A Letter from Africa December 16 2013

A great man has died and as an advert said, "may he rest in the peace he gave us". We all know what Nelson Mandela did for SA and the message he gave to the world. There is nothing that I can add.

About 400 million years ago the Langeberge mountains around **Montagu** were being formed.



The rivers flowed through the valleys of twisted layers of sandstone rock but in the end it was Thomas Bain who once more constructed a pass that would provide an entrance to the Little Karoo.

The Cogmanskloof Pass was built around 1875/77 and the Anglo/Boer War reached out even as south

as this. As a result the British built a small "fort",

more like a roofless blockhouse, over the top of this tunnel in 1899. Made from the same stone, it was wonderfully camouflaged yet provided a tremendous vantage point from which to defend the pass.

I am in the "fort" and Bev takes in the view after the climb.



We were staying in the Mountain Chalets at Avalon Springs, in Montagu. Their claim to fame is the natural hot water that wells up from some 3kms underground, yet arrives at the surface at 43oC.

Our hillside venue came complete with a private Jacuzzi that was a great spot in the early evening, fed as it was with the natural hot waters.



We had a few braais from the commanding patio that looked out over the vineyards and surrounding hills.

From this base we were able to visit Ashton,

Robertson and Macgregor, all delightful Victorian era places connected to grapes, fruit



and wines in this scenic part of the Western Cape. Helen and Brian decided to pay us a 2 night visit when

Helen and Bev took advantage of the Spa treatment on offer at Avalon and we all took in the fine wines that they had brought up from Cape Town.

So, no Ride-a-cup golf this year but at least 2 Camdenians raising a glass or three (we are glad you do not wear Speedo's).

I will return to our travels but perhaps now some **Politics** (please make it brief).

As you know we have the general elections in 2014 and new parties are being formed to try and wrestle away votes from the ANC.

We have talked about the intellectual offering of Mamphela Ramphela and the mass appeal of Julius Malema and his EFF lot. The latter's approach to land redistribution without compensation and the potential nationalisation of things like banks etc. will, no doubt, garner more votes than the deeper yet honest messages of Ramphela's Agang party.

Add to this the PA. No not the DA of Zille but a new group. It is ironic that we already have a party called "A gang" as the Patriotic Alliance is formed by ex convicts of the bank robber and fraudster kind.

They will target Cape Town where PAGAD is strong and where PA`s Rashid Staggie (out for a little while whilst serving a 15 year sentence) may have support *(this has to be a joke)*. Of course, Julius Malema`s court case is now to be heard next year and if found guilty with a custodial sentence then someone else would have to lead the EFF.

Then, of course, we have the ANC itself. Rocked by controversy after controversy this party still retains by-elections and is expected to win the popular vote next year with around 50%/60%.

The DA, whilst clearly a more competent group that runs the WC and other seats, is still seen as a "white" party. This is despite the leader of the house and the Jhb candidate being black.

Ramaphosa's choice of the word "boer" in a speech was not a casual one, as the ANC would like voters to ludicrously believe that the DA would bring back Apartheid.

Some **sport** news.

Port Elizabeth played hosts to a round of the World Rugby Sevens. This happened a week or so ago over a sunny yet not too hot week end. We went along on the Sunday and saw England, New Zealand and SA play amongst many others e.g. Canada, Australia, USA etc. England was poor and NZ looked a bit jaded. SA on the other hand was up for the fight and it was no surprise to see them win this leg of the competition.

We have a pic of Courtney and me taken by Andrea, in the lovely PE stadium that just begins to fill up.

If you look closely you will see who I was supporting.



I am not taken by the sevens game but it was a good fun day out despite the poorly run and high priced fast food outlets.

On TV, I have watched England being destroyed by the Australian test side and have seen my own soccer team, Arsenal, receive 6 of the best from Man City.

Harry made it on skis to the South Pole even though Fiennes could not (Is that sport?).



On November 22 we celebrated our wedding anniversary whilst returning to PE from Montagu via a week end stopover in **Plettenberg Bay**.

Despite school exams, Andrea and Courtney drove down to join

us at the River Club Resort.

A lovely dinner was shared by all at the iconic Beacon Isle Hotel as we looked out over the sea and a setting sun.

A picture of us all has

the Hotel in the background as we walked along the beach and climbed over the rocks (so is that a "selfie"?).



Andrea and Courtney did a tiring hike in the Robberg Nature Reserve and some tennis, swimming, beach walks and braais filled in the other time.

I must return to the **funeral process**. I have to admit that I had "funeral fatigue" after a few days. I did not watch it all but the memorable points for me were:

- The national and global outpouring of support and love for Nelson Mandela.
- The crowd booing Zuma at the FNB stadium whilst cheering De Klerk and others.
- Obama and Banda's speeches.
- The "interpreter".

It was the wrong time to boo but Zuma deserved it and perhaps he was lucky to just get away with boos. It was possibly organised by the Gauteng ANC, who are not great fans of Zuma, but they reflected the feeling of millions of South Africans.

The interpreter represented a microcosm of how this ANC Government manages matters. It now appears as if some high ranking ANC Govt members used their own company to provide services. In this case a person who suffers from Schizophrenia and has a long record of police investigation. On top of this, of course, was the fact that he could not do his job which had been highlighted to the ANC as far back as 2012.

The leader of Malawi gave a fine speech, from the heart that spelt out the clear yet subtle message that it was now the task of Zuma and his pals to change their ways and steer SA along the path that Nelson Mandela and others had already started to build. As she said "a leader should love the people and be loved by them".

But it is December and Xmas, and no Letter from Africa would be complete without wishing everyone a great festive time in which to recall good times amongst those you hold dear. Stay fit and healthy and raise a glass to us as we do to you all.

So once more it is good bye from me and farewell from Bev as we wish you joy and happiness in 2014.

Love Alan and Bev

