the second deepest, in all cases after Lake Baikal in Siberia. It is the world's longest freshwater lake and is divided among four countries - Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Burundi, and Zambia, with Tanzania (46%) and DRC (40%) possessing the majority of the lake. The water flows into the Congo River system and ultimately into the Atlantic Ocean" - Wikipedia.

The lake taxis were rickety wooden boats about 15 meters long and 2 meters deep with a very small outboard motor. There was a space in the middle filled with all sorts of cargo; bananas, flip flops, cans of baby milk powder, plastic containers with fuel, kerosene and live chickens.

About 60 of us were seated along the sides of the boat with absolutely no safety gear such as life-vests or the like! Despite the boat, being on Lake Tanganyika was spectacular - It was vast and calm and so beautiful - I can't remember how long it took us to get to Goma but once there we walked to our rest house in the forest. We stayed there for three nights but we did not see a single chimpanzee. We did see their nest beds where they spend the nights in the trees!

In addition to the wildlife in Tanzania, there were wonderful beaches and across the sea from Dar was magical Zanzibar - we often went there for the weekends and attended the Annual International Film Festival every year.

### *Ring in the Millennium*

We brought in the year 2000 with you Michel, Rosa and Adil, sadly Farhad couldn't be with us as Julia was 4 months pregnant with Azura and you were waiting for the best millennium gift of all, a baby!

We went to an idyllic island called Mafia, south of Dar es Salaam.

'Mafia Island is part of Tanzania's Mafia Archipelago, in the Indian Ocean. Large swaths of the island's southern coastline and surrounding waters are protected by the Mafia Island Marine Park. Within the park are many coral reefs, home to wildlife such as whale sharks and sea turtles. In the south, beaches include secluded Ras Kisimani, just across from Bwejuu Island. Popular Utende Beach edges onto Chole Bay' - Google Review

*We stayed in a small hotel that was packed with Tanzanians and Expats and after a sumptuous local dinner of vegetables and fish, Pa and I went to bed while you stayed up and drank and listened to the music. You promised to wake us up at the midnight hour and when you did, it was magical looking out at the sea which was dotted with fishing boats. Their lanterns looked like stars bobbing on the water!*

*On the 1st of January 2000 we hired a boat and went out in the middle of the ocean where we dropped anchor so that Pa and all of you could snorkel. I was much too scared to snorkel but Adil you managed to change my mind by promising not to leave my side when we were down below! You were a wonderful, patient and reassuring coach and I must thank you for it! what I saw was incredibly wonderful and quite unforgettable. As a reward for my bravery you picked up a tiny bit of coral and gave it to me – I still have it sitting on my altar!*

### *Isaac Chuma*

*Isaac was our night guard and gateman for more than five years. He was the quintessential rascal, a prototype of the lovably naughty, charming scoundrel. He would move around on his thin scrawny legs with an exaggerated limp which made his body jerk from side to side, but this didn't hamper his movements or slow him down at all. In fact, we called him Speedy Isaac because he could outrun most fit people! The gate of our compound was about 150 meters uphill from the house, but he would charge up the driveway to open it in the blink of an eye. We discovered that he had a daytime occupation as well, as a worker for the local chapter of Chama Cha Mapinduzi, the majority party in Tanzania. At night he would disappear into the bushes near the gate, there presumably to pass the night in peaceful slumber. I once stole his slippers but in truth we could not fault his effectiveness as guard for we never once suffered a break-in while he was with us, even though petty crime was rife in Dar and our compound was huge, more than two acres, and bounded only by a broken-down barbed wire fence.*

*Isaac lived about five km away and would walk to and from our place. He always arrived punctually at 5 pm and left early the next morning. He was very reliable and fiercely loyal to us, as long as he was sober, which to be fair was most of the time, with a few explosive exceptions. Once, while Hootoksi's parents were visiting, Isaac appeared at our door, grinning lopsidedly, swaying from side to side and obviously very drunk. I had warned him on several occasions about drinking while on duty, so I scolded him and told him to go home, but he refused saying he was there to look after our safety and security and nothing would deter him from this duty! My mother-in-law then sweetly gave him a lecture about the ills of alcohol, but he just nodded and stood there, swaying and grinning. In the end, I called in Ultimate Security, the company that patrolled our area and with whom we had a contract. They arrived in a pickup, lights flashing, helmeted and with batons ready, and looked doubtfully at the swaying Isaac. They were baffled by my request to remove him from the property, wasn't he our man? Dutifully, they helped him into the back of the truck and drove away. They must have dropped him off somewhere nearby, for Isaac reappeared at the front door a few minutes later, swaying and*



saluting. I then realized that we were stuck with him, like it or not, until we left Tanzania for good!

A couple of years later, Isaac announced that he was getting married. He then brought his bride Maria over to meet us, along with his year-old baby son, Wester!

We recently received a letter from Isaac which is a classic and which touched us deeply.

**From Isaac Chuma, Mikocheni, Dar es Salaam  
13th. July 2001**

*Hie Robert and Hootoksi Tyabji,*

*Don't be blood shocked to receive this missive letter from me "Yes it's me Isaac Chuma" with vigour and vitality to have this golden opportunity of placing all colours and views to you. How are you over that side of you. Telling about my body condition am okay.*

*The main theme which forced me to write this letter to you is to let insure that I have received your letter very well with many thanks! I also received a suit well.*

*Mum please don't forget to think more about myself. I really trust you because you are my Mother and Father.*

*More greetings from Wester CHUMA and her mother Maria. I do off my pen here.*

*I remain as,  
ISAAC CHUMA*

### ***Our Silver Wedding Celebrations, 1996***

*We were in Tanzania on our 25th Wedding Anniversary on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1996 and we had none of you or any other family with us.*

*I was more excited than Pa about this impending milestone and my planning began in May when I decided on a special gift for him. I wanted to sing and record "Love Story" but where would I find the musicians and the studio to do this at a reasonable cost? My search led me nowhere and in November when I was beginning to dream up an alternate idea, I met James, leader of the Masika Band. He owned a "Porta Studio" and we negotiated a reasonable rate for three rehearsals with the band, extra for a saxophone player and the final recording on one cassette; but in true Tanzanian fashion things did not go to plan. We ended up doing the entire gig in one hour, in a dingy, dark room with one chair and a rickety table with three legs on which some machinery perched precariously! Forget three rehearsals "just sing and my boys will play we cannot read music" said James fiddling with wires and pushing them here and there! Having come this far I had nothing to lose and to my utter amazement though they did not know the song they picked up the tune in no*

*time at all and did a great job of accompanying me. The gentleman on Sax was terrific and I had my silver wedding gift in my pocket!*

*Our wedding anniversary was on the 8th of December but in 1996 on the 11th December it was also UNICEF's 50th birthday and the Ghanaian Queen who was Pa's boss, was going to have him fully involved and engaged in the preparations for several events one of which was to be held on the 8th! I was MAD but Ms Agnus Aidoo wouldn't budge, Papa would have to work on the 8th and so reluctantly I agreed to postpone our celebration and I booked a balloon safari over the Serengeti National Park for the week-end following our big day, ie on the 14th and 15th of December.*

*BUT - The Gods were on our side and Papa called on the 5th to say the Queen had changed plans and so he was free to celebrate on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of December! Sadly, it was much too late to organize a big bash so off I went in search of a romantic spot where just the two of us could celebrate and I headed towards the Silver Sands Hotel 20 kms. out of town. It had the right name for our silver anniversary and it was a beautiful hotel right on the beach. I wanted something special for that special night, so I asked to speak to the hotel manager who turned out to be a young South African gentleman with a romantic heart and a spirit to match mine! When he heard what I was after he pointed to the ocean and said "See that large catamaran out there in the distance? it belongs to a friend of mine and he rents it out for dive charters. Why don't you book it for a couple of nights? I can get him to give you a good price."*

*What a fabulous idea! I couldn't think of a more romantic way to usher in our big day so off I went to see the captain and his charming wife and their little dog. They agreed to cook us a meal, have our favourite scotch on hand and there was a state of the art B&O sound system for our listening pleasure. The cost????? hey! how many times do you celebrate 25 years of marriage? All plans were sealed, and everyone was sworn to secrecy. I told Pa that we were going to spend two nights at the Silver Sands Hotel and he was happy with the idea.*

*On the 7th December 1996 around 6 pm we drove to the hotel in our Nissan Patrol. The manager was at hand to greet us and offered to take us on his motor launch for sun downers and a leisurely sail. It was a beautiful evening, there was a balmy breeze and the waves were lapping the bottom of the boat.*

*As we approached the catamaran Pa noticed our little overnight bag on board and wondered what it was doing there but before he could question we were alongside the 'Illusion' and boarding! We were welcomed by the Capt. Chris and his lovely wife Deserie, my surprise worked, and pa was gob smacked!*

*We were served a wonderful, three course meal, complete with champagne and then the couple left us to enjoy the night on their boat. We watched the classic film "Casablanca" and at midnight we walked out on deck.*



*Under a star filled sky with a sliver of a new moon, we kissed and reaffirmed our deep love for each other. We exchanged gifts, opened cards from loved ones and spoke to some folks on the phone. It was pure magic!*

*On the morning of the 8th after a sumptuous breakfast we went to Mbudia Island where we relaxed on the sand, drank Champaign and swam. We were supposed to get back to the Silver Sands and drive our car home, but Chris offered to let Papa pilot the boat to the Slipway, a pier an hour away and not far from our home. Great idea! So off we went with Pa at the helm! We got off the boat in our beach wear and fortunately bumped into a friend who offered to drive us home. We decided we would pick up the car from the Silver Sands the following day.*

*As we approached our house we noticed there were many cars parked outside, several with UN number plates but we thought no more of it as we waved our friend goodbye and walked into the house in our beach wear to screams and shouts and cheers and whistles - HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! We were surrounded by friends and ushered into our living room which was decorated with balloons, posters, buntings and streamers. The time was 7 pm. Our friends had been there since five, so they had ample opportunity to tank up and they gave us the heartiest felicitations EVER! We were toasted with champagne and feasted on snacks and cake. There was music and dancing and LOVE, LOVE, LOVE all around!*

*A perfect end to a perfect weekend but the celebration went on.....*

*I had already booked and paid for a balloon safari over the Serengeti, so as per plan on the 11<sup>th</sup> we boarded a flight to Kilimanjaro to continue the silver year festivity. Carlos our driver and guide for this first-class tour was on the tarmac to meet us with a bunch of red roses from the tour company. We were driven to the beautiful new Serena Hotel and treated to an evening of song and dance by the Masai. What a thrill that was and how wonderfully they used their voices to produce unimaginable sounds.*

*After a rest and a sumptuous breakfast Carlos had us sitting in the front seat of the Land Rover for our safari in the Ngorogoro Crater. The crater remains the most spectacular repository of wildlife on the planet and we saw zebra, wildebeest, lion, elephant, rhino, hippo, jackal, hundreds of birds, gazelle and the list could go on and on! At the end of around six hours of viewing as we were driving out of the crater, Papa noticed a zebra that seemed to be very unsteady on its feet and was swaying from side to side. He thought the animal was sick and in distress and pointed it out to Carlos who let out a whoop of joy and said, "You are very lucky people, that zebra is going to give birth, we will watch." The entire process took 26 minutes and unfolded in front of our very eyes about 50 feet from where we were parked!*

*There were four or five zebras at hand standing at a safe distance to ward off predators. Mama bore her pain stoically as she gazed glassy eyed at the distant hills, lay down on the ground and pushed the little one out. The baby arrived hind legs first and was covered in a blue sack which was the placenta. It lay on the*

ground for a few moments all wet and fragile but soon it began to struggle to stand on its own ready to face the world with all its challenges! After several tries it managed to stand up and nurse from its mother. It was still attached by the umbilical cord which mama zebra ultimately severed by stamping on it with her hoof. What an amazing memory and how fortunate we were to experience it!

The next day we drove four hours to the Serengeti National park which is 14,763 sq. kms. Over 1.4 million wildebeest and 200,000 zebra and gazelle, relentlessly tracked by Africa's great predators, migrate in a clockwise fashion over 1,800 miles each year in search of rain ripened grass. We were fortunate that the migration was taking place early this year and we were in the right part of the park to catch this awesome spectacle. As far as the eye could see were herds and herds and herds of wildebeest. It was like the entire plain was alive, moving and pulsating with life! I have no adequate words to describe what we saw.....

That night was spent at another beautiful hotel called the Serengeti Serena Lodge fashioned after a Masai village. The woodwork was spectacular, and our room was beautiful. The management were expecting a honeymooning couple and were quite surprised to see us silver haired folk! We were treated to a free bottle of wine and woken up at 4.45 AM to head out for the balloon safari.

Unfortunately, the weather was terrible, foggy, rainy and chilly but none of this deterred our group of 8 and we happily took off getting into those baskets lying down on our backs! Once up in the air it was glorious, and we floated above zebra and wildebeest watching the leaders and the followers, the stragglers and the feisty teenagers. We also saw some civet cats which we were told is a rare sighting.

As we floated down towards earth and tumbled out of the basket, in front of us a few feet away on the path, lay a beautiful male lion. He acted totally cool and nonchalant and was not to be moved by this bunch of gawking humans. He took his time, preening, cleaning and enjoying the morning mist before he sauntered off into the far distance while we cowered on the ground in awe of him!

Our Champaign breakfast on Simba Kopje was cancelled because of the rain, but we had it in the comfort of our hotel and said goodbye to Carlos and our ballooning friends as we drove to a tiny air air-strip where we had hired a personal single-prop aircraft to take us to Arusha airport from where we caught the commercial flight back to Dar es Salaam.

When the Welsh pilot heard this was our silver wedding anniversary celebration, he took us along a special scenic route and we saw beautiful scenery and picturesque villages, volcanoes, mountains and streams.

And the icing on the cake?

You Adil, waiting for us at home. You had arrived the day before to spend your Xmas holidays with us! Having one of the three of you during our happy time was so special.

## *The Bombing of the US Embassy*

### *7 August 1998*

*It was around 10.30 in the morning and Papa was giving a speech to government dignitaries and NGO's at a Public Space outdoors, right in the centre of town. I was in my classroom with my students at the British Council giving an English lesson.*

*We heard a huge blast that sounded like a gas explosion, Papa saw a column of smoke, everyone dispersed quickly, and Pa and I tried to get in touch with each other, but we could not connect. At the British council we were herded into a safe room and not allowed to leave till the all clear was sounded about an hour later.*

*"On August 7, 1998, between 10:30 and 10:40 a.m. local time, the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania were attacked in coordinated truck bombings. Approximately 212 people were killed and an estimated 4,000 wounded in Nairobi, while the attack killed 11 individuals and wounded 85 in Dar es Salaam. The bombings were timed to mark the eighth anniversary of the deployment of U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia and were later traced to Saudi exile and al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden" - Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training.*

*We had good friends who worked at the Embassy and we were very concerned for their safety. The embassy telephones did not work so I called Jin Liang, the wife of Chips Carpenter who was chief administrator at the time. Seconds before the blast, he had moved from his desk to get himself a cup of coffee. His entire office was destroyed, his desk and chair blown into smithereens.*

*Opposite the embassy was a staff residence. The family of 5 had gone off on home leave and fortunately their maid and cook were also both out when the bomb hit. Their house was completely destroyed.*

## *The Dar es Salaam Yacht Club*

*This was our watering hole where we let down our hair and de-stressed after a hard day's work - We loved sitting on the beautiful terrace overlooking the Indian Ocean.*

*Papa bought a Laser Racing Dinghy called "The Dogs" he learned how to sail, and he absolutely loved it! Being members at this club was a privilege and the highlight of our stay in Dar es Salaam*

*As with all our other postings, it was hard to leave our friends and the beautiful country behind, but the memories live on especially those of our encounters with wildlife.*

*Africa is my most favourite continent - there is something about the people and the light there that is unique and magical!*



## *Going Places in Planes, Cars, and Ships*

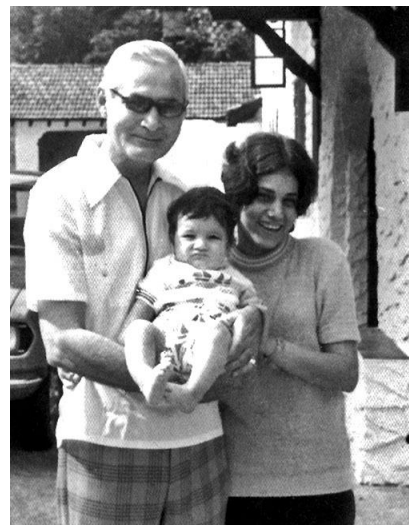
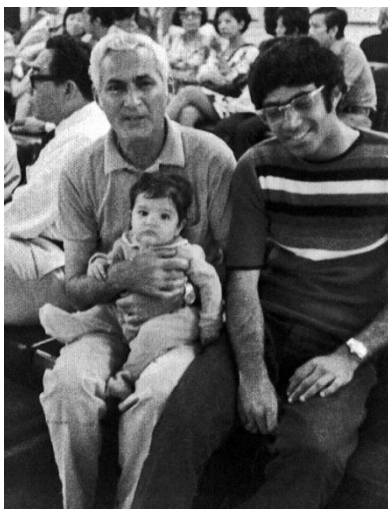
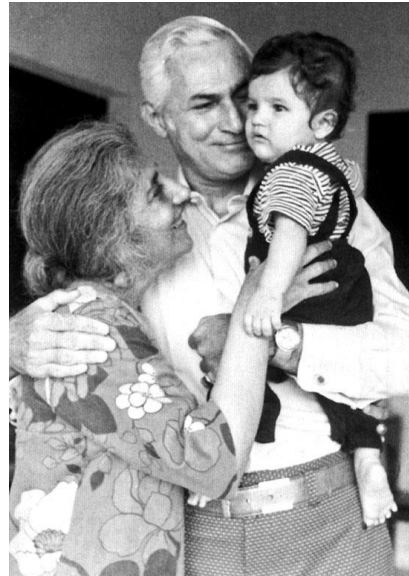
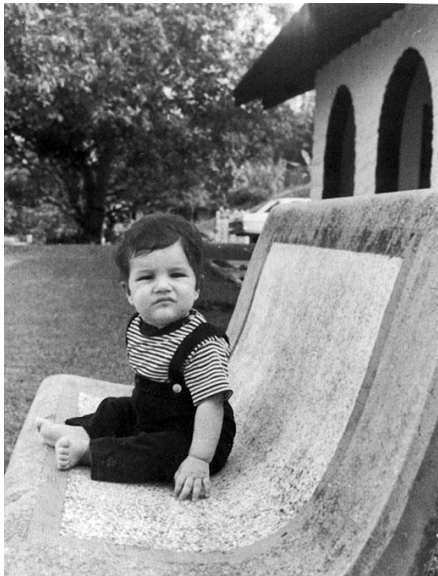


*Dana and Isuru Senagama*



*On the Boat to Goa*

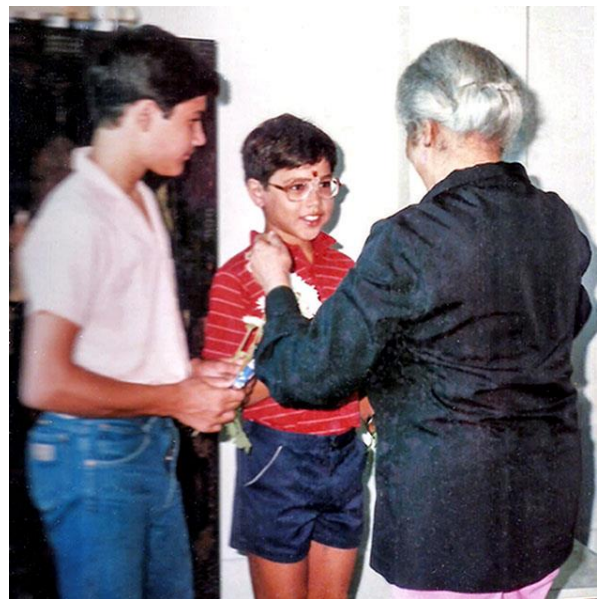
## *Holidays in Malaysia*







*Before leaving for St. Chris, 1987*





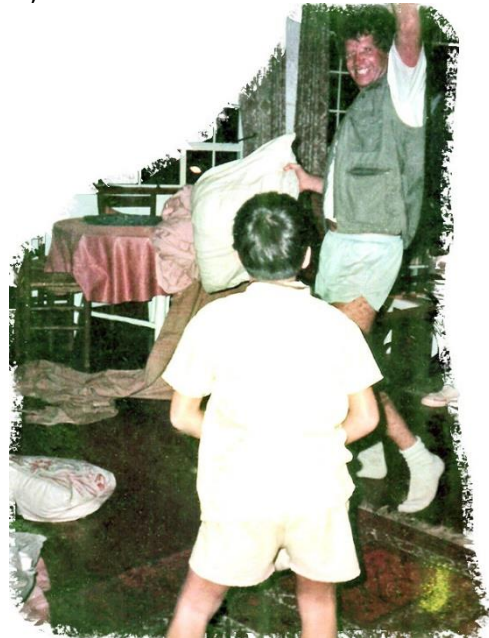
## *Holidays in Kenya and Dubai*



*Lake Naivasha, Kenya*



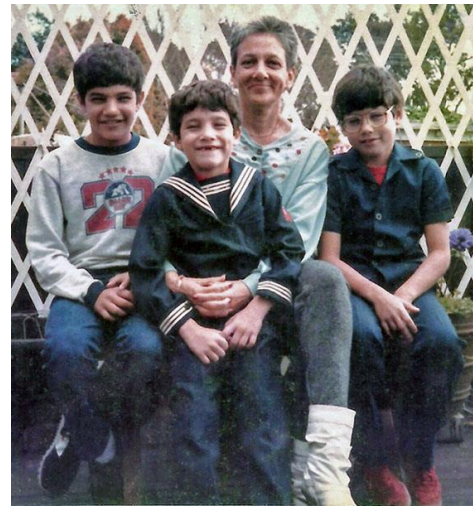
*At Steve's in Nairobi*



*Dubai*



## *Holidays in Australia*







*Damian, Kizzie, Sandy and Ray Miles*





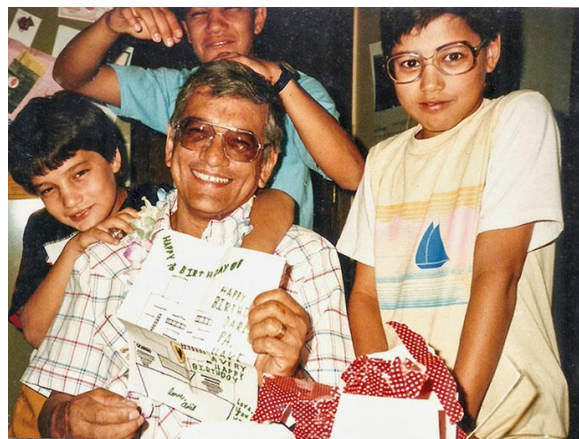


*Ray, Damian, Sandy, Kizzie and Helie*





*Visiting Mamu and Mami in Boise, Idaho*





*Visiting Mamu and Mami in Albany, New York*



*Shireen my dearest  
childhood friend and  
Farhad's Godmother*





## *LA and Grand Canyon*

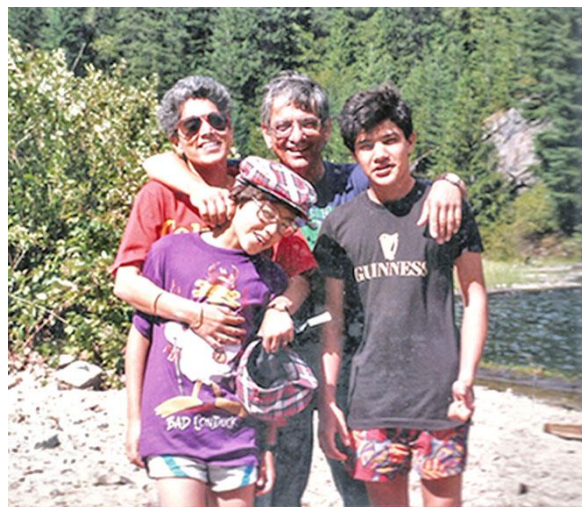
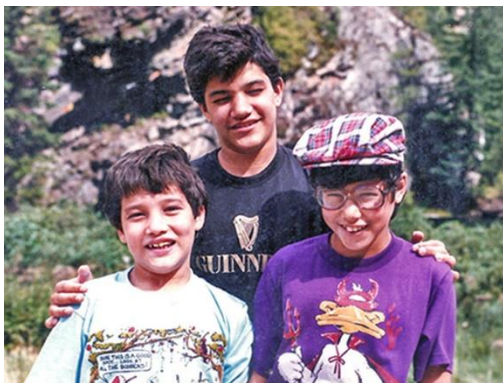
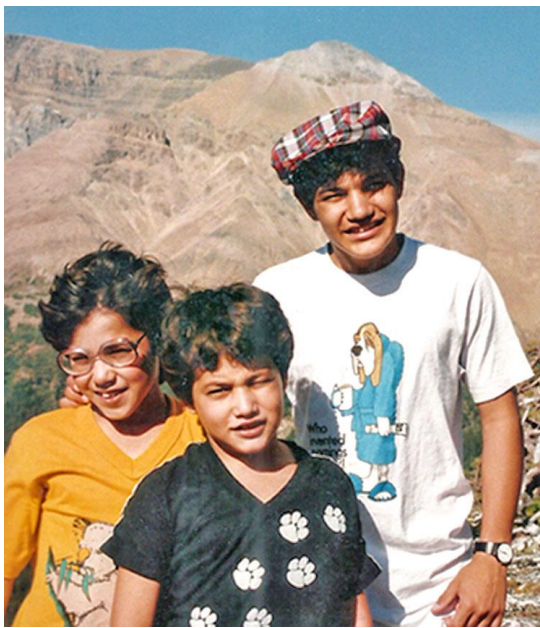
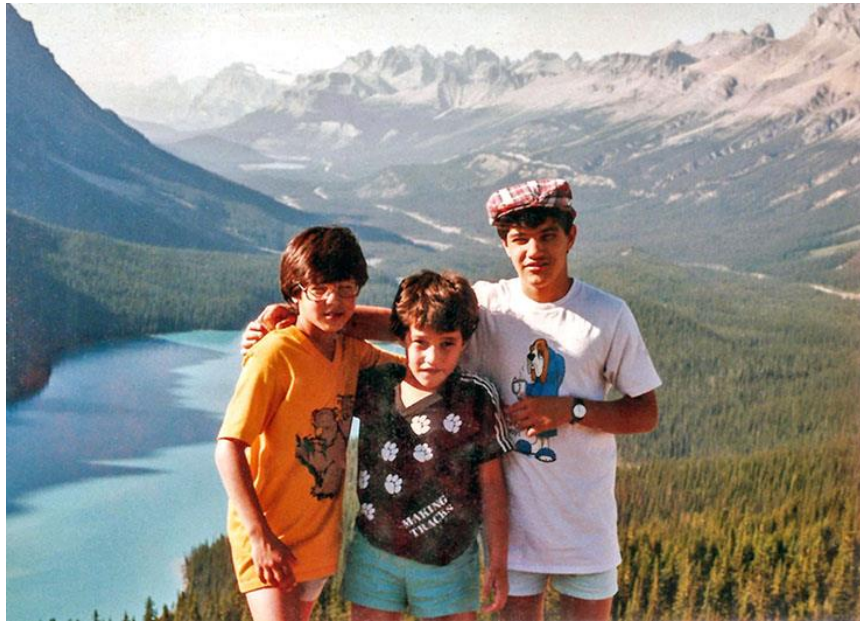


*Cyrus and Dolla*





## *Holiday in Canada*







*Fun in Banff with Jer Cox  
a Dear Childhood Family Friend*



*Sebastian Cox*

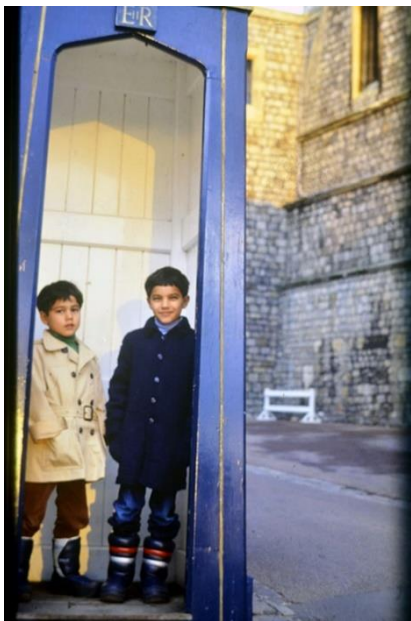


*Natalie Cox*



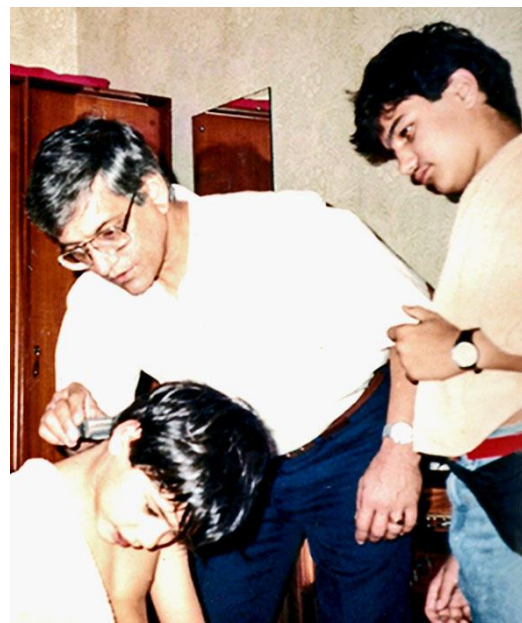


*Holidays in London, Scotland and Lincoln*





*Preparing for St. Christopher's, September 1987*





*Holiday in Switzerland*  
*With Dadima and Uncle Dolf in Agarone*



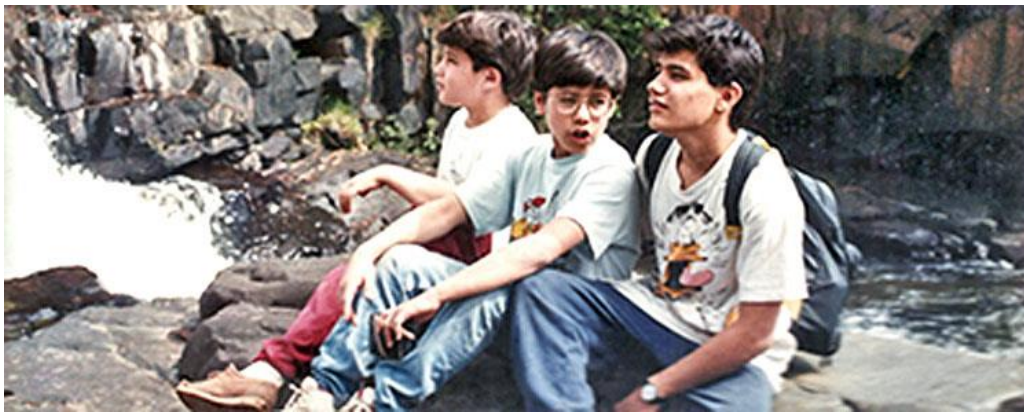


## *Camping in Zimbabwe and South Africa*



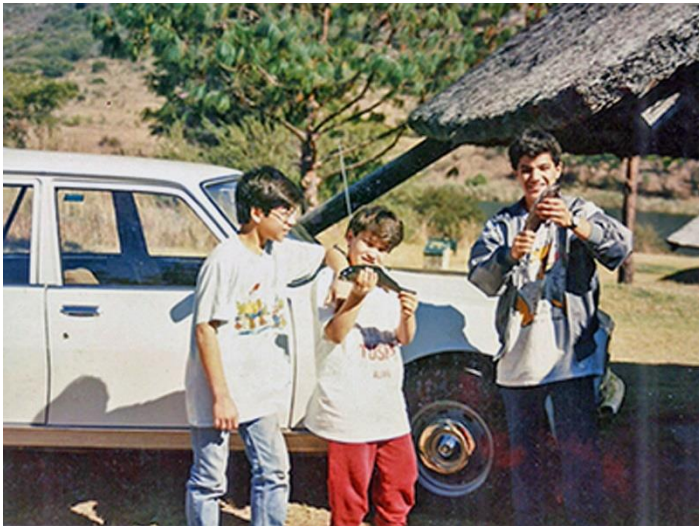


*Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe*

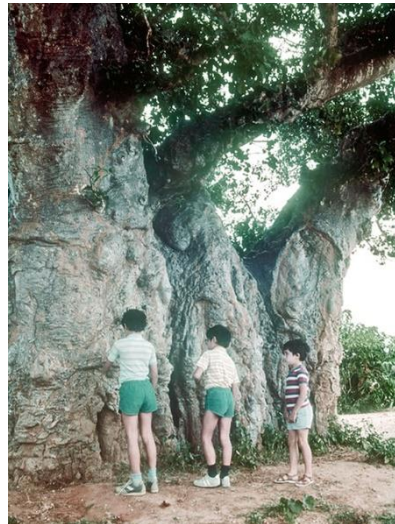
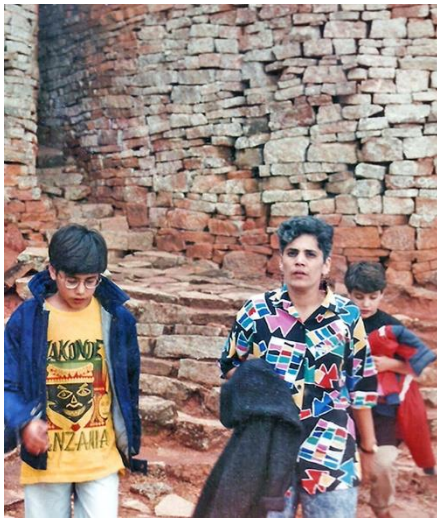
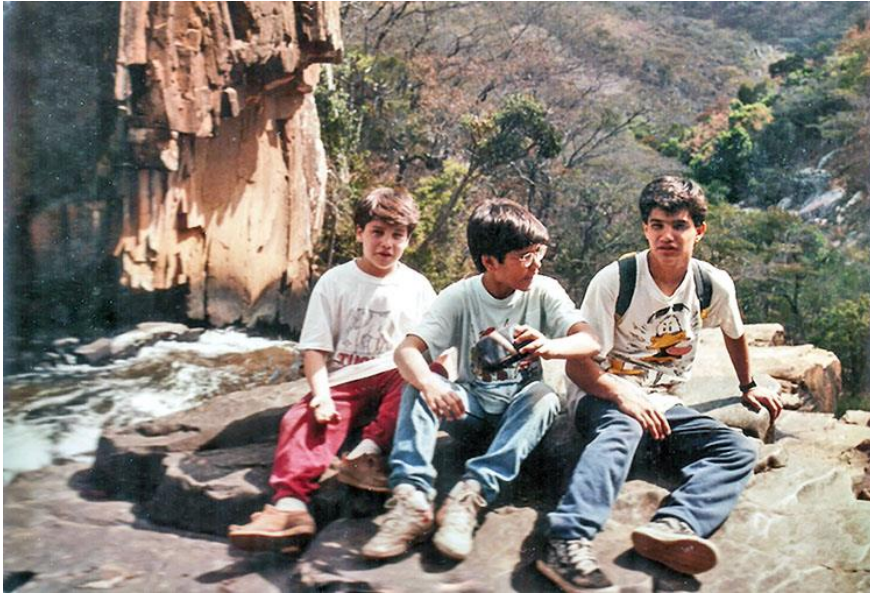




## *Eastern Highlands, Zimbabwe*







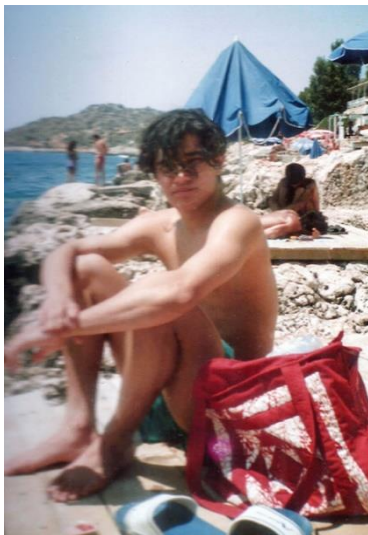
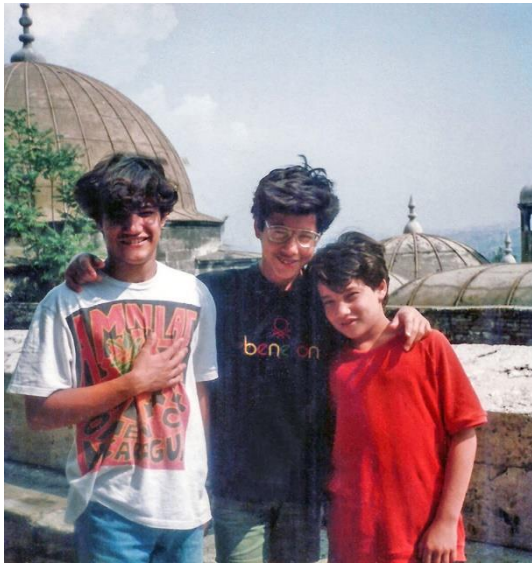


*Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa*





## *Holiday in Istanbul and Kash, Turkey*





## Our Christmas Cards 1972-1986



1972.jpg



EVERY CHILD COMES WITH THE MESSAGE . . . . .

1973.jpg



WE LIVE IN THIS WORLD WHEN WE LOVE IT—TAGORE

1974.jpg



WHEN WE REJOICE IN OUR FULLNESS, THEN WE CAN  
PART WITH OUR FRUITS WITH JOY—TAGORE

1975.jpg



Tiny grass—your steps are small, but you possess the earth  
under your tread — Tagore

1976.jpg



God Grows Weary of Great Kingdoms,  
But Loves of Little Flowers —Tagore

1977.jpg



Do not linger to gather flowers to keep them, but walk on,  
for flowers will keep themselves blowing all your way  
Tagore

1978.jpg



He who wants to do good knocks at the gate;  
he who loves finds the gate open—Tagore

1979.jpg



"The little are the flowers of children who take their  
game to the world" — Tagore

1980.jpg



"Man is a born child, his power is the power of growth" — Tagore

1981.jpg



"O Trance of little vapours of the world, leave your footprints in my words"

1982.jpg



"Lead me in the centre of thy silence to fill my heart with song"—Tagore,

1983.jpg



Jealousy, find thyself in love, not in the flattery of thy mirror—Tagore

1984.jpg



"If there is another world, he lives in it,  
if there is none, he lives in the love of his—Robert Burns

1985.jpg



Love is life in its fullness like the cup with its wine — Tagore

1986.jpg



## 1997-2000



When the little rays of light in our mind are focused, our mind becomes like a search light and reveals truth.  
— Swami Paramananda

1987.jpg



THE BELIEF THAT YOU SEND OUT, RETURN TO YOU. — Indian wisdom

1988.jpg



1989.jpg



Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace, where there is hatred, let me sow love . . .

1990.jpg



Life without mirth is a lamp without oil  
— Sir Walter Scott

1991.jpg



1992.jpg



CHOOKI, 1984-1993

1993.jpg



— Anna Tugend, 1985-1994

1994.jpg



INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE. — Martin Luther King

1995.jpg



The day you cease to travel, you will have arrived. — Japanese proverb

1996.jpg



Fahad's Graduation Highlight of Our Year

1997.jpg

Missing card

1998.jpg



That love is all there is, is all we know of love. — Dickinson

1999.jpg



Adil's Graduation  
July 2000

A diamond is a stone until it's endowed with value by the human mind.

2000.jpg

## *NEPAL*

*Our Home in Kathmandu, and our Pets, 2001-2003*



*Sox*



*Jigme*



## *Memories of Nepal*

*2001-2003*

*Nepal was our last posting before papa retired from UNICEF where he worked tirelessly for more than 30 years....*

*By the time we moved to Nepal Adil was 23 years old and because this book is to remind you of your lives from the age of 1 - 21 we have added just a few photos from our time there.*

*We would however like to include the letters you wrote papa which were read out to him at a surprise farewell party I organized on the day he retired.*

*I invited around 50 people to the house and swore them to secrecy. Pa was always home by 7 PM so I asked everyone to arrive by 6.30 PM which they did. Papa called me around 6.45 from the office to say he had decided to stay on and clear his desk because he did not want to go back to the office the next day. He walked in through the door around 9 PM by which time everyone had lots to drink and they were all in great spirits! Pa was totally overwhelmed*

*We held a little ceremony for him after dinner. I seated him on our African Chieftain's chair and made him hold a staff in his hand to remind him that henceforth he was his own boss and the sole keeper of his time, able to do with it what he wished. Colleagues gave speeches of appreciation and affection and gifts were handed out. I picked three friends to read your letters out to him and there wasn't a dry eye in the room as they were being read!*

*It was the end of an era for us and the beginning of a new phase in our lives...*

*The first 21 years of your lives were a lot different from the lives of most children around the globe. We suffered separation and the trauma of loneliness, but we were also privileged to have experienced and had exposure to life in places scattered across the globe - Delhi, Bhutan, Somalia, Yemen, Dar es Salaam and Nepal.*

*Through all the ups and downs, the trials and tribulations, the joy and the pain, we are certain you know that we have loved you; totally, wholly and unconditionally - this special family bond we share, transcends space and time and goes beyond forever.*

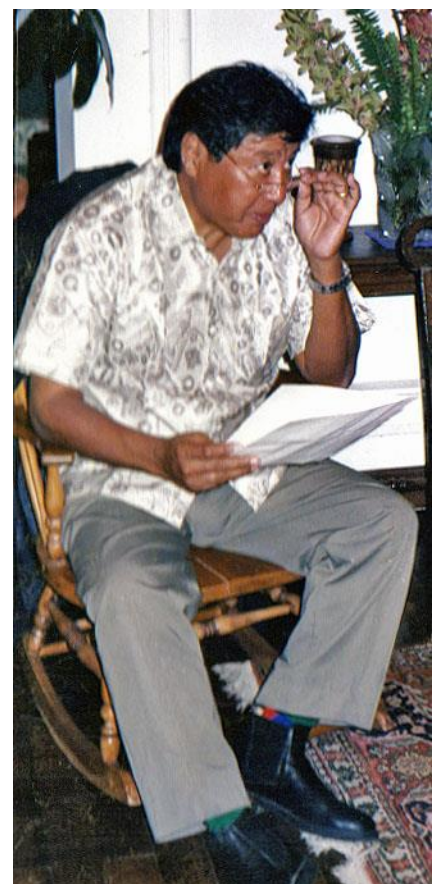


*Pa Retires From UNICEF After 32 Years of Service*  
*Kathmandu, 7 April 2003*



*UNICEF office farewell*

*Farewell Party at Home*



*Samphe reads your poems*



## *Letters to Pa on his Retirement*



*Darling Pa,*

*What do I remember about you and UNICEF? For starters, I wouldn't be me if it weren't for UNICEF and you!*

*That small thing aside, what do I remember about you and UNICEF?*

*I never really knew what you did at UNICEF until coming to Dar. I had a vague idea, but no specifics. I saw it as you, a passionate, honorable steadfast thing, always moving in the right direction. My head was always filled with magnificent scenes of parachutes dropping immunizations, of dare devil four-wheelers racing medicine in ice boxes across hostile deserts. I would tell the tales to my close friends late at night, and in my depiction there was glorious music - it was an epic thing you and UNICEF.*

*But a few years in DSM, seeing UNICEF and seeing you, I began to notice that all the glorious epics were about you, not UNICEF. I began to meet other UNICEF people. Many couldn't care less for the women and children. But you would come home hurt by the hurdles that creates. You were actually involved. Many people say work should be left at the office. But if you find your work to be a passion, to be a part of yourself, then you are always doing it. You cannot stop.*

*So, UNICEF won the lottery. They got you, a believer, an actualizer, a catalyst, a never-ending stream of solutions to the problems created by those who leave their work at the office. You put steadfast and honor into UNICEF, never taking advantage of your position. You brought them the passion, the very thing that fuels the search for justice and equality.*

*So now UNICEF lost you. I can't see your passion changing or abating. Now you do it for you. No more sons to fight for, no more drawn out meetings, no more power struggles. Now you do it for Mum.*

*Thank you, Pa for your years of toil. Thanks for the memories and experiences most couldn't even dream up. Thanks for making the world mine. Thanks for lighting the fire. Thanks for the UN voice. Thanks for the crazy ideas. Thanks for resting me on your stomach and cranking the tunes! Thanks for the love of music.*

*Thank you, Pa.*

*With all my love - and a big big CHILL CHILL PILL.*

*Michel*



## *TO MY PA*

*The time on the horizon has finally arrived,  
When UNICEF and Robert Tyabji are parting,  
After a lifetime of service to each other.*

*An exciting exit into a new life  
You are well fit to enter!*

*My memories say UNICEF was you,  
And there was nothing to worry about.*

*So, what's going to happen now?*

*My life with you was blessed traveling from country to country,  
Guaranteed my place and happiness in your peaceful realm.*

*I have developed wise maxims from those special experiences,  
And even regard myself "a UNICEF kid"*

*UNICEF is recognized worldwide for its helpful work.  
Travel, charity, exchange, and family values  
Flex like sweeping clouds over a hastening world.  
There is a lot of everything around the bend.*

*Often, I prefer to keep silent than explain complexity.  
Eventually, time is the best teacher.*

*Through college in America I told people close enough to hear me  
"travel is the best teacher"  
because the lifestyle I grew up with  
infected me with the satisfaction of seeing and re-living places of being.*

*In-born in me also is a certain Drive to Work,  
A need for an orderly house, peaceful and trusting relationships,  
And a desire to increase my consciousness and the happiness of others.  
These are some of the things you have given me.*



*For each of them, I owe you a million thanks  
And more so for everything else.*

*A son is supposed to love and honor and follow his father.  
It is all true for me,  
And true for my brothers.*

*Thus, now with the good employer satisfied,  
We have the time to gather as grown adults and share our stories!  
Miracles alive!*

*Pa, you have done the best job!  
I know it from many  
Except you!*

*Stellar  
A+  
Uniquely interesting*

*Congratulations!*

*It is such an exciting time this 2003.  
A New Year of opportunities.  
My trust in you is complete  
I'll applaud your every new move.>*

*What of opportunities to organize together in the future!  
And our joyous family reunions!  
We will come and visit you!  
We will keep Love and service flowing*

*I wish you and Ma a smooth departure from UNICEF,  
Accept all the hoorahs from all your admirers,  
And when it comes time to move on east.....  
Take that beautiful bride of yours  
And make a new life out of freedom and opportunity!*

*With everlasting Love and respect,*

*Farhad  
The Plod and Pilot of Passion and Praise*

*To: Mr Robert Tyabji, Free Agent,  
Globe Trotter Street,  
P.O.Box ABC  
Earth*

*From: Adil Tyabji  
43 Beechdale Road  
Youngest Son  
The English Connection*



*Darling Pa,*

*Congratulations on this your retirement  
day. Congratulations for beating the rat-race!*

*Your long career has carried our family in the palm of its  
hand. Without question, I have followed in your footsteps  
and strive to accomplish what you have and give to a cause  
as you do.*

*Your impending retirement has prompted much self-introspection. I have asked  
what it means to be your son, pondered on the effects your job has had on our family  
and asked what has or is the most precious gift bestowed upon us as a result of it.*

*The answer to all of the above is love. Your love for Mom and hers for you is written  
in the stars. It is the foundation of our family and even though I live thousands of  
miles away from you, I only need one fragment of that great love, to survive.*

*During your career you have touched thousands of children all over the world.  
Success in the later part of your career made you desk-bound but I have always  
known and remembered you to be the man in the field. I am glad that you will soon  
be back on the road again!*

*Your ever loving son,*

*Adil Tyabji*



## *Pa's Retirement Speech*

*UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 7 March 2003*

*Good morning...*

*Many years ago, a friend gave me a quotation on retirement. It goes like this:*

'I am often asked "When did you retire"?

To which I reply: "I am not even tired."

What is ageing?

It's like a rivulet

That flows into a stream,

Becomes a river and goes into the sea.

What it loses in force, it gains in depth.

Becoming old is about getting a larger perspective on life and carrying on as best you can.

I say -- Evolve or die!

But when the time comes, I will walk into the sunset.

Till then I am very much here!'



*What is retirement? Many people we know began pondering this question years in advance of reaching that point in their lives. They planned for it, built houses and prepared themselves so well that they had nothing left to do when the time finally arrived! Some people actually dread the day they will retire – the working spouse wonders how the days will pass without the preoccupations of the office, while the other spouse worries about how to handle the situation.*

*For me, retirement means an opportunity for Hootoksi and I to make a completely new life for ourselves and our children without concern for what others, usually strangers who have no interest in us as individuals, want us to do.*

*For both of us, retirement means the chance, for the first time in 32 years together, to spend quality time with each other. It will give us the privilege of doing things together that we really enjoy doing, like discovering more about the world we live in, getting to know our children and grandchildren better, and, of course getting back into making films and other creative productions together. We will have the luxury of selecting our own projects and executing them to our own standards and preferences.*

*Looking back over our joint career with UNICEF gives us plenty to think about. We wonder whether, in the final analysis, our efforts have been really worth it? This kind of evaluation is difficult and can be hard on one's soul, but one day we will arrive at a conclusion. We realize that we have had incredible opportunities to travel, mix into and imbibe other cultures and values. We have witnessed life in the real world, in the forests and cities, the deserts and on the mountains. Our children have received education in the true sense of the word, learning about life through experiences outside the classroom.*

*At the same time, as members of a select group of international civil servants, we have led privileged, protected lives. I have been particularly blessed in having been given an extraordinarily free hand in my work, whether I was functioning at GS7 level in Delhi or P5 level here. I have nearly always enjoyed my work because much of it has been experimental and frequently cutting edge. When in ROSCA between 1972 and 1980, I was showing village women and farmers how to express themselves more effectively by making filmstrips at the village well, without any professional or outside services, and projecting them to the authorities and to their own communities. I built windmills in Tilonia and Jamkhed and became deeply involved in developing the contemporary community handpump which is now so well known in different parts of the world as the India Mark II pump. Later, in Bhutan, I was the man on the spot in putting that country's universal salt iodation programme in place, apart from starting and heading a government department called the DSCD, now the BBS. In Bhutan, Somalia and Yemen, I was fully focused in helping to ensure the success of the oral rehydration and immunization programmes, as well as being involved in emergency and security issues.*

*But I regret that, too often, the nature of my work distanced me from family duties and responsibilities. It forced us to send our children away from us to boarding schools an eternity away. This is a risk everyone in this business runs, but that is also why the Organization needs to do more to address the issue of building a more family friendly UNICEF.*

*In these 30 years we have seen huge improvements in the survival and development of children around the world. Hootoksi and I are immensely proud to have been associated directly and indirectly in helping to make these happen. Our children share this pride with us. I say we, because I want to underline the fact that, in a family, both members, as well as the children, play key roles in deciding how effectively the staff member can contribute to fulfilling the work and mission of the office. Too seldom is this appreciated or taken note of in the organization. Hootoksi has quietly suffered anguish and frustration but never gave up out of consideration of the overall mission of UNICEF, but she has also rejoiced and takes an equal share of the kudos.*



*I have to say also that we have witnessed gross waste of precious resources, in UNICEF and in the host governments. We have had to stand by as umpteen ill-informed decisions have been taken, and staff members have blatantly derived personal advantage from their trusted positions in the organization and in the international community of the host country. We have even come across outright misappropriation and deliberate mismanagement in the name of children. One day perhaps, UNICEF will find a way, possibly through a 360-degree evaluation system, to overcome these deficiencies without unduly endangering the freedoms and flexibility that make UNICEF the most effective and highly regarded organization in the UN system.*

*We watch as UNICEF's role in emancipating children changes from prime mover to facilitator and advocate, calling for new skills to meet the emerging challenges of our increasingly complex world. Retirement may give Hootoksi and me the time to ponder these issues and one day we will know what the bottom line really is.*

*Meanwhile, as you know, we will be making our new home in Malaysia. This is another adventure for us as we have not planned it very well and don't even know yet where in the country we will settle. If we are given permission to drive there, I believe we will be the first ever to do so. We will keep you fully informed as we go along.*

*Finally, I want to express my very great appreciation to my supervisors and colleagues who helped make this career fruitful and enjoyable. I wish particularly to thank John Balcomb and Ken Nelson, who stuck their necks out and hired me in the first place. Ken taught me all I know about the art and science of making movies. I thank Satish Prabasi, Glan Davies and David Haxton who dispatched us to Bhutan, and to Rolf Carriere who trusted me with the ORT and salt iodation programmes there, and with whom we made marvelous advocacy materials.*

*Then, in Somalia, Dr. Gregorio Monasta, Stewart McNab, Baquer Namazi and Tom McDermott; in Yemen, Stewart McNab, Dev Chopra and Omawale; in Tanzania, Agnes Aidoo, Jesper Morch and Bjorn Ljungqvist; and here in Kathmandu, Nigel Fisher, Waheed Hassan and Sadig Rasheed. I thank HMG for hosting this last phase of my work with UNICEF, we have grown to love this country and its people.*

*Special thanks go to Neeta Thapa who has been the most efficient and understanding secretary I have ever known; Nuzhat, Dhruva, Sudhamshu, and Abha. All of you here, and others who have moved on, have been wonderful colleagues and good friends. At the risk of repeating myself, Hootoksi and I found ROSA to have been the most caring and user-friendly office of all. Please keep it that way.*

*We will miss you a lot and will wait for you to visit us in Malaysia. We will certainly visit you here whenever we are lucky enough to return to this beautiful country.*

*I have tried to say a lot but have actually managed very little. I'm sure Hootoksi would like to add a few things from her perspective so I hope you won't mind if I invite her to say something.*

*All the very best to all of you, may you be happy, healthy and prosperous.*

*Robert Tyabji*

*UNICEF ROSA, Kathmandu, 7 March 2003.*

