

JOHANNESBURG
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One day in the distant future, one of my grandchildren may be interested to know more about his ^{or her} grandfather. So before my memory starts fading and playing tricks on me I had better write it all down.

The opportunity to write comes from sitting at the Eastgate shopping complex in Johannesburg while waiting for customers for portraits. I have always regarded time as precious and rather than killing it as some people try to do I try to make the most of it.

To the best of my knowledge I was born in Riga on 8 December 1921. Due to a clerical error on my South African naturalisation certificate, it was changed to 21 December. Because I have never seen my birth certificate and to avoid a whole lot of delays and problems, I have subsequently used 21 December for all documents.

Looking back on my childhood I realise now how poor we were. My mother and father and grandmother (my mother's mother) all lived in a large shop which was partitioned off from the public. At the back of the shop was a little room up six steps and a toilet. This little room was our kitchen where we cooked on a primus stove. The 'bedroom' where we all slept was also our living room, dining room, etc. As my parents spent the whole day working in the front shop, we seemed to manage but at a huge price.

It is not surprising that there was always friction and arguments with my father and the two women. The inevitable result was divorce. Both my mother and grandmother were strong, determined characters. My father was more of a scholar and gentle soul and was not, I think, much help in the difficult task of making a living in our knitting workshop which the two women managed. In addition, we employed another lady on a knitting machine. So after long and bitter arguments, sometimes blows, my father left. He used to visit me and take me to the park. I remember clearly he gave me a small toy truck which I would up and it ran along the ground. I was about eight years old. We never entertained or had visitors apart from the public coming to the shop to have all kinds of knitting work done.

I used to help in the workshop mainly winding wool on to cones for the machines. I had a couple of close friends but mainly remember playing all kinds of games we invented ourselves, as well as a lot of chess. This playing was always at my friend Misha's apartment. He and his baby sister lived with their parents on the 5th floor of the building next door. They also had a large oil painting - perhaps a print - which I always admired and examined endlessly. The other great interest was being a member of the Hashomer Haatzair Zionist Youth Movement.

My father, I was told, went to live in Belgium. Sometimes during school holidays I was sent by train overnight to Rezece, a small rural town where my father's father was a lawyer. His wife, my father's stepmother, used to feed me sheep's brains and onions, all fried together. I think I eventually began to like it. I cannot remember a single item concerning my grandfather. They had horses. I used to ride bare back. Below the house in the valley was a river. The horses frequently took me there and we swam together as I clung to the neck. Once the horse began a gently canter. I laughed with excitement but could not make him stop. Eventually I fell off on to my back and hurt myself. The horse stopped and we both walked home. I did not tell anyone I fell.

These were strange times for me. I did not have any friends and was alone. The old people were stern and not much fun. I went there about three times. Before my father left us, once a week we went to the bath house. A large structure with lockers, baths and showers and a steam room (Turkish bath). I usually had a hot shower and put my clean clothes on.

After my father left I went with my mother. Either she waited for me or I for her when we were finished. Sometimes I used to have a proper bath but that was much dearer. We also had some rich friends, Popyanski, who owned a shoe shop and factory. There were two brothers, a bit older, who always fought with each other. Sometimes I used to have a hot bath in their apartment.

In winter, I skated if I had the money to enter a stadium which was all iced up and hundreds of people went round and round on skates. Many speeding, others learning and falling on the ice. I did not have proper skating boots and always had problems strapping the skates to my ordinary boots.

In summer the greatest fun was swimming in the huge river, Dvina. We had two places to swim. One along the shore in the industrial area at a saw mill. The river there was covered in great logs floating, some tied and some loose. We used to jump from one to another and swim in between, often falling and hurting oneself. I shudder when I think of the enormous danger such activity was to life and limb. The other place was in a proper swimming pool. This was a huge wooden construction completely afloat and tied permanently for the summer months to the main pontoon bridge which carried all of the traffic of trams, cars, lorries, horsecarts and pedestrians across the Dvina on which Riga is built. It was about one kilometre long. Before winter, it was dismantled and floated away to be reassembled the following spring as soon as the ice had broken up and floated away. Men and women had separate sections of this floating pool which was attached to the bridge in the centre of the river. Everyone had to swim naked. The explanation given to me was because some bathing costumes might be too dirty. As the water was a green-black anyway, I never understood that logic. There was a high wooden wall so ~~no~~ one from the bridge could see any naked bodies. Perhaps it was to discourage people to swim into the river outside the pool.

Today, 8 February 1988, Ilan's letter asks me about my early relationship with my parents. Perhaps these things are very important today to maintain a healthy mental attitude towards parents, children, strangers and people around one in general as well as one's own health. In the times that I was small and given the circumstances of our lives, such an exercise would be totally foreign, unprofitable, superfluous and no doubt embarrassing. We lived - survived - from day to day. Tantrums or hysterics, speculation about love and feelings were not tolerated or given much room to develop. If I misbehaved, I got a hiding. This happened often. I do not remember receiving much affection from anyone. I was upset when the adults shouted and screamed at each other. Perhaps it affected me. I don't know and frankly it's the first time in my life I have even thought about it in the context that Ilan is asking.

A thought has just occurred. Five months ago, when we spent a month in France with Ilan and his family, I said to him 'Was it not a big waste of time to spend hours in the Metro commuting to and from work each day?' His reply was that he uses the time for thinking and writing and it has become a very important period in which he can do that without work and home distractions. That is exactly what I have been doing too, here at Eastgate for years.

The differences in age and circumstances are considerable. The priorities too are far from equal. I can now relax and the time in financial terms is not as valuable to me as it should be to him.

To continue about my parents...The practical everyday living used up all my parents' and grandmother's time. They did not have time for behaviour which they perhaps considered trivial such as playing or talking to me. The great exceptions were religious holidays, Shabat and a certain devotion to culture. My grandmother took her religion seriously. We did not work on Shabat. My grandmother observed the Jewish custom of not cooking or switching on the lights on Shabat. On Friday, a large pot was filled with prepared potatoes carrots (zimmes), meat prines, dumplings, onions, spice and whatever else we had. I used to take this pot to a bakery near us. The baker did not work on Saturdays and let his huge stone and brick oven cool down. There was immense heat still in it. Our pot and a great many others were placed inside the oven to remain there overnight. The next day, Saturday, I again went to collect it about lunch time - this time armed with a blanket as the pot would be very hot.

This meal was called a 'Cholunt' and was absolutely divine. Sometimes it was a bit burnt, but still very edible. It was not a regular event, unfortunately. I don't remember whether the baker charged or not for his trouble. He had a very long wooden flat oar to get the pot out and had to shuffle the pots around in the oven with it until I could tell him which was ours.

Often we used to sit in the dark making certain that the sun had set and the first star appeared in the sky before we switched on the lights. This happened particularly during the years when my grandmother and I lived alone, before my departure for South Africa.

Pesach in particular, was a great time. The four of us were always invited to my father's relations for the two Seders. I don't know what the relationship was to my father as we did not go there too often. It was a great event and in particular there was Nora. She was the most beautiful girl I ever saw in those early days. Five years my senior with dark hair and flashing eyes, but very friendly. We were about twenty people around a long table with food and wine to take one's breath away. They lived in an apartment as nearly all in Riga did. Yom Kippur was spent entirely in and around the local Shul. My grandmother cried all day as did all the other elderly women. I think that was in an endeavour to reinforce their feelings of remorse for past sins and hope for forgiveness. Fasting was no big deal as there was usually nice food at the end of the day. While on religion, I must mention Christmas. The Christian young lady, Mary, who worked for us on a sophisticated knitting machine for many years, used to take me to her parent's home for Christmas eve. It too, was a memorable night. I do not remember participating in their meals, but certainly remember having sweets, apples and pears and admired their beautiful pine tree in the room. Shabat I was discouraged from drawing and did much reading. I read Hebrew, German but mainly Lettish books, the first two in the original but the Lettish always translations. Favourite authors were Fenimore Cooper and Dumas. My mother enjoyed the theatre, mainly opera. She took me several times to the large opera house where local or visiting mainly German singers performed. In particular, I remember one Joseph Schmitd - a small man with an incredible voice. Sometimes we went to a symphony concert in the big park. One had to pay and I used to enjoy that, too.

I don't remember ever being taken or going alone to any exhibitions. I think my grandmother was responsible for my first drawing encouragement. She bought me a small frosted glass about 20 cm by 30 cm. I could use it as tracing paper on any picture and copy in pencil, wash it off and do another drawing. When the glass eventually broke, I was already hooked and continued to draw. I have one vivid memory of my father drawing an intricate brass candle stick with a bird and outstretched wings. This is the only memory I have of him doing anything artistic. Although I did not mind school, I was not a good pupil. Art and sporting sessions were my favourites. I was never best in art but thought I was. One term I failed geography, so my parents got me a student tutor to help. The next term I obtained the highest marks for geography. That was standard 4 or 5.

Playing volley ball was great and I made the school team. The Latvian education was fairly enlightened. The Jews could attend a completely Hebrew medium school which mine was where Lettish was simply a language subject. It was a government school in a brand new multi-storied building. No grounds at all, just a concrete large yard for games and sport. Most of the teachers were Jewish. Lunch time everyone got a light meal and a hot drink, usually cocoa. I was usually the first to get a large mug full as no one else liked to drink all the stuff that was floating on the surface in the huge pot. I thought that was the best part, so no one objected to me getting it first.

Art at school was not particularly inspiring. Nonetheless I approached every project big or small with great enthusiasm, picturing in my mind's eye all the colours, concept and style. The result seldom approached my ideas. Faces always fascinated me and I often used to draw them mainly enlargements from photographs which I squared up and tediously copied square for square. The more I drew, the greater my ambitions for more and greater work.

Soon after my mother left for South Africa, I persuaded my grandmother to give me enough money to buy some raw canvas and a couple of brushes. Oil paint in tubes was too dear. So I bought ground powder colour and mixed it with linseed oil, size and turpentine and made my own oil colours enough for each occasion. The first attempt was a painting about 40 x 70 cm of a discovery I made in some book. It was a pair of praying hands in black lines which I thought would be nice to paint in colour and of course about ten times bigger. My mother, now 90, still has it in her room and looks at it every day. The next effort was a painting of a clown, the same size as the hands, but this time from a coloured picture in a magazine. My third and I think last oil painting effort in Riga was a very large canvas of the picture my friend Misha had hanging in their apartment. The winter scene mentioned earlier which was the greatest painting I ever saw. The size about 100 cm x 60 mm. I got permission from Misha's parents to sit in their home and copy. It took a lot of paint. When it was dry I rolled it up and took it to show my grandmother and everyone else who was prepared to look at it. The previous two oils we rolled up and posted to my mother in Johannesburg. Both are alive and with us. The large winter scene would have cost too much to send and is lost. The oil painting had become too expensive. All my other art work was back to pencil or water colour on any kind of paper or board I could get. There was another source of encouragement and interest in me which I remember with great affection. My grandmother had a brother, Serebro, who lived far from us in Riga. He and his family lived in a very large beautiful apartment. They were wealthy I think from owning property.

Mr. Serebro had three children, a son and two daughters. They were all at least 10 to 15 years older than me. My favourite person was Moshe, the son who was the eldest. He spent most of the year at a university in Basle studying civil engineering. This was because the Jewish quote of studens at the Riga university was full. It had to correspond to the percentage of the Jewish population in Latvia, roughly 5%. About once a year he would return from Switzerland on a brief holiday and I would be invited. I truly loved him for his interest in my drawings and his delightful exciting manner. About twenty years later, Estelle and I found him and his family in Ramat Gan, Israel. He told us he begged his father and sisters for years to abandon wealth and property and join him in Israel where he went after graduating. They did not follow his advice and perished in the war.

After my father's departure, conditions did not improve. Good friends of my mother, the Teitelbaums, were about to emigrate to South Africa. They promised to send us application papers for emigration. In due course, they arrived, were completed and returned. It was then that we discovered a number of people who applied years before and were waiting in the quota queue. Only a limited number were allowed into South Africa from each country per year. Consequently, it often took years of waiting, so we settled down to wait too. When after a few months, a permanent residence visa arrived for my mother, we were incredibly pleased. Evidently, the quota applied to the country of birth and since my mother was born in Russia from which no one could leave, that particular quote was never full. There was not enough money for me to accompany her. So off she went alone and I remained with my grandmother. The year was 1932 and I was eleven years old.

How my grandmother managed to cope with me and make a living for us both I shall never know. But manage she did. I think I was more trouble to her than earning a living. In retrospect, I think it was mainly due to the fact that telephones were not as freely available as today. Neither was I at all familiar with their use. The problem was that I used to disappear for hours on end and once, to my great ~~source of~~ shame, for several days. She was forever looking for me and since phones were scarce, we certainly did not have one in our workshop, it meant going from one of my friends to another looking for me. This sometimes meant climbing many floors - lifts were scarce as well - searching for me. About this time I joined a Jewish Youth movement whose principal aim was immigration to Palestine as it was then called. Because our Movement was strongly socialistic, whatever that meant, I was told not to talk about it to anyone in case the police got to hear about us. In fact, we were instructed to leave our meetings in small numbers and walk away promptly, avoid making a crowd and drawing attention to ourselves. Zeal and dedication was expected from everyone. We went on long hikes, some almost with military precision, learned many Hebrew songs imported from the kibbutzim in Palestine, participated in arguments and confrontation with our enemies to the right, the revisionist or Betar as they were called. Their solution to the Jewish 'problem' was also Palestine, but to be solved politically and not our way which was by settling on the land in kibbutzim. These confrontations sometimes became very heated and national news. The one I remember most clearly was when we had to meet a representative of our movement from Palestine. His name was Ben Gurion. As he stepped from his railway carriage at the station, he was pelted with eggs and other missiles thrown by our opposition, Betar.

Those were exciting days. On another occasion I told my grandmother that I had to participate in a long hike and would only get home late. This was during school holidays. About six of us set out and after walking all day, reached a large forest. Unlike South Africa, forests in Latvia or Eastern Europe and Russia can be extremely vast. The danger of getting lost if one ventured too deeply were very real. We chose a camp site far enough not to be observed from the road, yet within earshot of the traffic noise. It was much too late for me to return home that night as we probably were 20 km away from Riga. We built a shelter with all the foliage and wood lying around and spent the night in our new home. The next day we played around and resolved to return in the afternoon. Perhaps it rained - I do not remember. The fact remains that we spent another night in the forest in our much improved shelter.

We had all brought food and still had enough. Late on the third day I came home. My grandmother was beside herself with worry. She had been to the police for their help. She had no idea where we went or to whom to turn in her anguish. She did not know what to do first - hit me or hug me.

I was then about 12 years old. It was time to prepare myself for my barmitzvah. In spite of the anti-religious attitude of my Movement, it was a completely outrageous suggestion that I should not have my barmitzvah. So I learned my portion of the Torah with the help of a student rabbi. There was no band, guests or party. My grandmother watched from the ladies balcony as I chanted my portion on the Bima of our Synagogue. After the service I was given in 'shul' some 'lekach' which is a dark brown ginger tasting cake together with red traditional wine - religious fare. I don't remember receiving any gifts - the whole event passed very quickly without a ripple.

My mother's letters were a great event. Occasionally they included gold coins which were either half or full sovereigns. These were carefully fitted into a circular aperture in a card the thickness of the coin. I am sure they helped considerably with our living expenses.

Soon after my 14th birthday a letter came saying I was to prepare myself for the long journey to Johannesburg. The day soon arrived when my mother sent a ticket for the journey across Europe by train to Ostend, London, Southampton and with the Carnarvon Castle to Cape Town and Johannesburg. I did not know a word of English but wasn't afraid as my German was fairly good and was assured that that was enough to see me across the continent. At the Riga railway station, I got into a special international coach, parted from my sobbing grandmother and many new friends from the youth movement and waved them all good-bye. The date was June, 1935. Before going there was much talk among the adults about a new order in Germany and a man called Hitler. On no account was I to leave the coach while travelling across Poland and Germany to Berlin and beyond, to Brussels. My grandmother gave me food to last me the two days to Brussels. Apart from my excitement of doing this long journey, the trip was uneventful until I got off the train in Brussels one evening. My father was there to meet me. My mother must have informed him. It was strange to see him after all these years. He was obviously very moved to see me and kept remarking how I'd grown. We went to his apartment in Brussels. He introduced me to his wife and showed me a little baby girl about six months old - his daughter and my half sister.

I don't remember what we spoke about but do remember playing chess with him. After breakfast the next day he went with me by train to Ostend. We played chess all the way again and he was much too good for me. That was the last time I saw my father.

Twenty-nine years later I again heard from him. In London I was met by some strangers and was taken to a 'Shelter'. Here, I became friendly with a young adult also on his way to Johannesburg. All I remember about him was that he said he was a hairdresser. The most fascinating thing about London to me were the huge red double decker busses. I quickly learned which bus to take to and from the 'Shelter' and went for many trips. It was on a bus that I first learned the crazy British system of money. The conductor only gave 11 pence change when I gave him a shilling for a penny ticket, instead of 99 pence which I expected. My lack of English saved me from making a fool of myself. When I asked my friend he explained that unlike all the continental countries where they have 100 cents to the principal coin, the shilling only has 12 pence. This friend also explained that he was going on a ship called the 'Grandilly Castle'. It was leaving Southampton the same day as my 'Carnavon Castle', and that I could if I liked change my ticket to his ship, get a refund and travel for another whole week on the ocean visiting different places.

The advantages of changing the ticket were too obvious. So I did as he suggested, but did not think of letting anyone know about it.

The ship indeed stopped at many places. I remember Las Palmas, Madeira, Ascention and St. Helena. In Madeira I was offered bananas, forty for a shilling. A small suitcase which I had was quickly emptied, a shilling put in and lowered by a rope to the banana boards all around the ship. My shilling was replaced with 40 bananas. In Riga, tropical fruit was a great luxury. Grapes, bananas, oranges, etc were eaten by the wealthy and by the poor only when they were in hospital as a special treat and for health. So I could not resist buying 40 for only a shilling. After eating about 20 at once, I realised that apart from feeling a bit sick, I would not be able to eat the rest before they went rotten. So the next day when the ship sailed away, I sold 20 bananas to someone for a shilling. There was some kind of trouble over my transaction I think. Evidently I was not permitted to trade on board ship. Ascention Island was interesting because of the highest steps going up the side of a mountain that I have ever seen. On top were some big guns and soldiers. At St. Helena, I tasted granadilla fruit for the first time in my life.

There was also a strange grave which could only be seen if one bent over as the stone was in a depression. The guide said the man buried there was Napoleon and he wanted people to bow to him.

When the ship docked in Cape Town and after some formalities of which I was completely unaware, a strange lady helped to get me off the ship and took me to her home. She was not particularly friendly. Later when my mother explained a few things to me, I understood why. This person came to meet me a week before when the Carnavon Castle arrived. When I was nowhere to be found and in great perplexity as to why my mother asked her to meet me, she sent my mother a telegram. Of course my mother also had no idea of what happened to me and begged this lady to meet every ship from England and ask for me. This she did and decided on one last attempt when our ship arrived a week later.

Of my friend who suggested I switch ships, I remember nothing. We might have shared a cabin but even that left no memory at all.

The next day on a train to Johannesburg I got stuck into a basket of grapes given to me with other food for the journey. Of all the sub-tropical fruit seen in Riga, grapes were always the dearest and my favourite. I first tasted grapes when I was in hospital in Riga with typhus. Now here I had a whole basketful of this most delicious Cape fruit. How could I resist eating them immediately. To this day they have remained my favourite fruit, which I can eat non-stop. My four and a half weeks journey was coming to an end. Not many children at 14 undergo such an adventure, of that I was conscious. Not knowing English did not seem to bother me. There is little doubt that I enjoyed this long holiday without any supervision. Thinking of seeing my mother again and wondering what would happen in Johannesburg was all that occupied my mind. The sequence of events has become very blurred now. Of course I was happy to see my mother. We went to her home which was a round concrete room with a cement floor and round iron roof. It belonged to the Axelrod family and was next to their house. We had met Mrs. Axelrod many years before in Riga when she came on a visit.

She had a daughter about my age and three sons, all younger. They were my first english teachers.

Although I had just finished standard 6 in Riga, I was accepted at the local Jewish Government School for Standard 5 because of my total lack of english. After several months we moved to other lodgings. This time within the house in two adjoining rooms. It was also very much nearer to school in Doornfontein. This period was difficult for me and perhaps even harder for my mother. She worked as a supervisor in a knitting factory all day. I was not able to make friends as my english was very poor and I had lost much confidence in the strange new environment. Against many obstacles, my mother succeeded in placing me in Arcadia, the Jewish orphanage home in Parktown, Johannesburg.

This was very much better for me and also for my mother. My english improved immediately. I continued at the same school to which the Arcadia bus took and fetched me and many others from the home. I still had problems of acceptance among many of the boys probably mainly due to my poor english and heavy foreign accent, which has remained with me to this day. On the other hand, I also made some friends who supported me. Eventually, some friction provoked me into a fight with two boys in quick succession. The first a much older chap named Lipschitz. We had an impromptu fist fight which ended after a few minutes when the matron separated us. The result was inconclusive but I think I got the worst of the exchange and probably left with a bleeding nose.

The next fight a week or two later was much better organised. His name was Gordon. He always irritated and mocked me. So we had some words and finally agreed to a fight that evening in our dormitory. The beds were pushed aside. All the boys came to watch. Gordon wanted to box but I, who had no skill in boxing, opted for wrestling which I thought I knew. In the end we decided each could do as he liked. All I was interested in was to get this guy in some hold and get him to admit defeat. We were the same height and age and similar weight. The fight went as I planned. His boxing soon ended when I got near enough and had him on the floor. The hold I had him in was meant to hurt and it did. I would not let go until he said "I give up". At first he refused but I was just as stubborn and held on on top of him. Eventually he said the magic words - I let him go and it was all over.

After that night I had no problems with anyone until I left Arcadia which was two years later. As a result of my first fight with Lipschitz, I somehow became friendly with his younger brother, Issy. This friendship lasted long after we both left the orphanage and well after the war, until I left Johannesburg in 1948 for another war in Israel.

My art work received recognition as well. There was a constant demand for me to draw the Popeye cartoon for cinema competitions my friends entered. The director of Arcadia decided to take me, with some of my work for an opinion to a well-known artist-sculptor, Rene Shapshak. He said the work was not bad but his offer to teach me was too dear for the orphanage^{and} was declined. My compensation was a lot of art material and, better still, an empty attic in a cottage where I could work undisturbed. My close friend, Issy shared this room with me. He was forever involved in mathematical problems and needed a place away from the noisy hall where we were all supposed to do our homework. We spent many hours together there saying nothing to each other, each doing his own thing.

On weekends I used to visit my mother and the Axelrod children, but Ann the daughter in particular. A great attraction was their tennis court where I had my first taste of the game. The circumstances in which my mother and I lived when I arrived in Johannesburg were not good for either of us and the best possible thing for me anyway was the orphanage where I had a home better than I ever had in my life - friends of my own age, good food and care and even encouragement for my art.

Family love of course was absent. On the other hand, I had had very little of that ever, so did not know what I was missing. My greatest regret at the time was the disruption of my schooling, of which I was acutely aware. As I was approaching 16, it was obvious that I could not continue much longer into high school. All the subjects were of course taught in english and I was still learning it. I was also much older than the others in my class and felt it. Finally, after 16, boys were expected to leave Arcadia unless they were very bright at school, in which case other arrangements were made for them.

The day arrived when I was invited before the committee responsible for the welfare and running of the orphanage. "What would you like to do when you leave here?" I was asked. There was no hesitation from me. "An artist" I said. This was not received too well. Before my 17th birthday, I had two jobs. The first with a sign-writer which mercifully only lasted a month or two. In addition to the boss, a middle aged man, there was an apprentice who had been there for two years. He was a big young strong blond chap. Often we had signs to prepare at the house from where the business was conducted. On one occasion there was a huge sign to be painted directly on a wall of a six storey building. Two ladders were hung from the roof and a plank placed between them on which to stand and another ladder to get down to the plank. I think there was some rope tied to each ladder as a safety precaution. To me it looked suicidal the whole contraption. Fortunately there was little room for two men to work together and as I was still a novice, could not do much. But I did have one stint only on this plank painting some enormous letters on my own. I think I refused to go a second time and in any case, my relationship with the old man wasn't very good.

Perhaps I did not show enough respect for the signwriting craft. After two months I went to the O.K. Bazaars display department and got a job as a junior ticket writer. The work here was very monotonous and soul destroying. I was the only male with three females. A month there was enough I think for all concerned. The next job the orphanage obtained for me had nothing remotely to do with art. Mr. Walter Chipkin had opened a wholesale grocery and hardware warehouse and needed a storeman and general assistant in completing orders. The pay was much better than the previous jobs.

Mr. Chipkin was friendly. By now I had left the orphanage and was living in a boarding house in Braamfontein, near the university. There were three university students living there, one of whom was to become my step-brother and five other men including myself. Mrs. Furman, a short fat lady ran the house and made our sandwiches for lunch. Her husband had a small shoe store and repair depot in town. I shared a room with "Ginger" who was about twice my age, and worked nightshift for the municipality. He had red hair and a red complexion and smoked non-stop even setting himself alight in bed just before going on shift.

Supper was always animated. There was much talking and arguing, which I enjoyed immensely. Dominating us all was a third year student, Morris Navious, who was studying mining engineering and came from Bloemfontein. Although I never participated in the conversations, being too young to know what they were talking about, Morris used to encourage me to speak and always tried to improve my english. There were two brothers as well. Bernie and Leslie Edelstein. Bernie was also a third year medical student while Leslie was apprenticed as a plumber. After work I often saw Mrs. Furman glued to the radio listening eagerly, joyously, sadly, apprehensively to the stock exchange prices. Morris explained to me that she was "tickey snatching". This meant buying low priced shares and as soon as they gained three pennies or more, sell them quickly.

On weekends I still visited the Axelrods, Ann and played tennis. My friend, Issy, was still in Arcadia. His older brother with whom I had my first fist fight, had died after an operation. There were a few other Arcadia friends with whom I kept in touch. One public holiday, I persuaded Issy to come on a hike. We walked to Florida Lake about 15 miles from Johannesburg. We built a shelter among some trees, changed into swimming trunks and went for a swim. We returned to find our camp in a shambles. Some food and clothes were stolen. The worst, one of Issy's and one of my shoes were taken so we remained in our sand shoes and took the train home.

Very occassionally my mother would visit me at the boarding house. One one such visit, she met Mr. Edelstein senior who came to see his two sons. They obviously met several times again, as a few months later, I was told she was going to marry him and go to live in East London. He was a plumber there and had some property. The two boys were from his first marriage to an Afrikaans woman, whom he divorced after several years of marriage. He had a widowed sister, a Mrs. Koseff living in Johannesburg to whom he introduced us and whose family Estelle and I have had a live long association to this day.

I enjoyed working for Walter Chipkin. In the hardware department I bought a few large plain ceramic dishes and porcelain plates and painted decorative figures on them in oils.

Ann Axelrod was given one and my mother has two and Walter Chipkin had one. He encouraged me and always challenged me to greater endeavour. Unfortunately he was forced to close his business for financial family reasons but promised to obtain for me another position not dissimilar to my present one. He kept his promise and I soon began working for L. Feldman & Co, a much larger firm dealing mainly in tobacco, cigarettes and household merchandise. At the same time I was offered board and lodging with a room to myself in Hillbrow with the Adler family. Bernie Adler, another friend from Arcadia made this offer which I accepted. It was much more convenient than living in Braamfontein for many reasons and cost no more. The year was 1938.

Immediately my mother settled in East London, she sent for her mother in Riga. They were living in a large house and had enough room for my grandmother. She arrived soon after and moved in with them. On my first holiday to the sea in East London, I met her again. Bernie and Leslie were there too on holiday. It was a full house and my mother had a hard time managing us all. I was friendly with my two step brothers but could never make either of them my friend. They were distinctly peculiar, each in his own way. Bernie now in his fourth year of medicine was extremely shy and unable to maintain a normal conversation for any length of time. He had a health fetish and showered several times a day. When not studying he was either on his bicycle or the microscope in his room. Leslie was totally different. Loud, careless, could not care about health or cleanliness. For a short while he joined the communist party and distributed their pamphlets in his spare time. I never met their mother. They visited her, but very infrequently, and never spoke of her.

Harry Edelstein, my step father was correct as far as I was concerned but no more. He was a very plain person and I would be very surprised if he ever turned a book in his life. His older son, Bernie was very obviously the apple of his eye and was extremely proud of him. A tragic event a year later converted this pride to a great sadness. Bernie used to travel great distances on his cycle, always alone. On one such trip he was hit by a car at night and left on the road. He was later picked up, unconscious, and moved to Vereeniging hospital and a few days later to the Johannesburg General Hospital. After a week, he recovered consciousness and his health after a month or so - but not entirely. His memory was lost, his speech impaired and he had double vision for months. He returned to medical school but was unable to continue. The rest of his life was in ruin and his father suffered with him. My mother too had to bear much of the hurt.

To increase my income I obtained an additional job from 6 p.m. to midnight. The job involved taking care of the Jewish Guild premises in the centre of Johannesburg. Collecting subscriptions issuing receipts, switching the lights, airconditioning on and generally looking after the members' needs. It was a very interesting job. I learned to play a good game of table tennis and some badminton, did some painting of stage scenery and a few posters for the foyer. The building and basement were always a hive of activity and often I had a hard time chasing the people out at midnight and later. More than once I walked home about 3 kilometers as the trams had stopped for the night. It is not surprising therefore that my boss, Mr. Feldman called me in one day and asked if I was working elsewhere as well. My performance as well as my appearance must have suffered for all to see. He said I should give it up and they would increase my salary. This I did as I was contemplating to do anyhow. The pace was too great and I had virtually cut myself off from all my friends due to lack of time.

Ann, whom I saw frequently and went out with for walks lasting hours, always probed and encouraged me to better my education and position. I also saw the poor prospects of my job. So now that I suddenly once more had free evenings to myself, I decided to enrol at the Johannesburg Technical College and took a course in draughtsmanship three evenings a week. It was an interesting course and I enjoyed it very much. My free hand drawings in pencil of machinery were frequently praised by the instructor.

On Saturdays, the Colloseum cinema was the great attraction. It meant standing in a long queue in the afternoon and hope there were seats left by the time one reached the box office. As it was possible to sit anywhere, I always sat when going alone just behind to one side of some interesting face, usually female, take out my little pad and begin sketching her in the gloom of the cinema with a fountain pen. The sitter or model never knew they were being drawn. Often I only got the ear or nose or hair. Seldom did I finish the whole head. If the person turned to talk to a companion and luck was with me. I could get a three-quarter face every minute or so. This kind of sketching proved the most valuable exercise I could have possibly devised. Fifty years later, in fact as I am writing this, I get exactly that kind of modelling from infants, children and sometimes even adults. Speed and careful observation in drawing and looking and working in poor light was how I learned to draw people. In ideal conditions its really so simple its like a holiday.

I made one more move - my last for many years - to new lodgings. As one of a small circle of friends who frequently congregated in and around the Axelrod home and tennis court, I was offered convenient board and lodging with one of Ann's girl friends who lived with her mother in a large flat. The great attraction of course was the proximity to the Axelrods. The flat was across the road. The neighbourhood was clean and peaceful compared to living in Hillbrow. No traffic or noise, this was a real pleasure to live in. It could not last long...

Jan Smuts and South Africa became British allies in their war against Hitler's Germany. Early in 1940, Jack Joseph with whom I worked at Feldmans said he was going to volunteer for the army. As a committed Jew I too could not see myself standing aside from a war in which the Jews were so tragically involved in Europe. In fact I considered it our fight as much as anyone else's. At the same time I could not bring myself to accept that I could actually kill someone, anyone. Jack Joseph provided the answer. We both joined the Medical Corps. My mother was furious when I told her. I was not yet 19. From East London she could do little to stop me. Zonderwater, near Pretoria, was the first training camp. I hated every minute of it. Route marches, senseless marching up and down and behaving like some kind of puppet with a heavy pack on ones back was not my idea of war. Three months later came the medical work. It was as an orderly in a military hospital. Making beds, carrying bed pans, carrying what seemed like hundreds of basins of water early each morning to wash patients. Night shift, nursing caring for the sick and restless, giving out tablets. The matron in charge kept us on the hop, non stop.

The work was hard but at least it made sense. I was also learning a great deal. Six months later I was transferred and attached to the Second Battalion of the Transvaal Scottish. At the same time I was promoted to a full corporal. Years later this promotion was to play a crucial role in my life.

Being attached to an infantry regiment meant that two medical orderlies were to assist the regimental M.O. in coping with every health problem of the regiment. Our camp was in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. Every morning we had a sick parade. This meant attending to all the daily complaints from a cut finger to worms.

In addition to the surgery, a tent where the doctor with two of us in attendance, examined each soldier and instructed us in the treatment. There was also a marquee with a few metal beds which served as a temporary infirmary for a day or so for the uncertain sick cases. Most of the time we worked hard all day, each day. After a couple of months and just before our brigade was shipped up north to Egypt and the desert along the northern coast of Africa, I was again transferred to one of the police regiments in the same 6th Brigade. Here I met Sargeant du Toit and two more medical orderlies. So we were a team of four plus a doctor. My friend Jack Joseph with whom I joined had disappeared to another unit in the first month at Zonderwater.

During the year I spent in South Africa training, there was always some week end passes. Some of these leaves have left an indelible mark in my memory. My grandmother in East London, now well into her seventies, for the second time in her life found herself living together with her daughter and son-in-law. She did not like it at all. Only the very young and very old, I think, disregard the problems, dangers and complications when they set their mind on a certain course of action. So my grandmother who could do anything with wool began taking orders from friends for hand knitted dresses, skirts, tops or anything. They brought her the wool, collected, paid, all without her moving out of the house. One day when she had collected enough money, she went to the station and bought a ticket to Johannesburg. To this day I've not discovered whether she told my mother she was leaving or not. I don't think so as my mother probable would have frustrated such a move. My grandmother did not know any english to speak of. Nether did she know anyone in Johannesburg besides me, and I was in the army. But leave East London she did, probably without telling anyone. Somehow I never got all the details. I may still learn the truth one day. My mother's memory has almost completely gone unfortunately. The few facts I did learn were as follows:

She arrived at Park Station, Johannesburg with her food and bundle of clothes. Somehow, she ended up at the Jewish Old Aged Home. She stayed there for a while. Either there or elsewhere she met a certain old man, Mr. Bilchik. They married and set up home in a small house in Buxton Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg. As soon as I knew, I visited by Boba and her new husband. I had the foresight to take as many photographs as I could. Whenever I had leave, I visited them.

One Saturday, they were still sitting in the dark, not sure if the first star was in the sky. They said the stove wasn't working. I examined the fuses and found the fault. Unfortunately, after I fixed it, the lights in the street went out when they switched the stove on. I heard about it on my next visit.

Not long after, we embarked from Durban. The unescorted convoy consisted of three large and fast ships. The Mauritania, the New Holland and the ^{ILL de FRANCE} ~~New Amsterdam~~. From Port Teufik at the Southern end of the Suez Canal, we went by train to the north of Egypt and later to a place in the desert called El Alamein. We were there about four months. The whole batallion lived in big and small tents dug deeply into the ground with only the roofs slightly above ground. Each tent could only be entered through a narrow twisted trench to the entrance. The four of us lived in a large marquee tent divided in half. The front was 'the surgery' where every morning we had a sick parade while we slept on stretchers in the back half. Our M.O. was a very young doctor called Jannie Louw, from the Cape. In charge was Sargeant du Toit, a man well into his 40's. He was a veteran of the first world war and was a male nurse in civilian life with many years of experience. We later learned that his brother was the Commissioner of Police - a little short fat man. We no sooner settled in when the news broke that Hitler had attacked Russia. That very day Dr. Louw teased me, he called me the Russian, and asked me how long did I think the primitive Russians could survive against the Germans. I replied 'for the first time since the war has begun, I was absolutely certain that Germany was now beaten, and we would win.' He was skeptical and said so. As far as I was concerned suddenly a great burden of doubt about the war was removed in my mind and that day I shall always remember.

Russia, its people and land, were a favourite subject of mine. Its enormous vastness, even to a youngster like myself, meant that it could not be conquered and kept for any length. Certainly not when there are still many other enemies on the other side of Germany. We made a good team under the wise direction of du Toit. He taught us a lot and gave our doctor some valuable lessons too. All day long and at night we had a stream of soldiers coming with all kinds of complaints. One had to use one's judgement about the degree of urgency. Often some asked to see the doctor. du Toit or one of us would take their temperature and if there was none, we would dish out some aspirins and tell them to report the next day for sick parade if they were still sick.

With some experience we soon learned when to call the doctor who lived in a tent about 300 m away. One day, during a sick parade, a man complained to the doctor that he asked to see him the previous day and du Toit told him it was not urgent and he could see the Doc the next day. The naive, inexperienced doctor there and then gave our sargeant hell in front of the whole sick parade. The crux of his venom was that he was the doctor and no one else. That if someone asked to see him, it was our duty to call him, and so on... He was trying to impress the men still in the marquee and informed us he was the boss who made all the decisions. du Toit took all this very calmly, as he was responsible. To have been humiliated in front of a bunch of men must have been galling. Particularly when his discretion was used to protect the doctor. After this episode, du Toit got his revenge. He instructed us to call the M.O. whenever anyone asked for him, day or night. This happened several times a day and at night too at least once. Dr. Jannie Louw did not get much peace. We called him while he was eating, while he was drinking with his fellow officers. We woke him at all hours of the night. Even when he didn't come at night and gave some excuse he was still woken. A week of this treatment and he got the message. There were four of us and only one of him. He admitted that we return to the previous state where we relieved him of the pressure of seeing every one who asked for him. He still had a tantrum or two just to demonstrate his authority. The battalion was involved in digging and fortifying the area. Considering the Germans and Italians were over one hundred miles to the west of us, it seemed crazy. Jannie Louw was a born teacher and really very dedicated to his work. He taught us a great deal in the treatment of wounds and first aid. He used us to monitor a long series of experimental dressing procedures to obtain the best results and succeeded so well that he wrote a report for a medical journal on his success and findings. This is the same Professor Louw who was to become the senior surgeon at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town in charge of the surgical department where Christiaan Barnard performed the worlds first heart transplant. I went to Alexandria and Cairo a few times. It was marvellous to be away from the desert for a day or two in a huge city. There were lots of soldiers' clubs and many interesting and beautiful things to see particularly some ancient Mosques. In Cairo, which I visited three times, I usually went to a Jewish club and enjoyed their hospitality.

The only recreation in the desert was swimming in the sea, drinking beer at night in the canteen and my art. There was a certain lack of materials. So I collected John Players empty 50's cigarette tins. They were a dark blue and the back could be scratched to expose the shiny metal. I etched several tins with faces and posted them to East London. My mother kept them for many years but they rusted eventually and I threw them away. The cartons in which we received our medical supplies were often nice and white board. For colour I used various ointments and liquids which came in a big variety of tints.

The only reminder of the war were fighter planes overhead daily. One day while on the beach I saw a Hurricane flying east low over the waves. Suddenly out of a clear blue sky a plane came in a steep dive, fired a burst at the Hurricane and flew off to the west. The Hurricane just dipped slightly and flew into the sea. There was hardly a splash about a mile from the shore. We saw a British motor boat come out to look but found nothing. It was a nasty reminder of the war still around us. For weeks I kept seeing the plane flying straight into the sea on a bright beautiful day.

Before we left El Alamein I persuaded our ambulance driver to teach me to drive. The whole desert was there before me and the only danger was getting stuck in the sand. Soon I was driving at every opportunity. These lessons certainly were useful years later.

The day we packed up to move out there was a sandstorm. The wind blows so hard that for miles and miles its almost like a sand fog. The fine particles get into everything. By the time we moved out it had subsided. After driving in convoy for hours at night, we heard that there was going to be an attack. Dawn broke. We slept where we sat in the ambulance. I woke to a strange noise of whistling and explosions. There were vehicles everywhere and we were under an artillery barrage. Shells were exploding. All the drivers without a signal from anyone decided to leave the area at once and did so. No one was hit or injured that day. Eventually we returned to the area and were told that at dusk were entering the outer defences of a place called Bardia.

As we drove in the semi light through gaps in barbed wire, once more the shells came whistling down upon us. I did not see anyone hit as we drove twisting and turning all over the hard sand. Soon it got dark. The shelling stopped and so did we. Without lights it was not possible to drive further. I got out and with my colleague Sarel Taute went forward on foot carrying a stretcher between us and my medical bag and spare water bottle.

Our soldiers were moving forward in short runs in the dark from one lot of stones to the next. We did the same. Machine gun bullets with tracers and other automatic fire were criss crossing the darkness along the ground. It was like walking through a nightmare. I was aware that at any moment it was possible to be hit by a silent bullet. As if in a trance, one kept going forward following the general direction of the soldiers. The sequence of events are now completely confused. We came across bodies lying still. They had no pulse. I think I treated one wounded. He was hit in the leg but seemed alright. Two field dressings covered the wounds and we left him sitting on the ground. There were many more dead as we went forward. The ground was now entirely covered in stones and boulders and sloping down into a wadee. There were many men here as it was safe from bullets but not mortar or artillery shells.

Sarel and I decided it was a good spot to establish a first aid post. We treated a number of wounded, handed out lots of aspirin tablets and gave drinks of water which we carried for this purpose. We slept against some stones. When morning came we heard that Bardia had fallen. Italians and Germans had retreated during the night and the place about half a mile away consisted of a few stone buildings. Perhaps it had some strategic importance - none of us cared. I was still in a trance. In all my life I have not seen so many dead bodies as that night, nor since. It was impossible to shake off the feeling of shock.

As we sat wondering what to do next we heard and then saw a plane high in the sky. We were speculating if it was ours or not when we heard a few explosions in quick succession. It was not ours. We went to investigate. Not far from where we sat was the only casualty. A large chunk of shrapnel from the stick of bombs the plane dropped killed Eric, one of our team. He joined us when we arrived at El Alamein and was well liked.

A few days later another battalion in our brigade was involved in capturing Sollum. This was another small village of stone houses. There was bitter resistance and we suffered many more dead.

About this time I was instructed to visit a platoon of our men to see a sick soldier. It was easier said than done. They were in a position on top of a high barren plateau which was separated from our medical station by a large deep wadee. It was late afternoon when I set out. By the time I reached the bottom of the wadee and began up the other side it was dark. I had no wish to climb up in the dark and perhaps fall all the way down again so I lay down for the night.

As soon as I could see, up I went. At the top all I saw was a vast flat area covered in stones. Not a bush or tree or sand in sight. So I walked. After about twenty minutes I noticed what looked like a stone wall a few feet high. When I was a hundred or so metres away, a person behind the stones began waving frantically to me. It looked as if he wished me to get there fast so I ran. There were about eight men. The chap who did the waving said 'Didn't anyone tell you you could get shot walking about in broad daylight'. The whole area was constantly raked with sniper and automatic fire. They could not believe I had been walking about looking for them. The sick man had all the symptoms of malaria which I had seen and treated in the military hospital. He was covered with nearly all of the greatcoats of the men but was still shivering. I stayed behind the stones which the men had built, for nearly a week. It was impossible to dig in the rock upon which we lived. At night the temperature dropped very rapidly and we really suffered from the cold and the relentless sun in the day. The wall was built a bit higher to make shade but that was dangerous as it enlarged the target of our position. I did what I could for the sick man which was not much. One night a bunch of men came to replace us. The sick guy was over the worst and with the help of us all returned eventually to the base camp.

We all received half a mug of rum. Normally one tot of rum was rationed to all the men once a week. I seldom drank mine. To me it was like fire water. But on this occasion I just gulped it down and did not feel a thing. We were all suffering from exposure. This reminds me of a rum story. One morning when we returned from some mission to our medical post we found a black man lying near our tent. There was a transport unit of black men in the area. They never ventured into forward positions. This guy was dead. Near him was a two gallon tin of rum now empty. The M.O. did not hesitate. Alcohol poisoning. We did not know how much rum there was but certainly enough to have killed him.

Our next destination was Tobruk. Earlier in the war the Axis armies of Hitler and Mussolini tried to capture this port town of Tobruk. It was held mainly by Australian forces. Tobruk held out and was never captured, but at enormous cost of men and material. It was cut off from all land approaches and was under siege. The only supplies were by sea and many ships sunk doing it. Our medical team was separated. Each one of us was attached to a company. These in turn were stationed at different points in Tobruk. Company 'C' to which I was attached was given the piece of coast west of the harbour and stretched for a couple of miles.

Last night ma and I were watching an Aussie TV film 'Alice to Nowhere' about a group stuck in soft sand with a large lorry in the middle of nowhere. They began to dig the vehicle out of the sand. Ma said how can they do that and get out of the desert. Her remark reminded me of many such incidents in North Africa. One in particular, I don't remember now if I mentioned it earlier. Not only was it a back breaking task to dig the wheels out and make a path for each wheel, it could also be an extremely dangerous job which once almost killed me. In addition to digging each wheel free of sand and making a path, often it helped to place stones in the soft sand or boards or metal sheets - anything for the wheels to grip. Even then everyone would push hard to help the engine get the truck moving again. On this occasion we heppened to have a large section of corrugated iron sheet which we placed in front of one of the back wheels. On the signal from the driver we all pushed mainly from the back of the truck as the engine started, the back wheels spinning. The next moment, the sheet of iron flew past me but not before the corner of the sheet cut the heavy great coat I was wearing right across my chest as if it was butter. It was very early in the morning and still cold from the freezing night. Had I stood another inch to the left, I think the sheet would have killed me.

Each day our M.O. visited every company with his ambulance and examined the sick, brought supplies and gave news. The war in North Africa was going badly for the Allies. Our two months in Tobruk had been like a holiday. The food was fine. We swam every day, and used sea water soap. No one got sick. We lived in a stone and plastered building. We even managed to supplement our ration of fresh water by constructing a complicated water from the sea plant which worked very well and gave us more than enough distilled water.

One night we heard many planes. The sky was suddenly streaked by searchlights moving and criss crossing each other. Ack-ack which was anti aircraft guns began firing. There were explosions everywhere, but fell away from us. They were German bombers and they were bombing Tobruk and the harbour. Every night as soon as it became dark, the bombing began. It lasted for about an hour. Near our house was a bomb shelter built by the Australians. We decided to begin using it in a half-hearted fashion. It was an entrance without any doors with steps leading down three metres to a small concrete chamber for about twenty men. It was a particularly dark night when we heard the planes. The Germans had a plane called 'stuka' which was used as a dive bomber. We could hear when they dived but could see nothing. As I listened to the particular noise the diving plane makes it grew louder and louder. About five of us all stood in a bunch at the entrance of the shelter at the top of the stairs. Every night for almost two weeks, we endured the bombing of Tobruk and learned all the telltale sounds. But this sound of a diving bomber was getting much too loud and close. The next instant we were all hurtled down the stairs in one terrific explosion. I don't know how long we lay at the bottom. When we recovered one man was dead. There was not a mark on him apart from a little blood in his mouth. Much later we learned that his whole rib cage had been crushed by the force of the blast. My back, too, hurt but I never learned what caused it. The rest of us were fine. Outside the shelter everything seemed to be burning. We ran away into the darkness towards the sea and waited for the raid to cease. The danger was of more bombs being dropped as the fire lit everything and made a good target, but no more fell. In a while we returned. The planes had left. We put out the remaining fires and discovered a plane. The bomber must have been hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed, almost on top of us. There were four charred bodies of the crew.

Our building was practically demolished. In the morning I made an aluminium ring from a small pipe from the wreckage which I wore for many years. For weeks later my whole body shivered violently whenever I heard the sound of a plane. The raids continued and we, having learned a bitter lesson, stayed inside the shelter while they lasted.

On the 21 June 1942 we all became prisoners of war. P.O.W's. Over 30 000 men, mostly South Africans, were taken when Tobruk fell. I kept the bare essentials and as much clothing, tinned food as I could carry in the haversack, kit bag and side pack. The first words the German soldiers who captured us said: 'For you the war is over'. How wrong they were. One morning, a single German armed car came over the hill, fired a couple of shells at us, drove up and it was all over. We remained in our trenches which was just as well. The German tanks appeared over the crest and started machine gunning the whole area. The German in charge of the first party began waving his hands and jumped on on his vehicle waving the swastika flag before the firing stopped. Somehow, one is less afraid of the bullets which came from our own forces which is of course stupid and often fatal. A day later we were marched to a large barbed wire enclosure from where we were transported in large open lorries to Benghazi. It was about a seven hour drive with standing room only. We made a plan so that some could sit while others stood - everyone taking turns. The Germans handed us over to their allies, the Italians.

For the next year we only saw Italians. Benghazi was a bog city. Our camp was just a flat sandy patch of the desert with a perimeter of a barbed wire fence. There was no shade whatsoever. There was also a very great shortage of drinking water. They never expected 30 000 P.O.W's at once. One day the position was so bad that when I found someone with a full water bottle, I traded two tins of baked beans for it. Thirst was much more critical than food which we received. It consisted mostly of disgusting Italian tins of corned beef. The lack of shade also became a crucial problem. Anyone who has ever camped in a tent knows that without a pole or stick the canvas is useless. Every pipe, stick, piece of wood or anything remotely resembling a stick disappeared from the area. Our small group solved the problem partially by collecting a lot of discarded empty corned beef tins. These were fitted into each other until they made a kind of stick which supported all types of articles such as ground sheets, blankets, overcoats - anything at all about two, three feet off the ground.

We could then stick our heads underneath to escape the sun. Eventually, we were all given tents. The nights were freezing. Everyone slept in all their clothes and usually covered oneself with ones great coat. Many a man woke up to discover his great coat had been stolen as he slept.

This was the place where I received my very first bridge lesson. More and more men were getting dysentery. It was a terrible place to be in and I thought that the longer one remained the greater the chance of dying from dysentery or some other disease. Others on the other hand made every effort to remain on the continent of Africa. As long as they remained, there was either a chance of escape or perhaps being freed by our troops. Once shipped to Italy there was no hope of that and even a chance of being sunk crossing the Meiterranean. About two months later I and Sarel Taute climbed down to the bottom of a hold of a ship sailing for Italy.

We did not have much room to stretch out on the metal deck. The high vertical metal ladder was constantly in use. The men were crawling up and down like ants, going to the toilets up on deck and perhaps for a breath of fresh air. Two days later we reached Italy and Fara Sabina our P.O.W. camp in the south not far from Rome, a day later.

The three and a half months since our capture had reduced our physical condition drastically. I think it was only my excellent state of health prior to capture that enabled me to survive that period without falling sick. Hunger really began now. Any reserves of fat had disappeared by now. Here in Italy the climate was not as violent but the rations were abysmal. They consisted of 200 grams of bread, a small lump of cheddar cheese, a mug of black coffee substitute, a ladle of soup at lunch and another for supper. We lived in long large tents and slept in double wooden bunks, one above the other. About once a month we received a Red Cross parcel each. I am convinced they were responsible for keeping us in some sort of health from month to month. A parcel contained on average a packet of biscuits, a tin of jam, margarine or butter, sardines and cheese, slab of chocolate, packet of cigarettes some tea or coffee. Often we only received one parcel between two men or nothing for a month or two.

In the seven months there I received perhaps three parcels. The Italians controlled the distribution and we had little control. Winter was approaching. At night it was freezing again. I managed to obtain old newspapers and wrap my feet with socks over the paper. That helped a lot. The local bakery supplied the Italian army with 250 gram round loaves, so we too received them. In our case, five men had to share four loaves. This was a problem. A very elaborate procedure evolved within each group of five men. The most important was the order of picking which rotated every five days. If I had first pick today, tomorrow would be second and so on until last or fifth pick, followed by first again. The division of the bread or whatever had to be shared into five parts was always done by the person who had last pick that day. This was a principle quickly used by all P.O.W's everywhere. I have often thought if this principle could be used in our society there would be more justice in the world.

Two systems prevailed in sharing the bread. One was to cut the largest loaf in half. This created the least waste of crumbs and food. The other method was cutting a small portion of each loaf to create a fifth portion. The first way meant two days in five one received half a loaf. A good deal of the time many, including myself, spent lying in our wooden bunks to conserve energy. As Christmas was approaching it was decided to decorate the interior of the huge tent. All the labels of the tins in the Red Cross parcels were saved and a remarkable display of colour and shapes from them were made and hung everywhere. Another principal of P.O.W. existence was the inability to live entirely on one's own with any measure of safety for your meagre possessions of food and clothing, etc. Anyone caught stealing would be punished so severely that it was I think an adequate deterrent. Nonetheless food and other possessions such as a knife or spoon or blanket were so precious that no one wished to risk it. Consequently, everyone had a close group or partner who shared the food and watched each others things. Our camp was comparatively small. About 3 000 men mostly British with another 1 000 South Africans. We were newcomers to the camp which had already established a tradition of brewing tea received in the Red Cross parcels. There were no stoves or electricity. Fuel was almost non existent. But there was ingenuity and the metal of the empty tins. So the 'Blower' was invented.

It could only be made by a really skilled tin smith which a number of men learned from a master. The contraption was a marvellous refinement on a campfire where the fuel and the heat are used to their absolute maximum. They were custom built to fit the shape of the container for boiling water for making tea. It was so called because all of them had a built in wheel with fans at one end and a handle to turn the wheel. The other end held the tin, pot or whatever container with the water, but underneath was a raised mesh for the fuel. Most of the fuel came from our bunks, the planks on which we lay. With the passage of time the gaps between the planks became wider and wider. We knew precisely how much wood was needed to boil two mugs of water provided we got a flying start with some glowing embers from a 'blower' which just finished. The 'blower' was tipped over the embers falling into ours we'd put our piece of wood in, put the water on and turn the handle like hell. The fan would blow the air on the embers igniting the wood and within a minute the water boiled we would give our embers to the next chap and so on. Sarel, my partner, was Afrikaans. We had been friends for over a year, working and living together since arriving at El Alamein. He was a tall thin chap and we got on well. He had a good sense of humour, was older than I and married. Although we had been separated frequently in the desert, we somehow managed to find each other. Living so closely with the stress of constant hunger is not easy on any relationship. One thing in particular used to upset Sarel. We always ate and drank together. He could drink tea or coffee extremely hot. I could not. He finished before I had even started. Since we were perpetually hungry, he could not remain seated whilst I was still drinking and eating, so he always left for a walk. It would upset me that I could not finish at the same time as him, as no doubt it did him. So I resolved to improve my speed even if it meant burning my mouth now and then. Within a few weeks I learned the trick and to this day I drink the stuff boiling. Our liquid diet caused me to go to the toilet every night, often twice. It was a long walk from our tent and in winter just when you're warming up it is no joke to get out in the cold especially if it is raining. In early spring, the Italians called for 700 volunteers to go to Sardinia to work in some coal mine in the south of the island. They promised more food there and regular Red Cross parcels. Sarel and I promptly agreed to go.

The train and ship crossing was uneventful. The camp we eventually came to had proper buildings, floors, lights, inside toilets, but still long barracks in a square around a parade ground. Another medical corps chap came too, so the three of us and an Italian doctor established a medical post inside the camp which also served the local garrison of Italian troops. Forteleoni, our new doctor brought two Italian orderlies for the regular morning sick parade to work with us. We also provided six beds for any of our sick men. In the seven months in Italy I was speaking a lot of Italian, right or wrong, and could converse basically with our Italian captors and now colleagues. The calibre of the Italians was pretty low. Forteleoni spent much time in our company and did not hide his contempt for his own troops.

Sardinia had a lot of malaria and the population suffered greatly from it. I had never before or since given so many injections on the doctor's orders. There were no nets or other precautions to keep the mosquitos away. Quinine was given by injection. It was an Italian norm. Unless they got an injection from a visit to the doctor, they did not get good treatment. The promised Red Cross parcels never came. We did receive a little more bread. Almonds were almost a staple diet there and I got diarrhoea from eating too many. All of us, myself included, still had our big eyes for any kind of food. Our hunger now continued as a mental condition even with better rations. I drew portraits of the doctor's relations from photographs and he paid me with bread. No matter how much bread I ate I considered myself hungry.

One day I weighed myself - the scale showed over 90 kg. I have never been that weight or so fat in my life. The first P.O.W. photograph of me with three other friends at this camp shows how fat I was, but still hungry. How it came about I have not a clue but one day my mate Sarel was informed that he was being repatriated and sent home. Never have I envied another human that much as when Sarel said goodbye the next day. I have not seen him since. From even the local radio it was clear that the whole of Africa's north coast would soon be in Allied hands. We speculated that Sardinia would therefore be a natural stepping stone to Italy and Europe. Indeed, allied planes began to make an appearance day and night.

One night during an air raid as always a bunch of trigger happy Italians entered the camp in case somehow the P.O.W's staged an escape or revolt or takeover. The drill was blackout, no showing of lights. The door of a barrack was opened and perhaps not shut fast enough. So an Italian soldier fired his rifle into the door. The bullet hit a guy sleeping in his bunk. We were called. The man was unconscious. The bullet entered his upper back but did not come out. That was not surprising as it went through a heavy wooden door and the wooden bedboards of an upper bunk. We took him to our small hospital, undressed him and laid him down. He did not look good. The doctor came immediately and gave him an injection - I don't know what or why. He stayed a few minutes, took the man's pulse and told us to dress him as soon he would be too stiff. He was dead. According to Forteleoni, he drowned in his own blood. That night we slept with him in the ward which was also our sleeping quarters. The next day he was given a military funeral, such as it was. Our senior officer protested over the shooting and that was the end of the incident.

Soon the allied planes began appearing in the day time and the Italians became apprehensive. We too thought it was either Sardinia or Sicily which would be invaded. One of our patients was a man whose ankles were very swollen. The doctor put him on a completely salt free diet, but this chap had no desire to be cured in a hurry. So one way or another he managed to get even more salt from his mates. Eventually, our doctor sent him to the local city hospital. When the camp was closed and we were sent to ~~to~~ the north of the island, he was still in hospital and was the only one freed when the allies did land. His strategy worked very well.

Of course I was very sorry to leave after only five months. We even considered escaping and hiding in the mountains for a few months. There was of course always the danger of getting shot if caught and without a good plan and preparation we decided on discretion. My Italian had improved a lot and I would understand most speech and speak with some confidence.

In fact it was Sicily which was invaded at least three months after we departed and long after was Sardinia occupied. Lorries took us to the coast opposite Corsica. Here we lived in an olive grove under the trees for many weeks. I do not remember a fence or barbed wire anywhere.

Our planes flew over daily now. One day a couple of them were aiming straight for our grove, came over very low firing away at everything. I found an olive tree and hugged it for dear life as they made another pass at us. There obviously was no mark or identification that they could see we ~~we~~ were P.O.W's.

A small ship took us across the straits one misty rough day, then by lorries across interesting world country to the north of Corsica and a much larger ship to Civitavecchia on the Italian mainland. From there by train to a large camp near Firenze (Florence). There were a lot more German soldiers about than we ever saw in Italy. Soon after our arrival, Sicily was invaded. The Italians were very nervous. It was clear that only the hardened fascists were determined to remain loyal to the Germans. The majority by far feared the Germans I think more than the Americans. Our rations again were just short of starvation. Once again the Sardinian interlude had fattened me up so that for the time being I managed. One morning, a couple of months after our return to Italy, the guards around our camp had vanished. We heard that the Italians decided to part from their German partner and sue for peace. All of us remained where we were. Some prepared to escape and perhaps did. The next day I took a walk outside the camp. It was a rural countryside.

We still got our food rations but that was going to become a problem. On the third day the camp was surrounded by German troops. Within a few days the whole camp was closed and we marched to a railway siding where closed cattle trucks were waiting. On the march we came across great numbers of Italian soldiers guarded by Germans. They too were now P.O.W's and were getting infinitely worse treatment from their recent allies than we did.

The journey north was terrible. Once again there was no room. If one could stretch ones feet lying down and sleep you soon woke from the pain in your legs, to discover half a dozen feet on top of yours. With a great effort, I would extricate my legs, bend them at the knee and stretch them back on top of the others. So it went on all through the night. After a day and a night on a cold morning, we were let out for a short while. The place was a siding in Innsbruck, Austria. Instantly the whole length of the train became a toilet for hundreds of men. Soon we were back in the boxes going further north.

The next day we arrived at our destination, Stalag IV B. There was yet several kilometres to walk from the railway. These long marches carrying all your possessions to the train and to the camp, I did many times again. It was the most difficult, unbearable, painful exercise to do. The more one could carry the easier survival would be at your destination. On the other hand, that meant a greater burden. Many a man simply threw away things which became too heavy to carry another step. It was a very hard choice. Once through the double barbed wire gates, we were taken to a chamber and told to strip naked. Everything we brought in had to be deposited in a huge drum with a door. Only items made of leather such as shoes, belts, laces, etc were to be kept out. From here we were given a small piece of soap and went to have a real hot shower. Water did emerge when the taps were turned. We then went to another hall and stood before a very large fan which blew hot air and dried us. At the end of the hall was the other end of the drum with a door which had all our things besides the leather items we carried. From there we went to the proper camp about 50 yards away with more gates and fences and taken to large wooden barracks and triple wooden bunks.

As I walked to our new home I saw Russian P.O.W's in a seprate enclosure. I heard this was a transit camp with about 36 000 P.O.W'S. There were British, Yugoslavs, Russians, Chechs, French soon to be joined by Italians and South Africans. In the centre of the long barrack were two brick ovens. It was very obvious that in spite of its enormous size there was a well established order. The British who were in the majority and the longest inhabitants were in a sense responsible for the orderly management of the Allied part of the camp. This excluded the Russian section and other European sections which the Germans kept separate as well.

Every morning and evening we went on parade to be counted. The Germans did the counting. If the figures did not balance we remained standing. When one remained sick in his bunk, no one was notified and we could stand there all day until he was accounted for. If someone escaped somehow, the responsible barrack would try and cover by some clever footwork on parade especially late in the afternoon when the Germans too wanted to finish quickly. This gave the escaped man another ten hours before the alarm and a search began. Escaping was a great art and carefully controlled by senior and experienced men of a secret committee in the camp.

Parcels were distributed regularly. Unfortunately a few weeks after my arrival I was again sent out with about 500 South Africans to another camp. Once more I packed all my worldly goods and trudged to the train and another day and night journey in the cattle truck. On a wet, gloomy day we got out of our boxes and marched. A sign along the railway read MOST and another said BRUX. We were in what was Czechoslovakia and the town there was MOST (Bridge). This was the Sudetenland province in the east which had a large German minority and was used by Hitler to create trouble for the Chechs and became an excuse to invade the province and the country. We walked past a large industrial complex and saw many mine shaft headgears. Our camp was not far. Again we went through the cleansing procedure. When I collected my clothing, a leather belt which I forgot to remove from the trousers was all shrivelled as I tried to straighten it, the belt just disintegrated in my hand like a potato crisp.

Our barracks were small two tiered bunks and everything was made of wood. Again a brick stove in the centre. It was really warm inside. We received a large round loaf of black bread each with a large ladle of really nourishing soup. The next day on the counting parade, we were all told that this was a working camp. All the men would be working in the nearby coal mines. It was going to be shift work, eight hours, a day or night or whatever. In fact we were away almost ten hours as the walking back and forth took almost another two hours. The rations would be doubled. Every other Sunday we could rest, but it was used to wash our clothes. Once a week we could have hot showers as much coal as we needed to keep our barrack warm as winter was approaching. Most of the South Africans simply said they had no intention of working for the Germans, certainly not underground in coal mines.

Everyone sat down and did not move. I do not know if it was by luck or design that a representative of the Swiss Red Cross was in the camp visiting P.O.W. camps. He spoke to our senior P.O.W. man in the camp, George Brunton, a Springbok soccer player, who explained the position to us. Firstly on no account must we mutiny. In time of war P.O.W.'s were still soldiers and the Germans would not hesitate to shoot so-called mutineers. Secondly, the Geneva Convention which controlled the treatment of P.O.W.'s did not forbid the Germans from using privates and lance corporals from any kind of work apart from ammunition factories. Full corporals and above could not be forced to work but had to volunteer or be sent to a non-working camp. Those holding the ranks were therefore entitled to request a transfer back to the camp from whence they came. I and about 30 others immediately put our hand up and in due course our names were taken to be transferred. My two stripes have at last made a profound impact no matter how skeptical I was of obtaining an army transfer in the middle of a war.

Finally he said until we are transferred there is no choice but to comply with their orders. So off to the mine we walked. We passed a pitiful struggling column of Italian P.O.Ws shuffling along the road. They were skin and bones. Again I saw this enormous industrial complex through heavy security fencing. Later I discovered that it was a petrol from coal industry. The bulk of the coal mined in the area went here for conversion to fuel. At the mine each person collected a lit lamp which I carried like a small bucket hanging from a handle. The two tier cage held about 40 people in all as we descended about 150 metres into the ground. A large tunnel, well lit, greeted us. Here a Czech miner took me for a very long walk through tunnels smaller and smaller, most without lights. The only illumination was a circle of light on the ground about a meter in diameter from the lamp hanging from my hand. Everything else was pitch black. I could not see the miner a few paces away, only his lamp light, feet and the patch of light. The lamps and the sounds around us were the only contact one had with the world apart from standing and walking on the ground over metal tracks, wooden debris from broken supporting poles, coal lumps and dust.

There was a constant stream of sound signals almost like morse code. It was almost as if some kind of conversation was taking place for the whole mine to hear. I later found out that was precisely what was happening and old miners could follow what was going on and where. Most of the tunnels had tracks along which coco pans or large timber boxes on heavy metal wheels trundled along. Each box contained about a ton of coal. Normally, three boxes were joined together. The leading box had a kind of enormous metal fork with two prongs. The handle sitting in a holder with the prongs upwards. Above the boxes and below the roof of the tunnel was a heavy steel cable moving very slowly. The continuous cable went along all the tunnels with tracks pulling boxes, full and empty. This was achieved by hitting the cable down into the fork with an iron bar and the train was immediately in motion. To stop the boxes moving ~~out~~ one hit the cable hard out of the fork. Parallel with the cable about 25 cm to the side ran two very thin bare wires. One could lift a hand and bring the wires together touching each other causing a brief buzz. Instantly the cable in the whole mine would stop. An experienced miner could thereafter send a sequence of buzz signals by touching the wires as before giving his location, how long the cable should remain motionless and the degree or seriousness of the hold up. The man responsible for the machine shop and the source of power which kept the cable moving could understand these signals and act accordingly.

As soon as P.O.W.s were introduced to the mines they created havoc in addition to their work contribution. It was in fact a form of sabotage. The first day underground when we finally arrived at my place of work I was introduced to another South African, Bamford. We were told to pump. This was a manual contraption somewhat like a see-saw, but a lot smaller. Each end had a handle which we held in each hand as we stood facing each other. As one end was depressed to knee height the other end came up shoulder high, up and down, up and down, until I thought my back would break with the pain. It hardly needed any force on our part, but moving up and down non stop for half an hour or more was excruciating. Bamford felt as I did, perhaps more so as he was older. We rested as much as we pumped. There was water everywhere which was fine as it kept the dust down, but somewhere there probably was too much.

At lunch we were given hot thick soup and bread. Finally the shift ended and we walked back to the main shaft up to the surface and along march to camp. The sun had already set when we came up. In fact the whole time I worked in this mine, I only saw the sun every other Sunday or on days when we worked above ground. My mate in this camp was de Villiers whose first name I have forgotten. We slept in adjoining bunks at the bottom. Security was not as crucial here as in previous camps. There was always very hot water obtainable as the stove in the hut was always burning. de Villiers and I had long discussions. All I remember was my astonishment when he said he always thought Russia's people were all Jews and could not believe me when I explained how wrong he was.

I became the unofficial interpreter for our barrack vis-a-vis the Germans. The second day on the pump with Bamford was just as agonising. We continued pumping for a few weeks. The second week the motion of our backs up and down got into a rhythm. We became so accustomed to it that it did not bother us at all and we conversed for hours on end without stopping the pumping.

There were many Czechs working in the mine. Some of them had worked there all their lives and long before the Germans had taken their country. In addition there were others who were like us but were civilian prisoners. Without exception they all hated the Germans. But unlike us they refrained from doing any damage or sabotage for two main reasons. Firstly this was really their property and one day they hoped to get it back from the Germans, so why damage it. The second reason was more to the point. It concerned safety. Some of the things we P.O.W.'s did could kill even ourselves. There were enough dangers underground without us adding to them.

The simplest and most common sabotage on our part was just lifting ones hand and bringing the two wires together. This could be done in complete safety even if a German stood in front. In the total darkness he could not see your hand going up. The cable would stop but be re-started if no further signal followed. Multiplied by all the P.O.Ws in a mine doing it several times a day and the nuisance value becomes considerable.

Another more serious form of ~~of~~ sabotage was to hit the cable out of a fork which was pulling full or empty boxes of coal. The cable would continue but the train of boxes would soon come to a halt provided the ground was completely level which it seldom was. It needs little imagination what can happen when three tons of coal begin travelling down a slope and accelerating every meter. The tunnels although long were like streets turning curving and used by people. Three boxes laden with coal out of control would make an incredible din if the slope was even slightly steep. The noise was the first warning of trouble. At a bend or at a certain speed, they would jump the track and perhaps knock out several timber props along the side capsize and virtually fill the tunnel with coal and debris.

At one stage the sum total of all this activity caused the Germans to issue a warning to all P.O.Ws that they would shoot one of us if it did not stop. For a while we diminished these acts but not for long. After the pumping I was given another job, much more difficult. This mine was much more mechanised than some of the others our men worked in. My job on my own was to see that empty boxes were pushed by me one at a time below a conveyor belt spewing out coal non stop. If there was no box beneath the track would be covered with coal and to clear it I would have to punch the button to stop the conveyor which in turn would accumulate mountains of coal at every station further down the line feeding this main conveyor. There was always a line of empty boxes waiting at one end. It really was not funny.

The one thing that gave one a good rest was when the conveyor broke down somewhere along the line. Sometimes it would only be a lump of coal among the wheels but better still was when the actual very wide belt of the conveyor was cut or would tear. That wasn't my problem, but the cut off pieces of belting about a centimeter thick rubber reinforced with fine steel wire was highly prized for shoe repairs. Often when there was a heavy snow fall during the night, a gang of us worked on the surface clearing snow all day. Besides clearing snow, our gang of six or eight men were told to off load open railway trucks loaded with huge timber logs used in the mine as supports. We would take our time working in pairs lifting and carrying these logs from the truck to a stack on the snow or ground. Sometimes we took a whole day to offload a truck.

That did not suit the Germans at all as the mine was fined for keeping the truck too long. One day a high ranking officer made us a proposal. We could return to our camp and have the rest of the day to ourselves as soon as we offloaded one truck. It was a big gamble to take him up on it. Perhaps they just wanted to see how long it would take and subsequently use that as a standard, or could we trust them to keep his promise. The temptation of free time was too great. We did the job in half a day and were told to return to our camp on our own without the usual escort. That was a real holiday for us.

In subsequent days the same arrangement held. As soon as we finished one truck we returned to camp. It was December 1943. We were in good health. After a heavy snowfall as we were clearing the snow, the same officer, a Captain, came to me and asked 'who do you think will win the war?' 'The Allies of course' I said. At this he smiled and said 'You are Jewish are you not?' I said I was. All this was in German. I was a bit disturbed about this, but nothing happened. On the contrary - a miracle happened soon after. One night a major came to our camp and spoke to the 30 men who had asked for a transfer and which we had all nearly forgotten about in the last five months. He said he understood that working in the mines was unpleasant but he could arrange attractive work for us in Dresden if we would volunteer. No one agreed and he was angry. The next day we were informed that our group would be returned to the camp from whence we came. As far as I was concerned my priority as I think most of the others', was survival. I could not believe that this industrial and vital area in which our camp was would long escape severe bombing from the Allies. In such an event our camp would suffer as well. So my main concern was not to be here.

Work, sabotage and survival was all part of our decision, but survival was uppermost. Once again my health was good from hard work and adequate food and I was ready to face low rations again.

So in January 1944 I was back in the vast camp of Stalag IV B. I remained there for just over a year - the longest period of my P.O.W. days and one which changed the course of my life. As I said earlier, the Germans had left the day to day running of the camp to the senior and major members in the camp who were the British. Over the years, a good and functioning internal organisation was established-within certain limits the cooperation of the Germans was also established. With the assistance of YMCA and the International Red Cross, one whole barrack was converted into a theatre. Plays, concerts, lectures and other cultural events were regularly held with the German high command of the area and camp always in the front row. The scenery and costumes were of an incredibly high standard. Red Cross parcels were distributed once a month and with German rations were sufficient to keep us in good health. In fact the barley soup which the Germans were fond of giving us was often only partially eaten.

The surplus was always diverted to the Russian P.O.W. compound with German consent.

I also learned when I was designing and painting scenery in the theatre, that strained barley soup was excellent as a paint medium and size. There was much sport activity and I made the volley ball team of our huge barrack (300 men) and the chess team to play the Russians. My new mate was Jack whose surname I have forgotten. He was a small little man with a face like Lenin - also bald with a fringe of black hair and always a twinkle in his eyes. I think the main reason we became mates was bridge. We played it nearly every day, often late into the night. The electricity was on all night but off during the day. Once a week a wall newspaper was pinned up on the inside wall of the barrack for half a day. The whole thing about four large pages was hand done. There was news from German and sometimes Allied radio, articles, adverts, humour, etc and art in full colour. The quality of the whole paper and art work I thought was outstanding. I made enquiries and met the main artist. His name was Ray Newell. I told him I was very interested in art. He said that if I could show him some work I may join an art group he was conducting twice a week in a small hut next to the library on the perimeter of the camp. After seeing my work he agreed for me to join his class of about 15 men. For the rest of my stay in that camp, just over a year, I did not miss a single drawing meeting. This was what I needed. Ray, I later learned, was an art teacher at the University of London. He was the first person who actually knew what he was talking about when he criticised my work. He asked about my pre-war work and told me to give it up and develop my art. He convinced me I could earn a living at it. His confidence in my work convinced me finally that here lay my future. It was inevitable that we did almost nothing but portraits from life. He also taught perspective. Art materials, mainly paper and pencils, were supplied by YMCA.

Part of the hut was used as a library on certain days. One day we were drawing a German Sargeant who was promised the best portrait he liked for his trouble. This we always did for our models. Someone came in and spoke to Ray. They both went out and soon returned to say that Ray was needed somewhere and the lesson was over. All left the hut. It seemed somewhat strange as it never happened before. We continued working there in the next weeks but did not have any more German models. Sometime later I learned that the hut was used as the entrance to a tunnel which was being dug beneath the floor boards. In fact no one knew about this operation and the German was posing for us while the digging was going on under him. So Ray had to be informed not to use any more Germans.

The constant stream of men returning and collecting books enabled the ground to be moved out and dispersed over the camp. The hut was chosen as a starting place because it was the nearest structure to the double fence of the camp. No other information was available so I never knew if any escapes took place there. Of all the drawings and water colours that I did there I have only one small sketch book left. Before I was forced to leave this camp, Ray Newell actually gave me a certificate confirming the length of time I studied art with him. Education by correspondence was undertaken by many.

One day I received a parcel my mother had sent 18 months previously. It contained a magnificent blue mohair blanket which was extremely light and warm. In it were wrapped about six big slabs of chocolate. It was fantastic to eat them and even more incredible that after all this time, the parcel was delivered. When I first arrived, I began keeping a diary of sorts. Similar to what I am writing now. It was written in the form of letters which I knew I would never send to anyone. It began with our capture in Tobruk and gave a graphic and detailed record of events, to the present. It was written in a large full-scrap exercise book, pages and pages of small writing. In addition, throughout our P.O.W. days we were always given letter paper which I always used and posted. Evidently these letters were censored. I must have mentioned keeping this diary, as a German N.C.O. came to see me in the barrack and asked to see my diary. I had to give it to him and he took it away. For the next week I was in a state of shock and very frightened. The problem was very serious for me. As here I described how I and others sabotaged the works in the coal mine. My hope was that there were so many closely written pages, it would not all be read. This is what happened I think as a week later, the book was returned to me, each page had a censor stamp and nothing was said.

The camp was well informed about the war. Apart from the German admissions usually long after we heard from a regular verbal BBC account given by a runner from hut to hut. Somehow a radio signal from the BBC was obtained every day. Besides, no one could deny the vast armadas of aircraft which filled the German sky. No way could the Germans deceive their population who saw these Allied planes in their hundreds in broad daylight. Mastery of the sky meant victory. We knew it as well as the Germans. 1944 was coming to the end when a lottery of all the men in our hut decided that I and 49 others out of 300 men in the hut would be moved to another camp. The Germans needed 2 000 men out of the camp. No one wished to move as it was a very well organised place. There was nothing to be done but pack up and once again I had been here a year and made good use of the time here.

We moved to a brand new camp north west of our camp in the vicinity of Lubeck near the Baltic Sea. The brick huts were new, almost half finished, no stoves and cold. No Red Cross parcel depot as in the old camp and no parcels. The potato ration, which was our main diet, was very small. I was almost back to my original starvation diet experienced when I first arrived in Italy.

In addition, for the first time since becoming a P.O.W. the Germans segregated all the Jews from the other men and placed them in 'Jewish' barracks. The intention was to provoke friction among all the men. Many Gentiles protested and some of them said they were Jews just to frustrate the Germans. The Germans did not press the issue for long but tried on other occasions to cause trouble between Jews and others. Such behaviour was strange in the light of events. Even they now knew the war was lost. My mate in this camp was Louis Mendelow. We were all Jews in our barrack. He was a cousin of Ann Axelrod and I had met his mother and some of his brothers in Johannesburg. They lived very near the Axelrods.

The invasion of Europe had already begun. It was now just a matter of time and we knew it. Once again it became crucial to divide the potato ration by the person with the last pick.

There were some Russian P.O.Ws who worked outside the camp fence. I could still speak Russian from my childhood days. In fact in the previous camp there was a fair amount of contact with them. Even a chess competition in which I represented our hut. I was able to barter some bread from these Russians for socks and other items of clothing. It meant trusting the man outside or him trusting you to make the exchange. There were times when someone threw a pair of socks over the fence and the bread was not thrown back. Fortunately, it never happened to me. The main currency of exchange in all the years was cigarettes, but often other things were used for barter. Previously, when we first came to Italy and received starvation diets, we used to lie in our bunks and talk about food all day. There were heated arguments as to the merits of cake as opposed to plain brown bread. Of the marvellous pastry and confectionery shops in Cairo and Alexandria where fantastic cakes and pastries were on sale. Of the mountain of food one could eat there and then if only someone would provide it. We were back to this topic once again. Some, within earshot, would get so angry, they would shout for the conversation to get off food and find another subject. Usually, it was agreed upon, but no matter what other subject was mentioned, within a minute or two it was back on food. Later, someone read a book on hunger where it explained that the reason hungry men talked about food was a reflex action one could not help.

The mere mention of food, like saliva in anticipation of food, produced the digestive juices to flow in one's stomach in an effort to appease the hunger. Some men could not endure such talk and would walk away.

Most of the German guards were old men. They often spoke to us and made it very obvious that Germany was 'kaput'.

An episode I had completely forgotten now happened. Louis Mendelow, my mate at the time reminded me. I met Louis in Johannesburg in 1987, not for the first time, but after an interval of perhaps 30 years. He reminded me how my ability to speak Russian used to get us more bread. More important, he remembered when the Germans could see the Allied forces advance in the north, where we were, they decided to move us all out of the camp. I must have been in the sick bay at the time the march out was ordered and was therefore left alone with the others there. Louis decided to remain in his bunk after everyone left. The Germans usually checked all empty huts with dogs, but he took a chance. When almost everyone left the camp, I alone walked into our empty hut and approached my bunk - both he and I got enormous shocks. He, because he expected a German searching and I at the sudden appearance of a person in the top bunk in an empty hut. He told me he felt his red hair go several shades paler until he discovered it was me.

Daily the sky was dominated by Allied war planes and seldom did a German plane appear. We just had to hang on. On the morning of 16 April 1945, there were no German soldiers, or for that matter any kind of Germans to be seen anywhere near the camp. The double gates were opened the watch towers around the fence were empty. We just walked out.

I walked with another friend to the small town nearby. Only P.O.W.s were to be seen. A Russian P.O.W. came riding past on a horse shouting with joy. Some others were chasing chickens all over the street. There was a car which would not start, probably with an empty tank. I walked into a block of apartments. Some doors stood wide open. We entered. Everything was there but the people. A round table, after a meal with all the crockery on a plain white table cloth. I told my friend that here was an opportunity I was not likely ever again to have. I grabbed the table cloth and gave it a violent tug. The cloth left the table. Apart from one plate, all the crockery remained on the bare wooden table. From there we went to a three storey building. It was a warehouse. One whole floor was covered a foot deep in white sugar. On another floor we found hundreds of bags of all kinds of grain and food. I found a bag of oats ready for cooking. Between us we decided to carry it back to camp.

Later that day Canadian soldiers arrived in jeeps. They hung three flags over the entrance - Russian, British and Canadian. We were told that lorries would pick us up the next day and take us to the nearest landing field. After gorging ourselves on the porridge we took, I began packing for the last time in Germany. I was ready long before the transport arrived.

It was a concrete landing area. Everyone sat on the concrete in a long queue waiting for our turn. Dakota planes were circling and landing all the time. Each one was carrying 'jerry' cans of petrol. As soon as the last can was offloaded, P.O.Ws filled the plane to bursting and it lumbered off to England. There were no seats and we sat on the metal floor of the plane.

So on 28 April 1945, two months short of three years as a P.O.W. I was free again.

A team of South African doctors, among whom was Louis' doctor brother met us at Brighton where I was accommodated. The war was still on. Everyone had ration coupons for everything including food. We were fed double rations and a controlled diet. I also received money from years of accumulated pay not collected. Almost daily, I took the train to London. I met an attractive Wren and whenever she had leave, we would either go to London or to parts of Sussex. A complete medical examination had pronounced me fit. All I had to do was get back home to South Africa and pick up my life. Every day I checked on travelling home. After a continuous holiday of roughly two months, I was offered a seat on a Dakota to fly to South Africa. The trip took five days. I landed at Zwartkop airfield near Pretoria. There I obtained a travel voucher which took me by train to East London.

It was good to see my mother again. Leslie, my stepbrother was now a plumber and working on his own. He had an old Dodge car which he used for his work. It was three years since I had last driven a car. So I decided while I still wore the uniform I should obtain a driving licence. He lent me his car. Nothing worked as it should, but I managed to pass the test and received the licence. East London was not exactly London, Johannesburg or even Brighton. I had some 'fun' and returned to the army in Johannesburg to get my discharge. Feldman and Co kept my job. I also went to a few advertising agencies for a job as an artist. All asked if I had been to art school. So to art school I went which was also the Johannesburg Technical College. The head, Mr. ^{Gardner} ~~Granger~~ looked at my P.O.W. work and said he would get me a Government bursary for a three year course. It would include monthly cash grants to live on as well as tuition fees. A month later I began art school. When I told Feldman I was going to art school they gave me £280 as a part of my salary accumulated during my war absence.

After a week drawing from plaster casts in the first year, I was put up to third year students. Here was a fantastic teacher, the principal's wife Phyllis ^{Granger} ~~Granger~~. I went ever day. We did commercial art lettering theory, history, water colours, oils, life drawing. There were many teachers. For portraits I was told to begin with the eyes. the P.O.W. instructor said block the head out. I enjoyed myself very much. There were also night sessions where I did sculpture in clay and casting in plaster of paris. But it was all much too slow. They recommended I should do an art teacher's diploma the following year.

The money I was given simply was not enough. Once I paid for board and lodging there was almost nothing left for anything else. The money from Feldman helped a lot and stretched out almost a year. Once again I started looking for an artists job. Some of the best shops in town had to my mind outstanding window displays incorporating art and design of a very high order. The best of these always bore the name of a firm responsible 'Industrial Displays'. I went to see them. The owner, Mr. Shlamm was a short German man. He agreed to take me on trial immediately. The salary was £60, about three times what the Government was giving me a month. So after ten months I left the art school, but continued going at night.

The work at Industrial Displays was a constant challenge. In the first three months I learned more than in the ten months at the art school. There were two other artists, Lixi, a French girl who worked mornings only and was outstanding and quick. The other, a lady full time was pleasant and good in a slow kind of way in comparison to Lixi who was a ball of fire. Schlam too was an artist and did nice free lettering. He was really an interior architect with a German university degree. He was Jewish and just managed to get away from Germany in time. I was in my element there. While I worked for Feldmans I met Mrs. Richard Feldman who saw some of my work. She had good art sense and told me to work much bigger and with greater freedom, not possible on a small pad. Now here I was asked to do paintings of enormous size, metres high and wide almost like scenery for the stage. They had to be good and done quickly every day.

Shortly after I began, the one full time woman left so it was Lixi and I only and the boss. In addition, we had three male window dressers. The work covered a very wide spectrum. Designing window displays providing full colour backgrounds, producing cards, banners, posters, etc. Designing letters, using various cutting machines, model designing and manufacturing exhibition stands, design and production.

No way would I have learned and done all this at art school even in five years there. After a year I was offered a senior post to take charge of the display department at the O.K. Bazaars in Johannesburg. I almost accepted as the salary was nearly double I was getting. When I came to give notice, Mr. Schlam persuaded me to stay by offering me a large increase but not as much as the O.K. What induced me to remain was the extra money, but even more the wide range of experience which I would not get at the other job. It was a very happy time for me.

From East London I arranged to live with a family Feinberg in Johannesburg whom my step-father, Harry Edelstein, knew. It was not a boarding house. I shared a room with Wolfie Feinberg, the old landlady's son and five years my senior. In life luck plays a remarkably important role. Not being hit by a bullet at night in the war is just one of them, which happens entirely without your knowledge. Sometimes luck appears with your full knowledge. Such was the case when I met Wolfie. He was a practising commercial artist, self employed with a string of clients. He also had a keen appreciation of art and we became good friends.

Ann Axelrod had married while I was in Sardinia. She wrote often up until then. Issy, my old friend joined the Signal Corps after he graduated as an Electrical Engineer. He too had a lucky break in the army and was involved in a new science of electronics in his work with radar. He was discharged from the army about a year after me. We resumed our friendship and saw a lot of each other. Wolfie and I bought a Citroen in partnership and used it in turn or together, including a holiday to East London. This was my very first car and it made life so much more pleasant. We also joined the Transvaal Art Circle. Every Monday evening we drew life models, mostly nudes. It was identical to the Art school work but without an instructor. I found it extremely useful to maintain my drawing ability here which I did not get at work. Very often I watched Wolfie do commercial art which involved drawing letters to an incredible accurate finish.

I learned an immense amount from just watching him prepare black and white art work for printing. It is a highly skilled and demanding art not easily acquired. Very many years later I put this knowledge to good use. I also joined the Jewish Guild tennis section. Every Saturday afternoon I walked to their courts. Issy often played as well, but he didn't join.

Wolfie introduced me to a family of three sisters. I became friendly with one of them. Having a car was great when you have a girl and I enjoyed life very much- I also became very friendly with Issy's sister, Jane.

My job was great and exciting. I also painted in water colours and oils.

At least three times my paintings were accepted for hanging at the Annual Academy in the Joubert Park Gallery. My mother had also submitted an oil of mine to an exhibition in East London which won some prizes.

Soon after my army discharge, someone persuaded me to join a Zionist Youth Group on a weekend camp on the Vaal river in Vereeniging. It is very strange that I agreed to go as I had several years of camp and rough existence. My strange decision was to change my life because I met Estelle there.

This was my first experience of a social camp. Unlike Riga where I participated in many camps as a youth, in South Africa I never joined any movements. This was not because I did not agree with their aims, I just thought it was more of a social game here, not to be taken seriously and therefore not for me. I certainly was not to look for a wife that I went. I admit I did enjoy myself and meeting Estelle was very nice.

The first thing that struck me were her eyes. I thought they were marvellous. I don't remember all the details of that camp now. Estelle says I was drawing someone one evening and I was rude to her when she spoke to me. I am sure I did not mean to be but perhaps that was how I sounded to her. I had a very pleasant journey back in the train in her company. At the station I was somewhat embarrassed when Issy's sister, Jane and his girl friend, now his wife Mercia, came to meet me. I got out of the compartment to say hello to them and when I turned to help Estelle and take my own bags, she had disappeared. I remember clearly that it upset me. I walked along the platform hoping to see her but had no luck. Months later, I met her again by chance.

Trechikoff was exhibiting his paintings at the old Carlton Hotel in Eloff Street and I spent my lunch hour there. Estelle was there too with her sister Shirley and I was delighted to meet her again. She gave me her phone number this time.

By now Wolfie and I had sold our car and I had to rely on busses. At the time I was earning well and really tried to impress Estelle at least once. So I hired a car for the first time in my life and took her out. She met most of my friends and we went out in some big parties to dances and shows. I stopped taking out other girls.

By a remarkable coincidence, Estelle lived near the Koseff family. Mrs. Koseff was my stepfather, Harry Edelstein's sister and whenever Harry Edelstein came to Johannesburg with my mother, we used to meet at the Koseffs. Irene Koseff and Estelle as well as Irene's three brothers all became good friends. I liked Estelle's parents and they were friendly to me. Everything seemed to be fine in Johannesburg apart from the fact that the National party with Malan as their leader were going to be the new South African Government.

They had a history of being anti-semitic and if not openly supporting Hitler in the war, certainly tried to be beutral and anti-Smuts Government which assisted the Allies. Israel had just been born and was already fighting for its life. The Zionist Federation in Johannesburg put out a call for men with wartime experience to join the Israeli army. The influence of my formative years in Riga with Hashomer Haatzair was still strong, so once again I came forward, gave notice and flew off to Israel via Italy.

Soom after my arrival in Israel I was sent to a camp near Haifa and helped to establish a medical aid post attached to a regiment with half tracks and a couple of armed cars. The half track vehicle had wheels in front but tracks at the back. Dr. Rosenberg was our M.O. There was a motley crowd of Americans, South Africans, British and Sabras. All had combat experience and there was a minimum of drill for its own sake. It was hard to distinguish men from officers. Within weeks our unit left our base in the early evening and drove in a long convoy into the hills of Western Galillee. When it became dark, the whole convoy switched their lights on and continued along a narrow twisting road towards Safed or Tsfat, in Hebrew. At the outskirts of Safed we stopped and rested a while. All the men got out except the drivers. I was a driver as well. Most of the convoy was ordered to return to base camp in total darkness, not showing any lights whatsoever. It was extremely dark. The road kept twisting and turning around the hills even at a snails pace it was very hard to see the edge of the road. Men were walking in front of a vehicle to give directions but not all had co-drivers to do that. By morning we were almost home. Several vehicles were lost that night when they tumbled down off the road. Most of that day I slept. Before the sun set, I and the whole convoy of empty vehicles, mainly jeeps and other light trucks all only with drivers did the identical trip again with lights blazing towards Safed and other villages held by the Arabs. To me the whole exercise seemed idiotic and a terrible waste of petrol, vehicles and effort. Much later I learned the reaon. This was a totally different sort of war. It was confined to narrow roads with steep sides, either side of olive tree plantations. In either case unlike the desert of North Africa movement had to be along the roads only and therefore much more dangerous.

The next night I went with my unit into action. About six half tracts with a single armoured vehicle leading moved at a good speed along a flat narrow road. It was fairly dark but no hills only olive plantations on either side. We were told on no account to leave our vehicles. I was in a half track, all of which had thick armour plating along the sides, back door and front. The driver could only see through slits. The top was completely open.

The men in my vehicle were firing furiously from either side into the plantation as were all the other men in this short convoy. Only the leading car was totally enclosed in armour and it also had a small cannon in addition to two machine guns. I did not have a clue where the enemy or our objective was. After a while we stopped, the firing ceased to some extent and we waited for dawn. I was in a small Arab village with perhaps a dozen stone buildings. We all got out of the half track. I was told there was a wounded man up ahead beyond a low stone wall. As I ran to look for him I could see many bodies lying still, either dead or too afraid to move. They were not our men. The wounded man was lying well forward and in an exposed position. No cover at all. There was only one solution as far as I could see. I left my medical side pack, ran to the man and managed to lift him on my back and run back with him to a good stone shelter. He was badly wounded and could not speak. I gave him a morphine injection from a ready made ampule. He and a few others, lightly wounded were quickly evacuated. The O.C. ordered his men forward and we all got into our vehicles and continued north. There were several villages along the route, some abandoned and others not. The Arab folk just stood there and watched us drive past.

Those few days of war for me were more violent and graphic than all the years in the great world war. The other seemed to be impersonal. You killed or were killed from great distances by some remote enemy. Here, the enemy could be paces away and people actually saw who they were killing unless it was a night action.

Some incidents I witnessed were so horrific that I have never spoken about them nor can I write about them. Perhaps the experience in the desert six years previously had conditioned me to accept more of the same.

The next incident was rather strange. This was a more conventional ground action, also somewhere in the Western Galilee at night. I walked with the rest of the men over some fields into plantations and open ground. Another guy and I were told to remain near a road while the rest went on. There was some light from the moon. We remained there about an hour. The whole operation as far as I was concerned was total confusion as to what we were supposed to do. A vehicle came along the road. The driver asked us to look at some wounded in the back. I climbed on and had a look. The driver said he was going for some supplies to a town not far where there was also a hospital. Would I stay with the two wounded men and go with him. Which is what I did. They seemed not badly hurt from talking to them but needed assurance. My Hebrew was extremely poor - almost non-existent. They knew more English than I Hebrew.

Driving without lights the driver took us to the hospital. The wounded men were taken, the truck went off and I tried to make my way back to my unit. After walking for about an hour and feeling completely lost, a huge shape came rumbling along the road behind me. It stopped near me. It was a large breakdown truck with a tall crane. I climbed into the cab with the lone driver. He thought I knew the way or what was going on. At least he seemed to be familiar with the area. I could not tell him where my unit was so we both decided I stay with him as I may be of some help later. It seems he had to recover an armed vehicle somewhere. We drove slowly looking for a stuck vehicle. As dawn was breaking we were among the hills on a road with a sheer drop to one side. There was not a soul in sight. He drove around the curving road and we saw the armoured car. It was perched on the edge of the road with the front wheels in the air over the drop into a large valley below. I cannot see how he would have managed without me to attach and pull the car back on the road. This was enemy country according to him and we kept the vehicles between us and the vast open area to which we were exposed. Eventually after much hasty manoueuvering on this narrow road he took the car in tow and we made a hasty retreat.

In broad daylight now I also saw my unit as we drive back. This was the extent of my action in the Israeli War of Independence. I returned to the base camp near Haifa and continued with the dull routine of attending to the daily sick parades and patients.

About this time I read an army notice that the Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv was looking for artists and architects for a military project. I obtained leave from my M.O. and went to Tel Aviv. Before leaving Johannesburg I had taken a number of very good photographs of some of my best work at Industrial Displays. These I took to Tel Aviv now. I do not know how many other artists there were in the army who applied. What I do know is that I was accepted to join a special small unit attached to the Ministry of Defence to work in Tel Aviv. The main obstacle was that I had to obtain the consent of my regiment's C.O. for my transfer. I had a letter with a request for this move, but it was at his discretion. The C.O. agreed on condition my M.O. did. He was my most difficult hurdle. I finally convinced him he could manage without me and in case of the remote possibility of further action, I would return immediately.

The whole of the northern part of Israel from the sea in the west along the Lebanese border to the uppermost corner at Metulah was firmly under our control even though this area had more arab villages than any other part of Israel. In Tel Aviv the ministry put me up with a family who had a spare room with board. The special unit consisted of three men, the director, an architect, another architect and myself. The idea was to prepare plans and drawings for what was to become a victory exhibition for local but mainly international visitors. My art and exhibition experience as well as the photographs I had shown them had clinched the job for me. Moshe, the young architect I was to work with was a Sabra born in Jerusalem. He had recently done a post graduate course in America with Frank Lloyd Wright, the very famous American architect. The first job was to find a suitable area for such a project. It was agreed to investigate the area north of Tel Aviv along the sea shore. So I went on my own one day with the bus and a lot of walking to the area to make sketches of suitable spots. As I was sketching among the sand dunes, two armed soldiers approached me. I was not in uniform. My story seemed farfetched and the area I was drawing was restricted. Would I come along with them. They took my sketches and escorted me to their unit not far away. Having repeated my story to their security officer who also did not believe me, he telephoned the Ministry of Defence as I asked. Nobody had heard of me and there was no one there who could confirm what I said. It was late already. So in the nicest possible way I was under arrest for the night. In the morning another call confirmed my tale, but I was also told that the area was too near a large power station and could not be used as we had hoped. Back at the ministry everyone had a good laugh at my arrest. My next assignment was to design a mural for a very long wall, 2 metres high by 60 metres long. I worked on this for about a month at the ministry, while Moshe was busy preparing design and drawings for the various pavilions of the exposition. During this period I became friendly with another South African, Solly Ossin. He was also in the same unit that I had served in the Galilee without having met. He and several other South Africans, all members of the Habonim Movement in Benoni, South Africa, were now serving in Israel. They had plans for settling in Israel. The idea was to establish a brand new settlement on kibbutz lines but with some major differences. Simply put all the members either as families, couples or singles would live as private units but all the work and duties would be as in a kibbutz. They called many public meetings in Tel Aviv at the premises of the S.A. Zionist offices and explained all the details to prospective members.

The scheme was well received and many American, English and South African volunteers in the Israeli Army joined as members. The time had arrived for me to make the most important decision of my life.

All the important factors had come together. Since childhood to live in Israel was always at the back of my mind. If I could persuade Estelle to marry me and share the great dream of a new community it would be wonderful. I had the assurance and enthusiasm of many highly intelligent South Africans who would join this new scheme. What could be greater than this, to begin a new life. I had to get out of the army but first it was essential to write to Estelle. Since I first met her I grew to love her more and more, but was not sure how she would react to my proposal or plans. The war seemed to be over for the time being. The more I thought about my work at the ministry the more skeptical I became about the whole business. I thought anyone with half a brain would be mad to embark on this enterprise I was involved in. Here Israel was struggling to survive militarily and economically and we were playing with an exhibition. I finished my working drawing of the mural to scale. It took about three weeks work and decided to keep it. Should I prove wrong and it was still on the design would still be intact with me. Estelle's great 'yes' prompted me to return to Johannesburg as soon as I could. This was not difficult at the high powered offices of the Ministry. Without saying it I am sure they too came to the same conclusion I did about the exposition.

I flew back to Johannesburg. The events of the next few months are really hazy. So much had to happen. I introduced Estelle to some of the members of our new community to be. The S.A. Zionist Federation gave me a grant of about £1 200 for serving in the Israeli Army. Perhaps the fact that we were returning to settle in Israel was also an influence - I don't know. It was certainly unexpected and very welcome.

I asked Issy Koseff to be my best man. He seemed a natural choice as he knew us both well. I stayed with Wolfie Feinberg again. As always thinking ahead, I thought we should be married early to obtain the passports in my name in time. So we were married in Court in February a month prior to our wedding. It is very fortunate that Estelle and her family arranged everything because I was completely useless for that. My mother came from East London. It was a proper traditional chupa in the Yeoville Shul followed by an evening reception. We did the traditional waltz, and greeted all our guests. Estelle was beautiful and radiant and I hoped as happy as I was. Appropriately we went to Vereeniging where we first met for our honeymoon, at the Riviera Hotel along the Vaal river. Soon afterwards we said goodbyes to our family and friends and flew off to our permanent home - Israel.

On Saturday (July 1988) ma and I spent the evening eating out and later reminiscing with Irene and Jossie Rabins. The friendship with Irene is unique as I mentioned earlier. I first met her as one of the large Koseff family when my mother met Harry Edelstein. He was old Mrs. Koseff's brother and Irene was his niece. Estelle knew the Koseffs because they lived near each other in Orange Grove well before I met ma in a totally different setting. We have kept in touch and see them often. In fact, when we lived in Bulawayo Irene too had been living there many years before us, and she met and knew Michael and Ilan that one year we spent in Bulawayo.

On Tuesday I received an 'invitation' to attend the funeral of Wolfie Feinberg's (another old friend) mother-in-law, so I decided to visit my grandmother's grave as well. She died in 1952 when we lived on Moshav Habonim. I had no memory of her at our wedding at all and raised the subject this Saturday. Ma said that immediately after I stepped on the glass under the chupa and before I even kissed her, I went to kiss my grandmother who sat in the front row of the shul. I admit that I cannot remember that at all. Irene, whose family were all involved in our wedding, had another tale. Her youngest brother, Colin, now dead, was given the task of fetching my Grandmother and her husband, old man Bilchik, to the wedding. He had a Vauxhall, a small British car, and when he came and announced that they were to go with him to the wedding, my grandmother said she was not going to the wedding in such a small car. He had to do a lot of fast talking to persuade the two of them to squeeze into his car. His brother Issy was our best man. As I am writing this, Issy is lying more dead than alive at home with a brain tumour which has robbed him in the last six months of speech, sight and most bodily functions. No one knows if he can feel or hear. He has since passed away.

Actually we spent another week in Tel Aviv. I visited the Defence Ministry and as I expected my small unit had disappeared, so I kept by big design which I had carried back and still have to this day, in a roll. Our new friends, all members of the group, were gathering from different places. Kibbutz Kfar Blum in the Northern tip of Israel was to be the place where we all would begin our new life living on the land and learning new ways far removed from the city.

In retrospect this early experience which Estelle and I had to endure when we left Tel Aviv and came to Kfar Blum upsets me every time I think of it. The kibbutz management gave us the most primitive of facilities. We lived in a small tent with just enough room for two metal beds and an orange crate which Estelle scrounged. The tent was pitched over a raised concrete slab. I don't remember if we had electric light. (No, we did not - E). Some of the work Estelle had to do included working in their vast kitchen washing up or serving in the dining room. That was the best part. When she had to go in the fields and harvest cucumbers or 'thin' a young maize field, did one realise how extremely hard and exhausting such work is. It would take too long to explain without really conveying the agony of such labour. I can only describe it as inhuman to ask adults to thin a line of maize plants stretching for perhaps half a kilometre, or search for cucumbers lying on the ground covered completely by leaves. Mostly, such work is given to children and youth who are small and supple. Alternatively, its grown by small holdings intensively on small acreage. This was and still is a most unacceptable face and practice of a socialistic society. For such labour we were given the privilege of living in a tent and fed. In our idealism and inexperience, we endured this. I worked frequently in their maintenance workshop helping with arc welding.

One night I woke with the most excruciating pain in my eyes. As if a thousand needles were sticking into them. I thought I was going blind. By morning the pain had gone. I reported sick and explained. I don't remember seeing a doctor, but a man in the workshop explained the pain in the eyes was from watching arc welding without good eye protection.

Our group was growing and after about two months we all departed to our own land. Normally in the previous twenty years or so young groups wishing to settle on the land had to wait years to be given a place on which to establish a kibbutz or other type of settlement. In our case, we got it after a few months of negotiation with the Jewish Agency which controlled land and settlement. Firstly because there were many abandoned villages and tracts of land all over the country and secondly because officials at the Agency had never in all their years of settling young groups seen such a list of engineers, doctors, professionals in many fields in one single group.

The most important items naturally received priority. Water was found in two places. One was a cistern the Arabs had built which had rain water. One jsut dropped a bucket on a rope down a hole and pulled it up by hand. It looked alright but everyone boiled the water before drinking. The other was a well which required a motor and pump. This well was at the foot of the hill at the level crossing of the railway. Until proper showers were built the men and women took turns to shower completely in the open under one huge downpour of water arranged next to the pumphouse. Many a time was Estelle, together with other females caught showering by a passing train which blew its whistle either in triumph or warning as it approached the level crossing. When that happened, they all hit the mud with just their backsides protruding until the train passed.

Food, Fodder and Fuel, the 3 F's became the sacred items to achieve first. As time went on, many other things as well, but these always came first. We also had an army one ton truck. Its driver was a Dutchman, Jack Bles. He was and is a dynamic, wild, smart individual with whom I and later Estelle developed a lifelong friendship to this day. Every day he drove this clapped out truck to Haifa with or without passengers and carried a thousand and one items needed on the settlement. Everything had to be bought in Haifa.

Estelle worked five hours a day as did all the women. There was always a mountain of cleaning to do apart from kitchen work. I was in the party working at the lime stone quarry. This was exactly the type of convict work given for hard labour as depicted in cartoons. We were all given a short heavy hammer and told to break stones too heavy to lift by hand into a steel cocopan. We worked in pairs. After the blasting of the stone hill face, we had to pick up and load 16 cocopans a day of stones and wheel them to a stone crusher. The hammer was needed to break the boulders too large and heavy to pick up. Nothing that I did in the coal mine as a P.O.W. compared to the hard work I did now. Late in the afternoon the tractor and trailer would come to fetch us home. One big advantage was that we got a good hot shower daily at the quarry.

The communal dining hall was in two large rooms in what was the 'Mukhtars' (Chief) house, double storey. This was the central area on top of the hill with a beautiful view of the sea to the east and the 'mountains' to the west. On a clear day one could see the Carnel range near Haifa to the North as well. At night, by the light of the setting sun and later pressure lamps, eating supper, we all discussed the day's work. Estelle and the cleaning ladies came across unexploded bombs or shells. There were also thousands of rats and our traps were working overtime catching them.

The men working the shells on the beach complained they were the hardest working and would not agree our work at the quarry was as hard. The truth was that everyone really worked extremely hard. The lonely man on the tractor plowing all day in the hot sun had no picnic either. Neither did the women working in the kitchen in primitive conditions.

After a month or so the 'beach boys' swapped places with the stone bashers. Now I realised why they complained so much. The problem was twofold. One had to separate the sand from the shells first. This was done by throwing spadefuls of both vigorously against a large sieve standing at an angle. The idea was for the sand to fly through the mesh while the shells came tumbling down the slope of the mesh in front. As soon as the mound of sand at the back was high and the shells in front a good pile, we moved the sieve to another spot and started again. There were four teams each with a sieve. The second problem was did we have enough shells to fill a five cubit meter truck which came every afternoon and had to drive from pile to pile and we had to shovel again to fill it. We considered the problem which of course was a psychological stumbling and frustrating situation. Someone came up with the brilliant answer and complete solution. The carpenters shop had a very able man, ex-Poland, who performed miracles with wood for many years. He built a shallow long box like a coffin, with protruding handles along the length like a stretcher. We took one to the beach, placed the edge of the sieve on the edge of the box and began to work. The two men could see the shells tumbling into the box and not the sand as before. Soon it was full and the two men lifted it by the handles, alked a short distance and tipped all out. We quickly built three more such boxes and at once the frustration had gone. Now each team of two could measure precisely what they had done. All the boxes were tipped onto one big pile. We knew exactly when we had enough for the truck load and I learned a most valuable lesson on how a frustrating job could be made much more productive and even fulfilling, just by the knowledge of a measure. In case the reader is curious what our client did with the shells, here is the answer:

They were crushed in Haifa and were added to chicken feed. Evidently it was an important ingredient. Fortunately as the settlement developed, the stone and shell groups stopped.

There was much to be done. The money earned did not justify the effort when the labour could be used more profitably. The business of the settlement, now called Moshav Habonim, was conducted by a small management committee elected by all the members, for one year. It consisted of a treasurer, secretary, buyer, labour supervisor and farm manager. These were all full time jobs and more.

There were other jobs not elected but appointed by the management on a permanent basis. Head of the kitchen, the dairy, the maintenance workshop, carpentry shop, electrician, drivers, chickens, vegetable gardens, tractor drivers, bookkeeper.

While still in South Africa, we had arranged to begin a vermiculite industry on our Moshav. A certain Mr. Edenberg promised to give us, gratis, 5 000 tons of vermiculite provided we paid for the shipping to Israel. Our engineers were falling over each other looking for meaningful work on the Moshav. A couple of them began designing the factory and furnaces needed for exfoliation of the vermiculite which had arrived. For a couple of days convoys of trucks arrived from Haifa with thousands of bags which we offloaded. Whenever a large force of labour was needed such as offloading the vermiculite, or harvesting a perishable crop or bringing the bales of hay in from the fields, everyone who could possibly leave their work was mobilised for the task whether lasting a few hours or a day.

No doubt whole books have been written about the kibbutz society. Here I will only deal with the principal points and how they affected Estelle and me and our immediate environment. The first management committee not elected were the people who formulated the whole scheme in Benoni, South Africa, all members of the Habonim Youth Movement. The prime mover was Solly Ossin. Eric Bader also of Benoni, became our first treasurer, Yaacov Strachilowitz, a Sabra who joined us at the start and spoke Hebrew, Arabic and French fluently, became our buyer, Leish Joffe, who left a kibbutz and knew how it functioned, was labour supervisor, Reuben Joffe (Leish's brother and both from Benoni) was secretary. In the first few months of our existence, Jack Bles, our driver, happened to see a 3 ton Dodge truck in a car showroom window. The next day he took Eric Bader and showed him the truck, and told him to buy it. He refused to drive his old army reject lorry another yard. Eric, as all treasurers the world over said he (we) did not have the money, could not afford it, wait a while, etc etc. To his everlasting glory and tenacity, Jack refused to budge or accept any excuse. He made Eric buy that Dodge there and then. Very many years later, this single act of stubbornness by Jack was acknowledged to have been the greatest service anyone performed for the good of the Moshav. This Dodge became the absolute saviour and provider and our main link with the outside world, mainly Haifa. What is more, within weeks of its purchase the price of such a brand new vehicle trebled, provided one could find one for sale.

Austerity with a capital A had arrived. After about a year, I was elected as buyer and Yascov showed me the ropes for a few weeks. The Moshav did not have a telephone. We were far from self sufficient in anything apart from milk. The treasurer's chief task was obtaining loans from every possible source. My job was to see firstly the three F's were sufficient. Israel had established even during the British mandate a sophisticated system for its labour force under the Histadrut umbrella. We were only concerned in the economics. Nearly all the country's settlements belonged as members and could buy from its huge cooperative warehouse in Haifa.

Every month I had to obtain a note from their accounts department showing the maximum I could spend during the month. I often spent it in half a month and had to get my treasurer, now Solly Ossin, to establish more credit. Most of our crops were sold through them. In fact they were mortgaged in advance with them. Each Friday I stayed home and gave an account to our bookkeeper of every cent spent during the week, in cash or by cheque. Every receipt and slip of paper I kept to remind me. Friday afternoons, the management met, the agenda prepared by the secretary, took hours and often we returned after supper to continue.

In theory everyone was entitled to a 'shabat', being a rest day. On a farm with animals that is not possible. There were always others who could take over for a day. What in fact happened most members could not take a day off a week and accumulated these 'shabatot'.

My buying was done all over Haifa, five days a week. It also included errands on behalf of members, the post, medical needs and repairs which could not be done at home. Once a week was market day which meant leaving at 5 a.m. together with the head of the kitchen, normally a woman. If Jack and I arrived after 6 a.m. all the good produce, mostly vegetables would be gone. I went with Jack twice, often three times a week. Our work had to dovetail to manage and collect all my big purchases. Both of us frequently stood in separate queues purchasing and loading goods in different parts of the city. Other days I had to walk to the road about two kilometres, and catch a bus to and fro.

My previous army stint in Israel had now seemed to unearth a lot of Hebrew I learned in Riga as a child. Sometimes words came out I did not know I knew. Every night after supper a queue would form at my table. The head of every branch and section would place their orders with me. A special size spanner for the tractor workshop, more electric cable for the generator shop, cotton wool for the medical room, more tin plates for the dining room, etc, etc every day.

Then I worked out the shortest possible route to take if these items were not obtainable at the first port of call 'Hamashbir', the huge coop store selling everything. Often when my credit had been exhausted at the coop, I would try private stores where I could obtain credit. All the merchants knew that no kibbutz or other settlement would ever be allowed to go bankrupt. As long as they were still young, up to ten years in many cases and still under the auspices of the Agency they, the merchants were safe. But even they would rather be paid cash than have to wait too long.

Apart from members who had permanent positions, there were always many who worked wherever needed. Every evening the workers supervisor 'Sadran Avoda' in hebrew, listened to all the requests for labour for the coming day from heads of branches. These requests were always more than he had people available for. Before a large wooden board divided into segments and slits the names of every person was on a little metal plate which fitted into a slot. There were about 120 people representing all the members and even some visitors. It was his job to move these people to where they were needed which could take half an hour and it was everyone's duty to check where they worked the next day. This system had been evolved over the years by the kibbutzim up and down the land. Very often he was asked to change, swap or adjust these names. It was a very responsible job needing much tact and patience. Particularly with heads of branches who always complained that their particular needs of manpower were not met.

The ideal was not to move anyone from the work they were engaged in. On a mixed farm with animals and planting seasons, that is impossible.

In the first year, Estelle was sent to Jerusalem on a Hebrew course for two weeks. For perhaps the first time in twenty years, we had snow in Israel that year. In Jerusalem Estelle was freezing. I had not painted or drawn for months. The sight of everything covered in snow was irresistible and I made a couple of water colours.

Another great event for the country and Moshav Habonim was the state visit of Dr. D.F. Malan, Prime Minister of South Africa. This was the first visit of a head of state to Israel. His visit was to include Moshav Habonim, mainly because it was predominantly established by South Africans and was the most recent settlement. Several weeks before his arrival, it was agreed that I would do a painting of our settlement which I duly did in gouache and had it framed. One of the items in the ceremony was the presentation of this painting to Dr. Malan... I wonder what became of it.

Without exception, every South African on the Moshav had reduced their living conditions drastically. Even the most elementary facilities in South Africa did not exist here. No one had a toilet where they lived, not even outside, but far away a three minute walk. Food was of the most primitive with vegetables predominating. Meat and eggs were a luxury, perhaps once a week. The important aspect was that everyone was in a similar position. Unlike a kibbutz in those days, 1950, many members had private means and accounts in the bank in Haifa. Estelle and I included. These were used for minor luxuries when we visited Haifa. Two requests to own a motor car were refused by the management. The whole point was that no one should have a blantly higher living standard. Such profits as we managed to generate were constantly ploughed back well in advance of receiving them, into improving our capacity to be even more productive, but also lifting our very low living standards.

At the end of two years as a buyer, the A.G.M. elected me as secretary. Estelle had many jobs at that time. There was always the kitchen. A tradition has developed in the kibbutz society about working in the kitchen and dining rooms. In addition to a permanent kitchen staff, everyone, no matter how elevated or busy they were in their permanent jobs had a turn at serving and cleaning in the dining halls. This was over and above their regular work of course provided they were not away. Estelle spent much time working in the kitchen and laundry, in the vegetable sections of the land and exfoliating vermiculite. One of her more permanent positions was milking cows. This was done by hand three times in 24 hours. One milking was therefore done either very late at night or very early in the morning. We had a fairly large herd of all ages including over twenty cows in milk. I too learned to milk and at one stage we both worked with the cows. There was considerably more to do than just milk cows.

Our big plant was still being built so a very primitive method to head the vermiculite (exfoliate) was started. Vermiculite looks like small particles of mica, thin flakes like broken potato crisps. When subjected to heat it will expand like a concertina to about 10-14 times its volume. We hoped to sell it as an insulating material for construction. Our earliest method was to direct a big blow torch flame on a flow of vermiculite dropping through the flame, then gather and bag the exfoliated vermiculite. One big bag of imported vermiculite would make 10-14 bags, exfoliated.

In spite of a general request for couples not to start families before the Moshav was a bit better established, the babies began to arrive. Michael was born in 1951. Our wives had to have nothing but the best. So all the first babies were born at 'Imahut' on the Carmel in Haifa, a private nursing home. Michael's brit ceremony was held in a lavishly carpeted marquee in the grounds of the nursing home, a gift from the old king of Jordan, Abdullah to Dr. Rutenberg the owner of the nursing home.

Across the railway line not far from the old pump house where we used to shower, a special mixture of grazing was cultivated. The field was irrigated and 'fenced' all round. It was also subdivided into six equal segments by a single strand of wire supported on insulated posts, as was the whole perimeter. This single wire was about one metre off the ground. The idea was to bring the adult cows daily into one segment at a time for an hour. Every three to four days, another segment would be grazed. The wire 'fence' was connected to a car battery to keep the cows within the enclosure. They all learned quickly not to touch the wire. That is all but one cow. They were all Frieslands. Working with them every day one soon learns to recognise them. They all had names. Whenever I herded them from the dairy across the level crossing of the railway and into the field I used to fill my pockets with stones. This brief distance of 400 metres can become a calamity. Although the leaders, usually the same cows, knew precisely where to go, they could decide otherwise. One had to anticipate their every move and not let them get too far ahead. The critical point was crossing the line. Years after we left the Moshav I heard several cows felled the leader along the line and were killed by a train. Once within the wired enclosure it was almost possible to rest. No matter how green and lush the grazing was, one cow and one only just had to taste the grass on the other side of the wire. It knew all about the shock of touching the wire, so she would jump over it with dire consequences. Invariably, she would demolish the whole fence with her hind legs not being trained for such jumps. The result would be a total shambles with the rest spreading all over the place. That is where the stones came in. As soon as I saw this cow edging towards the wire, I would pelt her with a few stones. It always did the trick and she would move away.

By now Estelle and I had moved to another 'house' with a view of the sea, slightly bigger and with possibilities of extending it with a lean-to where Michael could sleep more or less on his own.

Whenever a baby was born I had to buy a steel cot. As the resident artist I also undertook to paint a bright colourful picture inside the cot, usually of a deer or yogi bear or a rabbit's head.

One day while Jack and I were doing our usual work in Haifa, we received word that our resident doctor and member, Jack Medalie suspected a case of polio on the Moshav. He placed the settlement under quarantine. We were therefore instructed to remain in Haifa and not return until further news. At that stage we were still without a telephone. A couple of days later, Jack said that he saw Henry who was our Secretary as he, Jack was driving in Haifa. We knew that Henry was courting a girl in Haifa at the time. The episode enraged us both and we decided there and then to return home in spite of the quarantine. If the secretary could break the quarantine, it was a farce. No sooner did we arrive back when a general meeting was called for that evening to debate our misconduct. Henry denied he visited his girl friend. Jack swore he saw him. Dr. Medalie asked for our expulsion. It was a very heated meeting. Finally, it was decided we two should return to Haifa and restore the quarantine. So back we drove. Two day's later the quarantine was lifted. Not long afterwards I was elected secretary.

Michael was growing fast. Estelle's working time for the Moshav was reduced to two hours a day.

Although we called ourselves Moshav Habonim, we were living like a kibbutz. This was mainly due to the central kitchen and dining room. As a secretary I was responsible for the settlement's every social aspect. I heard complaints from all, but mainly from females, single and married, and had to arbitrate between the members' needs as opposed to the settlement's, and often help with all kinds of work. It was during this period that many women complained about the poor food as well as the lack of variety and sometimes its preparation.

When the scheme was first mooted in Tel Aviv and South Africa, it was on the understanding that we would live as families, and only work would be on a communal basis. It was also accepted that early in our existence we would need to eat as in a kibbutz, but that would be temporary. After three years some thought it was time to change to private cooking and just keep the kitchen and dining room for our single members, visitors and other groups who visited us on brief working holidays.

I was in favour of the change too but was outvoted at our management meeting. So I brought the issue to a general meeting. These meetings were held about twice a month and depending upon the agenda, were not always well attended. They were mostly for information. The management reported on decisions, finance, crops and social and organisational decisions. There was always a question and answer session. Frequently, the members did not care how things were run as long as they were left alone and did not go short. For this meeting about a complete restructuring of our mode of living everyone attended. Within the management I had strong opposition from the big guns. The cost of providing every family with a primitive paraffin cooker, plates, cutlery, pots and pans was considered too dear and beyond our means. The biggest opposition though, came from the doctor and many of our engineers which, as I mentioned previously, we had an abundance - about six men. They said the Moshav was not yet ready for the change. We should prepare for it and in due course when everything was in order and arranged, we should consider it again. Among their points, the strongest was refuse collection. They said we were courting an epidemic and a hygienic danger. Garbage would be spread all over the residential areas, drainage at each house would need to be provided.

If I wanted the change, it was very much for me to convince the majority the change could be made quickly and safely. The main thrust of my argument was that a date must be set at the meeting but not too far ahead for the change. Everything possible would be done to prepare ourselves, but we could never hope to complete all our needs before we change as they would never cease. There would always be problems which we could not even imagine let alone prepare for. The most important thing was to decide to change and tackle and solve obstacles as they appeared.

I do not know if I convinced all the men, but the women were with me and the vote was overwhelming in favour. Another great reason for the positive vote was the fact that it would become mainly my problem as the secretary to implement the switch. In fact it was not as difficult as anticipated nor as costly. Within a month it was in operation. The change also contributed to a far greater responsibility from members in all aspects of our life. It began with the need of providing every family with a monthly budget. We printed money tokens. Each family was paid monthly according to its size and no other consideration. A provision store was established where food was sold, the same vegetables or rice or milk or meat which previously the kitchen used.

As time went on, more and more items were added including elementary hardware. Before, as a buyer I used to buy mugs, plates cutlery, etc for the dining room regularly because no one cared much about losing them. The same went for certain hand tools and working clothes. Suddenly, everyone began to care for and guard all these things or they would have to pay for them out of their budget money.

The tokens, in theory, could be exchanged for cash, but the treasurer only redeemed a certain percentage for pocket money. We did not want anyone saving on food. Our supplies were limited anyway. Our eggs from the most profitable branch of the Moshav in terms of man hours, were sent to the market in total. We and the rest of Israel lived on egg powder. Chicken feed and the keeping of chickens was strictly controlled.

Mainly because almost 100% of all fodder was imported which meant foreign currency. One man could look after many thousands so everyone on the land wished to enlarge their laying chicken numbers.

I built another lean-to which was our kitchen. Everyone learned to build a French drain near their kitchen. Refuse was no problem. Everyone attended to the cleanliness of their own area. Whenever I stayed on the Moshav I never wore shoes or socks. A year of walking barefoot produced soles and heels as tough as leather. The Moshav was expanding so was our debt. The Agency agreed to a big development of the residential hill. Firstly to build nine two-bedroomed houses on a flat portion of the hill. Reuben Joffe, our civil engineer undertook to survey and supervise a whole sewerage system and a brand new road along the entire length of the hill half way to the top. The purpose was to build houses on stilts above and below the road. The hill was nearly all rock. All the houses would face the sea. The plan called for twenty houses.

In our fourth year on the Moshav, Estelle and I moved into the first house completed, of the nine on the plateau. We were considered the couple with the greatest seniority and therefore first in the queue. It was a great event. A small porch led to a lounge/dining room. Two bedrooms both off the lounge. At the opposite end of the porch was a very small kitchen, back door, separate toilet and bathroom (no bath but a shower). All the floors were tiled and walls plain plaster, everything painted cream and white. Each room had electric light and although there were plugs for appliances, these could not be used. We were generating our own electricity and much of the power was needed for the workshops such as carpentry, maintenance, boiler room, some in the kitchen but not for cooking, the medical room and a fully equipped dentist's surgery installed by another Benoni member, Dr. Gerry Miller.

The national electric supply only reached a powerful new water pump at a new borehole.

The crop of babies kept increasing. They were all in a creche for most of the morning while all the mothers worked two hours for the Moshav and at home. For Michael's first birthday, Estelle had a treat. She flew with him to Johannesburg. It was quite an event. After the plane took off, I returned to Tel Aviv and heard that the plane had returned to Lydda (now Ben Gurion) airport. So back I went. Sure enough there was Estelle and Michael. We were given a room for the night at the hotel and as there was a power failure, had to warm the baby's bottle of milk on a candle. In the morning, they eventually left.

Many of our members had left us and returned to South Africa. Some, like Dr. Jack Medalie went to work in Jerusalem. Another doctor left in the first few months. On the other hand, we received new members from England and America and one or two from the local population. There was far too much English spoken but that was inevitable. We obtained another resident doctor who was not a member and received an allowance from us as well as one of the new houses. He was a Bulgarian, a young man who came with his parents. His English was just adequate.

Michael and later all of us became his early patients. On one of their daily walks, the older children were taken by the 'nurse' and supervisor to visit the Lul (chicken house). Outside the building, resting on a cradle was a large drum of paraffin with a normal brass tap. In the fraction of time the children's supervisor had her eyes off Michael, he went to the tap for a 'drink' and got a mouthful of white liquid which certainly did not taste of water. He was rushed home immediately, I was called and tried to make him vomit with little success. The doctor gave him a penicillin injection immediately and he was sent by ambulance to the hospital in Haifa where he was X-rayed and I got the cheerful news that Israel had a high mortality rate of children in his age group dying from drinking paraffin fuel. This was almost a universal fuel on which all cooked. The danger were the fumes causing pneumonia. Hence the early penicillin injection in anticipation. Michael was admitted for observation and released two days later. His stomach had been pumped the first day. He had pneumonia but we took him home and nursed him for a week, even sleeping on the verandah with him to get as much fresh air as possible (it was summer and very hot) and nursed him for a week. He was almost three years old.

The second house was allocated to Solly Ossin who had just married a South African recent member. We were neighbours. After we moved into our new house Estelle gave birth to Ilan. Although our settlement had grown considerably, we had long since ceased sending our women to 'Imahut' in Haifa. It was just too expensive. So Estelle was taken by our own ambulance, which was a gift given by South African parents of members, to Hedera, Kupat Cholim nursing home (Government run). I think our friend Jack Bles drove Estelle home with Ilan in the huge truck. All I seem to remember from that event was Jack saying 'what an ugly baby' or words to that effect.

Soon afterwards, Estelle's father came for a visit from Johannesburg. His father had arrived a few months previously. At that time old Mr. Kaplan at 96 was the oldest passenger El Al had flown. My father-in-law visited him in Jerusalem where he said he came to die. Six months after his arrival, this wish was granted. It was fortunate that we were in our house when he visited. The majority of the members were still living in the old arab houses.

At this time, I too was working in the Refet (dairy) milking and feeding. This branch of our Moshav was the least profitable in man hour terms but like the chickens, provided a steady cash flow. One other very profitable activity was cartage. The Moshav bought an American Mack 10 ton heavy duty truck which was imported by one of our American members, duty free. Jack Bles was moved from the Dodge which worked exclusively for our own needs and went looking for business with his Mack up and down Israel. He was often away days at a time. His resourcefulness to get loads in all directions was outstanding. There is a great art in choosing decent loads, tying down and caring for such a huge and very expensive truck. Jack also married on the Moshave a beautiful Dutch girl.

My art had taken a back seat. There was too much to do with two small children. I did manage though to paint several water colours. Some I sent to my mother, others to Estelle's parents.

One member from the U.K. brought his mother to live on the Moshav permanently. She was the first parent. Some wives went to South Africa on holiday and were in no hurry to return. Socialism in practice is altogether different from the pleasant theory. There is a great amount of tension when all are rewarded, paid, not on the basis of their work but their so-called needs or, in other words, simply the size of their family or other needs to do with health or emergencies.

One of the most difficult tasks was to be a treasurer, secretary or any of the very responsible jobs in management. Their work never ceased and the mental strain took its toll. After several years the idealism begins to wear thin. One likes to obtain some tangible and individual results for ones efforts. What aggravates the situation is to observe others not trying as hard as you, without any diminished pay or reward. Sooner or later the really able and enterprising become disillusioned with this form of socialism and leave to exploit their individual talents and reap the benefits of a capitalist world.

Ilan was growing into a fat baby. Estelle used to collect him from the creche after her two hours of work. To carry him half way up the hill was often too much for her and many a time she was lucky to get a ride with the mule cart to the top. Michael was never fat. He and his gang of five year olds, all born on the Moshav, had a grand time roaming around and playing on the farm. In that respect it was great. Certainly there were dangers like drinking fuel out of a tap, but none of the city environment dangers.

Some of our members obtained German reparations and from being among the poorer cousins to their rich South Africans, now became wealthy, not outwardly but in their bank accounts. Some 'lifts' with furniture arrived from South Africa, as well as refrigerators. Estelle and I still had our ice box which all had, and collected our block of ice twice a week which the Dodge had been bringing from Haifa for years.

Early in 1955 I had an accident. While working in the dairy I tripped on a piece of string, fell on the concrete and broke my patella. After an operation in Haifa and a leg in plaster, I was not much use back on the Moshav. At about the same time, the Agency approached the Moshav to contribute someone, preferably a married couple, for a job in Rhodesia. The Moshav nominated me for the job, at a general meeting. My knowledge of the most intricate business about settlements, art ability and not least the fact that I was not much use working until my knee had healed completely and functioned properly again.

As soon as the plaster was removed I went to Jerusalem and was interviewed extensively. It was to be a trial run as a cultural officer covering the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The fact that I had been in the Israeli Army and was never a member of any particular Zionist youth movement was in my favour because they needed a person who could work as a general emissary with all the different youth movements.

Rhodesia had always relied on instructors from South Africa who came for a week at the most and were always of one movement or another. The post was for two years.

At this stage I would like to say a little about the many personalities on the Moshav with whom we came into contact a lot. We are still in touch with many of them.

SOLLY AND ETHEL OSSIN: As I mentioned before, Solly first drew my attention to the scheme while still in the Israeli army. He was a large man, just a bit plump. A very jolly face and personality. I am not sure what business he had in Benoni, but it had to do with agricultural products. As all the Benoni chaps on the Moshav they were senior Habonim graduates. Solly was always smiling and had a mischievous glint in his eyes. His personality was such that people always paid attention to his words. He was a great negotiator and treasurer on behalf of our Moshav, but details were never his strong point. He could only think big and on a grand scale. On the other hand, this attitude always kept him on course for the final goal. Although he never shirked physical work, hard or light, he was not built for it. The very few times he was not a member on the management body and worked in the field, his back would pack up and in much pain, he would have to quit. I liked him immensely. He married Ethel, a South African, on the Moshav. She wore Estelle's wedding dress, as did several other brides. They had a son, Amnon on the Moshav. When the nucleus of the Benoni creators of Moshav Habonim began to part slowly and left the Moshav, he left as well. I corresponded with him from Salisbury. He had what I thought was a brilliant idea to make a living in Tel Aviv. It consisted of looking after the investments of many Americans living in the States but with share holdings in Israeli enterprises. He was their agent, independent, shrewd, honest, who could understand and speak their language, unlike an Israeli. Evidently he was doing well. One of his clients offered him a permanent important post in an enterprise they controlled. He took it and ceased to operate as an agent. Within a year he was out due to internal politics in the upper levels of the firm. Ethel wrote the next letter. Solly died of a heart attack soon after. He was about my age. They had another two children after they left the Moshav one of whom was killed in a motor cycle accident. We wrote to Ethel, but have lost touch with her for many years now, sadly.

JACK AND ERNIE BLES: I have already written about Jack. He was thin but well built of average height with dark hair and piercing eyes. One year the management committee came to the conclusion that Jack was much too enterprising a person to be our truck driver. We all agreed there was no one on the Moshav, with or without a heavy duty driver's licence who was likely to do the job as well as he. At the same time we wanted him elsewhere. Our vermiculite plant was working well. Unfortunately our sales were poor and needed a big boost. David Meyerson, another South African, was our salesman. He was a very nice guy but compared to Jack, with no drive or enterprise. We asked Jack to sell vermiculite for us and leave the truck driving. He turned us down flat. I am sure that had he taken the job, the vermiculite plant would have had to expand or increase its capacity. He was always direct, loud and unafraid of hurting anyone's feelings, knew what he wanted and took the shortest route to get it. We worked together a great deal in the early days. For the last two years before he returned to Holland, when he drove the 'Mack' I did not see much of him. Ernie and Jack left in 1954. Estelle and I saw them again twenty years later on our first trip to Europe. Jack and Ernie had a large beautiful apartment in Amsterdam and are still there today. He and Ernie, like us, started absolutely from scratch after the Moshav. He became a salesman of ladies dresses. That's some switch from driving a huge diesel truck. They treated us royally. Took us on a long trip around the country. His business had flourished and was well established. We visited them again in 1976 and I alone in 1977. Estelle has kept in touch with Ernie to this day. On my last visit I did a portrait of Jack in water colours. Before we left Salisbury I gave his name and business to a large dress factory in Salisbury. Jack's son is now a regular client and visits Harare often on business.

MORRIS AND YEDIDA SHAPSHAK: When I was in the Arcadia Orphanage, I was taken to a sculptor, Rene Shapshak, who was Morris's father. Morris was 18, the Moshav's youngest member when he joined in 1951. He was somewhat short but well built, quick witted and very pleasant. Soon afterwards the Israeli army requested his services. As secretary, I opposed this claiming giving all kinds of reasons. Morris was full of beans, bright and energetic. Nothing fazed him. He was ready to tackly any job. He drove our truck for a while, as well as tractors. Finally he chose to assist our carpenter, Naor, who was a master. There he stayed until I could not resist the army any longer and he spent a year in the army, coming home whenever he could on leave.

After his release, he married Yedida. She was one of a few Sabra girls who were members and joined our group when she was released from the Israeli army where she drove a truck. A few years older than Morris and almost as impetuous as he was. At the time we all thought it was a strange union. He barely out of his teens and she with a completely different background to his. He returned to the carpentry shop. From there it was a short hop to becoming involved in a big timber construction we needed for a large sheep's pen. He was in charge of all the timber construction which was mainly the roof. They left the Moshav in 1956 and after working a while in Tel Aviv, both landed in England. There Morris sent a letter to Mr. Marks of Marks and Spencer, asking him for a job! He received a reply and finally was offered a job selling men's clothing door to door. He hit on a remarkable idea. He visited all the lesbian hang outs and developed a clientele among women who did not like going to a mens' outfitter for clothes. He also worked as a carpenter on some huge machine which turned out thousands of chair legs a day with some very comical results. Eventually he met Sidney Levy from Bulawayo who offered him a great future if he came to Bulawayo in Rhodesia. All he needed to know was the rag and clothing trade. So of course, Morris said he knew all about it and he and Yedida went to Rhodesia. Within a couple of years he did extremely well and was on his way to great things. He persuaded two other ex Moshav chaps to come to Bulawayo and make money. The first was Leish Joffe, the original 'sadrans avodah' and ex kibbutznik. He too left the Moshav in 1956 and was working in Johannesburg. Shapshak arranged a job for Leish with Sid Levy in Fort Victoria, Rhodesia. After a while both he and Morris opened a mens outfitters shop in Bulawayo, mainly for blacks. During a period of black disturbances their business suffered. Morris got a job as a salesman and Leish sold the business, his house with the pool, and now very much richer than when he arrived from Johannesburg, and returned to Israel. Morris went from strength to strength. Yedida and he adopted two children as she could not have any. He made a lot of money, set his mother-in-law up with a flat in Israel and finally they sold up and went to live in California. His father the sculptor, lived in New York for many years. We met the Shapshaks many times in Rhodesia, but they left well before us. The other ex Moshav member Morris persuaded to join him in Bulawayo were Johnny and Leora Watson. When the British forces left Palestine, Johnny who served with them, decided to remain in Israel, so he simply deserted, and served with the Israeli forces. Rumour had it that he helped himself to a tank which he donated to Israel. He never confirmed or denied it. When the Moshav was formed he and another gentile ex British army chap, also a deserter, became members.

Johnny soon fell in love with a beautiful sabra, another member. She spoke fairly good 'American' having spent much of her childhood there, but her parents were now in Tel Aviv. In Israel there were no civil marriages, so it was either the church or the rabbi. Johnny agreed to become a Jew which apart from overcoming all the religious beurocratic objections was not funny for an adult male.

Yedida and Leora I think were the only two Israel born girls on the Moshav and after marriage the four were good friends.

Long after Estelle and I had left, we heard from the Shapshaks in Rhodesia, what happened to the Watsons. Johnny wanted to see his parents in the U.K. so he went to the British Consulate in Haifa. It was arranged that he return to England with his wife. There, upon arrival, he was met by the M.P.'s. At the time the British were having a good many problems in Cyprus, so Johnny was sent there to complete his army service, no doubt with an added bonus of time.

Morris wrote to him to come to Bulawayo when he finished and Leora and Johnny did just that.

MOSHE SEREBRO: I mentioned Moshe in my early days in Riga. One of our holidays from the Moshav, Estle and I decided to search for the one and only distant relative I had living in Israel. I had done some research and narrowed his whereabouts to Ramat Gan. On a packed bus from Tel Aviv to Ramat Gan we managed to find a seat, and as we approached our destination, I asked a man standing near me to tell me where to get off in Ben Yehuda Street. He turned around and asked what number I was looking for. When I told him he said he too will get off, and I must follow him. As he spoke, I asked him if he was Moshe Serebro. He said 'yes'. I told him who Estelle and I were. He was the same charming delightful, handsome person I knew in Riga as a child. He was absolutely astonished and delighted to see us. His wife was a Yemenite with a history of four generations in Jerusalem. A reserved and beautiful dark haired slender woman with classic features. Moshe told us his whole family perished in Riga. His father procrastinated leaving Riga and all his property until it was too late. In Palestine, Moshe was very active against the British forces and was finally arrested and sent to Eritrea with a few hundred other Jewish leaders and activists. His wife and baby were left to fend for themselves. He had some interesting tales to tell of his existence as a prisoner. Eventually he was returned to Israel and was employed by the Tel Aviv Municipality as their senior road engineer.

We met Moshe and his family only one other time before we left Israel. Jack and Janie Segal were also good friends. I first knew Janie in East London where she lived. My mother was friendly with her family, so I met her on my holidays there. When I met her again as a single girl and a member of Moshav Habonim it was a great surprise. She was the last person I would have expected to join. It just goes to show how wrong one's perception of a person can be. She was the belle of the East London Jewish circle. The family was wealthy and she was used to a luxurious and expensive life style. She was living in an old Arab structure with rats and vermin, working hard in the kitchen and vegetable gardens. After about a year on the Moshav, she married Jack Segal who originally came from Kroonstad in the Free State. He came to join the Israeli Air Force where he had a high position. He was a silent person. I liked him very much. He was thin, not tall and never raised his voice. He never spoke about his work in the Air Force, but with a master's degree, it was said that he had been responsible for some important air force equipment or installation. On the Moshav he was responsible for installing our electrical diesel generator which ran continuously and its maintenance. His other task was being in charge of the chicken houses, the 'lul'. He would not accept any position on the management committee although nominated many times.

Jack and Janie left the Moshav in 1958 and are living in Tel Aviv.

In Johannesburg today, June 1988, are two other families who were our friends in the early Moshav days. Yaacov Strachilewitz, who was our first buyer and showed me the ropes to take over from him. He is a Sabra and married a South African girl who joined the Moshav. He was educated at the American University in Beirut and was fluent in Hebrew, English and French with a little Arabic. He was a shy person and reluctant every to assert himself. After much cajoling I persuaded him when I was Secretary, to do the book-keeping for the Moshav. I always found him very pleasant and interesting after getting through to him. In spite of a large family in Israel, they too left the Moshav and settled here in Johannesburg in about 1970. That was his wife's influence mainly.

The other couple who we see are the Rom's. Vida and Wilfred came to the Moshav already married. It did not take long for Wilfred to acquire a reputation, rightly or wrongly, of not pulling his weight when it came to hard work. A guy like that is always useful to have around as he will find the easiest way to do a job of work, even if it means watching someone else do it. Vida on the other hand was a great character with a strong personality and forever a humerous smiling face.

Besides, she was an excellent worker no matter what she had to do. They left after about six or seven years and have lived in Johannesburg ever since. Estelle sees Vida occasionally and we have met a number of Moshavniks as well as ex-Moshavniks at their house.

By the middle of 1955 Estelle and I with the two boys landed in Bulawayo. Before taking the train from Johannesburg we of course met Estelle's parents. I was briefed about my job at the Federation in Johannesburg and obtained much information, literature and various aids for my work in Rhodesia. We rented a flat and bought the barest of furniture. I walked to work which was 15 minutes to the CAZO offices. Central African Zionist Organisation (CAZO) had its HQ downtown where I had my desk. My immediate boss was Leib Frank. He was an exceptionally able person. His area of responsibility covered all the Jewish communities in Northern Rhodesia, Malawi or Nyasaland as it was then, and Southern Rhodesia. My duties were to work with all the Zionist Youth Movements in the first instance. This was to impart first hand knowledge about Israel, particularly land settlement, and assist with seminars but mainly be available to the senior youth instructors in preparation of their programmes for their weekly meetings. Arts and crafts and games both indoors and outdoors were a prominent vehicle on which these programmes relied. The two main youth movements were Habonim, by far the largest in terms of members and Betar. Later Bnei Akiva began youth work as well. I was also expected to address adult groups, mainly womens Jewish organisations and adult Zionist societies. My knowledge of art and exhibition work was constantly requested. Frequently, I mobilised the youth groups to assist with large scale decorative work during festivals, Yom Haatzmaut in particular. Leib Frank also arranged three visits a year to the distant Copper Belt as well as Lusaka where there were fairly strong Jewish communities, but very few senior youth instructors.

The whole nature of my work was experimental. This had never happened before in Rhodesia and there were no precedents as to what my obligations were or the community's obligation towards my family and me. From Estelle's and my point of view, transport was the most serious deficiency. I was paid an adequate salary. We had to rely on others for lifts and the bus services. Michael, who spoke mostly Hebrew, returned one day from the Jewish centre creche and simply stopped speaking Hebrew. Apart from the fact that none of his new friends spoke Hebrew, Estelle and I also spoke English and very little Hebrew. So it was not surprising at all that from that day, Michael only spoke English.

Our flat was on the second floor and we had the minimum of furniture. Early on it was decided that we would live a year in Bulawayo and a year in Salisbury. We practically had no social life at all in Bulawayo. Such as it was was almost entirely bound with my work during weekends. I visited Lusaka and the Copperbelt by air three months after our arrival.

In addition to my suitcase, I 'schlepped' boxes of slides and a projector and records of Israeli songs became my regular baggage whenever I travelled anywhere. In Lusaka I stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Galaun in their very fine home. Both were involved in Jewish community work. I stayed with them another five times.

The duration of my visit was about three days, mainly over a weekend. There would be an informal tea at their home to meet the prominent members of the community. A formal meeting in a hall in the evening. Here, after a short speech by me with perhaps questions and answers by me about Israel. I would show the latest slides from Israel followed by tea and informally meeting the rest of the public.

On a Sunday morning, I met the youth and depending on their ages, had to lead, instruct, debate, play games, do arts and crafts, play Israeli songs, teach Hebrew songs with the aid of large flip charts which I prepared in Bulawayo. Often the theme could be in preparation of approaching festivals or other events. All this was always well prepared by me weeks before. Then on to the Copperbelt where once again it was more or less the same thing. The distance to the Copperbelt towns, about five of them all near each other, was great, about five hours by car, but I always flew. There was a substantial Jewish community in most of these mining towns with a Shul in each. I usually went to Chingola or Ndola, the latter having the largest congregation and most children. The parents had a lot of 'schlepping' over the three days I usually spent there. I timed my arrival during school holidays. Meetings would be in the mornings, about 10 to 12 and often again in the afternoon about 2 to 4. To keep these meetings interesting, lively and fun was a formidable task and needed much effort, ingenuity and patience. If I got the assistance of a bright senior youth, which I usually obtained, it was very much easier. The average number of children could be twenty, aged from 10 to 15 years. One family in Ndola where I usually stayed, the Freed, I came to know fairly well. Many years later I did a lot of business with Aubrey Freed, the son who used to assist me on these visits to the Copperbelt.

Our private life in Bulawayo was somewhat in limbo. Nothing could be done on a permanent basis, so Estelle and I concentrated on saving what we could from my salary. One day Yedida and Morris Shapshak came to visit. They had just arrived from London and were off to their first enterprise in Hartley, a one horse town where they would be the only Jewish couple. This was in partnership with Syd Levy who brought them out and would sell them all the merchandise from his vast store in Bulawayo. The more I got to know the individual youth instructors in the movements the greater became our cooperation and results. In particular one, Issy Abramov, was outstanding and we produced many useful pamphlets and other projects within the movements. The year quickly went and we moved to continue in Salisbury for the final year. The CAZO office was very much smaller and was controlled by the head office in Bulawayo. Roy Cohen was in charge in Salisbury and I got on well with him. He obtained a two bedroomed flat for us on the ground floor.

By now I had met most of the senior youth of both movements from periodic visits up from Bulawayo. I still walked to the CAZO office in town where I prepared my work and met various people. Since the advent of the Federation two years previously, Salisbury became the capital city. Bulawayo had always been the predominant centre in Southern Rhodesia but now nearly all development was taking place in Salisbury, including the growth of a large civil service. Contacts with the community were much greater and better than in Bulawayo. I still went on my visits to Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). Michael began school which was within walking distance for him. Estelle and I made some friendships with young couples, one of whom was Estelle's bridesmaid, Marian. She was living in Salisbury and had married Morrie Appel and they had a nice home with a swimming pool. There were also some distant relatives on Estelle's mother's side also living in Salisbury but these we hardly ever saw.

Once again we had to depend on lists and transport of friends and youth leaders. In the two years I attended two conferences in Johannesburg. These were arranged for the exchange of information and reports of all emissaries from Israel and senior Federation staff working in all the major centres of South Africa. I also participated in many local camps and seminars in various parts of Rhodesia.

In 1957 it was time to make plans for our return to Moshav Habonim.

Estelle and I decided to return by sea via England across France to Marsailles and by sea to Haifa. Most of the money we saved went on buying household items suitable for the Moshav. These were rubber mattresses, a small table top fridge, linen, clothing, kitchenware and hand tools. Morris and Yedida came to Salisbury as we were packing. They were now living and prospering in Bulawayo after a stint in the 'sticks'. On my last visit to Northern Rhodesia and on the Copperbelt in particular, I received a very warm send off. From Salisbury Habonim and Betar movements, Estelle and I also parted with much warmth and friendliness. The experiment had, I think, been very worthwhile and the movements were anxious to replace me and were negotiating with the Agency in Israel. I had packed three large crates for shipment to Haifa. We took the train to Johannesburg in July, said goodbye to Estelle's parents and continued by train to East London. We were booked on the Cape Town Castle from East London to Southampton. We had added the difference to the cost of an air ticket direct to Israel, which was paid for by CAZO. It was an opportunity Estelle and I were determined to exploit. We were certain it would be very many years, if ever, that we could go on such a sea voyage. My mother travelled with us from East London to Cape Town. We spent three days in London. Took a trip on the Thames to Greenwich and clambered all over the 'Flying Clipper' an old sailing vessel - a big attraction and fixed solidly on concrete. I also confirmed our booking on the 'Theodore Herzl', the brand new Zim ship from Marsailles to Haifa. We spent two nights in a 'pension' in Paris. The first day we all saw the Eifel Tower and went up to the top - a memorable event. The other great event was next day in the morning. Estelle performed a one act play from a script spontaneously originated by her. It was basically a demonstration of a hen laying an egg. This was for the benefit of the waitress from whom Estelle tried to order eggs for the children, and the waitress spoke no English.

It was an overnight train journey, sitting up most of the night to Marsailles to board the ship. We knew we were back on Israeli 'soil' when the waiter on the ship told Estelle she had enough hot water in answer to her request to top up her glass of tea. Three days and four nights later we were in Haifa. The ship was magnificently appointed and everything was brand new. Back on the moshav, we moved into our old house. The trunk of books and drawings I had left was almost empty, which upset me.

Estelle and I were soon back at work. Many of the old faces had left. There were also many new faces. Somehow I was looking at the Moshav with a brand new outlook. While in Johannesburg with Estelle's parents, I promised to investigate the possibility of them joining us to live on the Moshav. Now I raised the question with the management. There were one or two parents already on the Moshav. The reply I received was to delay bringing them until they absolutely had no other choice. In any case, Estelle and I did not yet wish to make such an irrevocable decision as there would be almost no chance to change it later if her parents found our primitive conditions unacceptable. Estelle, in the early years, said we should leave the Moshav, but said nothing later. The great socialist dream I had and tried to influence Estelle with, had evaporated. Many of the original people with whom we started the Moshav had gone and only a small handful was left. It meant now that our future would be dictated in a great measure by new people, in any case others whom I did not necessarily respect or care for.

Our three crates duly arrived and it was good to unpack our old and new things. One night as I was trying to have a hot shower, the primitive oil burner just kept smoking away. Winter was on the doorstep and suddenly this predicament that I was inflicting on my family and myself became the last straw. That evening I said to Estelle 'We are leaving the Moshav!'. She was delighted and said it was a decision she had long wanted, but waited for me to make on my own. At that stage, it was only to leave the Moshav that we decided, and not Israel. It soon dawned on me that we could only make it in Israel if I borrowed a lot of money just to make a start. This was due to the fact that unlike South African conditions and elsewhere, there was virtually no accommodation available for rent in Israel. One had to buy it. This meant an immediate debt burden. All my life I was brought up not to borrow money. Rightly or wrongly, this sentiment has ruled my life and I have departed from it very rarely. Inflation was not a factor in the so-called olden days, apart from one disastrous period in Russia. Anyway, we had no money to begin a new life outside the Moshav. So we decided to return to Rhodesia where we had just been. Even one way tickets were too much after selling all our possessions, old and new. So I asked my mother to lend me £500 to pay the balance of the shortfall on the fare. By the middle of December we were back in Johannesburg and lived in the flat with Estelle's parents. We agreed that I should go to Salisbury alone and prepare a place for Estelle and the children. I left immediately while I still had a little money.

Estelle was four months pregnant. In Salisbury I went to a house I knew which kept boarders. In fact they had stopped doing that but agreed to let me stay provided I would only have breakfast. That suited me. Without transport and a poor bus service, I could not always be on time for meals anyway. The first priority was to obtain a job and find a flat to rent. I visited every department store, hoping to get a job as a display artist in their display department. There were four large stores with display departments. I filled out forms and left knowing it was time wasted. Quickly it became apparent I could not spend many days looking for a job as an artist with Estelle waiting in Johannesburg.

The next effort was to freelance and pretend I was a window dresser. Having designed window displays for window dressers and supplied them with various posters and slogans was not the same as actually stepping into the window. But looking at the many shop windows in Salisbury I knew I could be of service and do a very much better job.

The first couple of enquiries in chemist shops proved promising and I knew that I could become really busy once I got going. So I had to get a central workshop. The owner of a furniture shop who agreed I do their windows, a Mr. Pelham, had a small room on the third floor above his shop for rent. I saw it and took it on a monthly basis. I also found a ground floor flat which had a stove and fridge and a bus service not far.

Estelle and the children came up after about ten days in Johannesburg. I bought four beds and a small kitchen table with four chairs. There was a built-in cupboard. Our lounge was totally devoid of furniture. The last of our money went on rent and some materials I needed for window dressing and food. But I began working immediately, doing windows and insisted on cash payments. It was a start. I did one men's outfitters shop with three windows which took two days and I learned quickly not to try any others. My windows were a disaster. It takes much experience to handle clothes. Furniture, curtaining, etc, chemists, hardware stores, bottle stores, cafes with dummy chocolates eventually became good business. After a month I left the 3rd floor room and took a first floor bigger room elsewhere. I had a light cart built with two bicycle wheels which job my first black assistant used to push along the street with the window props while I walked beside him.

My business was called Display Centre and I had nice business cards printed. These were placed in each window near the glass like a signature and advert.

Mr Menashe from Strand Stationers agreed to take calls for me until I got my own phone in the business. We had no phone in the flat. These cards in the windows brought the first big break in our fortunes. By now I had a phone but still received calls through Strand Stationers. A Mr. Hindley from a public relations firm asked me to come and see him. One of his clients, CABS, the largest building society in Rhodesia were considering a window display campaign - would I be prepared to submit ideas and designs and if accepted, could I manufacture all that was needed and instal in their branches throughout Rhodesia. It was a big challenge and just up my street.

Within a week I had several designs ready which Mr. Hindley showed to CABS and after a while I was asked to see CABS directly. Mr. Jenkinson of CABS saw me and with some minor changes, my designs were accepted. The deal was to make four different designs for Salisbury each to be paid for separately.

Subsequently, they needed a new design each month. There were at least six CABS branches in Salisbury. Once I placed a display in each branch window, they were to be changed around every month until a display was moved to every branch. After that I was to attend to all their branches in the smaller towns including Bulawayo and Umtali. This was the sort of work I hoped for and a customer who would appreciate good design and service without haggling over the costs.

The first thing I needed was transport. I asked my in-laws for £250 loan to buy a small second hand van. The same week that I bought the 'Husky' van, Estelle went into labour two months early. The drive to the nursing home was somewhat traumatic. I could see the building across a golf course, but did not know which road to take. Without a car, I had not learned all the roads yet.

Karen was born a few hours after Estelle's admittance. We had some very anxious days as the nurses said Karen had a 50-50 chance of survival. A month later, with great joy, we brought her home.

In the meantime I had bought a dining room suite so the lounge looked a little better. The van made it possible for me to work much longer hours in town as I did not have to worry about missing the last bus out of town. The service was very poor and inadequate to where we lived. Michael was going to David Livingstone school and Ilan went to their pre-school. My black assistant, Job, had resigned. He said he got a job in the Post Office, besides which he could not see a future working for a white man who could not even afford a car or van. That was before I bought one.

As soon as an adjoining room became vacant, I took it. The window display work was increasing, all of it on a contract basis from month to month. So I did not really look for more work while digesting what I had obtained.

On the other hand it came to me and if it showed promise I took it. Soon I had two black men working. One always in to answer the phone and do whatever work I prepared. I had contracts (verbal) with four very large enterprises. Rhodesian Breweries, Cadburys, Beechams and Chesebrough Ponds. I got to know all the chemists, bottle stores and cafes and supermarkets with windows. There were always more windows than I could cope with. Unfortunately, because they used almost none of my material apart from crepe paper, it was a cut throat fee per window. In addition, I had to store great numbers of beer bottles, dummy chocolates and huge numbers of their ready made posters and giant dummy boxes. A young man, David van Rijn came to work for me. Eventually I employed a free lance woman to do these very cheap and nasty windows. There was still much to learn, how to use crepe paper. It is a whole new art form and is amazing the many ways it can be used. All the time better and more profitable work came along. In particular, I did not like all the travelling and being away from my business. Also the windows were often dirty the shop owners or their staff would not clear and clean the glass or floor before I came in spite of my phoning them. The result was I wasted much time cooling my heels while they cleaned the window. Eventually I stopped doing all these windows and only did special displays as well as CABS. In fact, CABS at one stage was so profitable that it was 75% of my income. It meant travelling great distances each month for a day or two. In the fourth year of my business, I made some important decisions. The business relied too much on one client. My staff must increase with more skilfull services to clients and travelling must be cut to a minimum. Estelle saw an advertisement for an artist. I went to see the people. This was the start of a long association lasting over twenty years with Fred and Paul Sinek, the owners of Saltrama Plastics, the largest plastics enterprise in Rhodesia. Another packaging firm in carton boxes, Handler & Shrier also began to give me commercial art work on a regular basis. It was about 14 years since I watched Wolfie Feinberg at his desk doing this work. It required a great skill and concentration, hardly any material but much time. It paid very well. I learned as I worked. While keeping the CABS account, I kept enlarging my circle of clients in many directions. One of these was the Ford Motor Company which started a factory, and Willards Foods. These two became outstanding clients with whom I developed a great relationship over many years.

Throughout all these years of development, family demands kept growing. One day while I was finishing 8 windows in a large store in Sinoia, about 2 hours north of Salisbury by car, a policeman came to see me. Not knowing exactly where I was in Sinoia, Estelle phoned the police to find me and tell me her father had died in Johannesburg. So I finished quickly and drove home. The funeral was without Estelle and there did not seem an urgency for her to travel to Johannesburg just then when she had a young baby to look after.

After Karen's birth, an old friend, Mrs. Bella Kass suggested to Estelle she become a minute secretary for a woman's society. This meant taking Karen in a carry cot to these meetings. Estelle would be fetched and brought home. The big bonus would be getting a phone quickly as the secretary of a big organisation. Estelle agreed and went to a couple of meetings, but we had problems with the caretaker of our flats who refused to cooperate with the post office people when they came to instal the phone. We had a big argument and went to another flat as soon as our year's lease expired.

At the new flat we became friendly with Solly and Doreen Rudansky. Unfortunately Estelle became ill. Our doctor, Gessie Borok, could not determine the cause. After months of tests and many visits to other doctors, it was decided Estelle was suffering from her gall bladder. An operation by Dr. Gordon and another month later still didn't cure her. Estelle had lost much weight and just did not know what to do next. Eventually we persuaded Dr. Borok to refer her to a Dr. Krickler, a physician who had recently come to Salisbury. After a lengthy and thorough consultation, listening and checking all the tests taken, Dennis Krickler told us what was wrong. Estelle was going through from what is commonly called a nervous breakdown. The operation she had had was not needed at all. He advised Estelle to go to Johannesburg as the treatment was not available in Salisbury so she went immediately. I took her and the children to the airport and with a very heavy heart we all watched her from the balcony board the plane. Shirley, with whom she stayed, looked after her and 'schlepped' her daily for the regular and severe treatment she had to undergo. A couple of weeks later Estelle was back in Salisbury, almost like a new person. It took at least another month before Estelle was herself again, but she was cured and we were all very thankful for her complete recovery. The whole episode lasted about a year from the time she first felt ill to her recovery.

We decided then to have our own house. When we lived in Bulawayo, Estelle met two old friends whom she knew in Orange Grove, Johannesburg well before any of them were married. Irene Koseff and Rose Levitan were now both married and living in Bulawayo.

Rose, whom we visited was living in a small but cleverly designed house which I thought was just outstanding. So once we agreed to get a house and comparing various options of buying or building, decided to build our own home. Estelle's mother lent us £500 for a deposit, and we found a half acre plot in Avondale, near the Reps theatre and started building. I made the basic design drawings of the plan for the builder who was approved by CABS, the building society. It was as close as I could remember to the Bulawayo house I had so admired. In December 1960 we moved in to our own home for the first time in our lives - No. 9 Thurston Lane, Avondale.

One of the first things Michael did was to get some pigeons. We built a sort of loft for them and it was great fun to watch them fly around the place every day. We planted several trees including an avocado sapling. Estelle, who was completely well, decided to get her driving licence while we still had the small and familiar Husky van. So after some lessons by me and one or two from a driving school, she went for a test.

It was winter and unusually cold. The avocado pear tree perished one night in a black frost. The driving examiner had a bad cold. The car's brakes did not hold the car on the hill for a stop-~~street~~^{or} test which, of course Estelle said was the car's fault when it rolled back. She told the examiner how to get rid of his cold and he in return gave her her driving licence.

The next week I exchanged the Husky for a bigger, better and nicer Hillman station wagon. That Husky was the most hard working and reliable vehicle for almost three hard years. Every month it took me all over Rhodesia, fully loaded. What I feared, happened when CABS was bought out by the Old Mutual. But I had anticipated this and now did not regret the change and subsequent loss of their business. In a sense it released me for a better type of work to replace it. By now I was employing a lady commercial artist as well as a signwriter. I was also being pushed into silkscreen printing. Another very good client became Guest and Tanner, a large real estate firm who required a vast amount of signs of all sizes all in metal. The cardboard box factory for whom we did much commercial art work used to dispose of great quantities of offcuts of white board. This gave me an idea. From my window dressing days, I knew there was a constant demand for sale price tickets of all shapes sizes and colours. Here was the perfect material being thrown away on which to print them. So for almost nothing, I began taking their offcuts. In time this became a very profitable side line as well as a source of revenue to Simon, a black employee, until he was caught.

By 1961 I had moved twice already, each time to larger ground floor premises, and it was time to move once again to a larger shop. It was also time to take the family on a holiday. It was almost five years since we arrived in Salisbury and apart from weekend visits on a Sunday to the Kavonic's farm, the family had not had a holiday in all these years. I employed two white responsible people, a woman commercial artist and a mature signwriter. The Hillman station wagon had been replaced by a Ford Cortina station wagon, so I thought it would be good to visit my mother in East London, go to the beach again, see the Kingsbury's and have a break for three weeks.

We stopped for a night at the Kingsbury's, stayed for about twelve days in East London with my mother and Harry Edelstein. I think Harry enjoyed seeing our children. The flat was big enough to hold all of us comfortably. I am certain we all benefitted from seeing the sea again and the change.

In Johannesburg, we spent another few days with the Kingsbury's in Greenside. My business unfortunately almost did not survive my three weeks absence. It might have been better to have closed it for that time. That month there was hardly any income. It took me six months to recover and in the meantime we all lived under austerity conditions, watching every cent. Estelle was working mornings only for years that helped a lot. At the end of each month she also wrote out all my statements to be sent out. Often she came to sit in the shop to answer the phone and talk to people and staff. I still spent much time away, mainly visiting my clients and taking as well as delivering commercial art orders. The children were growing up fast and soon would begin high school. Our house was becoming too small. T.V. had started and we all watched the black and white screen for hours.

I had a little corner in the lounge where I worked at my desk every night but could also see the screen. The lounge floor was also my studio and I painted many pictures upon it.

We bought another car. A mini Austin. Estelle could do her shopping now and I too had greater freedom having two cars in the family. Michael was busy learning for his Barmitzvah.

The grandmothers came from Johannesburg and East London for the great simcha in our family. The Shul service was followed by a party for Michael's friends. I was delighted to have been able to make it a greater simcha than I myself had had. By Rhodesian standards and in Jewish circles, it was a very modest affair. I hoped Michael and the family had a joyous and hopefully memorable time.

The celebration was punctuated by breaking our ancient sofa from all the boisterous jumping that night. It was soon repaired and still did stirring service three years later for Ilan's barmitzvah. We had flowers and a garden of sorts. I built a fence. We were friendly with our neighbours Dr. Clive and Zipora Shiff. He worked as a researcher in the Bilharzia Institute. Estelle and Zipora learned to play bridge, each from her husband and the four of us used to play once a week. They too built their house soon after us. My main energies, however, were always in my business. That one year, my bank manager, whom I almost never consulted, looked at my balance sheet and asked: Did I ever consider taking a job? I might earn as much or more without the risk of having ones own business. All that was in reference to our holiday the previous year. Nevertheless, I determined to tighten and enlarge our enterprise. I had introduced some silkscreening work. It had much potential and I looked for and found more work. One customer, who later became a good friend, Colin Bloch, was marketing small electrical items on round stands all over the country in supermarkets, cafes, general stores, etc. They were all shrink wrapped to a bright red card which Display Centre, my business, silk screened in the thousands for him. The plastic shrink wrapping was done by an old, young friend of mine, Aubrey Freed, whom I first met in Ndola, Northern Rhodesia. He was a very junior partner with his principal, Len Bernstein. Len, whom I got to know well, had an uncle in England, Mr. Copes of Copes Football Pools, so Copes Pools was also started in Salisbury which was based on the African Soccer League and quickly included horse racing in Rhodesia and later South Africa. This enterprise very soon probably rivalled the best gold mine in Rhodesia.. The profits became astronomical and the two men were hard pressed where to invest. One of their little sideline business was known as 'Service Packers'. They imported three machines from Germany and a special clear plastic material and introduced shrink wrapping, later bubble packing, to Salisbury. Very soon they found the business needed more time and attention than they were prepared to give it. It was offered to me for £4 000, to be paid in two years. The new business became mine in exchange for 24 bills stretched over 24 months. I took over their workers, one black man, Kesari who worked the main machine and four black women who prepared all the goods and packing. The whole operation was moved from Sports Pools to our premises at 120 Sinoia Street. It was very fortunate that right up against the Display Centre shop was another large shop with an interleading internal door. Service Packers continued with its existing customers which I discovered to be very few.

The dispute with England over the Rhodesian U.D.I. was severe and business extremely pessimistic. Estelle who had left her job to assist me returned to the same firm, working mornings only as before. Michael had begun high school in Mount Pleasant soon to be followed by Ilan. The house was too small as we needed another bedroom. So after six years, in 1966, we bought another house in Mount Pleasant at 40 The Chase. It was a very solid unimaginative house, facing mostly south but with four bedrooms, large grounds and in a very good area. A strategic open area facing north and already with a smooth concrete floor I rebuilt by covering the concrete with a parquet floor, a wood and glass wall and door to the back garden and covered the whole with an aluminium roof.. This room, although small, became the family den with the T.V. in one corner. The garage under the main roof was too good a room for a car. The large swing door was replaced by a wall and window and we had a fifth bedroom with a private entrance to the large verandah.

Estelle's mother came for a visit and decided to stay with us and work for me. I needed someone to speak to people and answer the phone. It was a proper shop and people kept coming in. The commercial artist, Mrs. Carr was very good but I did not want her disturbed all day. At about that time, I also started a small side line which Mrs. Kaplan christened 'Glu Kleen' and I did the spelling. For years I had been buying an artist rubber cement glue. It was and is constantly used to produce art work and was imported from the U.K. in tubes called 'cow gum'. Now it was imported from Port Elizabeth in small tins. But the glue would dry halfway in the tin as the lid was never closed firmly. Consequently, it was a constant waste and too dear. After much research and experiment, I finally solved the problem. A factory was found making the rubber solution in great quantity for the upholstery industry and I found a method to store it almost indefinitely without deteriorating. It meant putting the glue into a tube. These I obtained from my silkscreen ink supplier just for a trial. It quickly became obvious to me that this 'new' product could also be useful to many others. I could not get small numbers of tubes - the least order was for 25 000 tubes from the only viable supplier, Metal Box. So in fact the sheer numbers of tubes also forced me to print labels 'Glu Kleen' and look for customers. It was very profitable and there were many regular customers. But the sum total was never great and always remained a small side line. It provided a useful work outlet whenever my staff in Service Packers were without work. In that respect, the labour costs were almost nil.

With sanctions imposed against Rhodesia it was a useful source of income. At about this time, two events in the Service Packers business made a tremendous change for the better. Due to our ability to silkscreen and shrinkwrap I managed to land a huge order intended for export to South Africa. A firm, CAPS, needed to export one and a half million ballpoint pens, at an extremely low price. I proposed packing 6 pens together on a card, 4 blue 1 red and one black. The order had to be completed within six months. I enlarged the staff to six women. The shop was swamped with cartons of ball point pens. For the first time I almost saw how much a million items of anything looked like. At no time did we have more than 20 000 pens delivered from the factory. The screen printing too was a huge job. On the strength of this export order I went to the Ministry and received an allocation of foreign currency to purchase a large order of plastic film. It was clear that I did not have enough to complete the job besides it was an opportunity to replenish material for future years.

As the original CABS window display contracts which gave me such a good start many years before, so this order established the packing and later the plastic business which was eventually the most profitable operation of all. It was also a difficult period economically for Rhodesia. My mother-in-law was useful to have during the morning. Estelle only worked mornings as well and I had always taken and fetched her to and from work. Unfortunately, Estelle's mother had an affliction about getting into a severe mood triggered by some perceived slight or disagreement. These moods went on sometimes for days on end. She would not speak to anyone and would drive Estelle to distraction. I could just tolerate it. On one such occasion it went on for a week, perhaps more, and it got to me as well, so I told her she could not sit in the shop feeling like that as it bothered me. One word led to another and I finished up having one unholy war of words with her - the first and the last. The next day she returned to Johannesburg. A year or two later, we agreed to bury the hatchet. Many months before this episode, she and my mother who visited us for a simcha (Ilan's barmitzvah) also had some words. After that, Mrs. Kaplan never again ever spoke to my mother and avoided her always.

Because the general economic climate was very poor, business premises were begging for tenants. We were working flat out. Next door to us was a business of butchers and packaging supplies. One of their lines were imported plastic cups and trays made from white opaque plastic. Their salesman who often came in said why don't we try to make them - he could sell all we could make.

It was obvious this could become a major new enterprise. It also became apparent that one had to have moulds, many of them, to go into production. I spent days and weeks carving plaster of paris moulds and joining them to make one large enough for the whole working surface of our vacuum forming machine. We could make shallow trays but not deep cups.

The shipment of Japanese clear plastic arrived as well as some clear but heavy guage plastic. I decided to look for premises in a semi light industrial area as our lease was up soon. The place I found was to be our last.

The Indian owner was so anxious to let his premises that he agreed to all I asked which at the time seemed negligible. The place was about three times our present area. It also had a large basement for midgets, which was our stock and storeroom. The ceiling was 5'6" high. My conditions were simple. The same rent to continue for five years, the length of the agreement, as well as an option for another five years at the same rent. As this was all verbal, I had ma type this agreement and we both signed the two existing copies. That piece of paper became a most precious document years later.

Our social life in the meantime had expanded a bit. We used to visit and associate with the Appels. Marian Appel was another bridesmaid, besides Irene at our wedding. They were really very good to us when we came to live in Salisbury. Unfortunately something ma said in jest to Morrie Appel caused him to take the wrong way and make the kind of remark which ma could not accept. I was not there and ma told me about it later. She still saw Marian and I have met and spoken to Morrie a few times in the last 15 years. A major and great part of our social life in the last six or seven years in Salisbury was playing tennis at the Blochs every Sunday without fail. I also played there at night for a year or two. They were extremely good friends, apart from the tennis.

In the early days in Salisbury we also were often at Taube and Bernard Wolf's also in Mount Pleasant, but they left Salisbury about fifteen years before we did. Bubbles and Alex Kavonic to whose farm we used to go perhaps once in two months, divorced and ma remained very friendly with her. Another of ma's friends was Cynthia Hind. We used to see a lot of Cynthis and Norman. Ever since we returned to Salisbury from Israel, I kept a low profile. This was due to a number of potent reasons. The main reason I would say was my checkered upbringing. I no doubt subconsciously always felt that because being poor early on, not speaking English well later on and finally not having my own home and family could not reciprocate hospitality received. So it became a kind of defense mechanism that I did not make my own friends easily, and that must have remained with me for life.

Another reason was that starting in Salisbury from absolutely scratch, we certainly could not reciprocate and all my time was devoted to establishing a secure base for my family and later keep improving it. Another reason for keeping a low profile in the Jewish circles was my previous job with CAZO. I was certainly aware of the paradox created by me when we returned from Israel. It was not exactly the kind of propaganda or results CAZO was trying to promote. For many years I did not show my face at Zionist functions and I am sure only the inherent politeness of the people I used to work with previously, prevented them from telling me their true feelings. Being immersed day and night in my business was both a challenge and escape. All social contacts were made by Estelle. Over the years she established a good circle of friends.

Estelle and I began to play tennis at Avondale Primary School which Michael, Ilan and Karen attended. So every Saturday afternoon we met many other parents, all playing tennis. On Sunday mornings I played tennis with a permanent group of six men. Years later we joined the Wingate Sports Club tennis section, and attended several large social functions. Slowly we also returned to partaking in Zionist activities. Ma became a regular member of the WIZO catering services, and worked most Saturday mornings for Barmitzvahs, Michael and Ilan and later Karen all joined the Habonim movement and were members for several years. Ma and I also joined the Salisbury Bridge Club in the last few years in Salisbury where we played regularly once a week.

Ma had never stopped working, albeit mornings only and still used to help out in the business from time to time. In 1972 I was employing about 12 blacks, a coloured signwriter and Stuart Ogilvy, a young white guy who was learning the commercial art business and craft. The strain of supervising them all was getting to me. In addition of course was the business side of servicing customers and attending to accounts. I could see that the business would suffer as I could not be efficient in every department. What I needed was another person with a fair knowledge of such business and preferably with a skill of his/her own. The ideal would be someone who could also make a financial investment thus having a greater interest in the success of the business. I made some enquiries and also advertised briefly but found no one suitable. In spite of sactions or perhaps because of them, we were always busy. I had given up doing or looking for exhibition work either in Bulawayo or Salisbury. No matter how much I used to charge it never seemed to be enough for the nights, weekends and other overtime required to complete everything on time. It also made it hard to do the regular work from constant customers.

The packaging of goods had diminished but there were still some very good orders such as Parker Pens and refills. From very modest beginnings with making white plastic trays, this business kept growing and I had to invest many thousands of dollars in buying the plastic sheets from Saltrama Plastics. All the money I had earned from them in previous years and now was returned to them ten fold. We learned to make durable plastic moulds. I had the good fortune to get the Air Rhodesia outstanding workshops to build me another vacuum forming machine, partially on the lines of my German-built machine which was doing sterling work packing goods and making trays and other small plastic items.

At about this time, an elderly man walked in one day and asked me if I could sell him some clear flexible plastic sheets. I said I had the plastic but it was not for sale as we used it ourselves. Across the counter which I had bought many years before, when a big department store went into liquidation, we talked. His name was Tom Preston. He owned a similar business to mine in the industrial area in Salisbury. In fact, he would like to sell it he said as it was losing money since he established it. He was a financier and knew nothing about managing such a business. The person he had originally backed had let him down badly and even the new factory manager he employed now could not show a profit. I said I would look at his place which I did the next day.

In floor area, his place was much smaller than mine. Mr. Rose, his friend and factory manager had a very good presence with white-gray hair, very well spoken with a hint of an aristocratic manner about him. I asked to see their list of clients. One or two were very impressive. Their equipment was not great apart from two pieces which I needed, a plastic cutting press and an industrial baking oven. I told Tom Preston I was interested if the price was right. We came to a good financial arrangement with the help of my accountant. His business 'Art Ads' was valued at \$16 000 and mine at \$28 000. Shares would be issued giving Tom 20% and me 70%, the others not issued.

To take advantage of several years trading loss, it would be a reverse takeover. This meant that 'Art Ads' would continue trading. Tom Preston would lend Art Ads the \$16 000 less the 20% shares. No dividends would be declared until his loan was repaid at 7½% interest paid to him quarterly. Before all this, I checked up on Tom Preston and discovered he was a very wealthy man with many other far greater interests, but most important he was not a 'shark'. In fact, a mutual friend, Bobby Krickler told me I was lucky to be his partner as he was an absolute gentleman who would not cheat or harm anyone.

This merger brought tremendous benefits to our fortunes. Art Ads left their premises and joined us at 19 Salisbury Street. My Indian landlord had been phoning me for some time trying to increase the rent. He thought our agreement was not a proper lease document and therefore invalid. Of course I did not agree. I also took over the whole staff of Art Ads which consisted of some outstanding black silkscreen printers as well as a young girl commercial artist, June. She was well trained, fast and perhaps too modest. Stuart Ogilvy and she soon worked well together. Les Rose came too as Tom wanted him to stay and I needed a senior person to help me run the place. In one grand stroke I achieved all my objectives and more. Almost a doubling of clients. A factory manager (still to be tested) and great economy in premises.

Another great windfall now occurred. Tom, my new partner, knew of an enormous (13 tons) of American board insurance claim. He wanted me to look at it and decide if we should buy it from the insurance company. I went, saw and told him to buy at the best price he could. Sanctions had been tightened around Rhodesia for many years. Foreign goods of quality were in very great demand. Tom bought the lot for \$50!! I could not believe it. It was worth 100 times more. I employed a couple of black lady 'midgets' who could work comfortably in our basement with the low ceiling to re-sort and pack this new board into bundles of 100 sheets and began selling them to printers. We kept a small fraction. The bulk was sold at enormous profit.

Within a year, Tom's loan plus interest was repaid. Les Rose was a great help to me but needed wataching too. He had no knowledge of art or design but good at organisation and talking to clients. Tom Preston visited about twice a month, Estelle also became a director, which made four directors.

Our 25th wedding anniversary was coming up. The children were big enough to care for themselves, so it was time for Estelle and me to take a holiday on our own overseas. Michael went into the Rhodesian army immediately after school to get it over with and soon after his release he decided to go overseas to Europe. He spent ten months wandering around and working, mostly in Switzerland. His letters, which we still have, were wonderful to read with descriptions of the snow scenery, working in hotels and farms, dodging Swiss police as he had no work permit. On his return, he continued where he left off to court Karen Henwood. Tom Preston thought we needed a representative, so Michael came to work for Art Ads in that capacity. He knew all our work and capacities and did an excellent job of work for the firm. He was paid a basic salary and a commission on all orders he brought in. One of his major triumphs was obtaining an order for meat trays from a large Bulawayo butchery.

The material for these trays I obtained free. It consisted of small rolls of offcuts of a plastised white card imported from America to manufacture African Beer cartons by the million. I did some work for this factory once and asked about the huge pile of offcuts I saw there. The result was they were delighted to send it to me free of charge just to get rid of it. I always kept my eyes open for opportunities to make very good use of apparently useless material that others just wanted to be rid of. Everytime this happened and it did several times to me, eventually after a year or so the source dried up. The people finally realised they were disposing of valuable material and found ways of using it themselves.

It was marvellous for Estelle and me to plan and go on our four weeks holiday to Europe after 25 years of marriage. The main restriction was our poor travel allowance the Rhodesian Government imposed. We booked a 21 day tour with a British coach which took us to Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy Switzerland and France. The remaining week we visited Amsterdam and London. Ma enjoyed her London visit most I think, as we visited one show after another. Fortunately, we managed to save some money in South Africa which was used mainly to pay for our European tour of three weeks. Just before we left Salisbury, Art Ads had made a major purchase. The business was doing well. The benefits of Art Ads tax loss in previous years and good profitable business not only repaid Tom Preston's loan but gave us a healthy surplus.

Les Rose and I decided to buy a small factory manufacturing copper craft items for the tourist industry for \$15 000 cash. In retrospect it was a foolish decision, but hindsight is the perfect science. At the time and if Mr. Ian Smith had played his cards differently, it could have become a great success. So as we left on our holiday, Rose replaced me at Art Ads and Michael replaced Rose at the Copper Design factory in Msasa, a long way from Art Ads.

The copper products I thought had export potential so I took a few samples on our trip. There is a valuable lesson to be learned about our acquisition of Copper Design. It was a business started by a woman skilled in copper foil work. The items he produced for sale to the many tourist outlets all over Rhodesia were of really high quality in design and finish. About six months before our purchase, she signed a contract with a certain high pressure businessman in Salisbury to supply \$10 000 goods per month! for shipment to the USA. To achieve this, she enlarged her work force, bought much more material and most importantly ceased supplying all the many smaller orders around the country and in Salisbury. Within a very short time, she exhausted all her reserves of money but had accumulated a large stock for her USA order.

Basically, we paid for finished stock ready for sale, material and machines. The problem was to break the contract we inherited and re-establish contact with all the shops neglected for the past six months. So I telephoned the business with whom the contract was signed and said we were the new owners. Their first order for \$10 000 was ready for shipment (it was far from that) and as soon as they established a letter of credit with our bank, we would pack and ship. This was all confirmed by letter. I had a suspicion that the whole thing was not worth the paper the contract was written on and I was right. It was not easy to get our small customers back but it was done with Michael's help.

After our holiday, Rose returned to Copper Design, and Michael went back on the road. I was unhappy with the great distance Copper Design was from Art Ads and managed to rent large premises next door on the first floor. Les Rose was still running Copper Design, but needed much prodding and watching. On our holiday in Europe I took the names of some potential stores in Switzerland, Lucerne, West Germany and Holland. Sanctions against Rhodesia now became a factor. With the help of our bank I made some arrangement to overcome this, but it was awkward nonetheless. In 1975 I took a ten day trip alone, armed with full colour photo album of all our products, many samples and letters of introduction to my bank's associates in West Germany, Switzerland and Holland and Belgium and a Eurail ticket. Letters of my visit were also sent well in advance to three stores. It was a venture I had no experience in. I had never been a salesman as such and relied entirely on the uniqueness and quality of the products.

First stop was Amsterdam where I met the relevant gift department buyer of one of the best and largest stores. All the stores I was going to were on a par with Harrods in London. England was definitely a no go area with Rhodesian goods, no matter how well disguised. This was my second call to the Amsterdam store. The first was a year previous while Estelle spent sometime with the Bles's. On that occasion while sitting in the reception where other reps were also waiting, I met and had a long talk with an American rep who gave me his card and invited me to the H.Q. for Europe in a small town in Belgium. He thought our copper would be very acceptable in the USA. I had written to him as well this time but had not received a reply.

In the ten days I visited all the stores some more than once, including the American place in Belgium. This guy had left the company and those I saw did not help.

As small as Belgium is, I had to take two trains from Brussels to reach the Americans. The Dutch store was interested if I could give them copper on a wood base. Next stop was Dusseldorf, gateway to the Ruhr cities and HQ to Germany's most prestigious stores, Karstad. The name I was given to write to, also the previous year was the founder and president of these stores. It was like writing to Mr. Marks of Marks and Spencer in London to sell him some trinkets. With German thoroughness, I was expected. My letter was in the hands of the chief gift buyer who explained to me it was to him I had written. He asked to see everything I brought as well as my catalogue album. After a brief calculation he placed a sample order of one item or set in the whole range. I left the album with him.

I walked away walking on air. From the day I landed in Belgium I was ill with flu. Every day I swallowed tons of vitamin C tablets. I walked miles and miles with my case of samples. It was very hard and lonely work. In Lucerne, another trip into the country to see the HQ of a chain of stores. Another sample order but much smaller than the German one. By now I was fed up with Europe and the whole business of travelling. The only consolation was the Eurail ticket which I could use to go anywhere in Europe at any time within two weeks from the first journey. I returned to Holland, said hallo to Jack and Ernie Bless, tried to do more business without results and was thankful to get into the Sabena plane in Brussels to return home.

Perhaps because I was sick most of the ten days I was in Europe, I hated every day there with the exception of the one large order I got from Karstad. Perhaps it was being on my own and lonely and no one to talk to.

One amusing episode is worth retelling. In Cologne, the HQ of another large chain where the buer refused to see me without an appointment. I wished to telephone Amsterdam an arrangement I made previously. One shop after another refused to let me use their phone, so I decided to use the best hotel I could find, walked up to reception and said in English I wished to call Amsterdam, gave the woman the number and she directed me to one of the booths opposite and got through for me. After my call I went up to her to pay and thank her. She nearly fainted when she realised I was not staying there and did not have a room number to charge.

While on the subject of amusing incidents, not long before I went to Europe I entered a large modern painting painted on clear perspex for a Rhodesian National Art competition organised by Gretermans Stores. At the time, I was chairman of the Salisbury and District Art Club. It so happened that the club's president, Mr. Hunter Craig won first price and I second.

I think I received R\$100, perhaps more as my reward. The conditions were that all the paintings would be auctioned by Gretermans and the proceeds go to charity. Before the auction, they phoned me to obtain my valuation. I think I said \$200 or 250. It was my intention to attend the auction and if necessary to bid at the very least my prize money, perhaps more rather than let it go cheaply. On due date I was there as well as a great many people in an L shaped hall. When my painting came up the bidding was very slow and low. At about \$75 intervened and bid \$80. There were other bids around the corner from people I could not see nor, presumably, they me. I kept bidding and reached \$150 and ignored the auctioneer's sweet talk about how great the painting was and I would lose it to the other person. As far as I was concerned, I had reached my limit. I was not interested in who got it. There were too many people and I left. About two weeks later, Gretermans phone me to come over and see them. When I got there, I was told I could collect my picture as it was not sold. I said I was at the auction and know that it was sold. The reply was that a person on their staff was bidding to drive up the price but the other bidder refused to go any higher. A year later, Saltrama Plastics Mr. Paul Sinek bought it at one of my one man shows for \$300. It is probably still in Harare.

Ilan was finishing school and preparing to go to university. He had also started playing the guitar many years earlier, mostly on his own. It was a difficult time for him which neither I nor Estelle could understand. Estelle in particular used to get extremely upset and hurt by his behaviour. We agreed that for financial and even educational reasons, he would attend the university in Salisbury which was near our house. In spite of this proximity, he insisted on living at the university. This arrangement meant buying him a small motor cycle for transportation but relieved much of the pressure all round at home. He was also active in the Habonim movement as a senior madrich.

Michael also played rugby at school. Now he joined a sports club and often played for their team. I went to a number of matches with Peter, his future father-in-law to these and other rugby matches. Karen Henwood visited us often and both Estelle and I liked her very much from the first day we met her. Our Karen had decided only to complete her matric and attend university in South Africa if we could pay for it, of course.

Ma and I enjoyed our first European trip so much we were planning another for 1976, two years after our first trip. This time the tour was mostly to Scandinavia. We again saw the Bles's and stayed with them this time for two days. Once again we spent time in London going to shows.

In Stockholm I saw an opportunity for exporting copper products and prepared all the material and information to do so. Copper Design was not doing the business. I really left most of the managing to Les Rose and in the difficult tourist climate Rhodesia was in, he was much too relaxed and did not provide the necessary leadership or example in productivity which was needed. I was much too involved with Art Ads but of course could see what was happening with Copper Design. The order to Germany had been sent by air with much cloak and dagger activity and expense. I decided the other order to Lucerne was much too small for the expense involved in sending it in the round about way to avoid sanctions. My bank received payment from the Germans promptly but no further orders. It was obvious things would only get worse.

At the end of 1974 Michael and Karen were married. The ceremony was conducted by a non-denominational marriage officer in a large marquee in the garden of the Henwood's home. Karen had spent many months preparing to be converted to orthodox Judaism, but did not complete her conversion by the time they decided to get married. The ceremony was followed by a reception in the evening in a hotel. They received many beautiful gifts, including furniture from our friend Cynthia Hind..

Ilan had just finished university and was anxious to leave as well, so they arranged that Ilan would leave with the newly weds in Michael's car straight after the wedding. Within two months, Estelle and I were left on our own. Ilan had asked if he could do a teacher's diploma for a year at UCT. Of course, we agreed. I also arranged that Michael could try and sell our copper products and see if could make a living from that and perhaps other lines. The decision was entirely his. At first he sent us many orders which he had taken. Unfortunately our resources in Copper Design were limited. We had to have a better cash flow. Sales from the local market were poor. The remittances Michael made after deducting his commission were insufficient to keep the business viable. The amounts outstanding from South Africa kept growing. It was obvious we could not continue much longer. Tom Preston left Rhodesia and settled in the Cape earlier. He became involved in a leather goods factory and asked me if Michael could sell their lines in Johannesburg. Soon Michael was selling more leather than copper. Rose and I decided to sell the Copper Design factory. Businesses were being sold everywhere in Rhodesia and people were departing in droves. Even so, Copper Design presented a good impression with an attractive showroom of its products in the entrance. A prospective buyer looked at everything including our books. We sold him the business for R\$11 000 cash.

Later he told me he did not believe our books reflected the true picture and that we were pocketing much without any record. I was delighted not to have shown a loss. In the few years we made enough to come out square perhaps with some profit and about 4 000 outstanding including South Africa.

Before all the children had left, I bought the best looking car we every owned. A large Datsun 2000 with the gear lever on the steering column. Both Michael and Ilan liked driving it whenever they had the opportunity. I had taught them all to drive as soon as they were able to obtain their licence at 16. We made several long journeys to South Africa and East London in it. It was rather huge and heavy, the engine not powerful enough. With the advent of petrol rationing in Rhodesia, I decided to sell it and get a smaller, lighter Datsun 120Y. By now we were on our own.

It was also time to make some long term decisions to stay or go. Smith, the Prime Minister was often negotiating. It was extremely difficult to know what to do. In the end we decided to prepare for the worst and be ready to leave. It meant abandoning (selling) an investment of over twenty years effort which was providing us with a fair living and exchanging it for an uncertain future in South Africa where we would go. First, we sold the house. Similar to businesses, house prices dropped drastically. We were lucky to sell it fairly quickly for a little more than we paid, and moved into a flat almost next door. About three years earlier, we bought a flat near the city. We were renting it, but had no desire to live there. A factor governing all decisions about leaving Rhodesia was Karen, who needed until the end of 1979 to finish her studies. The year was 1976. The position was not promising. It was clear to me the longer I waited to sell Art Ads, the less I would get and the harder it would be. Several events now occurred which resolved the problem. the CAZO office in Salisbury was run by Gaby Haimowitz. I knew him well when we both were members of Moshav Habonim. We were not close friends, but used to meet at functions. At one such a meeting, he told me that perhaps it was time for him to move on. He was thinking of returning to Israel. His wife had parents there. I said I was thinking of going and selling my business. Several months later, three large cartons of Glu Kleen simply vanished. Eventually it was discovered that Les Rose had delivered these three cartons to a firm which in fact had ordered a few thousand plastic trays which were also packed in three large cartons. The firm was a wholesaler which supplied various shops. Altogether it was an embarrassing situation to sort out all round. No doubt I expressed my feelings to Les Rose about it. The next day he handed in his resignation. The contract we both had with Art Ads was a three month's notice on either side. I did not attempt to dissuade him and accepted his notice.

I wrote to Tom Preston as ~~no~~ doubt Les Rose did. All I said was my intention to sell Art Ads and as he was the next largest shareholder he, of course, had first option. The end of the year was approaching and Karen would be home soon on holiday. I booked for the three of us to spend a few days at Victoria Falls. This perhaps would be Karen's last good opportunity to see the Falls. We met Gaby and his family there too. They were there for similar reasons. He asked me if I would consider taking over his job in March 1977 when he was leaving. I told him I would if I could sell my business by then. Besides, the job was not his to give.

Tom Preston came up from Somerset West. He was interested in buying the business provided Les Rose also bought a small shareholding and was prepared to continue as manager. In the meantime, the CAZO managing committee asked me for an interview and offered me the job on condition I take it for a minimum of two years. I told them they would have my answer within a week. My sale of Art Ads was not yet final. Rose agreed to Preston's proposals. I was to leave at the end of February 1977. One of my conditions concerned Michael and his outstanding debt to Copper Design which Art Ads took over. The condition was that Michael would not be pressured into repaying the debt beyond his means and to give him a good length of time to repay. Since Tom was, in fact, using Michael as his leather factory rep and knew him well, he agreed to this provided Michael made payments as often as he could. The fact that South Africa decided to devalue the rand soon after, made his task of repaying even more difficult. On the last day of February 1977, Tom gave me a cheque for R\$21 000 plus, I said my goodbyes to everyone and never again saw my business. It was a traumatic experience.

The last five years in spite of or perhaps because of sanctions against Rhodesia, the business had grown tremendously after my purchase of Art Ads. Tom Preston not only recouped his losses, but received handsome dividends. Given normal conditions, I think it was worth three times the price I sold it for. Tom and I met once again over a few drinks. I told him that with ^{Rose} Rhode in charge, even though he now had an interest in the business, needed careful and constant attention in every possible direction. Without it, Tom's investment would go one way. I never laid eyes on either Les Rose or Tom again.

After two weeks holiday at home, I began my new job as secretary of CAZO office in Salisbury. Gaby Haimowitz helped me for a week. The post included an old Fiat car. The staff consisted of two permanent ladies, a bookkeeper mornings only and a secretary full day.

My duties were many. There was a new urgency that had never existed before. People in the community who had never bothered about Jewish affairs in general or Israel and Zionism in particular, decided to take an interest now. Everyone who was thinking of leaving Rhodesia, came in to talk about Israel. I had to swot up all the latest information and became conversant with all the numerous details people asked about. I took over from Gaby with the approval of the Israeli Consulate in Johannesburg, all the official duties vis-a-vis passports and entry permits to Israel.

This was completely on another level and had no official connection with Zionist movement affairs. This work took precedence over all else, namely to assist people wishing to settle in Israel. In addition there was a host of local duties such as helping all the various WIZO activities, youth movements, functions, visiting dignitaries, correspondence, showing films and being a general dogs body. There were constant meetings to attend. All the committee members were of course voluntary and some were entrusted with important work on behalf of the community. I therefore had many so-called bosses. This meant treading a careful line and often performing balancing acts of tact and discretion. The same also applied to dealing with the public.

Barney Katz in Bulawayo, to whom I spoke almost daily was a great help. He was the General Secretary of CAZO for Rhodesia, even though the community there was now smaller. Once again I was using Hebrew. There was always a need to read or speak it. My involvement in the job was total. Estelle too became involved, and joined the WIZO catering activities. She still worked mornings in the city. We also joined the Wingate Country Club, mainly to play tennis on Saturdays, but also for their social activities. The CAZO offices were situated more or less on the outskirts of a commercial sector of Salisbury. They had been there for ten years and more. At night and early evening, the area had no traffic or pedestrians apart from perhaps the homeless and criminals. Often meetings finished late in the evening. No one relished the idea of walking about even to ones car in the area. There was the bush war in the country and hand grenade attacks in the city from time to time. Zionist offices were also a target in other parts of the world. I was aware that we were too vulnerable in the area. There was no shortage of office space in town. It was a big job to move, but move I did.

The situation in Rhodesia gave the office much work. The Johannesburg office assisted greatly by sending lecturers giving the most recent news and information on Israel.

Ilan left Cape Town soon after obtaining his teacher's diploma. With a group of Habonim, he joined Kibbutz Nir Eliyahu. After a short spell on the Kibbutz, tying avocado tree branches, he joined the IDF. As a 'sabara' he had no option. For my annual leave, Estelle and I decided to visit him in Israel. It would also give me an opportunity to renew my outlook of the country and meet people I was constantly writing to on behalf of olim. So for the third time in 1978 we flew to London, Greece and Israel.

The severe restrictions of travel allowance meant that we had to economise on all accommodation. The first day in London Estelle saw a concert advertised by Itzhak Perlman and Vladimir Ashkenazi in the Festival Hall (I saw this advertisement in a British newspaper on the plane - Estelle). We just managed to get the last two seats in the last row up in the gods. The stay in Athens was stimulating only in parts. We took a boat trip to Poros, one of the many islands, climbed all over the Acropolis and landed at some forsaken ancient monastery called Dafne. This was my mistake. I wanted to see Delphi, but got my names all wrong. Our diet in Athens consisted of freshly baked bread and yoghurt which was really very good. We were saving most of our money for Israel.

At Ben Gurion airport, Ilan was waiting for us. Never have I seen him look so good, before or since. His letters after he joined the Israeli army, which we still have, were most unhappy. It was not so much the extremely hard training which was the cause, as the people he had to live with in his unit. He had obtained special leave to be with his parents. His unit was in Lebanon at the time. He was brown, looked solid and healthy in his army camouflage, spoke Hebrew and just exuded vigour and optimism. He drove us to his kibbutz, Nir Eliyahu. He had prepared a room. There was fruit in a bowl and flowers near the bed. It was precisely and typically a kibbutz setting with the cowsheds nearby which we became acutely aware of when the wind blew in the wrong direction. It was somewhat nostalgic for me, but with the added knowledge that it was only for a week or so and was really home for Ilan. Nir Eliyahu in spite of being an old kibbutz, had not prospered. There we met a charming girl, Ilan's girlfriend, Roseline, who prepared a nice tea. She was a working visitor from Paris. It was Pesach and we participated in a huge Seder event with a kibbutz style Haggadah reading, celebration, and food. The next day Estelle was as sick as a dog.

I hired a car for three or four days and Ilan drove us all over the Golan. We stayed at a guest section attached to another kibbutz, Ein Gev on the eastern shore of Lake Kinneret. I did some sketches of Ilan playing the guitar there.. He took us right up to the 'good neighbour fence' with Lebanon. In Haifa we visited Estelle's two cousins, Theo Kaplan and Margaret. We stayed the night in Margaret's flat. I don't remember why, but she lent us her car to visit Moshav Habonim. Ilan had never been there as an adult. 21 years after leaving, we were back on our first visit. All internal roads were tarred. There was an air of prosperity. We met several families from the old days. Ilan was impressed and asked why we ever left this beautiful place. Most of the people around were total strangers. Their greatest problem was a shortage of labour. As the members were ageing their children often left home. In spite of that, their other problem was having to pay tax now that they were making a living.

Back in Haifa I wanted to fill the car with petrol before returning it. At the petrol station the attendant asked what grade. Of course we did not know. So he tasted it to determine what he should give us. We returned to Ilan's kibbutz. Estelle and I spent two days in Jerusalem. I visited the Agency with whom I had been in contact for the past year concerning olim from Salisbury. We also spent a few days in Tel-Aviv. Then it was time to return. Ilan took us with the kibbutz transport to the airport. After a hasty farewell he left. To our chagrin, our plane had left an hour previously.

When I confirmed our flight in Jerusalem, we were not told the new departure time. Eventually after much talking, we went to London by El Al with an hour to spare to catch an S.A.A. flight to Johannesburg. We were put at the head of the queue to leave the plane quickly and were just in time to board the next flight.

Back in Salisbury the work load had accumulated. The Rhodesian Government had reduced the 5 000 dollars permitted to be taken out by emigrants, to \$1 000. This made departure more difficult, but did not stop it. I interviewed a great number of people. Their greatest stumbling block and fear was starting a new life without knowing Hebrew. Without exception all were sent to an Ulpan institution. This was a most wonderful concept of tremendous value, situated all over the land. For a very nominal fee, people lived there with full board and taught Hebrew for six weeks, taken on orientation trips and assisted over the initial cultural shock.

As with every society there were unhappy incidents. No matter how carefully one checks, some deliberate lying or withholding of crucial information can lead to untold complications and unhappiness.

There has always been a tendency unhappily of Jewish parents to send their problem children to Israel, usually to a kibbutz. Invariably, as soon as these problems became apparent, which they always do, it is a great and costly task to repatriate them back to their parents. It happened in Moshav Habonim while I was there. How it happened to me in Salisbury.

One day the father of a teenage daughter had the nerve to come to my office and complain about the treatment his eighteen year old received at a kibbutz. If it wasn't so sad in a sense it was somewhat hilarious when I eventually read a report of what happened. This girl with a group of other young people, was in an orchard picking fruit, when she fell out of the tree. She evidently hurt herself, but fortunately not seriously. Further investigation by the kibbutz revealed this girl was suffering from epilepsy and had an attack when this happened. Further investigation by me showed that this condition was not on her medical report which each applicant had to complete for the doctor's examination.

A much more serious case of a young man in his twenties was a big problem. He was the son of a prominent family in Salisbury. In this case, the parents kept a very low profile. First rumblings of a problem came from the South African office in Tel Aviv. They had a report about a penniless young man wandering about on the beach, who originated from Salisbury. With the help of the police, he was eventually found and his parents notified. Against their protest that he should not be returned to Rhodesia where he would have to do his army service if was sent back. Unbeknown to me, this chap has had a long history of disturbed behaviour over several years, well recorded in Salisbury but kept confidential. In spite of this, he was accepted at UCT. In his second or third year engineering, he applied at the Cape Town office of the Zionist Federation to go to a kibbutz. The medical examination in Cape Town revealed nothing and although I was informed of his application as a matter of courtesy, I had no inkling of trouble. Gaby, my predecessor might have known of problems but not I. This chap was soon asked to leave one kibbutz and went to another which he soon left as well, to end up sleeping on the beach near Tel Aviv. When he finally returned to Salisbury with an escort, our doctor told me he suspected this chap was a schizophrenic. His parents refused to acknowledge that he needed help and were partially responsible for allowing him to go to Israel. The Rhodesian army refused to enlist him. The number of people wishing to leave for Israel kept growing. In addition many wasted much of our time. These were people who had applied to emigrate to various other lands and were waiting for replies. Their apprehension grew while waiting and applied for Israel as well simply as an insurance.

Sometimes I was aware, mostly not. Even if I was certain they were just using us, there was nothing much I could do. In the short two years I sent more people to Israel than in all the previous years of the existence of the office. Estelle was working in town too for accountants. We were constantly trying to decide what to do. On a thousand dollars which was all we could take with us, it was a very hard choice to make at our age. Over the years I had managed to send and save some more in South Africa. It was still an agonising decision. Michael had his hands full making a living in Johannesburg. We would have to rely on ourselves. Finally, in 1979, we decided to leave. I was able to arrange with the bank to pay all the fees for Karen to the end of her last year at Cape Town. Precisely 24 months after taking my last job as my contract stated, we left Rhodesia. Estelle by air and I by car loaded to bursting. Several months earlier I bought a red Kombi. The idea was to register it in Karen's name and perhaps keep it in South Africa. She applied to leave Rhodesia and was allowed certain items of furniture, etc. These I loaded into the Kombi and joined a convoy to Beit Bridge. 200 kilometres from Beit Bridge, the engine packed in. The convoy went on while I sat with bush on either side. Fortunately, I had resprayed the original red and changed it to green. This would make me less of a target to the constant attacks on vehicles between cities. Eventually a military vehicle gave me a tow to Beit Bridge. They asked R\$900 to fix the engine in Beit Bridge. I trucked it back to Salisbury and fixed it for R\$200. A week later I finally reached Johannesburg and left the Kombi with Michael. A coincidence worth noting is that Estelle arrived back in Johannesburg on 27 April 1979 after having left it on 27 April 1949 - 30 years to the day.

When we left, it was with a very sad heart. Rhodesia had been very good to us. Having arrived penniless in December 1957, were leaving after the best part of our lives spent there. I think the children obtained as good an education as anywhere. We loved the country and its people, black and white. Courtesy and honesty were still a very strong characteristic of the population in spite of the inhuman acts of war from time to time. To me the Rhodesian police were a remarkable force. The few encounters I had with them demonstrated their politeness, firmness and dignity. Their standard of education had to be high to enable them to join the police force, which was considered to be an elite corps. I think Smith blew a great opportunity when he had a chance to make a partnership with the blacks early in the conflict. With England's support and agreement the prospect for a great future was immense. So often he who wants everything finally gets nothing. So it was with Smith and Rhodesia.

We stayed with the Kingsbury's for three weeks. As soon as we found a flat, we sent for our furniture left in storage in Salisbury. Estelle got a job very quickly. While she was negotiating her job I got my first ticket - a R40 fine for parking our car before 9 a.m. I really was not sure what I would do. Michael had continued to represent Rasel Leather in which Tom Preston was the principal, but he was also selling a lot of macrame goods to hobby shops and others. This was a craze that was popular with many people. I had never heard of it. Against my better judgement and with Michael's great enthusiasm and persuasion he convinced me that we should join forces in pushing macrame and all its products. So we rented a large shop in Troyeville. He gave up his office/store in the centre of town. The Kombi was very useful in moving everything including thousands of Glu Kleen empty tubes. About a year previous to our move, I invested in 30 000 tubes of Glu Kleen, the minimum order. I thought Michael would be able to do the rest such as filling and obtaining orders. Unfortunately, it was not a viable proposition. We were equal partners as far as the macrame and Glu Kleen or any other business that we did in the shop. He still needed his main source of income from selling leather for himself. Almost from the start, it was clear that the only business we would do would be from macrame good orders that Michael brought in from his travelling. He worked very hard covering great distances and brought in many orders. These I made up and invoiced and packed and dispatched by parcel post. Hardly anyone ever came in. I made many signs outside the shop. The area we were in had no passing trade and was unsuitable for macrame. I did a little picture framing. For a short while we became ambitious and purchased fairly large quantities of acrylic 'wool' directly from the spinners. An acquaintance of Michael's, Issy Chernick, converted this yarn into braid. I designed and printed a special label for it. We also contrived a simple but effective packaging method for this braid which was sold in many colours. Half of the shop was partitioned and we sub-let it. Still there was far too much time with nothing to do. I embarked on a campaign to get more Glu Kleen customers. Every week I went at least one day, often two, to get new customers. Results were fairly good and I was filling Glu Kleen tubes as well now several days a week. Once for an order of 100 boxes (1 000 tubes) we even hired a youngster to help for a few days. In fact sales of Glu Kleen were becoming consistent and with inflation a constant threat, we decided to order another lot of printed tubes from Metal Box. The profit margin was good if only we could keep getting re-orders. For about a year the macrame orders were fair but soon began to diminish. We decided to find another shop with perhaps more passing trade as we had things to sell. We called it 'Gift Gallery'.

The lease was for three years and the position near Joubert Park was not good but 100% better than the first shop. While still at the old shop, a chap walked in one day and looked at my paintings hanging on the wall. I spoke to him briefly. He said he drew portraits of people at a great new shopping complex which had recently opened, called Eastgate. He showed me a drawing block with pencil sketches of people. They were so poor, I could not believe that people paid him, or he was a liar. Anyway, I decided to investigate. Sure enough, he was sitting at Eastgate near a Wimpy bar exhibiting his ghastly portraits and there were people having their portraits done. There and then I decided to find a spot and do portraits. This was easier said than done. So I asked an art gallery if I could work outside their shop. They agreed. I told Michael that Saturdays I would be doing portraits. Sometimes he came in but mostly our shop was shut. It was never better than my portrait work moneywise for me on a Saturday. When we moved to our second shop we did do better from various other lines Michael arranged mostly jewellery, small leather items and making copies on my machine I brought from Rhodesia. The rent was reasonable. I also took framing orders and painted a good bit.

Michael was still getting macrame orders which I packed and dispatched but they diminished so much that we gave this venture up. Glu Kleen was moving steadily and I still went out once a week visiting regular customers. One wall of the shop was covered in paintings, but sales were very few. Immediately we arrived from Rhodesia, Shirley mentioned the Artist's Market on a weekend at the Zoo Lake. After some formalities I was accepted as a member. Once a month Estelle and I would sit on Saturday and Sunday exhibiting and I would do portraits. First I sold a number of paintings in oils and water colours brought from Rhodesia. Soon I had to paint more, but was not sure what to paint. Our sales were poor compared to some artist whose skill was not great. The Kombi I had driven back to Rhodesia as it was too complicated to keep in South Africa. I was lucky to sell it quickly within three days for R\$3 000 cash. This I converted into two Kruger Rands and some other gold jewellery before returning to Johannesburg. Altogether, the Kombi episode turned out alright in the end. To replace it I bought a small secondhand panel van mainly to transport paintings, chairs, umbrellas and everything needed to exhibit once a month.

All the years in Rhodesia, Estelle had always worked mornings only. Now in Johannesburg she was working all day, doing what she knew best, balance sheet typing.

Michael and I were groping and not making much from our shop. For me, it was an address as well as a place to paint. Saturdays I earned better doing portraits at Eastgate while Michael used to come into the shop if he could. Towards 1983 our landlord asked for an 80% increase in rent. Michael was having problems of his own with a factory which was not paying him the commission owed. There was a good chance that he could obtain a good job and get a good regular income. So one day I said 'enough' to Michael. We should split up. Each should do his own thing. The extra rent was not worth it. There was nothing worth holding on to in our joint venture. We settled all our accounts, divided our stock very simply. I kept the Glu Kleen tubes and Michael everything else.

In the few years we had the shops, I tried to get jobs for the afternoons only as an artist. The first was for a commercial art studio where I did some straight art work and coloured presentations. I did not care for the boss at all and left after a week or two. Next I worked afternoons again in a furniture factory painting rose designs in acrylic, water colours on bedroom suites. This too lasted a few weeks only. I was too expensive for them compared to the coloured artist they employed. Finally just before Michael and I split up I worked on a piece goods basis afternoons again. This was for the International Film Distributors who supplied to their own Metro cinemas huge wall coloured paintings, also in acrylic water colours copied from small printed American art material. The last was the most satisfying and profitable but also only lasted several weeks. The firm discontinued this type of advertising, where I was the only artist.

The shop venture with Michael earned us both several hundred Rand each a month. With what I earned doing portraits each Saturday and the few sales at the Zoo Lake once a month if we were lucky, we had enough to live on without touching Ma's earnings. In addition we received the rent cheque each month from the bank in Harare for about R120. For Michael, it certainly was not enough. Our main interests of necessity lay elsewhere too.

From the day we came to Johannesburg I played tennis with Fred and his school each Sunday. Later I joined an additional group with Charles Smith each Saturday afternoon. So when Eastgate shops closed at 1 p.m. I would go directly from doing portraits to play tennis. I mentioned to one of the players, Stanley Lyons, that we were closing our shop and I was looking for a small store/workshop to paint in. He said he had such a place which I could use free of rent. It was fairly far from our flat, but I was never one to look a gift horse in the mouth. It was just large enough to hold all the Glu Kleen boxes and space to paint in. Today, after about 5 years, I am still using it.

The first windfall immediately after our arrival was on the Stock Exchange. I had managed to accumulate several thousand rand over the years before our arrival. Sasol was offering the public shares to which I subscribed. Once before in Rhodesia I had a similar experience with a very popular share offer. On that occasion I got nothing as it was heavily oversubscribed. This time I split my applications among four people and was lucky to get half the shares requested. I sold these within weeks at over 100% profit. For the next few years I played the market with some profit.

At about the same time, Karen announced her engagement to Jerome Frankel in Cape Town. Shirley Kingsbury offered her garden for the wedding. Ilan also wrote that he was coming for a visit and would attend Karen's wedding. We hired a large marquee for the morning tea. It was surprising the number of people we still knew in Johannesburg to invite. Jerome's parents and sister came up from Cape Town. Ma had the shock of her life when she saw Jerome's best man with whom she had to walk up the aisle in the Yeoville Shul. He was dressed in a leather jacket and slax with a huge Afro style hairdo and ma said he looked like the neanderthal man.

My partner on the other hand, was the exact opposite - a beautiful bride with whom it was a pleasure to make the all too short trip to the chupa. The speeches were kept to a minimum. I only remember Michael and Jerome speaking. There was a soft drizzle from an overcast sky.

Ilan stayed for about six months. He took a job at a fine restaurant, playing the guitar each evening from 8 to midnight or even later. It was a pleasure to have him live in the flat although we only saw him a short while before he went to work at night.

Before long Roselene came to South Africa and stayed with Ilan and us for a couple of weeks.

After Michael and I closed our shop I determined to devote much serious effort to art. Now almost for the first time in my life well and beyond middle age, there was still an opportunity for improvement. I had a good regular opportunity to sell albeit only once a month and had to make the most of it. I continued with Glu Kleen and by now it was much easier. There were many established customers who knew me and the product. Now and again I obtained large orders. The source of glue the same group as in Rhodesia, kept increasing their price. One day a representative while we were still at the shop in Joubert Park offered to same glue at almost half the price. Of course, I began using the new factory.

As the income from portraits was improving and my painting as well, my Glu Kleen efforts diminished. So I decided to look for a buyer while I still had a good store of empty tubes as well as regular customers. Besides, I needed the extra space to paint. At first I tried several factories making glue for the retail trade. Either my price was too high or they just had no interest. Finally and perhaps a bit hastily, I offered it at slightly above the cost price of the tubes to a good customer. Even so, it was not nearly enough to compensate for a tremendous loss of R30 000 at about the same time.

I had always wanted to invest in a flat where we could live if need be. Inflation would reduce our capital drastically each month so I looked for a hedge. Estelle was against buying a flat or property. Eventually I convinced her we should spend R30 000 cash to buy a small flat near us. If we did not live in it, we could rent it. It turned out to be a swindle from the very start. The two cheques Estelle made out to the lawyers trust fund was just a clever ruse, intended to make prospective buyers feel safe. I take the entire blame for not recovering our money when I became suspicious of the whole deal six months later. For two years we rented the flat. That earned us about 12% on our capital and everything appeared fine. One day we discovered by pure chance that the developer had left South Africa taking most of the cash. The properties were all firmly and legally owned still by the several building societies. Another year went by in which we received rent. After that the building societies took over. Many visits to lawyers and the building society in question were all useless. Hundreds of people were involved with this developer and the swindle amounted to millions of rand. It was a substantial portion of our savings. A contributing factor giving us a feeling of security was the fact that Ma's cousin, Stanley Treisman was a senior partner with the firm of lawyers to whom the cheques were made. We were very foolish in not contacting him at the very beginning. Being timid in this instance was a big mistake. Subsequently we learned that he resigned from that firm because of their association with Niland the developer.

The years in Rhodesia did not prepare me for the swindles of Johannesburg. In spite of the loss, we have done much better in money terms in nine years in South Africa than over twenty years in Rhodesia. Of course had it not been for the war, the financial value of my enterprise was very much greater than was realised. The non financial value of our Rhodesian sojourn was very great and worthwhile.

In the last five years my art work has dominated all our activities. For the first time in my entire life I have devoted all my time and energies to art for an income. Doing portraits has been a steady if unspectacular source of income. In the first year or so, I had one dread. What if the portrait did not look like the sitter. Speed was also part of the deal and created interest. The conditions of work could not be worse, with one exception, which was working in the sun in the open at the Zoo Lake exhibitions. I had never drawn in public. Often large crowds would, and still do, congregate around me which was disconcerting. I have learned to put up with all of that. My work has improved to the point when I do not worry at all about not achieving a very good likeness. As to the crowds, I love them now. They provide me with my next customer. At first I would not draw babies. They moved to such extent that I did not wish to spoil my reputation of not getting a good likeness. It was far too difficult and frustrating. Eventually, in spite of my protestations, mothers prevailed upon me to try, appreciating the problems. I surprised myself and the parents were delighted with my efforts. Ever since then I have greed to draw babies no matter how young or old. In fact they and young children are about 50% of all portraits. They are still extremely difficult and often drive me up the wall. On the other hand, I obtain much satisfaction and appreciation when in spite of all the moving about I capture the child's character in the drawing.

The art gallery had long closed down. The other artist who first told me about this place has also departed a few years ago. The general manager of Eastgate, who first saw me working at the art gallery years ago accepts me now as the Eastgate artist. I have probably the best spot in the whole complex I could wish for. They have never asked me for any payment whatsoever. At first I only worked there on Saturdays and everyday for about a month in November/December. In the last three years, I have been going every afternoon for about two hours as well. In the first few years it took ten minutes per portrait. Lately I think the work has improved, but I take up to twenty minutes sometimes, particularly ladies with elaborate hairstyles. I also carry large sheets of drawing paper. This is for multiple family portraits, up to five on one sheet.

Over the years at Eastgate, I have made a great number of good contacts. An art teacher invited me to do portraits at her primary school. They made appointments for me and for a week I went there to draw many children. Part of my proceeds went to the school. Subsequently, Lisa and Graham went to this school. I was also asked to do an oil portrait of the headmaster on his retirement, which now hangs in the school.

In addition, I have done hundreds of portraits from photographs in black and white and colour in all mediums. These included pets of all descriptions. My fee from photographs is much greater than from live sittings. I also obtained photo work from four art galleries, now reduced to three shops. I charge them all a much lower rate, and they often add 100% to my price. Over the years I have had some strange encounters and requests. The first, comparatively tame. A chap invited me to his home to draw his wife and daughter. After I drew the daughter of about 12, he asked his wife to strip to the waist so that I would include her breasts in the portrait. She complied without hesitation. This happened in the first year in Johannesburg and nothing like it since.

While on the subject of nudes, two amusing incidents happened in Salisbury. Estelle, who was fairly active with the Reps crowd and appeared in several plays introduced me to an attractive red head from the Reps. She agreed to pose in the nude for our Art Club which met once a week in the evening. It was years since I had drawn nudes in Johannesburg at the Art School and private art group. At the Salisbury Art Club, we had only people posing for portraits or still life sessions. It was a bit of a shock to the 10 or 12 ladies and 3 men when I announced that we would have a young nude that evening for fast sketching. We worked in a room in a block of offices in the city. It was a hot summer's night so the entrance door was left slightly open for better air circulation. All the other offices on our floor were shut for the night. Suddenly, our model flinched and looked rather startled. We all had our backs to the door but she was standing facing it. In a moment she was alright again. Later she told us a man had stuck his head into the room, probably curious and got as big a surprise as our model, who was the only one facing him.

A few months later, someone brought a young German exchange student to sit for us. Once again I asked if she would agree to pose for us in the nude. She agreed readily and stripped. Only then did I realise she had a most outstanding and interesting face. So I drew up my chair close and only did her portrait a few times that evening while she was sitting in the nude. I felt rather foolish having asked her to pose nude. One of the drawings of her was the first item sold at my first one man exhibition soon afterwards. It did not include breasts.

Once at Eastgate I was asked to do portraits in the evening at a sort of hotel and bar. I said I would visit the place and give my answer afterwards. To get in was a problem. I had to explain why I wished to enter and if I was a member. Eventually I was in but the chap who invited me was not there, but from looking around I got the impression it was not just a hotel or watering place and decided it did not suit me to do portraits there.

On another occasion a young well spoken man gave me some old sporting journals which he said he produced. He needed pencil drawings of six sporting South African celebrities for a new sports magazine he was going to launch. There were also a couple of press photographs to work from. He also gave me a post-dated cheque for R210 as a deposit on a Durban bank. That weekend I did three drawings and had a problem with the others. I tried to get in touch with the man who did not leave a number, but his name was on the editorial staff of the journals he left. After a number of calls to people who had known him, I decided not to draw any more. It was impossible to contact my client. Monday I took the cheque to my bank and asked them to check with the Durban bank. It transpired that this man was on the run from the police. He had swindled that and other banks in Durban and I should let them know where he is if I saw him. I never saw him again. He did leave a note for me with the art gallery where I worked, to leave his magazines, photos and my art work for him to pick up.

The very latest development was drawing portraits of Municipal candidates. First one and later four others, all independents, had portraits. I am looking forward to seeing their posters on trees and poles all over Bedfordview.

In spite of my extensive knowledge and experience in drawing faces, it is still no simple task. Unless I give the work at hand my total and undivided attention, it can go very badly. In the last few years, I have had a couple who I could see halfway were no good. With my apologies, I began all over again. I still regard it as an honest and legitimate work of art. Every now and again, a portrait is so good I am loath to part with it. It is just not the likeness which is good but every other aspect just stands out. On the other hand the great many drawings from photographs are just boring. They can take many hours of work to ensure every detail is right. As a form of art, I give it zero marks. Very often they bring me much praise from the client, because it nearly always looks much better than the photograph copied.

Ever since Michael and I went our separate ways, my income from paintings kept improving. Somehow my workshop in Kew helped very much. The early years of exhibiting monthly at the Zoo Lake Artists Market produced poor sales. My direction and styles were too many. I showed water colours and oils side by side. The oils were conventional landscapes or flowers. All the other artists were doing similar work. Many months Estelle and I would come home without any sales apart from some portraits which I did. Eventually I stopped doing water colours. Later I also stopped doing landscapes every other artist was doing.

The breakthrough happened when I began painting city scapes in abstract style. Twenty years earlier in Salisbury I won a prize for such a painting. Apart from the style and subject it was also painted on clear plastic, back and front. So I obtained similar clear plastic and tried it again for the Zoo Lake. For the past three-four years the sales of paintings have improved considerably. In spite of some extremely difficult business conditions over a year or two, many businesses have bought from us. Most of the paintings are abstract or cityscapes, mainly on hardboard. Always in oils and large. A great many have been sold to clients who seem to collect my work, and keep returning for more. One insurance company has 15 paintings in their business, apart from a number in the homes of the directors. Estelle and I have also improved our sales skills which too is a crucial factor in selling. With increased sales, the framing side became very important.

As a result of some modest investment in a metal saw machine, I am now saving a great deal on framing. From time to time I have dealt with art galleries. One at the Carlton Centre several years ago gave me both their large windows for an exhibition. I made a number of good sales there. Another gallery has also sold my paintings to a public company. I have always kept my prices low and have frequently been told so even by customers. On the other hand I have not neglected to raise them fairly regularly, certainly with the cost of materials and inflation.

As in many crafts, there is frequently an element of secrecy which contributes to the final result of one's work. Apart from painting, not too often, on clear plastic which I have not seen any other artist do except one in Tel Aviv over thirty years ago, and which is no secret once exposed, there is the application of paint. The conventional method is with brushes. About twenty years ago one evening, I realised that the following day was the last day for submitting paintings, a maximum of 3 to the Annual Art Academy at the Rhodes National Gallery in Salisbury. I had participated in these exhibitions every year since our arrival in Rhodesia. There used to be a similar annual event in Johannesburg which I entered successfully after my army discharge. To have one's painting accepted for hanging at these exhibitions I considered extremely important. It was to me a stamp of approval by an independent and knowledgeable jury of judges who had to decide what to hang from perhaps a thousand or more entries. Hardly more than 250 paintings could be hung. Apart from the good chance of a sale, there was also the prestige and with luck, a mention in the papers. More often than not I had the satisfaction of achieving the above.

To return to this one evening - I had the paint, a board to paint on but no brushes. These I usually kept in my business. It was too far and too late to drive there. Fortunately, I did not need to frame it. On the contrary, paintings accepted for hanging were framed by the National Gallery in their own workshop in simple wood frames. I even knew what to paint. As always I have had, as today, many sketches, some even in colour of subjects to make large paintings from. I considered finger painting, but decided against it. In desperation I finally decided to use an old toothbrush and a shaving brush. The tooth brush was no good, but the shaving brush was great for the background sky. It was to be a cityscape with tall buildings. I cut up some cardboard and used the small pieces to apply the paint. The painting, fairly large, was finished that night. It was all I submitted and it was hung in the main hall of the gallery. I have never used the shaving brush again, not for painting or shaving, but the bits of cardboard I have never stopped using. The shaving brush has been replaced by a conventional large brush or frequently by a rubber roller. This last device can produce outstanding effects not possible any other way. Even a moderate level of successful sales is not achievable without constant striving. All the secret devices and clever materials will not make sales. The greatest factor has been the Artists Market Association.

In 1979 once the selection committee saw my work and agreed to accept me as a member, I began to exhibit immediately. In the last few years, the artists reached the 160 members mark, which is the maximum arranged with the Municipality, who control the grounds. Nowadays when accepted, artists wait in a queue for vacancies before they can exhibit. Even Saturdays and Sundays once a month can produce sales and contacts to satisfy for the rest of the month. The weather can be and sometimes is a problem. Apart from that, it is a tremendously good venue which draws great crowds. I still draw portraits while Estelle looks after the sale of paintings. Frequently, a weekend passes without doing a single portrait, yet other weekends once I begin, they continue non-stop until I break to eat. The greatest inhibiting factor for the sale of paintings, as well as portrait work in Eastgate, has been the constant downturn in the general state of the economy. The years 1979 to 1983 were very good years. Unfortunately, my painting style and development had not matured quickly enough to take advantage of those years. By the time I found what to paint, the downturn had begun. Nonetheless I have managed to keep sales at a fair level in spite of the harder times.

The size and style is particularly suitable in business premises. I am convinced my sales would be double what they are if the volatile and uncertain climate in the country would diminish. The state of emergency has put a big dampener on all enterprise. In spite of all that, Estelle working and me with my art have managed to save substantially in the nine years we have been here.

Leaving Zimbabwe was a good move. But for that, my art would never have come as far as it has. The pressure of having to rely for a living on it and the competition has been a great spur. But it could not have been as successful without the many years of experience in Rhodesia. I have often considered how very lucky I have been to be able to do what I am doing. The freedom it gives me is of great value. Now my fear is getting old. Not that I am afraid of age, but more what it can do to one's abilities and judgement. I have seen it with my mother. She had a great understanding for well finished and quality work in garments and hand knitting. All her life she produced outstanding work. In the last five or six years her perceptions have left her. True, she is now 90 and I am only 67. The fear is still there that my portraits may deteriorate without me realising it. Of course, my customers will soon tell me and so far that has not happened. Painting is much safer. There is no likeness required. Unlike portraits, I paint in private and don't have an audience to watch my every move. Paradoxically, now when I have a fair number of clients who seem to collect my paintings, we may move once again. It is an enormous boost to greet and sell to people who have bought previously. Some also commission paintings. It has taken a number of years to reach such a position. Even the poor economic position this country is heading for may not reduce my income from art. There will always be people, I hope, ready to spend on art.

I have told Estelle that as long as my mother is alive, we will remain here. The home she is living in provides her with all she needs and she is very happy there. On the other hand, I feel she gets much pleasure and reassurance from my regular visits. I cannot deprive her of the only pleasure she has left, and leave. Estelle wishes to leave instantly. She completely understands my feelings and agrees with me however. For my part I am well aware that at our age to move again will be difficult and each succeeding year will make it that much harder. Unfortunately, we both feel and get very upset at the turmoil and reports daily in the media. In fact, we take it too much to heart.

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Estelle and I have had a most fortunate nine years in Johannesburg. A major part of this was the joy we both derived from seeing Lisa, Graham and Daniel all the time. Circumstances and Karen's and Michael's good humour and proximity have greatly contributed to our delight, particularly in all the years we have had Shabbat with them. For that we are very grateful and consider ourselves lucky. If and when they leave, we will certainly miss them very much.

On the eve of our third visit to Perth, I think we can also be thankful to have our health and means to visit Karen and Jerome, Ilan and Roslene and all their children. One is inclined to take these things for granted. It is therefore important to note how much Estelle and I appreciate our great children and children-in-law. Whatever the future may still bring, no one can now delete our happy years and memories.

This brings me and my story more or less up to date. To write more now will almost be like keeping a diary. Besides, I think it important to write about things after at least six months have passed. One can look at events with a better perspective and perhaps greater clarity. I don't know if I shall write more even then.

At this stage, our children are well aware of all the important events concerning Estelle and me. No doubt there must have occurred many events small and large which I have left out. This was not done deliverately, and is entirely due to poor memory or just possibly because I did not consider them of any interest. Only Ilan has commented so far on the half he has read which was: The story for him raises more questions than it answers. He may be right.... I have not heard his questions nor do I know if I have the answers.

ABA

JOHANNESBURG
17 OCTOBER 1988