

## **My Life Story**



**Joy Vermooten**



**Darlene Cantrell, Storykeeper**

## Acknowledgements

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Jim Mauldin

Ethnic Life Stories Project Coordinator.

**The Ethnic Life Stories Project....**

*-giving the Springfield community a window to its diversity through the life stories of ethnic elders.*

<b>Liewe Se Storie Afrikaanse</b>	<b>Afrikaanse (2)</b>
<b>ŌSŌ GAY HĀY WŌ TAN</b>	<b>Apache</b>
<b>قصص من الحياة</b>	<b>Arabic (2)</b>
<b>Ga-no-du Ka-ne-he-lv-s-gi</b>	<b>Cherokee</b>
<b>自傳</b>	<b>Chinese (2)</b>
<b>Life Stories</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>Histoires De Ma Vie</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Mayer rah-Khaan Knee-Hindi</b>	<b>Hindi</b>
<b>生きてきた道</b>	<b>Japanese</b>
<b>나의 살아온 이야기</b>	<b>Korean</b>
<b>ഇവിത കഥകൾ</b>	<b>Malayalam</b>
<b>Povestea Vie Ţii Mele</b>	<b>Romanian</b>
<b>La Historia de la Vida</b>	<b>Spanish (4)</b>
<b>Kuwento Ng Aking Buhay</b>	<b>Tagalog</b>
<b>געשיחטע פון מאן לעבען</b>	<b>Yiddish</b>

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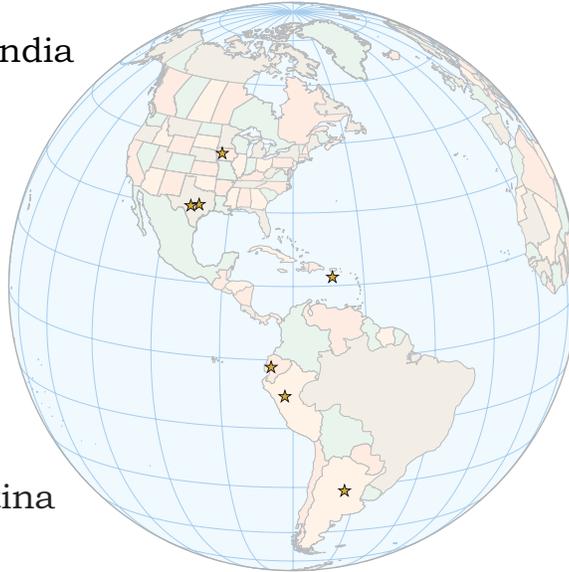
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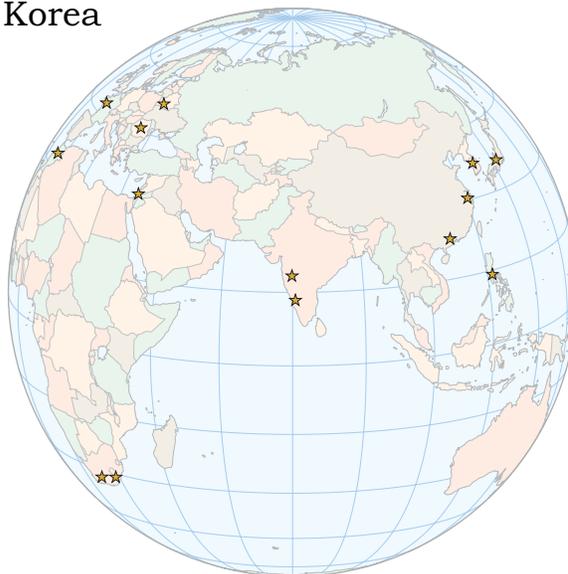
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Joy Vermooten  
Nqaberie (Natal), South Africa

Tobby Yen  
Chung (Zhongshan), China





Joy Vermooten  
Nqabeni, Natal, South Africa

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## **DEDICATION**

This story is dedicated to my five children, Ian, Inici, Graham, Diane, and Linda. They are my pride and joy and they have enriched my life.

## CHAPTER ONE: FAMILY HISTORY

*Joy Elaine Vermooten*

I was named Joy because my mother had lost a baby before I was born, and I brought joy to her again. “Joy cometh in the morning” it says in the Bible, and I was born in the morning. Their nickname for me was Joybells. I think a missionary doctor attended my birth. My complete birthday is the third month, the twentieth day, 1928. I was born at home on the farm at Nqabeni Natal, South Africa, which is approximately 100 miles from Durban, the nearest large town. The land is hilly and green with a subtropical climate, but it got cold in the winter because although we didn’t have any snow, we had a mountain in the far distance and icy winds used to blow off that snow.

My father’s name was William Dowling Larkan. His parents came from Ireland. The reason they emigrated to South Africa from Ireland was that the Catholics were forcing the Protestant children to be brought up as Catholics and they didn’t want that. He was born on the farm. My mother’s name was Dorothy Effie Larkan. She was born in Durban, South Africa. My father died at the age of 52 and my mother at age 85. They didn’t even get to their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

I lived at the farm until I was nine years old. The big rambling farmhouse had four bedrooms and a dining room and lounge. The lounge had a very big fireplace and often in the winter in the evenings we used to sit around it and eat ice cream. In the kitchen there was a boiler next to the main wood and coal stove. There was a tiny round stove that was attached to the boiler that heated the water that ran through the house to the bathroom. We didn’t have to heat and carry water to the bathroom. At one time, though, we had a round tin bath that we put in front of the fire and put heated water in it. When we took a bath at night we had an oil lamp that was carried to the bathroom and hung from the ceiling. My dad took care of that. We got a generator when I was seven years old and then we had electricity. It was a very comfortable home.

I had one brother, Terance, and two sisters, Audrey and Gladys. Audrey was the eldest, then Terance and Gladys. There was a seven-year gap between Gladys and me. I was like an only child because all of them were off to school. I can’t ever remember a time when they were home except during the holidays.

My native language is English, but since in babyhood I was always strapped on the back of one of the maids, my nanny, as she worked washing and ironing and cleaning the house, I learned to speak Zulu. My mother told me that as each of the children was born, my father came with a maid and said, “Now this is a maid to look after the eldest child; I want some time with you when I come home.” And when my other sister was born, he brought another maid to my mother and said, “This maid is to look after this baby, so I can have some time with you.” I guess he did that with each one of us.

My father was a farmer. He was there all the time, but he was mostly outdoors seeing to everything. It was a big farm, a thousand acres. He did mixed farming. We had big

maize fields, sheep, cattle, and horses. We also had trees called wattle trees. The bark was used to make a substance which was used in the tanning of leather. My father died before the war and when my brother came back after the war he changed the farm, planting all the land in sugar cane. So the main work in the area was farming. My mother didn't work outside the home.

Our closest neighbor was not very far away. We used to ride across on horseback. My Aunt Eva (Evangeline), my father's sister, lived in a house right next door to us on the same farm. I loved spending time with her. When she went out in her car I would love to go with her and ride in the special seat at the back. It was called a dickey seat and was out in the open.

On our farm was a little shop that my father's sister Rosie and her husband, uncle Harry, ran. All sorts of things were sold—groceries, material, all your needs. After my uncle died we had an Indian man and his wife living there at the shop and he ran it.

This is a story about a holiday my mom went on before the First World War. When they went on holiday they went in ox-drawn covered wagons. My granny took her double bed with her because she wanted to have her comfort. It took them four days to get from the farm to the sea. They had crates of chickens hanging under the wagons. This gave them meat and eggs to eat. They also took along a cow for milk. Once they got to the sea they had their wagons to camp in.

## CHAPTER TWO: EARLIEST MEMORIES AND CHILDHOOD

When I was six and started to school, I had a governess at our house. Another child lived with us, so she could share the governess. When I was a little bit older, I used to ride my pony every day to the farm adjoining us, where my cousins lived, and we shared a governess. When I was nine I went away to a government school and lived with Mrs. Benser, a German lady. She had her grandchildren during the week, but I was the only child in the house at the weekend. She was a loving lady, so she really spoiled me. I have fond memories of her. There was no car and we used to run to school every day, three miles. We walked if it was very hot or ran if it rained. We carried our shoes in a backpack and washed our feet when we got to school and put on our shoes and socks and tidied up. Nobody waited for you. If you didn't keep up with the group from the house you got left behind. I made sure I kept up.

We didn't have running water at Mrs. Benser's. We used to have only one bath a week. We washed our feet and legs in a big bowl on the floor every night before we went to bed. On Sundays she and I used to walk three miles to church. It was a German church so I didn't understand very much of it. It was a three-hour service. I learned to say "Our Father..." in German because we had prayers every evening in the home and recited it in German. I was glad I wasn't German because all the German children had to be in school early. The minister used to come and ask them all the catechism. They had a tremendous amount to learn. If they didn't know their work, he used to hit them across the hand with a cane. Those of us who weren't German speaking would play until the school bell rang for school to commence.

Our school year was divided into four quarters with a break between each. The Christmas holiday was four weeks and the July holiday, three weeks. These were the longest, and I used to go home to the farm. Once during the term I went home by train, which took from before lunch until about 5:00. My mother came and fetched me at the station.

I started out in a small farming community but spent most of my life in cities, going to boarding schools. When I was 11 I went to a private church boarding school. It was a good girls' school, but I got very, very homesick. I missed my mother frightfully, and I hated going back to boarding school because my mother had to drive us a long way to catch the train to get to the city where the boarding school was, in Pietermaritzburg, which is an hour from Durban. At Durban we would change trains and go inland to Pietermaritzburg. It took us all day to get to the boarding school. I would see my mother standing there alone on the platform and realized she had to drive back to a big farmhouse with nobody in it since she was the only person on the farm, so she was very, very lonely. My brother and sisters were also away at boarding school. Sometimes my mom would take us to the bus. I would travel dirt roads all day. We had to wear our school uniform, a white shirt and navy blue skirt and jacket with tie. We would be covered with dust, but we had to travel in uniform. They used the uniform for discipline because wherever you were in town catching buses or trains you behaved because you

had your school colors on. If you did not behave, the public would report you to the school.

When I was 14 Mom moved to Pietermaritzburg and took Gladys and me out of boarding school and made a home for us and John and Anne Bullen, brother and sister evacuees from England during the war. They lived with us as part of the family for five years. Mom thought it would be good for me to have other children around. She was 12 and he was nine when they came to us. They were both very difficult children. They had been spoiled and had not had discipline in their family. They returned to England at the end of the five years because that was the law. After that, their parents could then decide what they would do.

When I was 12 I had a special friend at school. I told her all kinds of secrets about the goings on in our household, but she broke my trust and repeated them to somebody.

I had a favorite teacher when I was at boarding school. Her name was Miss Wilkinson. She was very nice and taught us a lot about the Bible. Her father was a minister. She taught scripture but had to stop because some schools used it for extra math or extra English. We also had a mistress who was in charge of the high school and who was an atheist. She used to teach us a big bunch of rubbish. Some of us used to raise our hands and tell her that the Bible doesn't say what she said. When we got to be too much for her she would say, "Sit down and keep quiet."

In high school I had a history teacher I disliked intensely. She used to pick me to pieces in front of the class at every opportunity she got. She used to make out that I couldn't do anything, that I never knew anything, and that I was stupid. One thing I remember is that I was determined that I was going to do well on my history exam, so I studied and studied and studied and came up near the top of the class and got excellent marks. Her remark to the rest of the students was, "If she can do it, then what's the matter with you?"

My brother's children, when they lived on the farm, used to go away from home to boarding school when they were five. They used to go on a Monday morning and were fetched home again on a Friday, so they were home every weekend. Five is very young to go to boarding school.

Families didn't live on the farm. The people just worked for the day and their families lived elsewhere, not very far away. Most of our maids lived in their quarters. I remember my aunt had a maid who brought her baby. I used to play with the baby, thought this baby was wonderful. Then I got lice in my hair. My mother had to treat my hair with medication.

When I was seven my father bought a big two-story house at the seaside. It was situated on the top of a cliff and had the most magnificent view. There was a flight of 120 cement steps right down to the beach. We used to run all the way down them to the beach to get onto the sand. Our house was always full of people because all my cousins plus friends would come and stay. Most long holidays we were off to the sea. Some of

us used to sleep out on the balcony, usually the girls, and we could sit up in the morning and see the big hotel on the opposite cliff from us and could even see the time on the clock with binoculars. With the telescope we could see when our friends were in the sea. We would run down the steps to join them for an early swim. After the swim we would run up the steps for a huge breakfast.

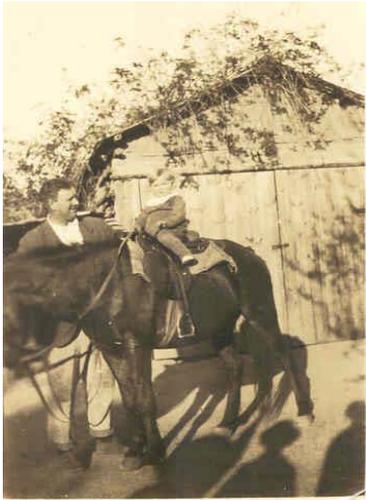
When we used to go to the seaside my mother would dress me just like a boy. I wore khaki trousers and a shirt. I used braces to hold my shorts up, and the shirt had elastic around the middle. My hair was cut short like a boy's. I can remember being in the water one time and some boys asking me if I was a boy or a girl. I said, "A girl, of course."

We had a pianola with a roller that had music on it. All we had to do was pedal and the music played. We used to run our fingers across the keys and pretend we were really playing the music. We all loved music.

We had a black man who used to do all the cooking for us. He cooked the fish that the men caught, and we had porridge cakes made out of maize and flour and then fried crisp. We had lots of fruit. The Indians used to come to the door and sell fruit from their little farms. They carried huge baskets filled with the fruit on a long bamboo pole over just one shoulder, balancing one basket in front and one behind. We'd buy lots of fresh fruit at a very good price, right at our door every day. My mother said she didn't have a holiday. She had her holiday when everybody went back to boarding school. She did have the cook, but she had to supervise and feed that mob.

I remember the smells of the cows being milked and the silage being made to feed the cows. Silage was made from chopped up old maize stalks. It was put in a pit where it was sort of half-cooked with the heat. The cows would also get fed with pumpkins that grew in our fields between the maize. The pigs ate the chopped up pumpkins, too. I remember the dip tank that the cattle and horses had to jump in and swim through. It had a specific smell, kind of a medicine smell. I remember the cooing of the doves in the trees as I rode my pony around the farm. Even to this day when I hear turtledoves it always puts me back on my pony on the farm.

I also remember the wind in the maize field as I rode with my father and the evenings when we went out walking in the late afternoon. We would hear the Zulu people singing down in the valleys or talking to one another. They could throw their voices from one hill to the other. It is a lovely sound when you hear the voices go back and forth. They harmonize beautifully. They lived in little thatched roof huts made out of mud. The women had a hard life. They would walk down to the river and back up the hill carrying big tin cans filled with water on their head, with their babies on their back. Most of them liked to live near a river because that was the only water they had.



*Joy with Dad*



*Mum, Dad, Audrey, Terrance, Gladys and Joy, 1932.*



*Mum, Audrey, Gladys and Joy, 1941.*



*Mum and Dad, 1938.*

One of the rules in our house was never to use bad language. On occasion when I did, my mother would wash my mouth out with soap. She said if I used words like that, my mouth was dirty. My daughter says I did that to her when she was little and used a

bad word. I said, "I am sure I never did that," but she is quite sure I did. We had to be polite and respectful to everyone always, including our servants. A lot of people were not, especially the children who thought the maids were there for them to order around, which they did; they just told the maids to do whatever they wanted them to do and the maids had to do it.

I had a room of my own. I didn't have to share with anyone. It had pretty curtains and a view of the garden. I would sit and watch my monkey go up and down his pole out there. I used to dress the monkey in doll clothes when he was little, but when he got older he became mean and would bite me. After my brother went off to the war we could not control it and it would get loose and go up by the main road and bite people as they went by. One day when we weren't home one of the neighbors shot him because my mother couldn't control him anymore.

My father used to take me with him sometimes when the farmers had a competition for the black people for the best bead-decorated horse. They would have a day of sport for them with prizes. It was quite fun. A lot of the black people have a ritual when the boys are about 16. They are gotten together and have to camp out in the open in just little make-shift huts which are usually just a few branches tied together with a blanket or something over them. They have to live there and fend for themselves for about two weeks and are not allowed to ask for food. It is quite tough. All they have is a blanket around their neck for clothes, and their whole body is painted white. On a certain day they are circumcised without any anesthetic. Very often a sharp rock which is often not sterile is used and many of them have died. It is a very painful ritual. After that they can go back to their homes and are considered men. You could see them in the black townships. They live differently from the white people, on the whole. They live in their part of the township and the white live in theirs. Now they can buy a house if they can afford it and live anywhere they like. It is not segregated as it used to be.

I remember riding behind my father on his horse. As soon as I was old enough to hang on tight enough I rode behind him. He tied a cushion behind the saddle and anchored it to the horse. I held tightly onto his broad leather belt. I rode everywhere like that with him until I was about four and then I had my own pony. I had a leading rein on my pony, so my father would lead me with him. When I was six I rode by myself. It was very safe for me on the farm because all the black people I met while riding around, sometimes on the main road which went through our farm, knew me, knew who I belonged to, and who our family was. So I would stop along the road and talk with anybody and have a chat with them in their language. Today you don't do that; you have to watch your children and not let them out of your sight. It is not safe to go out riding on many of the farms anymore. You used to be looked on as part of the family as far as the black people were concerned, but the new generation is not like that.

A typical day as a child was breakfast in good time and then riding my horse to the next farm to share a governess with my cousins. In the afternoons I would play by myself with my pets--dogs, cats, a monkey, a baby deer, and a lamb which I raised on a bottle. The chores were all done by the black maids in our home. I had no chores

growing up. We always had morning prayers together. The food we had normally was like here, bacon and eggs, and also maize porridge. On holidays we had fresh fish from the sea. At Christmas we would have roast lamb, roast beef, roast pig—a little one that was always nice—and turkey, just like here. Being on a farm is a wonderful life for a child. I always said I would marry a farmer, but I didn't.

The housemaids on the farm made samp. Dried hard corn was placed in the center of a hollowed out piece of tree trunk. They would stand on both sides and take turns in stamping the corn with a length of pipe to break up the corn ready for cooking. The corn was then boiled with red beans, to make a meal. To make mealie meal (corn meal) they would grind corn very fine between two large stones.



Mum Gran Larkin

My grandmother on my mother's side lived with us sometimes; she moved around, staying with each of her children about three months at a time. She was like a Victorian grandmother; she ruled the roost, was very strict, and never allowed me to do the things I normally was allowed to do, so when she watched me I always got punished when my mom came home. I was first to tell my mother what I had done because I had such a guilty conscience. I can't remember any of my other grandparents as they died when I was very young.

### *Celebrations*

Christmas and Easter were special times. Tickies and sometimes silver charms were put in the Christmas pudding. A tickie is a small silver piece of money worth three cents. These were well scrubbed and then put in a saucepan and boiled before using in the pudding. You had to be careful when you ate the pudding not to bite on one. It was kind of fun. On our Christmas table we always had crackers. They were made of paper and tied on both ends. There was a piece of paper in the middle that you put your thumb on and everybody crossed their arms and pulled at the same time and it made a popping sound. We also had fruitcake. We always liked a dark cake with almond icing and hard icing on top of that. At Easter we sometimes went to church camps. One of my fondest memories is going with my family to camp on a farm for Easter services and celebration. People came from the whole neighborhood and camped for a few days. There were lots of children, young people, and adults, and everybody had so much fun.

Birthdays were special with presents and sometimes a party. Weddings were very special and a time for real celebration. Funerals were always sad. At the farm when I was little I used to hate it if there was a knock on the door at night. I don't know why, but most of the farmers used to turn to my mom and dad if there was trouble in their house. So whatever was happening, they would fetch mom and dad who would go off in the night to see what they could do to help.

Union Day was May 31<sup>st</sup>. This changed to Republic Day when the country became a republic. Then there was Guy Fawkes Day, November 5<sup>th</sup>. To celebrate this we had big bonfires and lots of fireworks. That was really celebrating something that happened in England but for us children it was another celebration that we cared about.

Dingaan's Day was December 16<sup>th</sup>. Dingaan was a very cruel chief of one of the tribes. He had some of the leaders of the trekkers come to his hut. The black people (Zulus) had hidden their spears in the ground and at a signal from Dingaan they grabbed the spears and killed the white people. This is called the battle of Blood River because the river ran red with blood from all those killed, both black and white.

One of my saddest, most frightening experiences was when I was eight and we were on holiday at the seaside. A little boy fell off a cliff into the water. People searched for hours until they found him in the water and then brought the body up on the beach. That was my first time to see a dead person; he was partly eaten by fish. I was very afraid. In fact, I think I was afraid of a dead body right up until I went into nursing.

### *My Parents*

I remember standing next to mom in the pantry as she baked and I scraped bowls. She was a short, slim, tiny lady, maybe five feet. Her shoulders would fit under my arm. She was very loving and I loved her dearly. When she was 80 she drove a little Volksey car. She used to drive to visit my sister who was far away on the mission field, almost on the border of the Congo, in Zambia. My sister was headmistress of a black girls' boarding school way off in the bush. My dad was quite a big man with broad shoulders. He was fairly fat though not as fat as a lot of Americans. He was full of fun and mischief, very loving, and I loved him dearly, too. My mother had an awful job sometimes because when we were naughty he was naughty with us. She got very embarrassed about her family misbehaving in public sometimes. She would try to control the children, and dad wasn't much help because he was laughing.

When my dad was 52 he died of kidney failure due to hypertension. He died in the hospital in Durban. He was sick there for a long time. I was 11 years old and all the rest of my family was there but I was not. This made me feel left out of the family. One of the missionaries came to fetch me one day from school. When they came I got excited because I thought I was going to see my dad. All the way back to the mission station I talked about going to see my dad, but when I got there another missionary told me that my dad had died. They did try to prepare me; I remember them saying your dad may not come back, but it didn't sink in. Then one of my male cousins picked me up and drove me all the way to Durban. I missed my dad very much. I was close to him.

### CHAPTER THREE: TEEN YEARS

I always enjoyed it when the young people from our church went in a big, covered truck to visit the young people in another town. We would leave straight from work. We would pile in the back and sit on the floor, packed like sardines, and sing all the way going and riding back at night. It was fun.

I think the Bible was my favorite book. Bev Shea has always been one of my favorite singers. He came to South Africa when my daughter was 15. We went to the meetings that he had in Johannesburg. She went with a group of young people from the church and became a Christian that night.

I was allowed to date. I had a few boyfriends. I don't know where any of the fellows are now, but I do know one of them became a minister. At holidays young people would come and stay with us. My mother trusted me, and I would not have broken her trust in anything. I had to be home by 10:00 p.m. I was very young, 16. My mother always knew who I was with and where and what I was doing. I was out with the young people at the church, so it wouldn't have been hard to find us. We used to go hiking. There was a waterfall not very far away and we used to hitchhike. In those days it was quite safe. We went in a group, and there were always some fellows with us girls; we wouldn't go on our own. We were safe. This wouldn't do these days, can't take that chance. Although, when my son was in the army he used to hitchhike all the time. He used to hitchhike from his camp to where we lived to bring his washing home; he didn't like doing it himself. I would do his washing, and a couple of days later he'd come back and fetch it all. When he got a motor car he used to give people lifts all the time. I used to tell him, "Graham, it's not safe; one of them will hit you over the head or shoot you one day." He said, "No, when I used to hitch home when I was in the army there were people who were very good to me, so I'll give them a lift home."

## CHAPTER FOUR: ADULTHOOD

After the war, when I was 18 I went to live in England with my mother for two years. My mother and father had saved all their married life to go to England one day, and then my Father died just before the war. I had an aunt there and her mother was also in the house. I went to London and did training in childcare from birth to seven years old. It was an 18-month training course, very interesting. I love children. I always have loved children.

After we'd been there two years, just before I turned 21, we went back to South Africa and I went to Durban to work for a while. I then went to Entabeni Hospital, a Zulu name meaning "up on the hill," and trained to be an RN. While I was doing my general nurse's training there were two funny incidences. The first was when I was on night duty and I heard one of the nurses shout to me, "Quick, Larkan, a male patient is jumping over the hospital garden wall." He had dementia tremens caused by alcohol. He was clad in his pajamas and shoes. As the two of us ran down the street after him he was calling, "Help, help." It was late at night and all the house lights were being switched on. Eventually a man came out of a house and took us back to the hospital. The patient caused more trouble and we had to put him in a straight jacket tied to his bed. Early in the morning an ambulance was called and we had to ride with him, holding him down. He was taken to a special hospital that dealt with people like that. Another day one of my patients told me he could see a hen laying an egg. That night he became violent and chased the nurse up and down the passage. The patients in private rooms were standing behind their doors watching the performance. The poor little nurse got a terrible fright. This man was also sent away to the special hospital.

It was three-and-a-half years for the RN and then I had nine months training for midwifery. Before you could become a midwife you had to have completed RN training. I went to Addington Hospital for my midwifery.

I enjoyed my nurse's training very much, but while there I got the chicken pox. My friend had been nursing in the children's ward, and she got very sick one night. She was lying in bed and I was lying on the bed next to her. Another friend of ours was also there, but she had had chicken pox. Somehow we never thought about getting it. The next day my friend was covered in spots, so I said, "Oh, great, I've never had chicken pox." The day she came back out of isolation I was sent to the hospital, so I suppose it took about 10 days for me to get it. I was covered in spots and was very sick. As an adult, you get very sick, but some children also can get very sick. I saw a picture of a little black baby who had it and it went in his eye. He lost the sight in his right eye.

Straight after I had chicken pox I went by bus to visit my married sister since I had a few days off from the hospital.



*Joy nursing in  
England*

She had seven children, so she worked all her married life. When the children were small, she ran a boarding house. She lived at a place called Eshowe which was near Durban, not very far up the north coast, and there I met my husband, Cyril Arnold Loyd Vermooten. He was one of her two boarders; they were treated like family. Cyril was a medical technologist and being in medical work myself, I was interested. He was working in Eshowe at the hospital there. He walked to work every day, quite a good walk. He took me to his laboratory and showed me slides. The hospital where I trained was very good in that they encouraged us to bring our boyfriends to the lounge for tea, coffee, or soup.



*Joy when she met Cyril*



*Cyril when he met Joy*

*Our wedding.*



**Our Wedding**

When I'd been doing midwifery two weeks, we got engaged and four months later we got married. We decided to get married because we didn't really have a home to go to. We got sick and tired of walking along the beach every evening. After we got married, we got a little flat behind Addington Hospital, almost on the beach. The flat was handy for us both. We used to get most of our meals at the hospital because we bought a book of tickets every month. We had a full course meal in the day and orange juice or milk or tea or whatever we wanted. We were treated very well. We were married on Saturday, March 20, 1954, my 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was born in 1928 and he was born in 1929. We have been married 48 years.

When I was little there were several relatives who lived close. It was nice to see them. On Sundays we used to go out to my cousins' place. There was a wood and iron building there that we used as a church. All the farmers used to come with their families. It was very nice, very informal. Usually the American missionaries would come, mostly the one who lived about three miles from us on a mission station. My husband and I were married at Elim mission station in the little church. It was a church for black people. The American missionary, Mr. Adam Ferguson, took part in the ceremony. My minister, Rev. Hudsonreed, traveled from Durban, which was about a hundred miles away especially to marry us. There were about a hundred guests at the wedding, missionaries, farmers, relatives, and friends. I felt that if we got married in town, everybody goes to the wedding and half the time they go just because it is another wedding. I wanted the people who were really interested in us and who I knew would travel to the farm. My brother Terence gave us the reception on the lawn at the farm, the three-tiered wedding cake, and a check.

It was a very nice country wedding and reception. Everybody knew everybody. It was lots of fun. My sister-in-law Enid was very artistic. Our table was on the veranda and was decorated with rocks and beautiful flowers. At the front of the table a big arch was put up and decorated with green ferns and pink carnations. The table with the wedding cake on it stood under the arch.

Wedding cake in South Africa is not a sponge cake. It is a heavy fruitcake, usually three tiers high. The bottom layer is cut up and wrapped in cellophane paper ready to serve then packed back inside the box which is the mock bottom layer. When it is time to serve the cake two little doors can be opened to take it out to carry to the guests in little baskets. My sister Gladys was my bridesmaid. I had two little flower girls, my sister Audrey's daughter Winsome and my brother Terence's daughter Marilyn. My brother had loaned his car to two young fellows, so they took us to the place of our honeymoon and then returned his car. The place was a guest farm, which was quite a good way from our farm, up near the mountains. They thought it was wonderful driving my brother's plush car. We stayed on the guest farm for a week and then caught the bus back to Durban. I went back to work but my husband still had a week of holiday, so he had to go and buy the things that we needed immediately.



*Gladys, Winsome and Marilyn.*

Approximately one year later we went to Pretoria. Cyril worked at the Bureau of Standards in Pretoria to develop a department of microbiology and food technology. He tested some of the tins of food from each batch. The people who worked with the food were allowed to have some of the unopened cans of ham, fish, chicken, sausages, fruit, and vegetables. We did not have to buy very much food at that time.

## *Camping*

My husband and I used to take our family and go to the big animal parks. Kruger National Park is a very famous tourist attraction. There are several camps that you can drive to, some more rough than others and some you could stay in a small hotel nearby or rent a big house. We used to like to rough it. A couple of times we went to a game reserve that wasn't very far from us. We lived in this camp that was fenced in to keep us safe from the wild animals. We had to be inside before it got dark as the gates were closed as soon as it got dark. We could hear the lions roaring at night. There was a plush hotel but we chose not to stay there because if you are going to be in the wild, then you want to be in the wild. We rented a log cabin that had only a double bunk bed and one other bed, a cupboard to hang clothes, and a couple of shelves for provisions, and that was it. Everybody in the camp shared shower cubicles. We cooked outside over an open fire a lot, barbecue mostly. You could get out of camp at 6:00 in the morning and drive around to see the animals till about 10:00 when it starts getting hot and all the animals disappear into shade. Then we would come back to camp and cook, rest, whatever, and then as soon as it started to cool down we were out in the car and driving around until it was getting dark when we had to go back in the camp.

One night the game warden took us on a drive, which she used to do part-time. She drove a land rover, not an exceptionally big one, but I suppose there were around ten of us in it. She had a loaded gun across the dashboard. The nearest she ever came to shooting an animal was when a hippopotamus charged the group, but just as she was about to shoot, it turned and ran away. A hippopotamus can bite you in half with just one bite; they are more dangerous than a lion. We saw lots of lions and elephants, lots and lots of zebras, and all different kinds of deer, buffalo, and wildebeests. In the beginning a lot of young elephants were brought in but they began misbehaving because there were no big elephants to keep them in check. The young elephants started to do all sorts of things like bumping cars, so some big elephants had to be brought in to discipline them.

The South African animal emblem is the spring buck, a light brown animal with a white stripe on its body, and horns. It is very beautiful. They do what is called pronking. Pronking is when the deer spring up and down on stiff legs and kind of bounce. In a big field there was a whole herd of spring bucks. It was like they looked at us and decided to show off. Right across this field they turned around and pronked all the way back. It was beautiful to see. Sometimes you can see a lion or cheetah stalking an animal and can try and watch, but sometimes you get separated by a bush and can't see what they do. Sometimes you can follow them in your car but you must not frighten them, and then you can actually see them make a kill.

In this park they didn't have rhino, but Kruger National Park has rhinos. The white rhino is not a vicious animal so you could walk near them, but the black rhino are vicious and you can't go anywhere near them without a guide. The guide always takes you on the side away from the wind so that the wind doesn't take your scent toward them. Their

eyes are small but their sense of smell is exceptionally strong, so they pick up scent and charge. Once my husband went up the hill with a guide and I sat in the car with the children. A black rhino picked up their scent and started pawing the ground. My husband and the guide came running down the hill away from it. Many times the game ranger when he comes across a rhino unexpectedly gets caught before he can get to the nearest tree. The rhino can damage a person badly with its horn.

There is a place at Cape Town where you can see penguins by the hundreds. Tourists flock there. Ropes are put up to separate penguins and people. You can stand on the beach and watch them waddle around in the sand and swim in the sea.

My son reminds us of a time when he was little and we took the children to a game reserve. We came around a corner and there was a huge elephant with one of its tusks broken off at the end. His ears were flopping up and down. We sat there watching this elephant and it started trumpeting and his ears started flapping more. I whispered to my husband, "Start the car, start the car." The car wouldn't start and the children started crying as the elephant came toward us. I said, "Look, it's beautiful; look at its big ears." The car finally started and as we were taking off the elephant charged. It was a terrifying experience.

There used to be a big giraffe, I think his name was Fred, that used to stand in the middle of the road, and if you tried to pass him in the front he would move forward and if you tried to go in the back he would move backward to stop you. If you didn't heed him he would smash your windscreen with his head. We were very careful with him. We always waited for him to move. Also, with buffalo when they are on the move, you never try to cut them off; you never go through the middle of a herd. If there is a big herd crossing the road you wait till all have passed. You never want to get between a cow and her calf. All wild animals are dangerous because they are unpredictable.

South Africa is a beautiful country with the wildlife and beaches. The mountains in Cape Town are sometimes a purple color. When the sun sets they turn a beautiful pink.

### *Unexpected Turn*

An unexpected turn in my life came when my husband lost his job, our home, and all our finances when an embargo was placed on our country. Many innocent people suffered. He had been a consultant microbiologist and we had traveled extensively to several countries. He had gone into business for himself and had done exceptionally well. We were in terrible financial trouble for several months, but a ladies' group brought groceries and vegetables to us, a butcher gave us meat, and we were given several hundred rand by people we didn't know.

## *Christianity*

Religion has always been a part of my life, not religion, but Christianity—there is a difference. When bad things have happened to me I have had an anchor and a rock to turn to for comfort and guidance. When I was 12 I became a Christian and was baptized. My husband and I were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The new living translation of the Bible says in Philippians 4:4-7, “Don’t worry about anything, pray about everything, tell God what you need, and thank him for all that he has done, and if you do this you will experience God’s peace which is far more wonderful than human life can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds if you live in Christ Jesus.” This is what I thought of when I had my cancer operation. I knew my children and all the people we know were praying for us so I had complete peace. I didn’t have any fear whatsoever that day.

Hebrews 13:5 has always been special for both my husband and me. It says, “God himself has said I will not in any way fail you, nor give you up, nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake you, let you down, relax my hold on you, assuredly not.” “I will not” is said three times. Verse 6 says, “We take comfort and are encouraged, confidently and boldly, to say the Lord is my helper. I will not be seized with alarm. I will not fear, dread, or be terrified. What can man do to me?”

Psalms 91 is a favorite of mine. It says, “He takes us under his feathers, like a mother hen cuddling her chicks and they are safe.” That is what I feel like in times when things go wrong.

## CHAPTER FIVE: LIFE MISSION

I really enjoyed my nursing. I love people and enjoy helping them. Being a midwife I felt such excitement at delivering a baby. Every birth was a miracle from God; I really believed that. I would have liked to have gone back to it, but everything has changed so much. Once I did take a refresher course with some of the other nurses and doctors' wives, but I didn't start doing it again.

A high point in my life was when Cyril and I met and married and traveled to other countries on business. Some of the places we traveled to were Switzerland, Holland, Germany, Italy, England, and Vienna. A really high point was when my children were born. I always wanted children. I always said that if I couldn't have children of my own, I would adopt them.

A rewarding aspect of my life is having brought up my children and now watching them bring up their children, especially in the Christian field. We are very proud of all our children and grandchildren. My husband who has loved and understood and encouraged me at all times has had a profound influence on my life. He is the best friend I have ever had. Our interests are mostly the same, and we do everything together. What I value most in our friendship is being able to communicate and do things together.



*Graham and Dian*



*Graham's 21st*



*Ian, Linda and Graham with Gran*



*Ian and Ingrid*

## CHAPTER SIX: LATER YEARS

Audrey, my oldest sibling, died at her home when a blood clot moved from her leg to her heart. She had her grandchildren that day out of boarding school in the town where she lived. She had just taken them back and walked in the door and told her husband that she didn't feel well. He said, "Do you want me to call the doctor?" She said, "No, I think I will be all right." She lay down on the bed and then came walking through to him and said, "Stan, call the doctor quick." While he was on the phone with the doctor she dropped dead. She slid out of a chair onto the floor. She was gone, just like that.

Terence was next in birthing order. He went to World War II when he was 19 years old. He was a fighter pilot and then a bomber pilot. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for bravery. We were very proud of him. When he and his wife were traveling on a tennis trip, she was really good at playing tennis, he looked funny to her so she got his blood pressure tablets from the car and gave him one and he seemed to be doing better. But later when she got back to the hotel she realized something was terribly wrong and called an ambulance and rushed him to the nearest hospital. He died at the hospital of a heart attack.



***Terrence***

Gladys is next. She was a missionary in Zambia most of her life and we are very proud of her. She is 82 and lives in a home for elderly ladies in Pietermaritzburg. My nieces who are my oldest sister's children keep in touch with her. I am her only family member left. My nieces are very good to her.



***Joy and Gladys***

I admire my mother the most in my family because she had to bring me up by herself after my father's death. She was the one responsible for all my needs. I think I identify with Gladys because she is all I have left.

I am presently retired. We have always remained busy so there was no real adjustment. Three times a week I am at aqua aerobics. We spend time at the library and attend talks at the hospitals and the cancer association. We go to a dinner once a quarter with the doctors and have a wonderful meal while the doctors teach us about strokes, etc. Taking care of the home and preparing meals take time. We go for walks and to church.

As an elder in our community I think our responsibilities are to teach younger people how to live productive and fulfilling Christian lives.



*Cyril and Joy with Ryan and Shane*



*Cyril and Joy with grandchildren*

I have six grandchildren. The oldest, Kristen, 20, goes to the university to study to be a physical therapist. She took a year off, worked, and went to England for six months. Next is Justin and Chantelle, twins, 17. Kyle is ten. They live in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and belong to my eldest son, Ian, and his wife, Ingrid. Ian is one of the pastors at the Church of the Nations. He was headmaster of the school at the church. My son Graham and his wife Diane have two children, Ryan 13 and Shane 12. They live in Cape Town, South Africa. We don't get to see them very often because it is a long journey. Graham is a youth missionary and also runs a media training and production company called Media Village. My grandchildren are wonderful kids.

If I could do things differently in my life I would change some of the things I did with bringing up my children. All the things Cyril and I did bringing up our family we considered the right way. We did not have all the books and help that are available to parents these days.

I have had a good life. There is nothing that I regret about my life. I don't think I would like to live it all over again. I am glad that I brought up my children and they are all grown.

I wish for the future generation to live close to God so that their lives will be fulfilling and productive for God.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: SPRINGFIELD EXPERIENCE

My only daughter, Linda, came to Springfield as a missionary with Hospital Christian Fellowship. After six years she went to Central Bible College and earned a BA in Bible. Then she earned a Master of Divinity at the Assemblies of God Seminary. She completed the Doctor of Psychology at Forest Institute in August 2002 and is now in an internship in a state hospital in Nebraska. She is an ordained pastor and while working on the doctorate she was a part-time chaplain at Lakeland Hospital.



*Linda's graduation*

We just loved Springfield when we came here. Everybody was so friendly and made us feel welcome. The message I would like to give to the Springfield community about welcoming minorities into its life and work is they should be welcomed by the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, the people of the city, and especially their neighbors. When we get a new neighbor, regardless of where they came from, we take them a cake and welcome them to the neighborhood. That way they know who we are and if they want to invite us over or not, that is fine.

I went to a meeting at the cancer association and happened to mention that I had never had a mammogram and I was 71 years old. The staff was shocked, and I went off to get it. It showed possible cancer. I went to Ellis Fischel Cancer Hospital in Columbia for further tests. Shortly after I had a left mastectomy. I went as an outpatient and Cyril took me home in the afternoon. I am on a Tamoxifen tablet every day to try to prevent any further cancer. I didn't have to take radiation or chemo. I have now been a survivor for three years. When they told me I would have to have surgery, I didn't know what to do because I have no medical insurance. I have nothing. It is hard to get help if you are not an American citizen. We had to agree to pay a set amount each month.

When we lost everything, we started Living Free. Living Free is a motivational ministry that Cyril and I did, and it has been a help to many people. We believe "Make the rest of your life the best of your life." Living Free is described in Cyril's story. We came to America the last trip in September 1998 planning to start Living Free here. We had an appointment with the INS for October 17, 2002, for the green cards. My beloved husband Cyril was diagnosed with a brain tumor in August 2002. My daughter and I flew with him back to Cape Town, South Africa. He wished to be with his sons and their families. His grandchildren were his delight. We had ten very good days together before he was confined to bed and passed away on September 26, 2002. Safe in the arms of Jesus.



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