

Wednesday April 24<sup>th</sup>

I think  
How time flies!

3 Dibley Chbrs,  
Wren Street  
9'0'9

Dear Sir Vere,

For your bedain, tanks, also  
tanks for de bedain to Jeanette, she show keen  
to me.

How is de liddle knobs & de oden ting?  
(delicately put, what?) Haf you yet de operation  
had, or no?

I am quide well, tanks. Haf you  
had a most ~~lovely~~ <sup>lovely</sup> weekend, I must drop  
this dialect to tell you, as its too tiring to  
write it all the time.

Some of the people from the Hiking Club  
went down to camp on Thursday night —  
in fact most of them did, but us hardworking  
ones that had to work on Saturday couldn't do  
that. Pop (Mr. Kay) & Jerry went down on Wednesday  
(Jerry's not working at the moment, & Pop being a  
teacher had all the week off) & put up  
the tents, & as there were a lot of us, made it  
a really posh camp with two latrines my  
dear one for the ladies and one for the gent's  
known respectively as the town hall & the  
theatre (we've never had 'em at camp before,

and it's always been awkward sneaking away  
to find a nice quiet tree.)

Well, those that worked on Saturday mornings  
only went down at 10'clock & the rest left on  
Saturday evening, but I went to a party on  
Saturday night & went down to camp on Sunday  
morning. It was at a place called Kookfontein  
(the camp, I mean) near Meyerton, which is near  
Vereeniging (pronounced FERREENAHUN#) and I  
got there at 6:30 a.m. & we all went down to the  
river to swim (the Vaal river). It was cold early  
in the morning, & the water was icy. I took two  
steps into the river intending to go in up to  
about my ankles, but I stepped into a  
bloomin' great hole, & went right under. When  
I emerged, I beheld an admiring crowd on  
the bank, who said, "You are brave" (I was  
the first one in) so I didn't tell them how it  
happened.

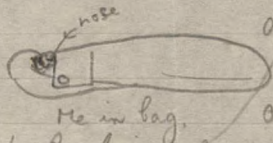
Well, er, next we had breakfast  
which was sausages & eggs & bacon & fat  
cakes (made of flour & water & fried in fat) &  
rolls & apple jelly, & sardines, & coffee, &  
guide scones & wholemeal bread & honey & tomatoes,  
etc. Then we took some lunch and walked  
to Vereeniging, which is about 9 miles away,



and had lunch there & swam in the river & watched  
a gala affair, & came back, & had some more to  
eat, & finally sat round a camp fire &  
entertained ourselves. Pop had erected a "bikers  
wireless", & he wrote a play, & a few other funny  
things - childrens hour "Peggy & Hilda are six  
whole years today; happy birthday Peggy & Hilda,  
& if you look under your beds tonight you will  
find a lovely surprise, only you must not fight  
over it." The surprise was a chamber, which of  
course referred to Jerry, who bestows his attention  
between Peggy & ~~me~~) and shipping news, all of  
which was very funny, as Pop can be very  
amusing indeed. Also we sang.

Peggy & I had decided to sleep outside  
the tent, as it was such a lovely night,  
full moon, & not cold. Everyone said we  
were mad, & that it was going to pour  
with rain, & that the mate of a snake we  
killed at campfire was going to come, & that  
they'd heard how snakes got under peoples  
blankets, & that we would go mad from  
the moon, & so on. But we had really  
made up our minds to sleep outside, &  
as Peggy was sharing blankets with her  
sister & another girl, they had to sleep

outside too. I had a sleeping bag which one of the boys who went home on Saturday left me, & once buttoned into this thing I couldn't move at all. We didn't get to bed until about



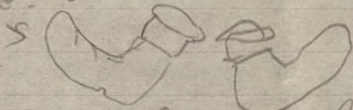
one o'clock & sure enough it did rain. At about 4 o'clock in the morning I woke up to feel big drops of rain on me, & I heard Peggy & Phyllis & Margaret getting their things into the tent. Some kind hero pulled me (bag, & blankets & all) inside, & there was a terrific storm & the tent was nearly blown away, but when we woke up in the morning all was calm once more.

That may sound all very uninteresting to you, but really it was awfully funny, & very exciting.

Well, the next day we ate a lot more, & had a fairly lazy day, & some of us went for a walk, & played "Follow the Leader" much to the astonishment of any natives we happened to pass, who were interested enough in seeing girls in shorts, but were still more interested to see a trail of people all gambolling after P.D. who looked very funny, because he



was doing a sort of fairy dance, & he has enormous big feet.



Well, we ~~struck~~ struck camp about 5 o'clock & got back to town before eight & that's really all that happened that will be being written about. All the really funny things are the kind of things that don't sound funny unless you were there to see - like Boggy (he's a new hiker, not very young, & rather fat. Her name's Miss Bowman) getting into a pair of shorts she bought, & things like that. The snake we killed wasn't a dangerous one - there are really very few snakes in the Transvaal, & not many round about Meyerton way, but we were all lying round the fire under blankets, when one of the boys yelled out "Give me a torch, quickly." It had crawled right over him, in the dark.

Also we had some Kaffir beer, which wasn't at all bad, & some of the boys put ribbons round their hair & did a chorus girl dance which was also most amusing.

Well, sis, I await the instalment of "Young England" with bated breath, so's to speak.

I forgot to thank you for the pants & brassiere  
which arrived last week - just into time.  
Last time I went out hiking I lost my one  
& only wearable brassiere when I got  
undressed to go swimming, & it was  
awkward trying to look for it, because I  
didn't like saying what it was that I had  
lost, if you get me, I didn't find it, so  
I was left brassiereless & being broken  
& broken every day, couldn't remedy the evil.  
So many thanks, well, it was most opportune  
indeed, ~~of the man at the post office thought it~~  
was mine, too.

Well, really, I must write to  
Ma, & if I tell you about the weather, & so  
on, there will be nothing left to write to  
her at all, at all.

There is another camp in two weeks time,  
cheers! as May 6<sup>th</sup> is a public holiday,  
& there are two more holidays at the end of  
May, so more camp,urray!

Hoping this finds you as it leaves  
me, & knowing it will find you as poor as  
me, I will close.

with all good wishes

Yours sincerely  
Hilda



VERA

154, Regent St.,  
Observatory. Jhbg.  
1st March 1949.

Dere Sis Vere,

There is such a touching programme on the wireless in commemoration of St. David's Day, full of Welsh Hymns and the like, I wonder if Morgan would like it? I bet his Welsh society is meeting in Johannesburg tonight.

Well, what can I tell you? Mama, as you know, has been away from us during the past two or three weeks. I didn't want her to go, because I thought it would be difficult for her, but it has been absolutely heavenly here without her, I never realised how really peaceful it is with just ourselves. I thought I might miss her pottering in the kitchen and washing the cups on Sunday, but no, it has just been lovely, I don't even feel ashamed of being so pleased she is not here. However, she will be back soon, and anyway, Tony will be pleased, she keeps telling her to come back, which makes her happy. Tony is learning to read very fast, I don't suppose you would approve of the methods used, they seem to be a combination of old and new, and her first reading book is called 'The Radiant Way' and has pictures drawn not earlier than the ~~thirties~~ 1920's, so it's not so bad. She learns her alphabet by sounds, and has 'sound and say' words, and also reading of repetitive phrases after the 'Old Lob' style. Proof of the way that she ought to learn is the fact that she can read whole pages of 'story', but is slower on the 'sound and say' words, if you know what that is. Anyway, she loves it all, she reads the bits she knows over and over until she knows them completely by heart, and she gets stars nearly every day for reading well. She says 'Oh, heck!', and is going to write some words completely by herself to send to you. The baby is simply lovely. just big and good and beautiful and so on. Rusty says he is beginning to suspect that he is a bit simple, because he is so good natured and grins all the time at everyone. He weighs about 17 pounds, eats anything I give him, splashes like mad in his bath, and then stops and grins all round, dribbles all over everything, plays with his toes, and does all the things a baby of his age usually does, only they look nicer in him, I think. I had the pictures taken by Lucy, and chose a few from the proofs today to send to you. They will take a bit of time to make them up.

Well, I suppose I should tell you some political news, but don't know where to start. Things just get worse and worse, and please be careful what you write - I mean, don't write anything flippant that is meant to be funny that could afterwards be quoted in Parliament against us, because not long ago a silly ass here in Jhbg wrote to a friend in Capetown saying that if the revolution started in Capetown they'd have to send to Johannesburg for some revolutionaries, and the letter has been used by Swart, our Minister of Justice, so just be careful, you never know who is listening, I mean reading our correspondence. Keep your jokes clean, and refer to portions of your anatomy in a ladylike and discreet fashion.



It must be due to subconscious reluctance to face up to realities, but I just can't seem to write to you all the serious political news. I feel much more like telling you all the funny things that Andrew does - he comes to play with Tony nearly every afternoon - and how the garden is full of dahlias and yellow daisies and asters and cutworm and rose beetles and centipedes and weeds. but it really looks lovely  
More noos next time.

Love and kisses

Melba



Mrs Vera Morgans  
48A Dudley Court  
Lower Road  
Harrow  
Middlesex  
England



154, Regent Street,  
Observatory  
Jhbg  
5th Jan 1950

My dear sis vear,

I snatch a few moments from my boss's time to write you this letter. I am still eagerly awaiting the full inside story of the dastardly doings at West Mark Camp School. Don't forget you promised to tell me everything, and both you and Olga owe me a really decent full-length letter. Neither of you wrote for months and months, and when people keep asking me about you I just have to say 'My sisters don't write to me.' Now, is that nice? No.

First I must thank you for the kind gift of money - most welcome. With it I (1) Paid that miserable Isacowitz character. (2) Bought Tony a Sewing Set for Christmas from you and Morgan, because she wanted one. (3) Bought myself a very nice present - a Breakfast set of four cups and saucers, four large plates, four small bowls, jug, basin and large platter, all in different bright colours, for 27/6. (4) Let Rusty keep the change (about 2/-)

Tony had a pretty good Christmas - lots of nice presents that she wanted, a little party on Christmas Day which was boiling hot, and a party on Boxing Day at Margaret Millner's. Jill Millner insisted that her uncle should be Father Christmas, because she said that Tony's uncle was Father Christmas. Her uncle was finally persuaded to dress in some red crepe paper and cotton wool, and put on a Father Christmas mask, that so terrified all but the older children that they burst into tears when they saw him. Even Partick, who is rarely unnerved by anything, came running to me madly and hid his face. Tell Morgan there has never been a Father Christmas as successful as he. I made Tony two rag dolls for Christmas - one an enormous one, bigger than Patrick, and a little one exactly the same. She's mad about them. At the moment she's a bit fed up with life - she doesn't know what to do with herself all day, and is longing to go to school, particularly as she is starting 'big school.' Also she fights with Granny most of the time. She is appallingly rude to her, but I must say my sympathies are with Tony, because even I feel I could scream at the constant, never-ending, "just-look-at-him, the sweetest-thing-in-the-world, the cleverest-baby-that-has-ever-been-born, look-at-him, look-what-he's-doing-now" chatter that goes on ceaselessly, night and day. It drives me mad, and makes Tony jealous without realising what's happening to her. And then they start quarrelling over trivial things, that Granny, with the obstinacy of old age, will not let drop. ("Why don't you have an egg, darling?" "I don't feel like an egg." "But they're such nice eggs, just bought them fresh, have an egg." "I said I don't want an egg." "I think she should have an egg" "I TOLD YOU I DON'T WANT AN EGG!!!" "An egg would be good for her, she hasn't had anything, now if she had an egg...." And at this point Tony screams at Granny, or comes complaining to me, or an explosion takes place. Do you blame her?)

And, of course, we also have our arguments. There are constant wars going on, such as the one I call 'The Battle Of The Vests.' It goes like this: I say to Bessie, "Bessie, you mustn't put a vest on him in this weather, it's much too hot." Granny says to Bessie: "Bessie, there's a cold wind this morning" (there's always a cold wind, even when the temperature is 99) - "he must have a vest on." Bessie, being a decent woman, is nice to both of us, and tries to please everyone. Or: "What are you putting a jersey on him for, it's much too hot for a jersey." "Granny said he must have a jersey on before she takes him out." "Well, I say he doesn't need a jersey, Granny always wants to overdress them. It's much too hot." Granny: "Everything I do is wrong for you...." grumble, complain, nag, grumble, repeat everything she has already said.

And so it goes on. So, sis, one way and another, I think it imperative for Granny and me to live apart until the children are a little older. Especially as I do not want to work all day - the baby is too young, and there is too much for me to do in the home - and if I am



at home all day we'll both make each other miserable. The couple of months she was at this house in Yeoville was heavenly for us. The small inconveniences - not being able to go out at night, and not having Tony's buttons sewed on for her - ~~were~~ completely outweighed by the peace, and the sense of privacy and being on our own for the first time for years that Rusty and I had. I felt mean about her working for some stupid old Jewish woman, and wanted her to come back, but loved her being away. Please never mention these things to her - I am only telling them to you - because she would understand them all the wrong way. But I even preferred the little bit of healthy neglect that Patrick might have suffered (running around with wet napkins - it drives her mad! Playing in the mud. Amusing himself while Bessie is busy) - to the constant, unflagging attention she gives him every moment of the day. And the place felt like ours - she sits with us when friends come, makes those irritating contributions to the conversation that everyone listens to politely, tells those dreadful boring stories of what her girls did when they were young, or what Patrick did today, and so on.

Now you will have to put up with it - and I think you are going to find it very difficult. You won't mind at first, but after a while you will want your flat to yourselves. I'm firmly convinced that children shouldn't have to live with aged parents. I was wondering whether something couldn't be arranged after she has returned - some small place of her own, near you and Olga, or near some friends. We could all contribute - of course, we would do that willingly, you know Rusty would want to make a contribution. Or to share a flat with someone like Mrs. Windsor. You might think it would be too lonely for her. But old age is lonely anyway. She must start to build a circle of friends and interests in London, or her life will be empty, even if she is living with you. If we were living in England, I would suggest that she live with each of us for four months of the year - and perhaps we can arrange that in about 4 years time. But for the present, we have decided to go to Kenya, and although no final arrangements have been made, we hope it will come off (it's dependent on passports and similar difficulties that you will be aware of) and in any case we are selling the house - it's being painted at the moment and having its patches cracked, I mean its cracks patched and next week will be up for sale. So if the Kenya thing doesn't come off we'll move into a flat or small house for the time being, and live as cheaply as we can until Rusty can find a job in England or somewhere. At the moment, the cost of living is so high here that all our money just disappears. Tea costs 7/11 alb. Everything has gone up considerably since you were here. We have to find a way of living more cheaply.

No, I don't remember Bill Bonin, and haven't the faintest idea what Olga's husband can be like - neither she nor you have really told me anything. Being much more 'quite quite' than Morgan means nothing, because after all, Rusty is more "quite quite" than Morgan too quite a different class background, comrade. However, I've written to her asking for full details, but you might really tell me what he is like (politics? occupation?)

The two kids are wonderful. I told Rusty I want another, but he says we can't afford it. I had some new pictures taken of Patrick, will send some when ready. He is completely beautiful, bright, naughty, sweet and clever. Tony too, but so grown-up now, with so many outside interests, that she is not comparable in anyway to the small dependent age. The other day I spoke to her sharply about something - I can't remember what - and she went to her room I followed her a little later to make up, and found her busy in her wardrobe. She said "I'm taking some clothes, and I'm going away. I'm taking Andrew's tricycle (he left it for her while he is on holiday) and I'm going to tie the pram to it, and I'm taking my big doll, and my puppets, and some books and some clothes. And I'm not coming back." However, a few kind words, and she decided not to leave us just yet. Following in her Auntie Vera's footsteps, huh? She says she is going to be a ballet dancer when she grows up, but she will only dance for children. However, when she is 20 she intends getting married. Most of the details are settled, including the kind of house, car, etc., but not the man. She reads beautifully now but still has to have her Daddy read to her each night.

class  
background  
again!







154, Regent Street,  
Observatory  
Johannesburg.  
28/3/50

My dere sis vere,

aren't I a peeg, I never write to you much, well, you see, it's like this, I'm terribly busy, I go to work in the mornings and I'm awfully busy there, and I'm writing "commercials", have you ever tried writing "commercials"? You really should try it, they're the little things that say, in a wireless programme, this programme is brought to you by courtesy of the super-suds super-sudding company, and now a word from Mrs. S.S. Suds.....In other words, S. Africa is to have Commercial radio from May 1st - a third programme, which will be entirely sponsored by various firms, and some of the firms that are clients ~~xxx~~ of the advertising agency I work for are taking ~~time~~ on the air, and I, as chief and only copy-writer of the Dower-wahl Advertising Agency, have to write their little commercials. I must say, I don't fancy it.

Anyway, I'm busy at work. Then I'm trying to make extra money by writing things and making things. Vic Clapham, that's the bloke I used to work for at Dower Wahl, left this firm to start a weekly children's newspaper, it's quite good, don't know how successful it's going to be, because it only started a month or so ago, and I've been writing poems, recipes, things to make, all kinds of things for him. If the paper is successful, he will publish a lot of the material separately in children's books, so you may still see a book of children's poems, by your sister. Anyway, Tony likes them, even if it isn't a success.

Then in addition Bessie keeps going home, poor thing, she has so much trouble. Last month or about six weeks ago, her aged father was very ill, then last week she had a letter that her baby is very ill and she must come at once. She was sobbing in the kitchen, not only over her baby, but also over all her troubles - having to support her parents, her children, to keep going home, etc. Then when she went in the evening she came in to say goodbye to Patrick and sobbed all over again because she didn't want to leave him. However, she wrote that the baby is better, so I hope she is going to bring him back with her this time, as her parents are too old to look after him properly. She is such a good, kind person and works so hard. If she has just cleared up a room, and Patrick comes and empties a pail of mud all over the floor, she just laughs at him, never gets cross at all.

But the point is that with Bessie away there is such a lot to do, I even have to look after my own child, bath him, prepare his food, feed him, shocking isn't it? Then winter is beginning to approach, and I haven't made the kids any clothes - or myself - and have tons of knitting to do. Then politically things have been perking up a bit, and we have all been very busy subverting. Had a wonderfully successful conference last week-end to oppose the ban on free speech,

66upla days later.

No nylons are available in Jhbg, mesh or otherwise, since import control banned importation of all stockings some time back. Now I believe they are lifting the ban a bit to let in a few stockings to cover the hairy and varicose-veined legs of the population, but so far, none have come my way, and if they do I will need them badly. Sorry!

Re Williams, don't know their address, I might be able to find out, but Cecil Williams is also overseas - on visit, and promised to contact you or Olga some time, so when he does you can find out where his brother is. They went back to the place they came from, but I can't remember the name - wouldn't the party be able to tell you?

Tony says she will write to you. She is very busy these days. She goes to the school on the corner - quite nice, as S.A. schools go - and she is in grade 2, and she is obviously one of the brightest little girls in her class, because she is always telling me that she was made "teacher" to take a group reading, and she gets all her sums right,



and she never practices her reading but it's always all correct and so on. In addition, she goes to dancing twice a week - she loves it, but I don't think she's much of a dancer; doesn't seem to get the idea of time at all; and has now started piano lessons twice a week with Flo. All this keeps me and her very busy, but it's all her own insistence, not mine. We haven't a piano, but Flo says it doesn't matter so much at this stage, and really what I want her to learn is about music, an understanding and appreciation of it, rather than to be able to 'play.' Still, I would like a piano.

I can't tell you about Patrick, he's just perfect in my eyes, beautiful, clever, funny, sweet, gorgeous - I expect Mama writes to you about him. He's just a little bruiser, who breaks everything and scribbles on our new-painted walls with crayons and pencils, and tears Tony's books and chases Fluffy round the garden yelling "Flutsy!" at him. And pulls all the buds off the flowers. And smashes all the cups and glasses. And cuts teeth with difficulty, waking us several times a night for nights on end. And eats like a horse and demands "Teeties" all day long. And talks all the time without stopping, and follows Tony around day and night. I'm trying to persuade Rusty to have another, but he simply refuses because he says we can't afford it. I'd better come to England and have it on the National Health Scheme, but then I will have to wash nappies myself.

No more noosx yet about any of our plans. Still waiting for things to happen. Write to me and I'll write to you.

Love and kisses  
Hilda.

Didn't know Ruth was writing for the "orker. She's expecting a baby in a month or so. Ever see Patsy and Vella?

*Can't find the book tokens.*

*Huddleston is always asking  
after you & Morgan*



154, Regent St  
Observatory  
Jhbq.  
20/4/50

My dere sis vere,

reely and trooly, you are most kind and thoughtful, I thought nobody remembere birthdays any more, now I feel guilty I didn't send you something rare and beautiful, thanks so much for the money, I have it here at this moment (in cash) it hasn't been spent yet. I haven't decided what to do with it - I don't want to get just anything I need, but something really nice such as something I don't really need at all. I haven't got Tony's present yet - don't know what to get her, to tell you the truth. She says she wants a watch, but she can't tell the time properly yet - only some of the time, if you know what I mean. Well, we'll see.

She is going to have quite a grown-up party this year - film show, I'm trying to arrange at the house.

Well, no noos. Rusty~~x~~ has been refused a passport, so we wouldn't be able to go to Kenya anyway, even if we wanted to, which we don't. However, I am not much worried about it, because I think we will be able to go to you in due course of time. Politically, things are getting very lively here. We had a big Convention last month in Defense of Free Speech - very successful - came from all over the Transvaal, C.P., African National Congress, Indian Congress, Churches, Chiefs, Youth organisations, Sports Clubs, women's orgs, Trade Unions and so on. They decided that May 1st is to be Freedom Day - holiday to demonstrate for freedom. Everybody works on May 1st in this country. They've started organising for it, we are all very busy, I sometimes think that one day a great Soviet Sculptor must make a Great Soviet Sculpture of the Communist martyrs, - a sort of furtive figure, licking a small slip of paper and peering around before sticking it onto a wall, a lump of chalk in one hand. Wadjothink? This Govt is just getting too awful for words, the things they do are quite unprintable, you could read all ab out it in the Guardian if I could only remember to arrange to send you copies. I will, honesty I will.

Thanks so much for the papier mache plate - no joking - that is EXACTLY the sort of thing I want. I have to make the darn thing myself first, before sending it on, so's they can photograph the finished object, and also to see that I give the instructions all right, but that is probably worth about £1.1.0 to me, so will you send some more things to make? As many, as varied as you like. They don't pay very well, but I have a poem and a recipe each week, and something additional now and then, so it is something! I'm putting all the money from this into a special savings account - what for, I don't know, except that if I don't it just gets spent and forgotten, and nothing to show for it. By ordinary mail I'm sending you copies of some of the perms, as Tony still sometimes calls them, and also the Book Tokens, slightly soiled, that we found when we cleared her room out. If you really have any good stories, rhyming plays, etc., send 'em in, Send 'em in, I'm prepared to act as your agent, for a small commission on all items placed. ~~Thxxx~~

Thanks for the advert about the poor horses. You forgot to enclose it, but I don't doubt it was awfully funny.

Haven't read the Singing Grass, though I would like to read it. I met the author once, in Rhodesia, 1942 or thereabouts. She was a Com - and had quite a life herself, if I'm not confusing her, which I'm sure I'm not. Had three young children, left her husband, married this fellow Lessing, was not allowed to see her children (the reviewers described her book as about a sort of South African Madam Bovary - maybe she just put her own life into it in some way or other). When I met her, she had not long left her husband, and she was a young, extremely goodlooking and attractive girl. Life, what? I have, however, read The Diplomat, and if you haven't read it, it's what they say A MUST. (\* \* \* Three stars.)



It is a most fascinating book. I enjoyed it so much, I could hardly wait every evening to get into bed and read it. So if you can't get it, borrow it or something. I can guarantee you'll enjoy it. Also, on your recommendation I bought the Great Gatsby, but haven't got down to reading it yet. I started reading an old book by Elmer Rice 'Imperial City' but gave up half way. I'm now reading Brighton Rock, for light entertainment. Don't get much time for reading. Rusty reads about a book a day, however. We also have Fred Troup's book about Michael Scott "In the Face of Fear" (bit pretentious, no?) and Rusty says its quite good. Anyway, Rusty and I both saw the original document from which ~~xx~~ it was prepared, and how anyone could make a clear account from it, I don't know. It was Scott's own document - and a most confused, muddled, jumbled and interesting piece of work. Like Scott himself. If you see Sis Olg, you can mention the book to her, because Freda Troup is Freda Leveson, wife of Leon Leveson, to whose house I took ~~xx~~ her once. She didn't think much of Freda, as I remember.

As for films, we still go about once every two weeks or so, and still come away wondering why we go. Such tripe! You can't believe it possible! We saw a beaut the other week. It was called Alias Nick Beal, and it was all about the devil in human form, Ray Milland was the devil, and he came through doors, materialised in rooms, etc., and tempted and led astray a decent, honest advocate-general who was running for governorship. However, he was routed in the end - do you know how? By THE BOOK (you know which book, of course) and the rage and fury on his face was most impressive. But he SHRANK at the sight of THE BOOK. Oh boy, that was a good film, Morgan should have seen it.

Well, Ma is back with us. As long as we avoid the subject of children, we get on alright. She hasn't been back long enough to have grated me to death, and of course, Patrick just loves it. She shows him books, plays with him, fusses over him, kisses him. Well, he is rather cute, I must say, and such a funny little bloke. Talks a lot too, says all sorts of sentences like: Look what I done!" and "Where's Tony gone now?" And "Mummy! I want dis BOOP." He has scribbled in all Tony's boops, and ~~xon~~ all the walls, and he breaks everything he touches, and he touches everything. He nags all day "I want to go in the car." or "I want a sweetie." He now calls Fluffy Flutty. Flutty is a bit scared of him still, although he makes a fuss of him. Flutty had all his hair cut and just doesn't look flutty any more. Everyone thinks we bought a new dog, but his hair was all matted and he had fleas, and now he is cleaner. Flutty has a little girl-friend, a dog called Judy from next door. I'm hoping that when Judy comes of age (she is a little young at the moment) that she will cure him of his homo-sexual habits. ~~Q~~ Actually I could murder both of them. I've e hardly anything left growing in the front garden because of them.

Rusty's big job is still threatening to come off. If it does, I'll tell you all about it. Meanwhile that's all - I've got to write some 'commercials.' Will send a photo of Tony when I have one. Lots of love, Thanks again for the present.



Tony, in school uniform



Tony in home uniform

Child.  
Do you want a parcel?  
If so, what?



was referring to thank you for sending the letters from the  
law <sup>is</sup> high, very satisfactory, tho' I don't think the animal prints  
showed enthusiasm you, they are not sentimental. How steep are  
the steps now? When we were at Toni's we went to a waterfall  
which I have ~~to~~ always viewed from the top. This time the  
National Trust had made steps so I went to the bottom & up  
again, much steeper than anything in Via dei Vestini, & now  
I am seized up with a strain in my leg that should be  
elastic but isn't & am relying on the orthopedic to put  
me right at £5.50 a go (it was worse after the first  
session) so I might as well have come to Aprile. And  
the view of the fall wasn't as good from the bottom!

You must now be having good weather at last, & the  
swallows will be whirling & skimming, not sitting  
dejected on the TV aerials. Remember me to the lady  
who lives opposite, & the one who sweeps the square.  
If I were more adventurous (& Roman less dyspeptic) we'd  
use our old ape train passes to travel  $\frac{1}{2}$  fare to the  
French border (can't use them in Italy) & have bed & breakfast  
in Ventimiglia, which we both liked, pay you a surprise  
visit, & make excursions from there. I had planned to  
do that but cold feet & stiff leg say no. We had a lovely  
10 days at Toni's beautiful house, the swallows fly  
there too, & of course I'm going to Verona with Olga  
at the end of July. We hope to go to stay again before  
then, the roses are out & other flowers blooming.

Two days ago I went to a meeting designed to start  
an Anti-Apartheid group in Hertfordshire & was picked up  
by Ben & Dany Tunak & taken to Beverly Nardoo's  
house. ~~At~~ the meeting started I fell into deep gloom, it is  
so long since I have been to that type of meeting - however  
something positive has come from it I think, someone called  
Phil spoke & suggested various activities, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> I can no longer  
stand outside Barclay's bank giving out leaflets, I might  
find someone who will. I am saving a very interesting

By air mail Air letter  
Par avion Aerogramme



COLLECT  
BRITISH  
STAMPS



Mrs H. Bernstein,  
Via dei Martiri no 121  
APRICALI (IM)  
ITALY

Sender's name and address



MORELANDS

93 COWPER RD.

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

HERTS

Postcode HP1 1PF

U. K.

An air letter should not contain any enclosure

article by Noam Chomsky (from the Guardian) Perhaps I'll write  
you a real letter & enclose it. Have you plenty to read? I've  
just read A Handful of Tears by Brenda Kidman & have a  
book of short stories, Human of the Third World.

He had two days of sun & warmth & I took off the duvet  
& put on one blanket & put away my winter clothes & alas!  
& it'll be putted to duvet back, & warm knicker affair. I  
hope you're having a lovely time & got the last thing  
fixed in the house. Love Vera.

I forgot to tell you there was a programme on SA in Panorama, I thought of  
and - was that the one they asked you about? Louise Tansella was in it she was lovely. Also the

Bill Healey programme, for a million  
I hope I remember to tell you about it



Dere Hilda,

93 Cooper Rd June 25<sup>th</sup> 1981

Your card dated 19<sup>th</sup> came this morning - is this a record? Yes I have regretted not being in Amicale - I am confined to home lying prone most of the time having trapped a sciatic nerve & misplaced my pelvis or so the osteopath says & who am I to contradict? It is much less painful than it was & I should be using my time doing all the cerebral things like thinking & writing, instead I re read popular favourites (Pride & Prejudice, real Tolkien LOTR stuff) watch TV, listen to the radio, devour the papers, do X words & am lighthearted & brave pain & bearing to calling friends. I have written, in my head, a toughy query to leading Marxists - How is it possible, when all infernal ones know that capitalism leads to war, is the cause of war, that China & USSR who have overthrown capitalism & have some form of socialist organisation have actually fought, & are gearing up for something bigger? It's no good saying it's all China's fault, it may be but that's beside the point - neither of them are capitalist, have multi-national warriors for markets. Socialist competition can lead to war? Don't work with all competition - competitive exams included.

Then last night we saw a programme about Switzerland - the terrific wealth pouring in &





everything. I'd like to hear your comments. I've also got a book of short stories "Women of the Third World" some are horrific reading - how much ignorance to be countenanced, still it has been done in some places, China for example.

~~Strangely~~ Mary Bird, who we knew as an infant (Dickie Bird's youngest daughter) a member of the B. B. C. Symphony Orchestra has just returned from a far Eastern tour with the S. O. - she said Tokyo has tinsels everywhere - in the crowded streets, in the lifts, you couldn't escape the crowds of polluted air assaulting nose & ears, sounds dreadful - China was such a contrast, full of lakes. Did you know Olga is going to China? When do you go on your African tour? Fileen Wainwright has asked me to get a fish stall sticker for a friend of hers. She thought it would be cheaper than buying it thro' the R. A. I said I'd ask.

Jill Tweedie in today's Guardian writes about a book "Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship between women from the Renaissance to the Present" Her ferial thoughts, she says, was Heaven preserve me from it, but on reading it found it fascinating. I know I dearly loved my school friends Sadie Barnett & Jean Wood & Mary Turner & <sup>some of my adult friends</sup> without any thought of sex - we went away together, stayed in each others houses, slept in the same bed - how are such innocuous friendships possible? Margaret & Alan Jones too shared beds till they were married. Excuse me rambling on, I need someone to talk to & bore stuff. Give my love to Apricale, Ventunghia & the mountains. Love Vera



Do you remember a terrible bore on TV & Radio called a Telethon? Glenda applied to Capital Radio for some of the money raised for her Kay Bus & they've granted her £500 - she's going to get a car built on. She's pleased with herself - a booster after the bus was vandalised recently - due to cuts there is now no night watchman on the estate where it was parked. She has now found a garage space for it.

What about France? Hooray!

When I said Pride & Prejudice was Berberie Cambard stuff I meant the plot: the character drawing is wit makes it readable & re-readable, have you read it?

Who's the worst? Begin



93, Cowper Road,  
Hemel Hempstead  
Herts ~~HP1 1~~  
forget it

4. 2. 83

Deve Sis Hild,

I've just sent pictures of Sean  
off to Frances <sup>or John</sup> & here are two for  
you, one because the colours on  
your blouse blend in so well with  
our rug & carpet & the other because  
your picture of ostriches has come  
out so clearly. I've been meaning  
to bring them up, along with the  
books about Rembrandt but we haven't  
moved out of Hemel for weeks -  
perhaps next week? Hongan just  
isn't well, no energy, it depresses



the quality of life along with all the  
Other depressants like Reagan & Tebbit  
& Bush & the Pope and Nigeria/Ghana  
and not being able to lose the  $\frac{1}{2}$  stone  
put on at Christmas despite being  
careful & not eating all the nice  
things I really like.

However we have been viewing  
the wild snowdrops since the last week  
of Jan, & many sightings of deer & I  
now listen much more to music - I get  
records & cassettes from the library.

Are you interested in the African  
holidays in the enclosed programme?

I'll have it back - don't throw it  
away, it is the stuff of dreams. You'd  
be among ancient dons I suppose &  
their wives, but it was a bright  
young girl who suggested sending me  
the programme, she was a headfinder

Love, your long sister Vere  
Flowers in Crete.



16. 10. 89

MORGANS  
93 COWPER RD  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD  
HERTS.  
HP1 1PF

Dear Hilda,

I am bursting to talk to you, I can't believe my eyes at the TV pictures of Walter Sisulu & the others, and the rejoicing and the flags and the singing & dancing. I thought they would be isolated, each in some remote homeland - do you think de Clerk & Co thought there would be riots that they could crack down on? There have been TV programmes with Buthelezi as the spokesman for so many hundred thousand Julius, I can't believe they're not cooking something up. It can't be true, that's what I tell myself, remembering our premature optimistic joy when the Portuguese



colonists got out of Africa; & the  
misery that S Africa has perpetrated.

Today is a lovely bright Autumn day,  
the leaves on the trees, the washing  
drying well, the Conservatives in a  
spin and I feel cheerful enough to  
write to you; after periods of miserable  
introspection.

We were at Olga's a  
couple of weeks ago, Julie Jones was  
advising her on how to present her  
sketches of Russian life during the war,  
for a BC radio - & I was reading  
some of the incidents for the first  
time. So many years of accusing  
people of lying, of rejecting friendships  
because I called everyone who said  
anything against the SU & fascists,  
Noman says we were ~~attached to~~ <sup>attached to</sup>  
a religion, just like the fundamentalists



How is your research going? the interviews  
I mean. Louie tells me you are  
coping well with the conditions. Sorry  
to hear that Robby had malaria,  
hope it doesn't recur.

Do you still want information about  
your local flora & fauna? I hope to  
go to London next week & will try the  
National History Museum, our local one  
in Trip can't get information. We  
haven't been into town for months, not  
even to see Glenda because the tube  
escalators have been so frighteningly  
out of order & you don't know before  
hand that you've got to walk up  
or down those awful iron spiral  
staircases. Thatcher's Britain is  
horrible, - at least London is, filthy,  
polluted. It's still O.K. in Henford -  
we saw a short programme about it  
on TV with the lovely old bridge & the  
riverside walks & the old street with



the crafts shop that used to sell Peter Harton pots, still unspoilt & beautiful. And Admidge with the magnificent beeches & chestnuts can't be spoilt.

This summer has been so marvellous our Woolworth's grape vine is covered with bunches of small black grapes - not very sweet, & pippy with toughish skins, not as good as the Teoville ones but not to be sneered at.

Will you go back again? It is a possibility isn't it?

I'm reading a book called *Literary Daughters*, by Maggie Lane. (Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, George Eliot, Beatrix Potter, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Browning) - wonder how they were influenced, repressed by their fathers. Maggie Lane says that Mrs Gaskell, who was so capable & well-balanced



was brought up by maiden aunts  
 & her ability to write, do social work  
 support her obnoxious husband & be  
 a splendid mother to her 4 (?) daughters  
 was because she had no hang ups  
 about her father. Could that be  
 one reason for what you've been able  
 to do? There must be something else  
 as well!

Loni says you are definitely  
 returning at the end of the year,  
 but would you like me to send  
 you any reading matter before  
 then? For a Christmas present I mean.

Peggy Baeteng has a bring & buy  
 sale for Nazimbu; we all have to  
 bring a toy for the young children  
 & then things to ~~sell~~ for the school.  
 Hemel sends quite a few things out.  
 I've potted lots of house plants for the  
 sale, & have the opposite of green



fingers, but a few have taken.

The last time we saw Harrison was at Olga's - she had a little surprise party for our Golden wedding - 50 years it seems impossible that we still have things to talk about. Melissa was there as well. ~~Remember~~ Both babies are beautiful of course - we'll be seeing ours again next week, Ganda's  $\frac{1}{2}$  term, I bought a 2nd hand cot for such visits. He is a very active baby & we've had to clear the fossils off the lower shelves as he crawls at 60 mph, his arms & leg going like pistons, & grabs anything within reach to haul himself up. I can't remember what I last wrote - about our summer visit from USA? Nothing exciting, only S African news - & does the stock market affect you?  
lots of love  
Vera.



3rd November 1989

SOMAFCO

Dear Vera,

I was just about to write to you when your letter of the 16th October arrived - that's how long it takes, so I had decided I would write to wish you many happy returns of the 25th, reckoning it would just about reach you in time. And also enquiring as to what had happened to my two sisters, from whom I had no word.

It's been very frustrating for us here, listening to the BBC World Service and their repetitive and measured news, getting a taste of everyone else's excitement, and seeing nothing. We'll probably get some news videos, but they take weeks to arrive, when the news has passed on to other things. However, we did get a whiff of what it was like even from the BBC, with the ANC flags, the young volunteers, the slogan shouting and songs, and the general euphoria. We had TWO phone calls the other day - one from Frances and one from Keith, 'just for a chat' Frances said, and Toni sent a telex to alert us that they were phoning (we don't have a phone in our house) so we would be at the office waiting, and to let us know it was not any disastrous news. They go to great lengths to stop us worrying, but the truth of the matter is that we don't worry about them, only like to hear from them. Keith said he even wept as he watched Walter's homecoming, and thought it was from sheer happiness, and also possibly the thought that 'Dad might have been one of them'. We had a march in Morogoro with the Tanzanians to their stadium and lots of awful boring speeches interpreted line by line into Kiswahili and broing children's choirs, all in the burning sun. Well, it was a gesture. The Tanzanians certainly take the anti-ap. struggle to their hearts.

What is so interesting is that having started a process that they - I'm convinced - thought they would control, and could back-track on at any stage, they don't realise that these things gather their own momentum; that you can't move back to square one. I'm glad at least we've been spared interviews with Buthelezi - Maggie's black hope for SA - when I read some of his latest attacks on individuals, it sounds as though he has gone completely round the bend.

Do you remember the Easts? Evelyn died very suddenly just before we came here, and now Wilf is coming to visit us on the way to see his daughters, Marion is studying hyenas in Serengeti and Janet is on the trail of the tse-tse fly in Zambia.

Rusty is not getting much further with his project due to conditions beyond his control, but I have been doing a lot of interviewing of people as a start to collecting information for my book. Some of them are fascinating. One young woman here, in her 30's, is a medical assistant and plans to become a doctor. She had her first baby when she was 14, and by the time she was 18 she had four children. After the fifth she began to move away from her husband, and ended up here at Mazimbu, was trained in the GDR, as many of the people here have been. A youngish man I interviewed began by saying 'I was a policeman' and then went on to tell how he gradually changed.

There are a number of German teachers - I mean they teach different subjects, but they are Germans, from the GDR, here, and we have become friendly with them. They are really terrific people. One of them is a herpetologist - he has a houseful of snakes, frogs and chameleons, and is a mad enthusiast. I really admire them, and also the GDR for the massive help it is giving to African



countries, it is really generous and unpublicised. At the same time as I believe most wholeheartedly in perestroika, and the need for it in the rigid GDR, and sympathise with those demonstrating for 'reform' (although Rusty says what reform do they want? What's their programme?) at the same time I can't help feeling that most of those tens of thousands 'fleeing' to the West are simply fleeing towards the riches of the consumer society, that they care less about real freedom, more about freedom to make money, have fast cars, all the electronic devices. I can see, though, that the German character itself makes the proposition of relaxing the rules difficult. Germans are really Germanic. However, we had a nice meal with them one evening - they get additional supplies through their embassy, so it was a change from the usual Mazimbu diet. We get ~~max~~ monthly supplies of basic stuff - flour, rice, mealie-meal, sugar, soap, toothpaste, tea (awful Tanzanian stuff) and such things; and then weekly deliveries of things like tomatoes, potatoes, onions, occasionally but not often enough some fruit, and erratic supplies of meat or fish. The meat is ghastly grisly unidentified lumps that in SA they used to call boy's meat, although I think most 'boys' would have changed jobs rather than eat this stuff. WE go into Morogoro when we can get transport, there is a lively market there, crammed with all sorts of things, and we buy fruit, mainly pineapples which are delicious and not expensive, paw-paws, oranges; other things when the season starts - none of that all-the-year round shopping at Waitrose or M & S.

Yes, I agree with Morgan, although I wouldn't use the term 'fundamentalists', I thought more of the comparison with the Catholics. It was a religion, and you have to believe in the whole creed, because if you start questioning one thing then doubts begin to creep in about it's infallibility and you start to question basic tenets. Like Catholics who want to use birth control - but if the Pope's wrong about that, isn't he wrong about other things? So you suppress the doubts and believe in the leaders who know best. And the end result is Stalin and Mao.

I wish Olga would get on with her writing, it's ten hundred times more valuable and worthwhile than selling more dental equipment, and this is exactly the right time to get it published. I believe she would get it published in the USSR today. I kept telling her, she has a unique story, comparable to 'The Past is Myself' in that she, as a witness, was part of that society in that period, but saw it as an outsider. I also thought her spare, rather brief way of writing has a definite appeal, it's really good. I don't make any claims to exclusivity in this family as a writer.

Frances is dotty about her Kieran, who when I saw him was gorgeous, and is one of those marvellous babies who eat everything, sleep well, are happy all the time. She has started working part-time job-sharing, but she and John will have financial difficulties soon as John wants to stand for the Council and would have to resign his job if elected. Well, all my children can't be rich. Keith is doing very well at the Telegraph, he was off to Indian for 3 weeks to photo the elections; and Patrick is trying to build up his own business.

People here are talking about 'going home', and someone asked me the other day if I intended 'going back.' For the first time it seemed a possibility, but on thinking it over I'd rather stay in Europe. Rusty says he doesn't want to return unless he has a role to play, just to go as one of the old politicals in retirement doesn't suit him. As for me, I really feel I've had more than enough of active politics, haven't the least desire to participate



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