

A Letter from Africa April 27 2013

It is one of those lovely warm days with temps around 29°C, allowing for a great evening braai with camp fire, wine, lager and conversation, on a wind free night in Port Elizabeth. A full moon glowed big in a clear sky.

Earlier in the day I was trying not to lose golf balls on the small course near Sardinia Bay.

In truth the weather has not decided if we are in summer or autumn and big variations have occurred over the last 2 weeks or so.

But I did say last time that I would seek out good news and so the picture I paint is just an example.

In fact I have even gone into sites like Good News SA to find positive features about SA. More about this as we go along.

But first let us talk about **a tree**. *A tree !.Are you sure?* Yes, just one for now. I attach a shot from our patio of a distant tree.



But look closer.

Let me try and help with a zoom lens.

Do you see him near the top branches?
But that is so dangerous.
I know.



He was part of the team who were cutting down the tree. But this guy climbed up with a power saw and after about two working days (windy days were missed out) the following view resulted.

Riveting stuff to start you off!?

A bit of the **good side of SA**. Those who live here, or have visited SA, already know about the great countryside, friendly people and good weather. Hard working entrepreneurs can also make a good life for themselves in this growing and emerging economy. But what else can I tell you?

Well here are some bits -our tap water is safe to drink. More people over the years have been connected to services e.g. access to clean water -6 million,

connected to electricity- 5 million, with the first tier of usage for both being free to the poor. Of course we have a great constitution and a free judiciary in a democracy. The ANC has built some 2.5 million houses since 1994. In addition to the provision of some free water and electricity 15 million poor now receive social grants. *Is that good news?* Shut up. More good news later.

In the mean time we all get a **little bit older** and this family is no exception. Since the last letter I have reached one of those milestones and we took advantage of the date to do one or two things.

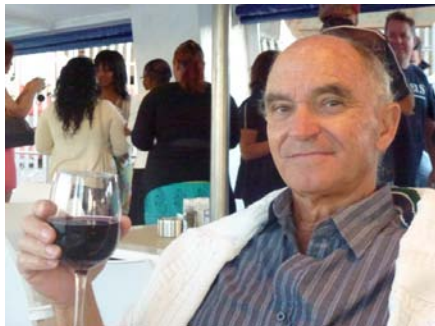
First a bit of intellectual exercise in the form of The National Science Festival in Grahamstown. We were not able to attend any of the lectures but spent much time amongst the exhibits and then into the Albany Museum for other science related activities.

We are seen here learning about the theory behind the use of pulleys. Andrea takes the shot.



Of course we managed a good breakfast to start the day and then a fine lunch with the essential wine and lagers (Andrea was driving).

Melanie and family then kindly weighed in and they booked the two of us on the evening braai trip of Jester's catamaran. This sailed around the harbour and a full house of people enjoyed a lovely calm evening with drinks and dinner.



I will continue to raise the issue of **Rhino poaching** in SA. We have already exceeded 250 so far this year. Most (80%) come from the Kruger National Park where the open eastern side allows gangs to come through the bush and exit via Mozambique where the owning of rhino horns is not illegal! There is a growing desire in SA to stop the poaching but it appears an almost hopeless task especially with a resurgence of terrorist activity in some areas of Mozambique. My view remains that of legalising the sale of rhino horns when

proper and controlled “farming” can change the future of rhino survival. Please tell me why this option is not viable.

So we move on to **hats**. *First a tree and now hats!!* I know, it is not the sort of stuff that will win prizes but it does have relevance.

As ever I have a picture to cheer you up. Nothing quite like a view of hats to excite one??



Ok, so we have some hats. I am sure you are going to tell us something about them so get on with it before I fall asleep.

Thank you. Well they all relate to companies that I have worked for. In 1972 Coates Inks in the UK sent me off to South Africa and during the drinks in the local pub, the middle hat was presented to me. The tatty blue one on the left was from my stay with Hoechst in the `80`s and the 3 lion cap was given to me in 2005 at the (first) farewell of my time with Hallmark in Bradford.

They all have meaning and bring back memories of the people I worked with and the times spent together. Some of these people are recipients of this letter. But please note the Hoechst hat is used when gardening and the 3 lions are one of the hats used when going out casually, the camouflage hat rests on the hallstand and is sometimes taken into the bush.

More good news.

Our life expectancy is now 60, up from 56.5 in 2009, due mainly to the treatment of HIV with ARV`s. Deaths from AIDS is down from around 400000 pa to 280000. Pregnant women who have HIV are down to 29.5% from 30.2% in 2010.

The ANC issued some 300 million condoms but fell short of the years objective of 1 billion, due a global shortage of latex. *Are you sure that is correct?* Well that is what they say.

The Iron Man and Iron Kids.

We have 2 big events in PE around Easter. One is the Splash Festival when lots of beach and water sports are organised as well as various musical and comedy performers plus the stages to house them. Stalls are set up for all sorts of fast foods and other items for sale. It attracts around 450000 to the beachfront with a big fireworks display to finish it off.

This is organised by the Municipality.

Our dear Municipality handed out the tender request about 2 days before the Splash Festival start date even though they had 12 months to organise it!!

It rained over Easter to add more misery to the festival and ensured a total failure. I will say no more as it will damage the Good News feeling of this letter.

The other is the annual Iron Man event that forms part of the global competition.

This is run by a private company but with lots of sponsors.

Courtney took part in the Iron Kids race that included a 100 metre swim plus a 2 km run.

As with the FIFA World Cup, once private enterprise is involved you are likely to see a success and so it was.

Great weather and a huge crowd to watch and take part (over 1000 Iron Kids entries) saw an international field only full of praise for this lovely and well run stage of the Iron Man.

Courtney holds a photo/certificate of herself plus 3 other friends who also took part.



We had a visit from Lindsay at around this time. She and her dog Comet (one of many) came down from Jhb. for the dog show. This was a competition about obedience and agility as a stiff course of various obstacles had to be correctly navigated. Lindsay and one of her pupils did so well (and the dogs).

More Good News.

Wine is cheap. We are part of BRICs (however tiny). We have a positive GDP estimated to be close to 3% for the next year. We are also just hanging on to the World's greatest icon at this time, namely, Nelson Mandela. People receiving ARV's have grown from zero to about 1.75 million people.

I have to add that the Good News has been searched for and deliberately represents one sided reporting that I hope you will allow me on this one occasion.

There is no room for updates on Mamphela Ramphele, or the Toll road saga. The infighting within the ANC and COSATU and the 2014 Elections are not talked about this time.

I make no mention of the Talana killing by the police or the Marikana enquiry into the massacre of more than 40 miners by the police. I have not covered the SANDF deaths in the CAR that saw hundreds die (24 of ours and perhaps 600 of CAR rebels).

We do have a Super 15 rugby team called the Southern Kings but you will have to wait for details. This is, after all, good news day.

So you will just have to read the next letter.

So with love from Bev and from me, goodbye.

And of course Keep Calm.