

# **SO I'VE DONE MY THREE IN THE BSAP**

**GORDON 'JOHNNY' JOHNSTON**

## INTRODUCTION

Ever since I was old enough to hold a pencil I have been a writer. While I don't really feel I was driven to seek any riches or kudos from writing; indeed my early 'success', while they were on occasion forthcoming, were rather limited to stories that were published in school journals and the like and quite forgettable. In 1962 I began two correspondence courses in journalism, believing I possibly had a future career in that field. My tutors were encouraging but I soon realised I lacked the courage to seriously pursue a fulltime career in that field. In 1964 Africa called. For years I'd avidly read of the explorers exploits in the Dark Continent and indeed once I reached South Africa I believed I knew as much of that country's history as its average citizen did. I worked in the same field I had in NZ; that of a laboratory technician at a Free State town, Sasolburg, without any ideas or prospects of a lifetime career at that occupation. My decision to apply to join the British South Africa Police in Rhodesia didn't come after any personal soul searching or research on that organisation. I saw an advert. in a popular South African monthly magazine that asked for men interested in adventure and a life in 'One of the finest Police forces in the world' and thought 'Why not'. Within two days I'd despatched a letter to the Police Recruiting Officer at Causeway, Salisbury and about six weeks later found myself boarding a plane at Jan Smuts airport (Johannesburg) for Salisbury.

Three years and eight months later I passed through Joburg again en-route to Durban and a passage on a ship back to NZ.

When I decided to write of my exploits as such as a young policeman in Rhodesia it was in the context of the story of my life which, given it was rather adventurous and exciting at times, I thought may be of interest to my grandkids and possibly siblings. I certainly had no plans to seek a wider field of readers. For one thing I found it hard to shake off the idea that it was rather pretentious of me to think that my three years and eight months service in the BSAP would be of interest to others who'd served in the force or had lived in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe during the period of my service (June 65 to Jan. 69). And then again I realised that ones memory could become rather flawed in the rather lengthy interval between the 60s and the present time. However, I more than memory to fall back on. The letters to my parents, many rather lengthy and detailing my adventures had all been saved. I had police note-books that I'd brought home to provide information and recollection. And finally I had spent a number of years recording, generally on scraps of paper, incidents and events that had occurred during my period of service as they came to mind. This is no guarantee that 'my story' is correct in every detail. I'm well aware that former serving members may have a different take or slant on events that I was involved with. However, I haven't consciously 'gilded the lily'. Readers...if any...will soon realise that I've included my foibles and 'stuff-ups' as well as any deeds of any merit. And I've been careful not to be particularly critical of any former serving members; far be it from me to judge others I served with. While I have included the actual names of those civilians found guilty of crimes, I have been careful to use pseudonyms for others who were charged but found not guilty of a particular crime.

Finally a big 'I'M SORRY' to those members of the opposite sex with whom I engaged in relationships, however long or fleeting, while a member of the force. I wasn't a man, in that era at least, that a woman could rely on to be particularly faithful or consistent. I do however hope that my peers and superiors in the BSAP won't subscribe the same failings to me when it came to my sense of responsibility towards my duty while a member of what really was 'One of the finest police forces in the world.' Thank-you.

Gordon aka Johnny Johnston. Ex. 7354

## SO I'VE DONE MY THREE IN THE BSAP

Personality was a widely read monthly magazine published in South Africa. I was perusing a relatively current copy when an advertisement figuratively stopped me in my tracks.

*'Wanted. Men who seek action and adventure to enlist in one of the finest Police Forces in the world. Join the British South Africa Police.'*

Certainly I needed more stimulus and adventure in my life but becoming a policeman, in an alien, albeit British country, certainly hadn't ever entered my mind. Nevertheless I cut out the advert, placed it on my bedside table and decided to give the matter some thought. Two days later I wrote a letter to the Recruiting Officer at Police General Headquarters, Causeway, Salisbury, Rhodesia expressing an interest in enlisting in his Police Force.

*'It's up there somewhere.'*

I knew very little of Rhodesia and nothing of the British South Africa Police. Alex Swanepoel, a Rhodesian born flat mate was reasonably helpful in giving me an overall picture of a country where the Blacks apparently outnumbered the Whites by eighteen to one as opposed to South Africa's ratio of about five to one. He didn't share my enthusiasm for 'a life of action' in his home country and either knew very little about the BSA Police or else didn't wish to talk about the subject. Not surprisingly my work-mates and acquaintances were no more forthcoming.

I did know the country had been named for Cecil Rhodes and it had been settled by Whites in about 1890. And the Blacks wanted it back; well African Nationalism was becoming more apparent and I remembered reading in the Rand Daily Mail that one Joshua Nkomo, leader of the Peoples Caretaker Council until it had been banned, had apparently been detained for unlawful assembly and inciting civil unrest.

The reply and the pre-enlistment papers from Police Headquarters, Salisbury, arrived within a week. I would need to pass the obligatory medical examination, provide proof of educational standard reached, obtain two references from people who'd known me for several years and use the services of a Commissioner of Oaths to witness my signature on the Application Form.

*'Goie middag. Sergeant'.*

*'Agh, man. You again.'* The ruddy-faced bull-neck Desk Sgt. I'd encountered on a couple of previous visits...once to be 'interviewed' by detectives....opted to converse in English; not so much out of politeness, I felt, but rather to avoid hearing his sacred *taal* besmirched by a *verdamde rooinek*.

*'I have to sign this form before a Commissioner of Oaths so I've come to see you, Sergeant.'*

*'Wragtig! British South Africa.. Police! Sis, man. Why do you want to join that lot? What's wrong with our country here?'*

*'Nothing, Sergeant. I have enjoyed my time here. But, I want a change of occupation.'*

*'You a policeman?'* The other occupants of the office plainly shared the Sergeant's amusement. *'Agh, man. Ok. Sign here then.'*

*'Danke, Sergeant.'* I signed the form and pushed it back to him for his endorsement.

*'A policeman. Oh, well, best of luck, eh?'*

My work-mates at Fison's seemed genuinely sad I was leaving them and appeared not entirely convinced my change of occupation was for the better.

Hugs and handshakes and I was off on a new adventure.

*The most striking of all impressions I have formed since I left London a month ago is of the strength of African consciousness...The wind of change is blowing through this continent.' Harold MacMillan, Capetown 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1960*

I'd never flown before and was disappointed my seat wasn't a window one. But, happily when the South African Airways pilot announced we were crossing the border with Rhodesia, the Limpopo river, my window seated companion, knowing it was my first flight and the reasons behind it, kindly indicated we swap seats. It was a clear near cloudless day and my attention rarely shifted for any length of time from the broad expanse of browns, greys and dark green for the remainder of the trip.

'You, Gordon Johnston?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Sarge, will do. Have a good flight?'

The 'welcoming committee' at Salisbury Airport was efficient enough and quite relaxed... there to speed my passage through Immigration and Customs. Then.

'Where's your TB x-ray plate?'

'I don't have one, Sarge.' I wasn't told I....'

'Oh, hell.'

The Section Officer, for that was his rank.... following a recent change of nomenclature in the BSA Police rank structure....had a brief chat to an equally frustrated Immigration official before I was bundled into an Anglia car and whisked down to the city to obtain the necessary x-ray.

Finally, all procedures completed I was dropped off at a private hotel and told I'd be contacted on the morrow. I'd barely worked out I was sharing the room with another when the other occupant strode through the open doorway. He was taller than me and definitely younger with a tanned smooth complexion and fair hair.

'Peter Ruck. You just get here?'

'Johnny Johnston. Got off the plane from Johannesburg not much more than a couple of hours ago. You a Rhodesian?'

'Nah. Born and brought up in Kenya. Mombassa. Got here yesterday'

Shortly there followed a brief heavy tread of boots and an even younger guy in police uniform entered the room.

'Kenny. Meet Tommy Thomson. Tommy, this is my cousin Kenny Rundgren, he's a cadet in the BSA Police.' Peter did the introductions.

'It's Johnny, Johnny Johnston, Kenny.'

Peter laughed at his mistake but, ever afterwards when we met after a time apart he'd greet me with 'Tommy Thomson!'

We phoned for a taxi and barely three hours after landing on Rhodesian soil, despite the upset at the airport, Peter and I were swapping background histories as we imbibed on Lion Lagers in the Windsor Bar.

The next morning, smartly dressed in suits, Peter and I fronted up at Police Headquarters to be told that it wasn't a given we'd be automatically accepted into the Police Force; we had to undergo and pass a series of Psychological and IQ tests ('Putting square pegs into round holes ecetera...nothing too challenging.') that would

take most of the day. True to the examiner's word I didn't find the tests overly difficult.

*'Report here at one o'clock tomorrow; you'll be individually assessed by a Board of Officers then.'*

I filled in the morning wandering about Salisbury, taking in the atmosphere. My first impression, having lived in South Africa, was the sheer number of Africans in relation to Europeans. The Blacks still apparently deferred to the Whites, but gone were the separate shopping counters and the '*Slegs vir Blanke*' (Whites only) signs and my initial feelings were of a closer rapport between Black and White than that I'd experienced in The Republic. I observed several Black and two or three White policemen. And the latter weren't wearing side-arms as they had in South Africa.

The senior officer of the Board, the training depot Commandant, seemed impressed that I'd come to a position of attention before him and his three cohorts.

*'Stand easy, Johnston and tell us why you wish to join the British South Africa Police.'*

The change of occupation and the chance of adventure. Above all the opportunity to serve in a highly regarded Force. They'd undoubtedly heard all that before.

*The Commandant leant forward in chair and he wasn't smiling; 'I see here that you've had some service in the New Zealand Army, Johnston. I encountered New Zealand soldiers during the war and I gained the impression they were somewhat...lax...in matters of discipline. The British South Africa Police prides itself on being a highly disciplined Force. What assurances can you give us that you'd be amenable to discipline?'*

Bugger! That was a rather tough one. It was true that the well known NZ lawyer, Mike Bungay, was to go on record as saying: '*A order was an order in the British Army, in the NZ Army it's more like a topic for discussion!*' but, I wasn't of the mind that discipline, or lack of it, was a major issue in our Kiwi forces.

*'Sir, I've given up my previous career of nearly five years for a chance of a different way of life. I believe that our modern NZ Army acts in a disciplined manner. You have my word that I will be fully amenable to discipline.'*

If the Commandant didn't smile at that, the other members of the Board did.

Early in the afternoon of the next day, June the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1965, I placed one hand on a Bible before one, Superintendent Eric Collier, raised the other hand, and swore to loyally serve and uphold the law in Rhodesia. Pro Rege, Pro Lege, Pro Patria...

Then it was off to the training depot at the end of North Avenue.

I didn't really know what to expect but, believed that the training to become a policeman would involve more in the way of lectures and less drill than one could expect if he'd joined an Army unit. Poor, disillusioned me! Outside the rather small and nondescript Guardhouse, a policeman in his early twenties chipped away at a flower garden under the bored gaze of a younger man. Cook-Yarborough, I was to learn, '*One months CB (Confined to Barracks) for conduct unbecoming a member of the force.* Popular rumour in Depot had it the offender had deliberately discharged his service rifle in the wet canteen of his Midlands Police station! Years later I saw that Cook-Yarborough left the Force with the rank of Superintendent, so all must have been forgiven for the criminal waste of 'Top Shelf' booze he'd allegedly taken pot shots at!

Near the main offices, dining mess and barrack blocks which were named Bodle and Capell.... for men who'd long ago served the Regiment well.... units of about fifteen or twenty men were either drilling or running from one building to the next under the stern and barking observance of their squad instructors. We were shown our

beds in Capell block and weren't exactly enthused with our accommodation. Whilst it was tidy, everything looked old and the beds especially bore witness to the occupancy of thousands of former recruits who'd undoubtedly snored, farted or paid homage to Onan, the great god of priapic relief, to soothe their path to slumber after a day of extreme physical activity. We were then shown the mess and given meal times. There were seven of us, four Rhodesians, one Kenyan, one from Tanzania (actually born in Zanzibar) and myself. Nine recruits from England would join us the next day to form Squad Six of '65 and our instructor was to be Inspector Gerald "Gerry" Winchcombe.

*'Left-right-left-right-left-right-lee ft! Left...left...pick up the pace!'*

We'd fallen in, been given our placings in the squad, a 'marker' had been chosen, Brian McGarry, and we'd marched...make that shuffled....on parade. Then it was off to the sports ground for PT.

Oh my, gawd!!

We ran up and down the tiered seats then did the same with a squad mate over our shoulders. One guy pleaded he'd not long recovered from a knee operation and was told '*I've had both knees operated on...get on with what I've told you to do!*' A couple of guys collapsed or sank exhausted to the ground only to be told to '*Get on your feet; I tell you when you can rest.*' Winchcombe was leaving us under no illusion that training to be a cop, physically at least, wasn't going to be a breeze. To be fair, PT on subsequent mornings never appeared quite as rigorous as that first morning. We did gym work, ran the mile where I generally managed a third or fourth and went over the obstacle course which included Jacob's Ladder, a rather high sloping ladder where the top rung was spaced further apart than the rest. On my first attempt I baulked at the top rung, Winchcombe assembled the rest of the squad around the ladder to catch me if I fell! I made it over the top rung ever afterwards although many guys conveniently left it out.

There were inevitably injuries, mainly ankles and in my case an elbow after I landed heavily on it. Two of our squad broke bones, one an arm and one a thumb; it was unusual for a squad to complete training without such injuries we were told.

In the early stages of our training there was much emphasis on drill...square bashing...which Winchcombe, reputed to be a former British guardsman (Coldstream, I believe) appeared to thrive on. Initially my foot-drilling, because of my Army training, gave me the edge over many of the other squad mates, Winchcombe even managed a '*That's good, Johnston*' once when we were marching. But only once. I didn't improve much, the others did! To Winchcombe I was a '*Bloody Nimaranjee*' (his version of aborigine?) or '*A poisonous dwarf.*'

*'Mafuta...mafuta...maa..fut..aaa!!'*

It was the day of the annual Police Sports held in the Depot. All recruits had to enter at least two events. Given I'd enjoyed harriers and longer distance running, I chose the three mile and the cross-country. Winchcombe decided that as I was slower than Dusty Miller...the only other White in the three mile race...I'd be a 'sacrificial lamb', run as fast as I could to tire out the Africans and give Miller a chance to win.

Fat chance! I ran the first 'four-forty' as if that was the full extent of the race, keeping the lead, but, was only part way through the second of twelve circuits when a great lanky legged Black casually and rather disdainfully overtook me with little apparent effort. Nevertheless the large contingent of Black spectator recruits who were watching the race lauded my dogged..make that knackered!...heroic effort and every time I passed them their cry of appreciation, soon taken up by the White recruits, spurred me on to greater defeat!

I was lapped eventually but ran a solitary last circuit to complete the three miles which on completion earned me a few ‘derisory’ cheers and claps from my squad mates..

*Mafuta, I soon learnt meant ‘The fat one.’ ....the cheeky buggers!*

*‘Get up there, Johnston, and beat those two old codgers ahead of you! They’re twice your bloody age!’*

I’d barely begun the cross-country, this event contested by nearly as many Whites as Blacks, when I came across Winchcombe at one of the checkpoints and he wasn’t having any mercy on a guy who’d already ran three miles. The ‘two old codgers’, men in their mid-forties, were actually a pair of Superintendents who apparently jogged together regularly. Whilst I overtook the occasional other faltering contestant, especially on the climb up Gun Kopje, the pair of officers remained doggedly in front of me until about two hundred yards from the finish when they inexplicably ...fortuitously in my case...became confused as to where the Finish Line was and I comfortably beat them to the line. Winchcombe managed a rare grin at my minor victory.

*‘You’d know something about that, Ruck?’*

It was our Musketry Instructor, S.O Eric Kennelly, not our Squad Instructor, who took us through the Police Museum and Forensic Science Lab. John Thompson, the director of the Forensic Lab, had, I believe, achieved world renown for his ability to prove, or disprove links between the inks used in certain hand-written documents. Given my Lab. background I had a better understanding and showed more interest of what was involved in the chemical side of Forensics than had my fellow recruits. Thompsons’ assistant pointed out a few cases they were working on but it was the ‘Black Museum’ that we were really interested in. Prominent among the displays was a rope with a noose on it; which had been used to hang Leopold Smith, one of the few Europeans to be executed for murder Rhodesia. We were shown biltong that had been made from a human body, firearms and *badzas* (native axes) that had been used in certain notorious murders, various documents that had led to convictions for crimes of dishonesty. Then.... I don’t know the relevance of it in a Rhodesian Police Museum.... we were shown a series of graphic photographs of a European family who had been murdered by the Mau Mau in Kenya during the rebellion there that had led to Black Rule under Jomo Kenyatta. And it was then that Kennelly innocently made what could have been a very hurtful *faux pas*. The butchered family, as the typewritten caption pointed out were Michael Ruck, his wife and two children, Peter Rucks’ Uncle, Aunt and their offspring!

Peter, to give him his due, realised Kennelly had made a mistake and turned aside from the display without comment. Kennelly offered an apology along the lines of ‘Sorry, Ruck, I should have read the caption first.’ And no further comment was made on the matter.

*If any of you gentlemen feel like bringing up your breakfast, do it outside, not in here!*

Most, if not all, of our squad would not have seen a dead human prior to our visit to the Harare Hospital Mortuary to witness a couple of autopsies. The bodies of two African males, rather grey and yellow in death rested on adjacent stainless steel tables. After explaining that a post mortem was carried out on any any unexpected deaths the European doctors set to with a will to get into the innards and heart of the matter...so to speak...of the victims. I didn’t find the procedure exactly revolting; being brought up on a farm I’d seen plenty of blood and guts, albeit animal, not human. The smell, not particularly pervasive but certainly unique, was one that can be

very occasionally evoked in me with certain aromas I encounter even today. Most fellow squad members were affected by the experience; none fainted, but a couple left the room suddenly. An unusually restrained Winchcombe made no comment at their departure. We were reminded that as Police officers we'd inevitably encounter death on a number of occasions, no matter how long we served, and would have to attend autopsies.

*'You'll do, you poisonous gnome. Let the nice Section Officer put the arm guards on you.'*

Police Dogs played an important role in the BSA Police. If Winchcombe thought he could put the wind up me by selecting me as the dummy the German Shepherd Police dogs would savage, he was sadly mistaken. Despite twice been bitten by dogs in my teens and, whilst I exercise a degree of caution and respect in their presence, I'd basically lost any real fear of them, even the so-called 'dangerous breeds.'

Once the handler had demonstrated the incredible scent retention ability of his dog by taking a two shilling piece from his pocket, holding it briefly under the dog's nose and then throwing the coin into long grass for the dog to locate; it was my turn on the stage...so to speak.

*'I want you to run as fast as you can. Don't turn as the dog nears you and remain still when he pulls you down.'*

To laughter and jeering from my Squad mates I was off. Behind me I heard the command '*Vat hom*'... commands to our Police dogs were apparently given in Afrikaans ( perhaps our dogs were originally from the Republic...I'm not sure)....and all too soon I sensed the approaching hound. He chose my right arm, leapt at it and used his weight to pull me to the ground. Then growled menacingly in the region of my throat at any perceived movement on my part. The handler called him off. Then he handed me a .38 revolver and issued his instructions. I was to run like hell with the revolver in my right hand, turn back before the dog reached me and fire a couple of blanks from the weapon before I quickly transferred the revolver to my left hand. I'd determined after the first exercise that I could probably remain on my feet when the dog leapt at me. And with a weapon in my hand could possibly deal to the dog. But, that wasn't to be entertained; Police dogs were as Regimental horses, a mite higher up the scale of importance than Police recruits were!

I enjoyed the exercise, added a few colourful expressions to add authenticity to the event and the dog did his thing. Before we left the facility I even managed to explain to the handler that we farm-raised Kiwis didn't all go in fear of our four-legged friends!

Law and Police took up quite a percentage of our training. I welcomed the 'class-room' atmosphere where I certainly held my own; something I couldn't always guarantee on the parade ground or PT field. Inspector Cillers, was less authoritarian than other senior men in Depot but managed to gain our attention and respect. We learnt how to prepare witness statements for Court, compile Incident Reports, fill in Crime Registers, complete TARBS (Traffic Accident Report Book), follow correct procedure when arresting and charging an accused, Police radio procedure, a field where I did well given my Army background and various other aspects of every-day Police work. We were tested on our knowledge and I generally came within the top five in our squad.

*'You'll never be able to keep up with the dictation or radio messages, Johnston, if you persist in two-finger typing instead of the touch typing I'm trying to teach you.'*

Annie Lovell our civilian typist instructor frequently tried to 'correct' my typing practice of frantic two finger stabbing at the keys of the old Remington and Imperial

typewriters the Police were equipped with. Most of those who'd never done typing eventually mastered touch typing; I'd had several years of Journalism lessons and article writing; all performed on my Hermes Baby portable typewriter with two fingers and just couldn't master the change to the more graceful and so much faster...in the hands of the average typist anyway... touch typing. Came the final exam and Annie Lovell indicated she would be dictating at the speed a trained policeman could expect to receive radio messages from Headquarters or other stations. I decided I couldn't risk trying touch typing. So be it if I ended up dog tucker and failed!

Those seated closest to me during the test passed the odd jibe at my frantic efforts. I kept up but, the final result depended on the number of errors made. The next and final typing period and the results were read out highest to the lowest.

*'Johnston. Seventy-three.'*

I'd come third out of the sixteen in our squad! The instructor managed a smile even as she shook her head in a contrived wonderment!

*'Johnston. How would you compare your New Zealand Maoris with our Africans?'*

Room inspections by the Depot Commandant, Van Sittert, were relatively rare but he required an answer. I hesitantly pointed out that the Maori, as a Polynesian, was naturally lighter skinned and inter-marriage with Whites had caused him to become of even whiter hue still. I also pointed out that the Maori had equal rights with our Whites and relations between the races was generally harmonious.

Apparently his interest in matters, Kiwi, had been stimulated by our countries reaction to the non-inclusion of Maori in a South African rugby tour. There'd also been a reaction to Rhodesia's political aspirations from our NZ Govt. that had caused some bad feelings in the local White community. For a time it was better to pretend I was a Pom or a South African!

*'There's no objection to any member of the force wishing to make a little pin money by writing. As long as the content doesn't show any bad reflection on the BSAP or Rhodesia as a whole.'*

Our first day in Depot had seen our squad attend an address by the 2 I/C in Depot, Supt. Wright. He was a less authoritarian man than his immediate senior and invited questions from the ranks. I pointed out my interest in writing and added it was just an interest of mine but I'd had articles accepted and paid for. Supt. Wright's expression, 'pin money' I found rather amusing...rather twee.

*'Faa..rr..k me with a frozen rope!!'*

When I entered Depot Squads One and Two were training for the Annual Police Musical Ride with horses. Basically the mounted recruits would travel with their mounts to perform daring acts of lunacy at show-grounds in the main centres of Rhodesia. The theme tune was a Beatles one; 'It's Been a Hard Days Night.' and horseback manoeuvres included tent-peggings and crossing over at a gallop. Insp. John,( Johnny) Pearce, a noted horseman, was the instructor and, despite his choice of 'robust' expression, was generally fairly popular with the recruits. Popular legend had it that Pearce galloped a Police horse down a main street in Bulawayo one evening taking pot-shots at the street lamps! He certainly wasn't very circumspect when it came to his '*love-life*'. After relating details of his seduction of a civilian employed by the Police....during which the hitherto rather mature virgin was supposed to have admitted "*I'm not very good at this type of thing*".... for a time whenever a Musical Ride recruit was rebuked for not performing well he'd often utter '*Sorry, sir. I'm not very good at this type of thing!*'

After having an hour long class-room lesson on equitation; mainly learning the parts of the horse, we were taken down to the stables which housed about sixty horses and taught grooming. I was given RH (Regimental Horse) Wallaby and he was less than enthused to meet a fellow creature with ‘connections to ‘down under’. Did his best to kick me back there ... Aussies! Indeed, most horses appeared to be less than relaxed with new recruits; some were downright cantankerous and quite a few even dangerous. One, RH Nutmeg, had had a complete gutsful of the human race and was universally feared by all recruits. Ivan Smith, a fellow squad member, managed to calm Nutmeg down for a while by hooking her grooming bag, filled with dry-feed filched from the feed room over her nose, but generally one had no more than about two feet of ‘No man’s Land’ between her snapping teeth and flashing hooves. I wasn’t too iffy with horses....thanks to my time with cousin John on the farm...but for English recruits from the cities they were fearsome beasts and man-killers. One squad member, Bert. Cubitt, decided to endear himself to the horses...pat them and croon sweet nothings... the first time he was rostered for evening Picket Duty at the stables. He ended up with a broken thumb and admitted he’d carelessly gone into the Mule Stables, not the facility that housed the horses! The mules were used in Depot to pull drays around and were driven by Africans wearing overalls and floppy hats.

One particular evening the Picket Guard was either elsewhere, less than diligent or chose to ignore the six or eight of us who crept through the stable area bent on witnessing a promised ‘strip-tease’ act at a private house near the Depot. Alas for we sexually deprived and testosterone charged lads the artiste in question had to be at least forty-five and only after much persuasion coyly stripped down to her ‘eminently serviceable’ knickers and bra!

*‘Quickest of the best...mount! Tee...rot!!*

There’d been a lot of speculation as to whether we’d actually have to ride the horses; most preferred we didn’t. However, about three months into our five months of training we were issued with ‘Saddles, Military, for the use of’. Fortunately our batmen were equally up to polishing the saddles as they were attending to our boots and uniforms. There was only once my batman really let me down in the polishing of my leatherwork; he decided without consulting me, to strip the polish off my everyday drill boots and have me wear my rather scuffed and dull hued stable boots on the daily parade. Nothing escaped Winchcombe’s eagle eye. *‘Parade behind the guard, Johnston!’*

Parading behind the guard was the standard punishment for relatively minor misdemeanours. One such punishment for me occurred not long after we commenced riding horses. My first horse was RH Viscount a tall wall-eyed ex racehorse, but I’d just got used to him when I had to change to a smaller and nuggetty grey, RH Wellington....named for the Duke of course... not NZs capital, I was told. One morning when I was a mite late getting to the stables and somewhat hungover, I tried to take a short cut with the grooming and ended up with more than a few white horse hairs on the dark brown saddle blanket. *‘Parade behind the guard, Johnston....with a perfectly groomed and saddled horse...you horrible man!!’* Any transgression involving one of his beloved horses was taken personally by Insp. Pearce!

To get to the guardhouse one had to walk past the wet canteen. And as they heard the clip-clopping of a now well turned out RH Wellington, my fellow squad-mates all came to the doorway to salute me with full beer glasses and to jeer at my misfortune! Bastards! The SO taking the defaulters parade was less than amused I’d be parading with a horse. I still had to do the standard drill which was fortunately accomplished

with no loss of life or injury and my return to the stables was mercifully unheralded by the happy drinkers.

*Oh, I joined the Force for intercourse,  
And all I did was ride a bloody horse.  
Kuma-ky-yi..Yi-yi-yi,  
Kuma ky kuma rookie kuma-ky!*

Few recruits will forget the first day of actual riding. A senior PO staff member, Tony Brown, had us lead our horses to the Riding School. We were taken to one end of the School and shown the correct way to mount. Then the command came. ‘*You will all gallop down to the far end of the School and back here again! Go!!*’

Oh, dear. A couple fell off en-route, a couple went head-first into the elephant grass wall of the School and at least six others landed among the hooves on the wet sandy ground of the School. At the end of that lesson there were only four of the sixteen recruits who could boast having stayed in the saddle, a Rhodesian, a Kenyan, an Englishman and a Kiwi. We made a wager; the first of us to fall off had to buy beer one evening for the other three. All went well for a time but not long after I’d started riding Wellington we were in the Riding School one morning when the horse behind me bit my horses rump.

‘*But, we were only trotting, Johnston!*’

I still remember the grey ears passing between my jodhpured legs and the hoots of laughter from my unsympathetic mates as I sprawled in the wet sand. Wellington kept in formation circling the School and with each pass I made a futile attempt to grab the saddle horn and mount.

‘*Who gave you permission to dismount, recruit?!*’

Of all the times to stuff up! The Camp Commandant, Supt. Vansittert, and the Depot CI, Ron Trangmar, astride their mounts were gazing malevolently on my pathetic efforts to remount. Fortunately the next pass was slower and I managed a ‘*quickest of the best mount*’...grabbed the saddle horn and used the horses momentum to swing into the saddle. The others got their beer after training had finished for the day!

The military saddle with its’ prominent horn to grip and assist with staying mounted was an asset the morning Wellington ‘got the pip’ with me and began ‘pig-jumping’ in an effort to buck me off. To the accompanying hoots and cries of ‘*fall off you poisonous dwarf!*’ and ‘*hit the deck...you nimaranjee!*’ from my squad mates I was actually beginning to enjoy my rodeo display until Brown intervened and told me to get myself and horse under control.

One cool spring morning when the horses hadn’t been exercised for a couple of weeks there was no controlling any of them. We struggled to keep them under tight rein but once we reached The Common they bolted...all sixteen of them! Tony Brown, as an instructor, had a fast horse and was soon overtaking many of us and yelling the obvious command, but to no avail. I knew from previous occasions when we’d galloped the horses...including one where three of us line abreast tried to get through a gap designed for two and a bit horses and poor Jack Walsh hit the deck hard...that Wellington wouldn’t take much to get under control. By pulling on one side of the bridle and keeping the pressure on I was able to steer the grey in a big circle and tire him out. Not so the others; with the motorway coming up a number of them bailed out at the gallop. Several horses made it on to the motorway and caused some confusion, and the oft laughed over story of the motorist who when faced with a re-enactment of The Charge of the Light Brigade shot off the road and up the rather steep median strip! One riderless horse actually ended up in a womans’ flower garden

and had to be retrieved by a crestfallen recruit. After that early morning performance for a time we became known as The Flying Sixth.

It wasn't all drama riding the horses. Ivan Smith reminded me recently (43 years after the event!) of those early morning rides when, at peace with the world, we rode down the jacaranda lined Avenues over the carpet of purple flowers.

But, sadly all in Rhodesia was far from at peace with the world.

Towards the end of our training, national politics ever increasingly intruded on our training schedules. When the right-wing Smith Rhodesian Government made certain indications....including an announcement by Smith to the effect that 'there won't be a Black led Govt. in his lifetime...it appeared that a unilateral declaration of independence was a given... rather than an option.... and the left-wing British Govt. under Harold Wilson weren't happy. They sent a senior Cabinet Minister, Bottomley..as I recall, along with his aides and advisers to Salisbury to sort 'the rebels' out. Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU and Ndabaningi Sithole of ZANU were brought out of political detention to meet with the British officials. Our squad was detailed to guard Sithole and his lieutenants at the Tomlinson Depot where the African Police were trained.. Sithole was a relatively short man and as a Methodist did not drink alcohol. His men did and one day Sithole handed me five pounds with instructions I buy gin (a spirit that seemed popular with Africans who could afford it) for his men. When I asked the SO in charge of us if Sithole's request could be met I received a *'If he's paying for it he can buy what he likes. Except a gun of course!'*

Whilst Sithole seemed to prefer to keep to himself or engage with his senior Party men, several of his men tried to draw us into conversation; one even detailing his experience in the United States where FBI people had shown him around a big Forensic Science facility. Often the Blacks conversed among themselves in English...an affectation I felt they used to try and impress their 'jailers' of their education and intelligence... and I overhead details of times spent in Algeria and Egypt. The Rhodesian born recruits were not prepared to indulge the Blacks in any way, preferring to view them as common criminals, rather than political detainees. When one considered that much of their Party funding apparently came from intimidating their fellow Blacks into being paid up members of their organisations, I suppose the Whites had a point. At the conclusion of our 'guard duties', Sithole approached us smiling and generous of spirit; '*You young policemen have treated us very well. I'll remember you if we come to power.*' There were no Whites present looking forward to that day with any eager anticipation that I noticed.

*'Hold hands in a circle and we'll all play ring-a-ring-a-rosy.'*

All recruits underwent riot training. The dark blue riot trousers and jackets were standard issue, the white (WW11 German Army shape) helmets, light-metal circular shields and pick-axe handles that passed for batons were drawn from the armoury when required. And we had to become used to the effects of tear-gas. Really used to it; not just a token sniff of the stuff! So we played *ring-a-ring-a-rosy* around two smoking canisters on the ground and learnt that tear-gas stung any part of the body that sweated, never mind half blinding a man. The ultimate test had us all boarding a truck used for transporting prisoners. SO Eric Kennelly then backed the truck up to a tree so the rear door couldn't be opened, pulled the pin on a gas cannister and casually popped it through the doors inspection hatch before leisurely strolling back to the cab to drive the truck away from the tree. We all piled out in a jumbled heap, sweating, swearing and trying to get our breathing and vision back to normal. Poor Jack Walsh had been flattened in the rush and one brave lad had to clamber into the truck and pull him out.

Whilst the gas cannisters were usually thrown like a hand grenade, they could also be fired, using a ballistite cartridge, from an attachment fitted to the end of an SMLE rifle. So could blocks of wood the same size as the cannisters. Divided into two groups, one armed with the ‘grenade launchers’ the other defending themselves by trying to deflect the flying hunks of wood with their riot shields, a merry, if somewhat apprehensive time was had by all. Then still in two groups we had to take up our batons, charge and ‘beat the crap’ out of each other. The helmets acted as good protection, even from a direct blow and the shield could also prevent blows to the body. Sadly for me, a wildly swung baton bounced off my shield and caught me across the side of my head just below the helmet line. I went down seeing stars, Peter Ruck tripped over me and as he fell the edge of his shield caught and gashed his chin. Kennelly decided it was time to call a halt to the warfare. He then had us walk about two hundred metres down a field before he fired a long-distance gas cartridge, the Flite-rite rocket, in our direction. The rocket hit the ground before our fearful group and skipped along, thankfully missing us all.

SO Kennelly was also our Musketry Instructor. The Depot Armoury, apart from our issue SMLEs for parade purposes and the 762 mm FN rifles, 0.38 revolvers and 9mm sub-machine guns we’d all have to familiarise ourselves with...also housed an assortment of weapons taken from a group of terrorists shot or captured in the Lupane area. They included a .45 Thompson Sub-machine gun (Tommy-gun) a 9mm Lanchester sub-machine gun, a French made rifle with what appeared to be an inordinately long barrel, a German Schmeiser sub-machine gun and an AK 47; the latter the most efficient and feared weapon of them all. We all got to handle them briefly and ponder on their origins and history of use.

On the range I was Second Class with the Pistol, Second Class with the FN rifle and just made First Class with the Sterling (9mm Sub-machine gun). A not very noteworthy effort given my previous experience with weapons on the range in NZ. Ivan Smith easily made markman with the FN and a rather impressed SO Kennelly persuaded him to ‘*give us a demonstration, Smith*’. Ivan chose to lie prone about fifty yards from the targets and on the command to ‘*Commence!*’ he fired three shots semi-automatic in quick succession, rolled a complete turn firing as he came upright at the second target and so on until the fourth target. He missed just one shot out of the twelve fired!

Late one afternoon Kennelly led us down to an area at the edge of depot where he lectured us on explosives, more specifically of the plastic variety which had been employed by a terrorist cell in an attempt to blow up the pipeline from Lake McIlwaine to Salisbury. Three pounds of plastic had dented the heavy large diameter pipe-line, an expert demonstrated that properly employed as little as three ounces were enough to hole the section that had been removed after the sabotage attempt.

*‘One..two...three..dive!!’*

No afternoon with Kennelly seemed to be complete without an element of excitement and danger. After showing us how to set the fuse in a Russian made hand-grenade taken off a captured terrorist he then decided to detonate it in a previously prepared hole about two feet deep. We had to hold hands in a circle about the hole and after being warned the grenade had a four second fuse it was dropped in the hole. I swear some guys covered thirty yards in the three seconds it was deemed safe to be upright. The explosion itself was disappointingly dull.

Eric Kennelly, Rhodesian born, became quite friendly with Ivan and myself and invited us to his house a couple of times for a beer. He had a son about two years old and before our bemused gaze allowed the toddler to consume his own, albeit small,

glass of beer! Then told us that whenever he had a beer....which was most days...his son always had one to. Bringing him up to be a true Rhodesian, Eric asserted!

Gas mask training was left to our squad instructor, Gerry Winchcombe, and carried out one morning instead of the usual PT. Winchcombe grabbed a mask from a box full of them, briefly fitted it to himself, removed it and barked at us to do the same. Some of the masks were new and had a circular cardboard disc in the cylindrical part one breathed through which had to be removed prior to use. Winchcombe made sure all masks were snugly fitted and then ordered us to run one circuit, 440yds, and woe betide the recruit who tried to pull the mask out from his face! Breathing through the masks was hard and at anything more than a trot one couldn't get enough air. Poor Jack Walsh...if anyone got into trouble it was Jack....normally a good runner gasped and fell down before pulling the mask away from his face to get air. He hadn't removed the cardboard disc from his mask!

Apparently prior to WW11 would be recruits to the BSAP were expected to be competent in horse riding, swimming and preferably accurate with a rifle. One can only assume this was to make life easier and safer when on rural patrols which were invariably carried out on horse-back, occasionally involved crossing rivers and on occasion meant encounters with less than friendly wildlife.

Horse riding was restricted to Depot training, ceremonial parades and Musical Rides. The use of various firearms was practised in depot and the recruits competency rated from marksman to Third Class. Swimming competency was taken as a given and there was but one afternoon when we were paraded in our swimming trunks at the Police Pool. I could barely swim to save myself....certainly couldn't assist anyone in distress.... and this was soon made obvious to the disgust of Insp. Winchcombe. One of our squad members was a non swimmer but that didn't mean he was exempt from trying. After a lot of 'hilarity' ....most recruits loved the idea of a swim in preference to other training activities....the two squads were divided into two teams and given a long and heavy pole each with which to engage in a relay race. Into the water at "go!" and get the pole through the pool, round the diving board and back in the pool to the other end; about four circuits in total. By swimming and hanging onto the pole I was managing quite well until I realised our non-swimmer, who'd survived the race hitherto by merely hanging onto the pole whilst his comrades propelled it along, was missing! Oh, dear!

Looking back I saw close behind, his red hair just below the surface as he struggled to bring his head above the water and stay alive. I yelled to the others as I went back to the stricken lad along with another of our team and all the while to Winchcombe's exhortations to; "*Leave him and get on with the race!!*" we managed to get him to the edge of the pool where he could hang on and at least breath again. There was no way I was going to catch up with the team by swimming so I climbed from the water, ran to catch the 'pole-pushers' just as they'd re-entered the water at the far end of the pool for the last lap and to the cries of '*Foul!*' from the opposing team we finished the race ahead of them. Winchcombe could only acknowledge my intrepid action with a sad shake of his head. Little was I to know that afternoon that there would come a time when I had to swim in the mighty Zambesi river itself.

By the time there was only a month to go before our scheduled Pass Out Parade, we were becoming fairly sharp with our drilling which included some rather fancy footwork such as quarter-turns on the march and slow march etc. One hot afternoon when we were doing drill, and the order came to march on the spot, I got out of step and despite executing some fancy hops and skips remained out of step. It was all too much for Winchcombe.

He rushed at me: '*You fucking idiot!* And he cracked me over the head with his pace stick; right on the metal wire that ran inside the top of my cap! I kept my position without comment but several of the squad members hissed their disapproval of what was an actual offence. We continued our drilling and it soon became apparent when blood...mixed with sweat...ran down the side of my face that my head had been cut. Soon there was blood on my shirt. Winchcombe dismissed us at the end of the drilling, the last training period for the day and I went off to shower and change. Several of the squad were adamant....Winchcombe generally wasn't liked or even particularly respected....that I report the '*assault*' to Trangmar, our DCI (senior NCO..equivalent of a Regimental Sergeant Major). But, I was having none of it; the incident had happened in the heat of the moment and besides I had to live with...or at least be instructed by....Winchcombe for the remainder of our training. As was the usual practice I led the rush to the wet canteen for a beer before our evening meal.

Surprise...surprise; for the first time since I'd been in Depot, Winchcombe was behind the bar. I ordered my usual and put my money on the bar.

*'How's the head?'*

*'No problem, sir.'*

Winchcombe uncapped and slid my bottle of beer across the bar pushing my money back to me before he reached into his own pocket and paid for my beer. It was as close as I'd get for an apology; all I could expect for his own lapse in discipline. Enough, I privately concluded.

*'Johnston. March out to the front of the squad, face them and talk for five minutes on the love life of the lesser dodo!'*

Shit, he was serious!

One afternoon when we were undergoing foot-drill, Winchcombe halted us then had me address the rest of the squad. I had a fairly well developed imagination and after a few hesitations....and angry prompts from our instructor...was soon constructing an improbable tale that drew chuckles from my squad mates...albeit some nervous ones ...as they correctly assumed one or more of them would follow my efforts. Some recruits were quite inventive with their subjects; some were stuttering, stammering idiots made worse by Winchcombe's caustic castigations! The second and last time I had to 'address the rest' my subject was Captain Cook I took the opportunity to point out that English born Cook's 'frequent' voyages were largely the result of his finding it difficult to live in the corrupt and second-rate country of his birth. I got a laugh from the other 'colonials' but I don't think it was as well received by those of English heritage!

When Salisbury CID needed a ready source of manpower for special surveillance duties, we recruits were occasionally called on. Once after there'd been trouble on the SUOC (Salisbury United Omnibus Co.) buses a number of us literally rode shotgun....carried an unloaded Greener shotgun (with a live round in a pocket)...on various buses for a few days. Another surveillance which we enjoyed....anything to get away from foot-slogging in Depot...involved a number of us walking the beat in civilian attire down less popular streets in the hope of locating and arresting one of the dissidents who were throwing the odd petrol bomb at premises. For some reason, possibly because they broke more easily than the local bottles, the perpetrators always seemed to use Amstel beer bottles, imported from the Netherlands and readily obtainable in Rhodesia. No arrests were made but for the three days of duty we felt like real policemen!

When it appeared that Rhodesia's PM, Ian Smith and Britain's PM Harold Wilson were completely at odds over the direction of Rhodesia's future governance,

Wilson decided to visit Rhodesia for head to head (heart to heart?) talks with Smith and his ministers. We Police recruits, whilst we were aware of the general picture regarding the political stand-off between Rhodesia and Britain, didn't exactly keep it uppermost in our thoughts. Frankly, for our squad, we were more consumed with the ever looming Pass-out Parade we would face in November.

*'You'll be on special duties tonight, at the Governor General's residence.'*

One late October afternoon, Winchcombe took a number of our squad aside, instructed us to draw our issue rifles from the Depot Armoury, not to go to the wet canteen but, to report in our No.1 uniform to Hard Square after our evening meal. An Inspector and a couple of SO.s, unknown to us, had us board Landrovers and we were taken to the imposing Governor General's residence. I was assigned main gate duty with a town SO who appeared relaxed and friendly enough. We were issued with one live round each for our rifles but warned to keep them in our pockets unless absolutely necessary. I never really understood, other than the occasion of a sudden dangerous political gesture by a dissident, what situation would warrant the use of a firearm. Had I enquired of the SO I'd probably have been told to use the firearm on myself if I stuffed up! However, I was soon to learn from the SO that our weapons would be formally employed....each dignitary would be saluted with a 'present arms' to his count. Not to worry; Winchcombe had had us drilling with rifles until we could do it in our sleep!

*'Detail..detail... shun! Pre..sent arms!'*

The first black Daimler contained Clifford Dupont and we received a short formal wave of acknowledgement from the dark haired and dark be-suited gentleman. Harold Wilson was next and the solid, wavy haired... British Bulldog featured, British leader favoured us with a brief nod of recognition.

*'Make the next one our best one, Johnston...it must be Smithy's car.'*

Alas, Smith was turned away from us seemingly in conversation with an aide as his car slowly drove past us. Then from the SO; *'Take a look now.'* I glanced at the departing car and Smith was framed in the rear window, at best just a wry grin on his face for he was generally a rather conservative...some would say dour... man. But, unmistakably he held a hand up and favoured us with a 'thumbs up' salute of his own!

*'If any of you horrible buggers get your photographs in the Guardian I'll have your guts for garters! Fall out and return to Depot immediately!'*

It was a shameful retreat from the field of victory the afternoon when the 'defeated enemy's' allies broke from their ambush waving microphones, cameras, sound booms and Press Cards.

We were normally free to leave Depot and to pursue our own activities after noon on Saturdays. But, with less than a fortnight left before our eagerly awaited Pass Out Parade, our squad.... and another of about twenty recruits.... were instructed to remain in Depot within call should it be deemed necessary. Finally about mid-afternoon we were ordered to don full riot blues and report to Hard Square. There we were issued with riot helmets, shields and batons and ordered to form up. We were marched to about three hundred metres from the Governor's residence in North Avenue and then halted. Ahead of us, outside the gates to the Governor's residence, over a hundred chanting and placard waving ; mostly African; protesters covered the road. Our formation was changed so that we occupied almost the entire road. Insp. Johnny Pearce in riding habit; carrying a Sterling Sub-machine gun by the sling, marched in our rear and barked out the orders. Quite clearly he'd had a drink...or two or three...with his midday meal and he wasn't in a good mood. It wasn't made any

better when a metallic clatter indicated the magazine of his weapon had parted company with the Sterling itself.

*'Fall back here, Erasmus, and put this bloody magazine in properly for me!'*

Clearly recruit Erasmus took advantage of the occasion to instruct, Pearce....*a horse man; not a fuckin' weapons instructor!*... in the use of the weapon as in '*under no circumstances, sir, are you to pull back on this lever and especially, sir, don't even touch this little dingus (what-you-call-it) here.*'

*'One, two, three, boomph! One, two, three, boomph!'* Three paces and the base of the pick-axe handle that passed for a riot baton, was sharply rapped against the bottom of our metal shields. Anticipation mounted with each pace; we'd suffered the blows in riot training and now it was time to deal it to the perceived enemy.

But, our very presence and bearing was too much for them; forty metres from us and the protesters ceased their noisy activity, discarded their placards and fled. Insp. Pearce had barely finished yelling at us to hold our formation when cameramen from the BBC appeared from behind the Jacaranda trees and became '*Bloody Bastards! Break formation! Fall out and return to Depot! If any of you horrible buggers.....*'

We all ingloriously bolted off the road and made our way back to the Depot via the back yards of private residences; doing our best to assure some of the concerned elderly residents that '*There'll only be trouble if I get photographed by a pommy press-man!*' Back in Depot we all agreed 'the afternoon's diversion' had helped relieve the monotony of training and whilst some recruits openly expressed their frustration the exercise hadn't ended in batons versus rocks or placards, I wasn't alone in being happy no blood had been spilt...we soon got on with what we normally did on a late Saturday if we weren't going into town, retired to the wet canteen.

However, weeks later, a member of the 'riot party', a self-elected spokesman for the last English recruits to arrive in Rhodesia who'd asserted to Rhodesian TV people on arrival at Salisbury Airport: '*We are here in Rhodesia to serve in the BSA Police; it doesn't concern us if UDI is enacted*'; then promptly deserted from the BSA Police post UDI and returned to Britain; when interviewed by a major...The Guardian I think... UK paper, tried to give some credibility to his desertion by basically asserting: '*Dressed in our black uniforms with white Nazi style helmets on our head, we were forced to march down North Avenue against innocent and non-violent protesters. An Inspector, armed with a sub-machine gun, marched behind us to make sure we followed his orders.*' I am sure I'm not alone when I say I can't entirely agree with the tenor of the failed recruit's assertions!

*'Whereas in the course of human affairs history has shown that it may become necessary for a people to resolve the political affiliations which have connected them to another people and to assume amongst other nations the separate and equal status to which they are entitled.....etc.'* Ian Douglas Smith, Prime Minister of Rhodesia  
11<sup>th</sup> November, 1965.

All recruits had been ordered to listen to their private radios before falling in for a delayed afternoon parade.

For those who were vague as to what Smith was getting at there were older and more politically savvy recruits like myself who'd followed the events in Rhodesia of the preceding weeks with a degree of interest and who could put his words and intention into somewhat simpler language. A Unilateral Declaration of Independence (ever after referred to as UDI) had just been enacted!

*'I want all you recruits, especially those recruited from Britain, to understand that you attested to serve the law and remain loyal to this country. Today's declaration doesn't place your national status in any jeopardy. You are still British citizens holding British passports. And you are obliged to carry out your police duties as normal.'* The spirit, not exact wording, of Commandant Van Sittert's address to us after we'd formed up on Hard Square following Ian Smith's 'declaration'.

*'You recruits must understand that whatever has happened, or could happen in the future, you continue to owe loyalty to one flag only; and that's the flag flying on the left.'* Depot Chief Insp. (RSM in another era) Ron Trangmar was unequivocal in his own personnel 'declaration' and defence of the Police flag. Poor man! When scarcely suppressed titters of amusement spread through the ranks he too late realised that his *left* facing us was our *right* facing the flagpoles. Before the British recruits had any time to savour an unexpected confirmation that Mother Englands noble emblem, the Union Jack, reigned supreme over all....rather than the BSAP flag....DCI Trangmar had called for '*silence in the ranks!!*' But, not before his normally light-brown countenance had assumed a very bright puce colour. As the 'self-appointed guardian' of the flag raising ceremony each morning in Depot, his public *tadza* (mistake) must have really galled the poor man!

Despite assurances given by our Commandant, many of the English recruits...in contrast to the Rhodesian and 'colonial' trainees who openly rejoiced even if they possibly didn't understand the full import of UDI...were both confused and far from happy.

Whilst I was nominally in the 'Rhodesian camp' and somewhat pleased....and not a little amused... that a Government had dared to *cock a snook* at the British Labour Government, I did my best when approached by younger English recruits to not only reiterate that I was basically in the same position as them, but to offer an opinion that all would be well with us and there was nothing to fear. Not all shared my optimism unfortunately. Within a few short days several recruits had either deserted, or attempted to, back to the land of their recruitment. One, I'd got to know quite well, an older married and rather quiet and introspective guy, was caught attempting to cross into Bechuanaland and received two months 'confined to barracks' before he was deported. In total I believe, that within a few months of UDI, over twenty, possibly as high as thirty, members of the force, all of English origin, deserted.

*'It's just as well that wasn't our flag, sonny!'* Our squad, 6/65, was due to pass out of the Training Depot on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> Nov., exactly a week after UDI. I was rostered to be Orderly Corporal on the Monday preceding our pass out and, unlike my previously uneventful stint in the role, it turned out to be quite a day. In Depot the flags were raised in the morning and lowered in the evening by the Orderly Corporal and the Picket Guard. 'Paddy' O'Hara, an affable Irish guy (where else could he be from?) in his early twenties who'd apparently previously spent three or four years studying for the priesthood... but had answered the call to Africa before his ordination... had drawn Picket Guard duty. Unfortunately when the African bugler signalled it was time for the flag raising, O'Hara and I, cursing the bugler's adherence to punctuality but with flags in arms, were still about thirty metres from the bare poles. We broke into a fast run, the corner of O'Hara's flag, the Union Jack, fell to the ground, he trod on it and measured his length on the unforgiving sealed road! Oh, well, who better than a Catholic Irishman to take direct action and emphasise the prevailing ill will permeating White Rhodesian attitudes towards the Mother Country at that time. Probably made him feel better over having to swear allegiance to the Queen at the time of his attestation! Sadly, his

'protest' didn't go unnoticed, nor was it applauded. From behind the high hedge, opposite the Guard House, which surrounded the Depot Chief Inspectors residence, came the rather stentorian voice rebuking the hapless recruit and proving once and for all that it wasn't just '*Depot talk*' that our DCI, Ron Trangmar on occasion climbed a ladder on his side of the hedge to view the early morning carry-ons in the vicinity of the Guard House!

After breakfast as Orderly Corp. I had to call the roll of all the squads assembled on Hard Square for the morning parade. Barely a week before a squad consisting of a number of South Africans had entered Depot and previous Orderly Corp. details...more especially those of English origin...had struggled with the pronunciations of the Afrikaans names...so much so that the recruits concerned had either laughed within their ranks or on occasion even not answered the Orderly Corp. Their squad was the last to be called and this morning I was aware the Camp Commandant, Eric van Sittert, was 'overseeing' proceedings from horseback behind me. The 'Sons of the Veld' were already smiling in anticipation of again experiencing a low and hesitant '*Van Ass..weegan...Lubus..shane...van de Mer..wee*' from yet another '*dumb Engelsman*' but this Kiwi lad had '*spent time in the Vraai Staat, you know*' and they got it like back home down South.

'*Fon..Arse..veergan!....Lub..us..Kark..nee!....Fon de Me.e.rr..va!*' I swear our Commandant fought to hide a smile at the conclusion of my efforts on Hard Square!

After roll call the Orderly Corp. basically acted as a runner or had the use of a bicycle if it was necessary to travel to PGHQ or further afield.

*'Where are they, Orderly Corporal?'*

That evening.... when all recruits should have been tucked up in bed...I was in the Guard-house when the DCI (Trangmar) entered and instructed me to follow him to the barracks. The accommodation at Depot consisted of a multi-storey (well four stories, as I remember!) relatively new block, Stops Hostel, and two of the original single floor dwellings, Edwards and Bodell block. I followed the DCI directly...he appeared to be a man on a specific mission...to Edwards block, entered the first four man room and 'nobody was in residence'. The next room produced the same result. A check of the wardrobes revealed a few items of both civilian and Police uniform.

Oh, dear. But, the DCI was rattled...clearly he suspected the possibility of a mass desertion and he demanded I tell him what I knew. I put the proverbial '*two and two together*' when I recalled that our Squad Instructor, Gerry Winchcombe, had mentioned to us the possibility he may not be present to put us through our paces on our Pass Out Parade because of his involvement in special duties, and I recalled that it was rumoured a squad of recruits may be sent to Gatooma to help quell any post-UDI African unrest there should it occur.

*'Sir. It's possible the missing recruits have been taken away on special duties.'*

*'Who, in this Depot, would know for certain then?'* Mr. Trangmar wasn't happy with a mere supposition.

I believed that we'd find the answer in Bodell block. We entered; beneath the white shrouds of mosquito netting recruits snored, snuffled, farted and dreamed of Mother England; or Enkledoorn, Lalapanzi or Pretoria or quiet horses and even more willing girls. Trangmar chose a likely candidate for interrogation, tried a relatively gentle approach to waking the lad and when that didn't work prodded the recruit in his rib area with his baton. And smartly whipped his head aside as a fist came out from under the blankets and narrowly missed his head!

When all the *kerfuffle* had died down...I also added on the recruits behalf that he must have been dreaming when awoken; no-one, but no-one, would attempt to punch

their DCI in their right mind...the hapless recruit was able to explain that Insp. Winchcombe had gone to Gatooma on special duties with a squad of about fifteen recruits that very day.

DCI Trangmar seemed mollified by that information and I was allowed to return to the sole bed in the Guard-room and to view the couple of hunting spiders the size of milk bottle tops that had crawled out from behind wall pictures. Hunting spiders, black with a rather flat appearance, spent the daylight hours resting behind the pictures or wall hangings and popular belief had it that to kill any in the Guard-room was akin to damaging Government property. It was believed that the really keen of eye could detect a Regimental Number engraved on a front foot of the spiders as was the case with the Regimental horses!

Ron Trangmar was generally well liked and perhaps somewhat less authoritarian, despite having a solid and imposing figure, than some of his predecessors were reputed to have been. I recall him attending an afternoon parade and putting to rest a dreadful rumour circulating among the young lads. '*Bromide is not and never has been put in the recruits mugs of tea to curb their libido!*' This to grossly simulated sighs of relief from the assembled recruits! A big man, Trangmar had represented Rhodesia in the early 'fifties at the Empire Games in the discus event. On the one occasion when I'd been ordered to report to him for a rather stupid misdemeanour....I'd lost a spirits drinking contest with Ivan Smith, and was caught out of bed by the Duty NCO asleep in a toilet after *calling for Herb*. for a while...Trangmar had told me to stick to beer drinking (*I'd bath in it if I could afford to*...I remember him telling me) and he'd let me off with a warning. Perhaps his decision was influenced by his association with and apparent liking for Kiwis as an Empire Games athlete in NZ in the 1951 Games. Telling Winchcombe that my 'punishment' from the DCI consisted of eschewing the consumption of spirits whilst in Depot left him far from amused. His body language implied 'the old fellow must be losing it.'

Sadly, Ron Trangmar...a man to whom I never heard accorded a derogatory nickname, perhaps 'Trangers' to some recruits...wasn't to 'make old bones'. His passing to cancer in the 'eighties evoked a widespread and real sympathy from those who'd encountered him.

*'But, Sarge, they're natural food. Better than the scoff they serve up here!'*

*'It's disgusting behaviour, that's what it is! You're lucky I'm not sending you all to the DCI!'*

Not long before our Pass out Parade I was having my evening meal in the company of Ivan Smith, another couple of Rhodesians and Pete Ruck when an absolute cloud of flying ants, attracted by the bright lights, poured through the open door into the dining room. I'd experienced flying ants in the Free State and had actually eaten and enjoyed them there lightly fried. Buttered bread was served with the evening meal at Depot and it wasn't long before three or four of us had made and were munching...make that crunching...on raw...shamefully still alive and wriggling...flying ant sandwiches. And not much longer before the Duty NCO; an English born man who obviously hadn't as yet learnt to appreciate the local customs and fare; undoubtedly summonsed by one of the near gagging English recruits; was ordering us to leave the mess forthwith!

Whilst still in Depot we were all vaccinated. No disposable syringes for we men in those pre-Aids days; arms akimbo and moving in a line we received X amount of cc.s of a brew to counter tetanus and other bugs common to Africa from the same large syringe. We were also photographed for our Police ID cards and future Driving

Licences. My head appears to one side; one evening an amateur...as opposed to the guy who normally cut our hair... dealt to my hair with clippers and I had the lot removed. A couple of days later I carelessly cut the side of my head on a bolt on the obstacle course and the Police Photographer didn't want the wound showing on his pictorial display.

When we were issued with Dog-tags it was brought home to us that Policeman can be injured and need a ready blood-type match, or die on duty and require identification. During the time I served I can recall that at least two European and one African member of the force died in vehicle fires. Winchcombe's take on the Dog-tag issue, delivered in tones that suggested it wouldn't be a loss to the BSAP where some recruits were concerned: '*Something to send home to your Mum if a bloody lion eats you!*' earned him a rare collective laugh from we recruits.

Aside from the aforementioned three members of the force to lose their lives to accidents, one recruit, a very good boxer, was killed one evening in a vehicle accident that warranted a parade ground warning to us from our DCI that we weren't beyond the tragedies common to humanity.

*'Bloody do it properly, if you wreck that dummy, we'll spend the rest of the afternoon square-bashing!'*

Another occasion that had its lighter moments involving Winchcombe was his attempts to teach us First Aid; more especially CPR (Cardio-Pulmonary-Resuscitation). Some got it right, others like me earned a scornful '*Ooh! Leave the poor bugger to die in peace!*' Years later when on one fateful occasion I was faced with the reality of having to administer CPR to save a life I thankfully got it right!

Fifteen recruits got the last command to '*Dis..miss!!*' right, one moved a mite early...me...but on November the 18<sup>th</sup>...exactly a week after UDI...Squad 6/65 had completed their Depot training and the Pass Out Parade

*'Recruit Patrol Officer Johnston! Te Kuiti, King Country, New Zealand, Sir!!'*

Police Commissioner Frank 'Slash' Barfoot had walked along our assembled ranks on Hard Square. In training we'd practiced the moment when the Commissioner would face us on the Pass-out Parade and I'd given my place of residence or birth as Wellington, NZ on occasion and Te Kuiti on other occasions...all to Winchcombes '*Make up your mind, you bloody nimaranjee!!*' Now, on this day that we'd trained for and waited interminable weeks to arrive, Winchcombe wasn't with us; Inspector 'Tackie' MacIntosh was standing in for him. I opted to use King Country as my former place of residence...Barfoot would be none the wiser. But, incredibly he was!

*'I've been out to New Zealand and know your Te Kuiti, Johnston. I stayed with friends at the Waitomo Caves. You're apparently the first New Zealand recruit for some time. If you serve the BSAPolice as well as Mr. Schollum from your country did, you'll do well.'*

We'd then drilled up and down the Hard Square, fervently hoping that the unfamiliar voice, as in higher pitched... commands from Insp. MacIntosh; a man looked back on as arguably being one of the BSAPs best drill instructors ever...would match the timings of those of the absent Insp. Winchcombe. They did and we'd held it all together until I'd fluffed the order to dismiss, which happily went unnoticed by all except the squad mates behind me!

We all then retired to a lecture room where Mr. Barfoot reiterated that we had a reputation to maintain as one of the finest Police forces in the world. He concluded by wishing us all a long and successful career in the Force. A senior African policeman, Sub. Insp. Douglas Chingoka, a man of imposing bearing and immaculate turn-out, then addressed us. It would be fair to say....we were young, brash, bullet-proof and

above all White....that much of Chingoka's address to us that outlined the crucially important role the African police played in the overall scheme of policing, in the main fell on ears wishing only to hear the pop and sigh of a cap being removed from a beer bottle in celebration of our Pass-out.

It would take us all some time to realise the truth of the senior Black policemen's...Chingoka's illustrious career in the BSAP was followed by senior service in the ZRP (Zimbabwe Republic Police)...advice and experience. Frankly, without the resourcefulness, loyalty and courage of the average Black policeman, we'd soon be made aware that the BSAP could not have functioned at any level of effective law making. Sometimes in the future when taking credit for 'good work' or a 'good arrest' I wasn't alone in having to take a reality check of the groundwork... often tedious and on other occasions potentially quite dangerous....that African police had put into the case.

At the wet canteen that Pass-out evening...we'd been ordered to remain in Depot...our last occasion there, Winchcombe returned from his duties in Gatooma. He'd had a few to drink when he joined us and managed a '*A man can't even be present at the Pass out of his own squad. Heard you lot were a bloody shower...ha..ha..but all the best*' before he left us to continue our celebrating and to drink too much yet again.

The next day, a Thursday, about half our squad were selected to go to the the Police Driving School at Cranborne... formerly a base to train aircrews in WW11 under the Rhodesian Air Training Group... near Salisbury, whilst the remainder would be sent to Bulawayo Driving School. It was '*Good-bye..good luck*' time for a number of guys with whom we'd spent the last five months in training and had socialised with. It was the last I saw of most of them.

Those of us who'd believed that the 'theory side' of obtaining a Police drivers licence would be a brief formality...a day or two in the classroom...were to be sadly disillusioned of that idea. We would be confined to the Driving School for at least a week and would learn '*parrot fashion*' whole paragraphs pertaining to the defensive driving principles taught at the British, Hendon Police College which a number of our instructors at Cranborne had attended.

*'Enjoy yourself tonight, lads, and report to my office at eight o'clock, Monday.'*

Despite having access to a bar at Cranborne a number of us soon became '*Camp happy*' and less than a week into the class-room lectures, four of us, Ivan Smith, Peter Ruck, another who slips my mind and myself sneaked out of the School and went down-town to the La Boheme Night-club. We enjoyed the atmosphere and the beer. So did Insp. John Dolby, the Member In Charge of the Driving School along with his wife and another couple!

Oh, dear!

Come Monday, Dolby was straight to the point. We apparently didn't like his establishment and its rules so we would leave and come back to the Driving School when our Members In Charge saw fit to send us there.

John Dolby hadn't been exaggerating. PO.s straight out of Depot training without driving licences were viewed in the same light and considered about as useful as three-legged horses.

*'I'm putting you down at Stodart, Johnston. Report to the Member In Charge there, SO. Bailey, at 0800hrs tomorrow.'*

Stodart was a satellite station of Harare situated almost in the middle of the Harare African township. It was relatively small and totally utilitarian; a Charge office was situated at one end and three offices adjoined it. The Member I/C.s office was the

middle office. I hadn't known what to expect when I fronted up to my first station's Member I/C. Understandably, out of what was seen as a necessity to instil discipline in us, anyone senior to us in Depot and Driving School had tended to at least appear rather authoritarian.

My first impression of SO Bill Bailey was that he was a conservative man who didn't smile that often and one who appeared to carry a certain sadness within him. He was older than most SO.s and I learnt he'd been a member of the Palestine Police in the late '40s and had reputedly been injured on duty there. I instinctively liked him. Rather than any derogatory comment about my lack of driving licence, he pointed out which of the A/Sgts and A/Cs I could call on to drive me to a crime scene or an enquiry if required. He'd put me on night shift; 5pm to midnight, starting the next day with PO. Dick Bird until I was familiar with the area and Police routine in the township.

I was keen to show my mettle as a real policeman and Dick Bird, an affable and married English born guy was a willing 'tutor'. And keen to show me the boundaries of our area. We drove down to the Market area and as we rounded a corner, about a dozen African women, shrieking in panic and dismay, scrambled to their feet and fled. They left behind foodstuffs, boiled eggs, samousas, cooked chicken pieces etc. that they had been hawking to passers by. Dick braked the vehicle to a sudden halt and the two African Police leapt from the vehicle but only to help themselves to the abandoned food, not to make any arrests! Basically the women were illegal hawkers who sought to make extra money to support their families. As Dick pointed out; if they didn't get a 'shake up' now and then the legal traders would complain to us about the unlicensed opposition to their businesses. Nevertheless I felt sorry for the 'illegals' who were probably living at a subsistence level and needed the extra cash to help support their families and when I was the sole European on duty...which was the norm on evening shift... I'd only visit the illegal hawkers at the instigation of an African Sgt. who passed on complaints from traders; or felt he could enjoy a couple of samousas!

When Dick instructed me to radio Stodart Police Station with our ETA there and the African Sgt. gave the 'Roger, sir' in reply it hit home for the first time that, drivers licence or not, I was now a working member of the British South Africa Police!

Our first arrest that first day came about an hour after we commenced duty. The only problem was that it was one of the station's A/Cs! We'd returned from our patrol around our area during which Dick pointed out likely trouble spots and any other details of interest to a new chum.

Back at the station an A/C was seated behind Dick's desk, his feet on the table as he pored over a 'girlie mag' he'd found somewhere. He seemed in no hurry to vacate Dick's office and made the mistake of pointing it out as such. A fight developed but, Dick and I were able to restrain the A/C in short time and he was detained until the next day when he would appear before the Member I/C. Bailey determined he should face the CO for his ruling.

And so my first 'Court Case' involved giving evidence against a fellow, albeit African, member of the Force.

But, I soon grew to become aware of just how important, dedicated and efficient the majority of the African police members were. Quite frankly they were the front line, hands on police and important as a young White Patrol Officer straight out of the Training Depot felt he was, it behoved him to quickly learn that in a country where the Blacks outnumbered the Whites by nearly twenty to one, it would be frankly impossible to solve the majority of crimes without the use of the African police.

*'Johnny, meet Daniel...Daniel Carney.'*

PO Carney, stationed at Matapi, had a matter of days left in the BSAP before he took his discharge. I didn't get the time to know him but, he became a successful author of a number of books including 'The Wild Geese' and 'The Whispering Death', the former book being made into a movie. As I understand, Daniel died whilst still in his forties.

Another of the PO.s at Stodart was Mick Richards, a Police boxing champion who claimed to approach each bout full of beer, maintaining that in an inebriated state one didn't feel the opponents punches and had little worry about missing an opponent's head with a punch of his own even if there appeared to be quite a number of them to choose from!

We were on duty late one afternoon when I observed an African dressed in a suit standing in the doorway of the Charge Office. I took little notice of him until Mick and I were heading to the Landrover to go back to the barracks for our evening meal and he approached and addressed us.

*'My baas, kaan je my help?'*

*'Ja, jong, waat est jou probleme?'*

*'What the fuck is that, Johnny?'* Mick enquired of me in tones that suggested he'd now heard everything.

*'Afrikaans, Mick. South African Dutch. He asked me to help him'*

*'Where the hell did you learn that...ah, let's go...we can sort it out later.'*

In the Charge Office after supper, the A/Sgt. on duty informed me the man must be mad. It was bad enough he couldn't speak any of the local African dialects or 'chilapalapa'; he couldn't even understand basic English!

*'Yes, Sergeant. But, you didn't try him in Afrikaans, did you.'*

*'What is that, sir?'*

My Afrikaans was rather basic and limited but on that occasion I enjoyed using it 'professionally'; especially in front of the African Police details. I learnt the African was a business-man from Pretoria who'd been robbed of his money and passport. Then I learnt from Mick that one doesn't try and investigate a crime when the complainant can't give a full statement because the investigating officer's understanding of the former's language doesn't go much beyond 'Yes', 'no' and 'thank-you'... *'you dopey shit, Johnston!'*

I took Mick's intemperate advice and referred the hapless African to the South African Embassy in town.

Periodically, members stationed in the Salisbury area had to do a week of Riot Stand-by Duty. We were billeted in the Driving School and each afternoon and evening with five men in each of two Landrovers we patrolled the African townships of Harare and Highfields. I don't recall I encountered John Dolby at the Driving School but I did see one or two instructors who recognised and greeted me with a sad rather 'bloody idiot' shake of their head. Riot Stand-by went without incident.

Shortly afterwards I was back in Driving School having another go at obtaining my licence. I felt like an old hand alongside those fresh-faced young guys direct from Depot. And they were too early in their career to have become jaded or complacent and were generally fairly eager to learn what real policing was all about. I had to considerably embellish my career to date!

I behaved myself and breezed through the theory. Then we were taught the 'intricacies' of driving a Land-rover. How to double de-clutch and put the defensive driving theory I'd learnt into practice. My instructor was 'Ash', a Kiwi civilian who'd

been living in Rhodesia for a few years. I passed my Land-rover test on the second attempt.

And then for the next two weeks we seemingly tried to ‘commit hari-kari’ on motorbikes. We all but performed handstands as we motored around the sealed areas of Cranborne. I’d ‘graduated’ to a 500cc bike the day we motored to the country and attacked Mt. Dombashawa. All the 650cc bikes made it after a struggle; we on the 500s stalled on the turns to end up sliding downhill shedding skin off ourselves and paint off our bikes. Three of us ‘losers’ having a rethink on strategy and course of action prevailed on our instructor, SO Gordon Scutt, to let us make another attempt. With myself in the lead we veritably charged full bore at the seemingly impossibly steep stone face from a different angle to our failed attempt. And with the remainder of the guys, some above and some below, cheering us on, with ‘Go...go...go!!’ ...not that we heard much over the noise of our tortured engines...we made it to the top. Getting down again saw a number of us unhappily and unexpectedly eye-ballng the rock formations again. After that day we seemed to charge at anything which would provide a challenge! Happily no-one suggested to our instructor that an attempt be made on the Epworth ‘balancing rocks’ outside Harare; there’s only so much man made machinery and rampant testosterone can conquer! However, big anthills were a speciality and certainly made for a softer landing if one, as often happened, failed in the attempt. Bog and river crossings saw our poor batmen faced with washing some rather grubby attire.

After starting my training on a 250cc bike... which I unwisely pointed out to the instructor was only a step above a push bike compared to what I’d ridden in NZ and was told *‘We’ll determine how good you are’*...and graduating to a 500cc bike, I was finally issued with a 650cc Matchless. *‘Don’t push it too hard, it’s got a reconditioned motor and it gets a bit hot.’* The previous trainee to use the bike had cautioned me.

All went well until one morning when we’d charged around in rough country for some time and finally emerged onto a good sealed road. Up until then we hadn’t had the opportunity....make that been permitted....to ride at any real road speed. Gordon Scutt, leading us on his 650cc BSA Gold Flash was away down the long straight and we were to follow. Now this was riding a bike! I’d just overtaken most of the group and noted my speed at a little over 90 MPH when the engine began to seize. I pulled in the clutch, the engine died and I coasted to a stop. I tried to turn the engine over but it wasn’t moving. When I finally got it going and rejoined the others who’d waited for me; Gordon Scutt clearly voiced the opinion that I *‘was gutless and had lost my nerve.’* Some of the others defended me but SO Scutt wasn’t very happy with me.

A few days later and it was follow the leader, SO Scutt, braking and accelerating through urban streets and it was soon apparent my engine was badly overheating again. Right behind Scutt as we accelerated away from a Stop sign I perversely wound the throttle open in first gear. The engine seized, I didn’t pull in the clutch and skidded quite spectacularly to a halt. By the time SO Scutt sensed all was not well behind him, slowed, turned and motored back to me I had the bike on its stand and was in a fighting....if somewhat shaken....mood.

*‘Alright, Sarge...you turn that fucking engine over!’*

He knew not to rise to the challenge. ‘Alright, Johnston, you’ll have to push the bike to CMED... not ride it.... and get them to check it over.’

*‘CMED is miles away!’* I protested.

*‘That’s your problem, Johnston. You wreck it, you get it fixed.’*

Thanks, Sarge! CMED I calculated to be at least two miles away. By the time I'd pushed the bike about two hundred yards SO Scutt and the others were well away and the engine had cooled enough to start it. Bugger, the man, I'd miss lunch if I walked all the way pushing the bike. And we Johnstons like our food.

At CMED my reception was predictable. '*There was nothing wrong with that bike.....blah..blah.*'

I got my licences and returned to Harare. There was a big 'Yank tank' car in the barracks car park, an elderly batman, John, who'd moved from station to station with his employer ....a real rarity....and a big brown Rhodesian Ridgeback X whatever dog moping about the place who hadn't been there when I'd left for Driving School. And the owner of the car and dog... the latter whom I learnt was referred to as 'Sludge-guts'... was the new occupant of the room next to mine. I made myself known to the overweight, ruddy faced, short ginger hair guy of about thirty-six who I was surprised to see was still a PO.

Denis Castell-Castell had been posted to Harare. Some of the older members knew him as 'Pom-pom' but in the two years I knew him he was as often as not, affectionately or otherwise, referred to as 'Bloody Castell'! And it was rare when someone had an anecdote to relate about Denis that they could do so without developing tones of exasperation that easily implied '*Then what did you expect of the bloody man?*'

I remember in the late '70s meeting Austin Wilmott.... whom I'd known from my Salisbury days when he was member I/C Hatfields...at a function in Auckland. Austin came out to NZ, got a good job but returned to Zimbabwe in the '80s to be with family. In answer to my query regarding Denis and his possible whereabouts, he related how a Member I/C in a rural area had had a visit from Denis after the latter had left the BSAP in the '70s after seventeen years of service and was employed in a similar role to policing...that of guarding enclosed African villages, ostensibly to keep guerrillas away from the rural African populace. A uniformed Denis had formally identified himself something along the lines of '*Acting Commandant Castell-Castell of the local Enclosed and Protected Village Policy*'. Austin's tones conveyed the idea that Denis was the same old Denis, always up to something!

He was some sort of legend to many, a bane to all Members In Charge, certainly an enigma when one learnt more about him and a definitely flawed...in the anarchic sense...member of the human race! A musketry marksman and a member of the American Rifle Association, he was also a collector of ammunition and boasted he had over 7000 different items, arguably one of the best collections of such in Africa, if not the world. Back home in NZ a cardboard cased Schneider rifle cartridge had been in our hay-shed workshop for many years and it would have been a useful addition to Denis' collection but I wasn't game to have it sent out to Rhodesia.

Denis had already served for twelve years in the Force when I met him. Popular rumour had it that he'd twice been promoted to Sergeant and subsequently been reduced back to Constable for bad conduct offences; one which he told me involved an assault on a Member I/C. '*I'd been promised that on the completion of a patrol I could go on long leave to England but, when I returned to the station, Inspector J....told me it was all off until a later date, so I grabbed him and gave him one!*'

There was a section in Police Regs.... somewhat cynically referred to as the 'Can't read and write Act' ... that indicated a PO could automatically be made up to SO after ten years of service if he struggled with his promotion exams. Most PO.s would be looking at promotion after somewhere between four and six years of service and it was rare to find a PO with more than eight years of service behind him.

It was even less likely that a guy would remain in the Force after demotion, as Castell had. But, as I wrote of him earlier, the man was somewhat of an enigma. He had all the understanding of Police procedures that would have made him a good SO and possibly even Member I/C, he was one of the few junior ranks who'd go to formal Mess evenings and mix...dare I say hold his own... with the senior men; he'd done some good work in his early years in the Force and I believe even earned a Commissioner's Commendation and he never easily accepted defeat. Never. And if he ever really acknowledged authority he was certainly never subservient to it.

However Denis was one of the few members of the lower ranks who'd attend Regimental functions and his background included a stint in the British Royal Marines where discipline was a given. Some who knew him implied Denis was a 'remittance man' but, I never had reason to believe that.

But, scratch beneath the surface of the rebel he was.... and the never a care attitude of the man...something most never did, preferring to court the anarchy in him and you'd find a strain of grievance in Denis. Perhaps a certain loss that begged an understanding.

I feel Denis and I became close enough to exchange confidences we'd withhold from most others we knew, because we recognised....or believed anyway.... that to a degree we were both misunderstood in the eyes of others who we associated with. And we both used booze to soothe any unease and doubts that tried to surface. And both could be guilty of intemperate behaviour on occasion, but where my indiscretions were almost always when I was under the influence of alcohol... my awareness of prevailing situations meant my actions when sober were rather conservative....Castell had no hesitation in drawing attention to himself, drunk or sober.

Denis had a wide circle of friends in the civilian world....indeed he didn't really socialise much with fellow members of the Force outside of the mess and barracks bar. Early in our association he took me to a party one evening and introduced me to a women he'd known for some time. Rosemary was perhaps ten years older than I was and like Denis and myself, she could be rather uninhibited when she'd had a drink or two. But, we found common ground to talk over and found a common bed that night.

Without ever placing any serious demands or even expectations on each other we were to be infrequent lovers for the next two and a half years

I'd heard the stories of Denis, of the near scrapes he'd had poaching, of the Landrover with the two externally mounted spare fuel containers labelled Gin and Tonic respectively, and of the ignition key switch in the same vehicle that was outlined with a piece of duiker (a small antelope) fur 'so he could find it in the dark', but it wasn't long before I actually witnessed him illustrate that defeat should never be entertained without a good fight.

Peter Ruck, my good friend and fellow training squad member, was stationed at Stodart when I was back at Harare. One evening Peter tried to stop an African cyclist who wasn't displaying a light on his bike. The cyclist fled, Peter followed him on foot but, when the offender entered the 'waste-lands', tripped over and hurt a hand and then in his anger and frustration fired his .38 revolver.

The offender, I still remember his name, Garakayi, was subsequently caught by an African Field Reserve patrol. Peter came into the Harare Charge Office the next morning when I was there on day shift. He had to record that he'd discharged a firearm and initially toyed with the idea of claiming he'd fired at a rabid dog. SO 'Jock' McGowan sympathised with his plight but advised him to record truthfully

what had happened, especially as the person he'd fired at or near was now held in Police custody.

Peter was subsequently charged with breaching Standing Orders regarding the use of a firearm and was to appear before our CO, Supt. Jouning, with Insp. Bill Osborne being the Prosecutor. Osborne, also relatively sympathetic to Peter's position, apparently sought him out before the trial and intimated that a guilty plea would see a nominal punishment meted out; perhaps no more than the loss of a couple of days time off duty.

Peter passed on Osborne's suggestions to Castell and his reaction was typical of the man. '*You never plead guilty, you silly bastard!*' And then. '*You're allowed to have someone defend you. I'll do it.*'

When Peter asked me for my opinion as to what he should do I had to admit that Osborne's suggestion probably had the most merit, but, Castell was no novice when it came to appearing before his CO.s when in trouble himself. Peter would have to decide for himself.

I still didn't know what Peter's decision was, but I was delegated to 'march the prisoner in' on the morning of the hearing.

*'Not guilty, sir.'*

*'Do you have anyone to represent you in your defence, PO Ruck?'*

*'Yes, sir. PO Castell will represent me.'*

My eyes were on the CO and the Prosecutor. I swear Jouning smothered a grin but Osborne's face clearly showed that he was annoyed that Peter hadn't accepted his advice.

*'Call PO Castell in, Johnston'*

My moment of power and glory. From the doorway of the office with a voice of new-found, if short-lived authority. '*PO Castell!*'

And then as the short, rotund figure strode purposefully into his CO.s office I knew where the man's reputation for being somewhat different came from. He had three books in the crook of his left hand, prominent among them being our law 'bible'. Gardner and Lansdowne. All three books had a number of small strips of paper marking sections that he'd obviously determined were pertinent in his client's defence. I will also swear that all in the room with the exception of Bill Osborne struggled at that moment to keep a straight face. Just what the hell did Castell think Ruck had done? Committed treason! Or taken a pot shot at the Commissioner himself!

The trial was over in relatively short time and sadly... and not a bit frustratingly.... we were never to know what Castell would have presented in Peter's defence.

I led Garakayi, the African Peter allegedly shot at, into the hearing.

Yes he ran away from the policeman. Yes he threw his cycle at the policeman.

What happened then?

The policeman had yelled and sworn at him.

Before he fired his pistol?

*'Ah..ah..no, Baas. I did not hear any shot from a gun'.*

No, he definitely had not heard a firearm being discharged. And yes, he knew the sound a gun made from the time when he lived in his kraal and the crop guards fired guns to scare off the baboons. But, he had definitely not heard a gun being fired that night.

*'I move that the case against my client be dismissed, sir.'* Castell sounded almost weary, complacent even and perhaps even a touched bemused that Ruck had even been charged in the first place. The arrogant bloody man!

‘Case dismissed.’

And later. ‘*You owe me a beer, Ruck.*’

Denis would never admit to how he would have conducted his defence of Peter had Garakayi told the truth. All you got from him was a knowing chuckle. And that was also his response to allegations from myself and others that ‘he’d got to’ Garakayi before the trial.

Never plead guilty. That was our Denis; our own ‘Rumpole of Harare.’

Months later Denis was to go on trial himself. But, this time it was in Harare Magistrate’s Court. I never learnt the exact details but there was some argument about whether a pistol in Denis’ possession was legally registered or not. Denis would tell his peers that he’d fallen foul of a senior policeman who saw the case as a way to get even but Denis, as I stated earlier, was a man who carried a certain grievance. Surprisingly he elected a lawyer, a Mr. Pitluck, to defend him and not surprisingly he pleaded ‘Not Guilty.’ It was a touch of irony...or perhaps merely sound judgement....that Denis’ choice of a lawyer was a man he made no secret of the fact he detested and always condemned as ‘*a guilty man’s lawyer*’.

Whatever, Denis was found not guilty and had yet another grudge to add to his arsenal of grievances.

I only ever took one defendant to court who was defended by Pitluck and the latter tore my supposedly ‘water-tight case’ to bits, so in a way I can understand why Denis had chosen him!

*‘Johnny! There’s an African woman giving birth in the Charge Office. What should I do?!’*

*‘Yeah, right Pete. You’ll have to tie the umbilical cord in two places and cut between the ties.’*

I was having breakfast at the barracks when the call came from Peter Ruck who’d gone on duty at Stodart at five a.m. My casual response to Peter’s concerns didn’t convey the urgency he required.

*‘Can’t I get her up to the Hospital, or something?’*

As amusing as I found the situation my good friend was in I summonsed a little common sense. *‘Clear the Charge Office of all details but you and the Sergeant. Make sure the baby is breathing ok. Inform the Hospital and see if an Ambulance is available. Otherwise you may have to bundle mother, baby, and placenta into ...’*

*‘It’s fuckin’ well on the way...ooh...shit!’*

*‘Pete!’*

*‘Wha.at!’*

*‘Print your name on a piece of paper and pin it to the mother’s dress. She’s bound to want to name the baby after you.’*

*‘Fuck-off, Johnny!’*

Well, I did try!

I passed my concerns on to my immediate SO regarding the seemingly lack of discipline and poor turnout of the Harare African Constables and got the expected reply. ‘Then deal with it, Johnston. You should know what to do, eh?’

I didn’t like the idea of getting fellow members, even African, into trouble with the CO. Most A/Cs were generally efficient and dedicated to the Force. And there were occasions when I was less than the perfect policeman myself and nudged boundaries I’d have been more prudent to stay away from. But, the African Sergeants were on my side, far more experienced than me, and advocated we sort out the problem once and for all of the African Constables on night shift at Harare who appeared on parade unshaven with untidy uniforms and without issue equipment;

torches, notebooks etc. When the duty Sgt. and I went out in the evenings to check on the Constables and actually found a couple sleeping on duty, one of whom insisted he wasn't sleeping even after a Sgt. had lifted him by his belt and dropped him again to the ground, I decided we had to act. The Sgt. was adamant we had the man charged; as there was the possibility he may get in first and lay a complaint against us for assault by a superior!

Of the eighteen A/C.s I worked with I had eleven successfully charged for various 'misdemeanours' and the problem all but disappeared. And surprisingly the African Police, with whom I enjoyed working, didn't appear to hold a grudge against me for my actions.

But, one evening it was my actions or lack of such that came under question when the Duty Officer for the area paid an unexpected visit.

*'Let me see that revolver you are wearing, Johnston.'*

Oh, shit! I knew what was coming. It was compulsory for PO.s to wear a side-arm when on night duty or weekend duty in the African Townships. When we went on duty we drew a .38 Smith and Wesson from the Armoury and the heavy canvas type military style holster had a small holder for bullets attached to it. I was in the minority of PO.s in that I hated wearing a pistol and up to that evening had never loaded one on duty.

*'It's no use to you like this, Johnston. Don't let me ever catch you again with an unloaded revolver. Alright?'*

That there was the potential for danger in the township at night was brought home to me by an incident involving Dick Bird with whom I was stationed at Stodart. Going back to the barracks one night; off duty and thus not in possession of a side-arm, he felt there were grounds to check a suspiciously acting person out and whilst doing so the offender attacked him with a knife. At least one blow hit his Police note-book that prevented a lung wound or worse a fatal heart wound. Several blows struck his upper body. He radioed for help and drove off, without his assailant and bleeding quite badly, to the Salisbury Hospital.

In Dick's words; *'I staggered into the Hospital more dead than alive, with my uniform soaked in blood, only to have the Duty Sister say to me, 'And what can we do for you?' I replied to her, 'What's it fucking look like you can do for me!'*

Dick's assailant was arrested, convicted of 'Assault with intent to commit grievous bodily harm' and received six months imprisonment.

Understandably Dick was annoyed the man wasn't charged with attempted murder. When I saw his bloodstained jacket with the knife cuts in it after the case I can understand his frustration.

I was only ever to draw a pistol twice when on duty, once because I felt....momentarily, but not on reflection!....that the situation I was in merited such action and once because I wanted to make a point very clear to an offender.

If I ever go back to the African Township of Harare I'll make a point of visiting 67 Rakajani Ave. The two previous occasions I visited that address I failed miserably...if not spectacularly... in my duties, especially on the second occasion.

My Member I/C at Stodart, SO Bill Bailey, gave me a radio message that requested our station check for an offender believed to reside at 67 Rakajani Ave.

*'Go around this evening with a Sgt. and check if he's there, Johnston.'*

Right, Sarge. Easier said than done.

Wrong!

An African Sgt. and I knocked on the appropriate door, identified ourselves as Police and once we'd entered the dwelling discovered the offender had jumped out a back window and fled.

Two weeks later and on night shift again, the same African Sgt. and I approached the same dwelling. Foolishly I elected to be the guy who'd nab the offender when he jumped out the back window again.... as we were sure he would.... while the Sgt. would knock on the front door.

I positioned myself against the wall a few feet from the window. A faint glow came from the candle-lit room occupied by the wanted man.

*'Mvura...mvura...Mapolisa!'* I heard the Sgt.s insistent knocking and demands they open the door.

The frame creaked open and a dark shadow appeared in the window before the offender climbed onto the sill. I moved too soon!

*'Mai..wee!*

*! Fuck!!'*

He landed fair on me and I went down, my cap flying off my head. He was on his feet in a flash and was off. I was no slug getting to my feet, drawing my revolver, and trying to follow. It had rained and the house occupants had chickens to stir up the mud and I soon discovered my boots had little traction. I was going nowhere fast despite my attempts to pursue the man.

*'Stop or I'll shoot, eway! Mira...mira...stop...stop or I'll shoot!!.'*

But, he was soon well away from me. The offence was too minor to justify shooting him, not that the likelihood of my hitting him was very good! And the paperwork would have been horrendous. Besides, unlike our South African counterparts, we were proud... even to the point of boasting about it...that for several decades we'd never shot a person.

I holstered my weapon and retrieved my cap. There was mud all over my knees, boots and splattered elsewhere on my uniform. As I neared the corner of the building the tall shape of the African Sgt. appeared. His teeth and the whites of his eyes shone as I neared him.

*'Did you get him, Sir?'* He may have hidden his cynicism but, not a smirk.

He knew bloody well I hadn't.

*'Sgt. I want you to come around here in a few weeks time with a couple of Constables and make sure you catch this bloody man. I won't come back again.'*

Unlike a number of our cops I never really harboured a grudge or let issues involved in Police work become personal. If anything I saw a degree of amusement in what had happened. I was never to learn if the offender was caught and if any of my fellow cops learnt of the incident, it was from an amused African Sgt.s lips and not mine.

Patrick Mashayamombe allegedly threw a 'Molotov cocktail' into the bedroom of an African occupied house, ostensibly to intimidate the occupants... if they survived the attack... and their friends, into supporting his ZANU political party. It was an offence that carried the death penalty and Special Branch were keen the man be arrested before he cause further trouble.

SO Bailey gave me the radio message that included two addresses in Harare where the alleged offender, a rural African from a Tribal Trust Land area in the Hartley District, may possibly be located.

Along with a senior African Sgt. I visited the first address, knocked on the door and we were informed that no-one of the same name as the alleged offender was residing there or was known to them. We noticed that there was a room attached to

the main house and on gaining entry saw an older African who'd opened the door for us and one about the right age as the wanted man, sitting up in his bed.

No, the younger one was not the man we sought and he provided us with another name. No, he didn't have his '*situpa*' (Registration Certificate) in his possession, he'd lost it and had applied for another. He was polite and well spoken. There was nothing to my inexperienced assessment to make me believe that 'he was the one.'

*'Ok, Sergeant, I don't think he's the one. Let's try the other address.'*

We'd parked the Landrover about fifty yards up the road and as we walked back to it.

*'Sir, I think you have made a mistake.'*

*'How's that, Sergeant?'*

*'I think he is the one. We can arrest him anyway for not having a Registration Certificate.'*

I wasn't going to argue with a man who'd had nearly thirty years more Police experience than I'd had.

*'Ok, Sergeant. You creep up to the door and listen; they are probably talking about our visit. If you still think he's the one raise and lower your hand like this and stand back from the doorway. I want to go into the room first.'*

The Sgt. tugged his boots off and then walked carefully and quietly up to the door. I stopped about five or six metres from the door. Then the hand signal and the white teeth as the Sgt. faced me and grinned evilly. He is the one!

Mindful there'd be no more than a simple wire catch keeping the door closed from the inside and with torch in one hand and revolver in the other, I charged the door and put my shoulder into it. It shot open beautifully, hit a suitcase behind it and came back to hit me alongside the face sending my cap flying. It was fortunately a rather light and flimsy door and my blood was up enough to ignore for the moment any damage to my person. The younger African didn't have time to sit up in his bed before the torch light blinded him and the foresight of my revolver was resting on his upper lip just below his broad nostrils.

*'You fucking bastard! You are Patrick Mashayamombe!'*

The poor man could barely nod, given the position of my weapon.

And days later SO Bailey called me into his office. 'SO. R... of Special Branch asked me to pass on to you that you did good work in apprehending the wanted man'

I wasn't to tell SO Bailey that if I'd initially had my way the wanted man possibly wouldn't have been arrested for days, if at all!

Mashayamombe was tried and sentenced to 10 years with Hard Labour. In hindsight I wasn't particularly proud of my actions at the time of his arrest but, took some comfort in the knowledge that his method of intimidation could kill people, mine just gave them a hell of a fright! And was never used again.

Kingston Kachaga Matimba was released from the Sipolilo Detention Camp for ZANU political prisoners after spending eighteen months there and arrived back at his house in Harare to discover his wife was about seven months pregnant. Many political prisoners studied various tertiary subjects while in detention but, even if poor Kingston hadn't studied maths, simple arithmetic would have told him his wife had been all too discernibly unfaithful.

So he whacked her over the head with the back of a shovel and in his own words told the A/C who went to investigate to get stuffed; he'd come into the Police station in his own time, if at all.

*'Go with the Constable and bring him in, Johnston. Wear a revolver to make him see you mean business. I believe he's a nasty piece of work.'*

I arrived at the house and the front door was open. A younger woman with a bloodied bandaged head sat sobbing on a bed; an older woman barred my way and in response to my query, told me Kingston, the wanted man, was not in the house, he'd gone away. I told her I had to make sure.

We went into another room that had a bed in it. The A/C was standing close to me and soon he expressed a low '*Ah..ah*' and tapped me on the thigh with the side of his hand to get my attention, before, with a toothy grin only an African could produce, pointing downwards. The sole of a foot was just visible projecting from under the bed. I was in the mood for a little '*levity*'.

*'Right, Constable Fani, what say I fire a couple of bullets through this bed? Scare the wanted man out if he is there.'*

Cst. Fani was unsure of my intentions. I was relatively young and not long out of Depot after all.

*'Perhaps that is not a good idea, sir.'*

*'Oh well, Fani, just one shot then.'*

Matimba was out from under the bed as fast as he could move and the look on his face when he climbed to his feet demonstrated he hadn't appreciated '*my sense of humour*'. He was still scowling at me a couple of weeks later when I gave evidence against him in Court and he received six months I.H.L.

Runyararo Mission was situated on the same road that ran past Stoddart Police station. One Sunday afternoon when I was the sole European on duty an A/C returned to the station from a cycle patrol in a rather agitated state.

*'You must come quickly, sir. There is serious trouble near the Runyararo Mission.'*

I reacted quickly, anything was better than the paperwork that faced me, and summonsed an older A/C to come with me. Later I was to realise I should have taken at least an African Sgt. and perhaps two A/C.s but I was still fairly new to township policing and unaware of the potential for seemingly small incidents to escalate into major ones.

Outside the Mission a Vauxhall car was parked on the side of the road and a pedestrian lay motionless in the middle of the road. Several bystanders were yelling at and beginning to manhandle a man I assumed was the driver of the vehicle. I instructed the A/C to put the driver in our Landrover for his protection and radioed Stoddart to get an ambulance sent to the Mission for the pedestrian. He was obviously alive but in rather poor shape. Beside him was a broken Mazoe orange bottle and two other full ones that surprisingly had remained intact after the accident.

When the ambulance hadn't appeared after ten minutes the situation began to deteriorate with increasing numbers of bystanders, some becoming quite vocal; especially three or four women who challenged an obviously uncomfortable A/C.

*'What are they saying, Constable?'*

*'They want the driver, sir.'*

Damn it. It was a worse situation than one I could handle on my own. '*Riot Stand-by One; this is Stodart One*'

*'Roger Stoddart One.'*

*'This is PO Johnston. I'm outside the Runyararo Mission and an ugly situation is developing after an African pedestrian was knocked down. There's a hundred plus bystanders gathered around and they're not happy. I've called for an ambulance and it shouldn't be too far away.'*

*'Roger, Stodart One. We're on our way but, we'll be about ten minutes. I'll get Riot Stand-by Two to attend as well but they'll take longer.'*

I'd done Riot Stand-by duties and they were generally boring. The guys would welcome my call and the chance of relief from boredom.

I had no chance to savour my own relief that assistance was on its way.

'Sir...Sir!?' The A/C. s voice was raised in panic. He grabbed a matronly African woman and a broken bottle fell from her hands to the road. The passenger door of the Landrover was open and blood seeped from between the fingers of the hands the driver of the car had clutched over his face. The woman had attacked him with the broken Mazoe bottle. A number of the crowd cheered her actions. To bundle her into the Police vehicle with the stricken driver would be to provoke a rescue attempt and a worse situation. I slammed the door shut again after satisfying myself that the hapless driver's face could be repaired with a few stitches and did what I'd neglected to do in the first place; locked it.

*'Get on the loud-hailer Constable and tell them in your language that an Ambulance is coming for the injured man. Then tell them there are more Police coming and they have guns. Also tell them there will be big trouble for them if they don't go home now.'*

But, the A/C, a senior man as he was, was as white as I was and clearly fearful of the developing situation. 'I cannot, sir. We should get in the Landrover and lock it.'

'No we bloody well won't, Constable.'

'Then you should take out your pistol, sir, so they can see you are armed.'

'The pistol stays where it is.' I was angry with the A/C but in spite of growing unease, still managing to keep my equilibrium.

I got on the loud-hailer. '*You people must go home! There will be trouble if you stay here. An Ambulance will take the injured man to the hospital. Go home now! Many more Mapolisa are coming and they have guns.*'

Then back on the VHF. '*Riot Stand-by One, this is Stodart One. How far away are you guys?*'

'*Stodart One, we'll be at yours in about five minutes.*'

Bloody hell. That long!

Then I saw the Ambulance slowly making its way through the crowd, which had to have grown to be the best part of two hundred people by now. Anything to relieve the boredom of a Sunday, even if it meant stirring up the local cops!

I prudently elected to stay by the security of my vehicle but noticed the Ambulance took little time to load the injured person and surprisingly, given the hostile mood of the crowd, did so with only verbal harassment and nothing physical. And then from the back of the crowd a woman began the high pitched ululating that was taken up by others and was designed to stir their men-folk into action. That angered me even more. I knew that if I was attacked, drew my pistol and used it, there was a good chance the crowd would disperse. But, any fear I had had given way to a cold anger and I was determined to stand my ground outside of the vehicle and keep the driver secure in the vehicle. I was concerned about the amount of blood soaking into his handkerchief but reasoned I'd seen worse and at least his eyes had apparently missed the attack on him.

'*Stodart One. We can see you now, Johnston.*'

'*Roger Riot Stand-by. I've got an African with a seriously cut up face I'll have to get him the hospital. I'd better get on my way.*' I wanted out of the situation!

'*Leave it to us. They'll disperse and go home once you're gone.*'

In the vehicle I started the engine, yanked the red knob back to engage the low range and selected second gear. The vehicle had heavy mesh riot screens fitted to the side windows. The crowd, cheated of their victim, rocked the vehicle quite alarmingly

and thumped their hands noisily against the aluminium panels until I got under way and soon spit was running down the side windows in a stream but I kept up a steady speed with a high revving engine and I was stopping for no man. Soon the yelling and angry faces at the windows were no more and the A/C had got his colour back.

*'That was too much, sir. Too much.'*

I couldn't agree more. My hands were still shaking at the hospital as I recorded details of the injured driver.

Not all gatherings of Africans indicated trouble or political dissent. One Saturday afternoon when I was on duty at Stodart I was doing a routine vehicle patrol of the area when I came across a large number of township residents gathered in the vacant area close to the station. My A/C had a ready explanation. *'Ah, sir. There are Nyasa dancers. They are very popular.'*

I had to investigate and soon the A/C and I were among the spectators enjoying the performance by the dancers from Malawi (formerly Nyasaland...hence their name). Happily there was no reaction to our presence; the people seemed to be taken up with the music and their own rhythms of life. When it became obvious we weren't in a hurry to depart I even had a young man approach and ask if 'The baas would like a chair to sit on!' But, I declined the offer and let my senses enjoy the music and the movements. Never mind that away to the north was the city and the tall buildings that marked the passage of progress of White Rhodesia's relatively short history, before me was the primitive and the present as enjoyed by the indigenous people. It was only with a certain reluctance that I tore myself away from the happy group and re-engaged with my own reality.

It seemed ironic that on weekends when people, males in particular, weren't working and were more likely to be drinking and causing trouble, that the Police powers-that-be had less men on duty. Most of the major 'events' that I experienced in Harare seemed to occur on a weekend day.

I was on duty at Harare one Saturday... not long after I'd been kicked out of Driving School... with SO. Alan Stock when we received a report that several Europeans were fighting by a car in Remembrance Drive. At the scene we came across a solidly built White guy of about forty, another smaller swarthy type about the same age and a young Coloured woman in her early twenties, all standing outside an earlier model car. Inside the car a White guy of perhaps forty-five was slumped over the steering wheel.

We learnt there'd been a fair amount of drinking involved and a fight over the woman the Whites acknowledged was a prostitute. The 'unconscious' guy in the car had been the instigator of the fracas and main offender according to the other pair, Bernard 'Makabusi Mac.' McKenzie and Moses Lurie.

Carelessly neither SO Stock nor myself thought of taking the 'pros' details before she disappeared from the scene.

Because I didn't have a licence to drive a car, not even a civilian one, we had to choose one of the offenders to bring the car to Harare Police station. There we fetched a bed-board from the African holding cells within the Charge Office itself and the 'comatose' White was laid out on this outside the station entrance. A very light misty drizzle was falling which we were sure would hasten his recovery and return to our world.

McKenzie and Lurie were questioned, informed they'd face at least a charge of '*fighting in public*' and put together in one of the holding cells, pending the return to consciousness of their accomplice and possible complainant.

I'd never met Bill Hobley, a former 'tank man' from WWII and now a Detective Chief Inspector at Salisbury, before that Sunday but, obviously SO Stock knew who he was when he entered our Charge Office. But, the expected exchange of greetings and pleasantries were somewhat held in abeyance!

*'What's that body doing lying outside your Charge Office?'*

*'Body? No, sir. He was involved in a fight and we've put him there until he comes around.'*

*'You'll be waiting a long time...the man's dead.'*

Oh, dear.

In his book, 'Without The Law' (Truth, Lies and Mistakes) Hobley made a couple of mistakes himself, the first when he wrote that in our case he'd attended Salisbury police station (and not Harare) to '*assess our murder*'; the second when he wrote 'I spent an hour talking to the parties involved before deciding that the case could safely be left in their hands!' Both SO Stock and myself remained at a loss to explain how DI Hobley had learnt before us that we had a possible murder on our hands and not a serious assault as we'd carelessly assumed.

Hobley, I was later to learn, was somewhat of a legend in the Force. Certainly he did his best to point out the error of our ways that afternoon before he left to investigate another killing of a White person, this time a store-keeper at Athlone, an Eastern suburb, named Benetar who'd been bashed and knifed to death by a former employee bent on robbery of the shop takings.

McKenzie and Lurie were charged with murder.

SO Alan Stock later gave up normal Police duties to become a very successful editor of the Police 'Outpost'. His change of direction in policing wasn't prompted by our handling (mishandling?) of the case outlined above.

The day following the two killings saw me at the mortuary in Salisbury Hospital (The Avenues) to attend the autopsy of the deceased I was involved with. An African assistant trundled out the naked body of a White deceased. A knife wound to the upper abdomen had allowed a three inch coil of intestine to escape and stand vertical.

*'Well, let's get on with it.'* The doctor took up a cutting instrument.

*'Sorry, Doctor, but this isn't the chap we brought it.'*

*'You don't know anything about this deceased then?'*

*'I know the guy we brought in wasn't knifed.'*

The doctor threw his cutting weapon down with a sigh that may have been born of frustration at the stuff-up or may have carried the suggestion; "*Does it really bloody well matter?*"

I was at Driving School in the motorcycle part of the training when I was called to appear at a preliminary hearing in the case against McKenzie and Lurie. I was conscious I was still in my motorbike uniform and a little apprehensive at my first time in Court. All went well until I was asked to tell the Court exactly what clothes the deceased was wearing. I couldn't see the relevance of such a query and initially struggled to remember how the dead man was clothed. Apart from the fact he wore dark coloured long trousers and a light shirt. Then it came to me...perhaps a long shot but worth it.

*"I remember the deceased wore a light coloured shirt and under the right armpit there was a fair length... perhaps three or four inches... of stitching undone."*

The Prosecutor pulled the deceased's shirt from a plastic bag. It was a white with blue pin stripe type and he held it up, almost with a flourish, by the right sleeve to reveal the area where the stitching had come apart.

Whew! But, to this day I don't really know that my revelation bore any relevance to the case.

There wasn't to be a High Court case for murder. McKenzie and Lurie pleaded guilty to a lesser charge... Culpable Homicide, I believe...and received rather short prison sentences. About nine months after the case I was with a police patrol checking a bar with a reputation for sleaziness that was frequented by mainly Coloured people or Europeans deemed 'social outcasts' when Lurie came up to me. He earnestly assured me he'd learnt his lesson...whatever that was. I did the least I could do and wished him all the best.

Another establishment with a reputation for sleaziness was the 'Bali Hai' café in Pioneer Street which wasn't far off the road from the central city to Harare. Running out of cigarettes one evening after a night on the town I was in a taxi heading home when I decided to visit the 'Bali Hai' to see if it's sleazy reputation was justified and to get some cigarettes. What an evening...I was robbed before I even got into the café! As the taxi pulled up my passenger door had suddenly opened and a young Coloured woman with a '*You like me, darling?*' had plonked herself on my lap and silenced my protests with a passionate kiss while another climbed into the back of the cab and leaning over ...unbeknown to me at the time...extracted my wallet and removed all the money from it. Unfortunately it amounted to quite a bit; about twenty pounds as I recall. By the time I'd extricated myself from the cab the young women had fled leaving me with the memory of female flesh, cheap perfume and a wallet still containing important papers but devoid of cash. The whole performance had obviously been planned and was all over in literally seconds. The cab driver could only shake his head sympathetically. I gave chase but it was a futile gesture; the place was a veritable rabbit warren of buildings added onto buildings. I entered the café....I still had enough cash to buy cigarettes and a coffee...and looked around. Most of the patrons were Coloured but there were maybe three or four White guys present. Several had been aware of 'the attack on me' but, I got wry grins from them rather than sympathy; especially once I'd identified myself as a cop. I'd sat alone with my coffee at a small table but, not for long. A tall, rather attractive and light-skinned young Coloured woman in her early twenties had approached and gaining my assent sat opposite me. While she'd genuinely sympathised with my plight she was only able to identify the assailants as a 'couple of pros' who'd in the past apparently found other victims such as myself. Being a cop I'd felt a complete fool and inwardly berated myself for the blatant robbery. When she told me she liked members of the BSAP and named a few she'd met, including one I knew of, but hadn't met, for whom she claimed 'to have been a mistress for a couple of years' I must admit I'd been a little intrigued. I'd already been made aware that, while rare, it wasn't unknown for members of the force to 'try one with a bit of the tar brush' as miscegenation was euphemistically referred to. Harare African Hospital had an extremely attractive Coloured sister, Edith, working there who was both educated and sophisticated whom I'd met when on duty two or three times. I also met her one late evening 'sneaking out' of a fellow English-born Harare cop's bedroom and had my smile returned with the same and a complicit wink! When another young Rhodesian born cop coming off night duty on another occasion witnessed the same 'goings on' he was the following day to loudly proclaim to myself and another cop; '*I saw that ugly 'goffel'* (a derogatory term for a Coloured person used by many Rhodesians) *bitch from the hospital coming out of Xs room last night.*' Would I'd had the courage to both tell him to keep his prejudices to himself and to point out that I felt his appreciation of the female form was all to hell!

I can't recall where I met a Coloured guy, Danny Fernandez, but we struck up a certain rapport and I was interested to learn amongst other things that he'd served ten years in prison for the knifing to death of his wife who he'd apparently caught in bed with a lover. He invited me to visit him one Sunday in Arcadia, which was a housing complex for Coloured people. I took up his offer and took some beer with me. It was an interesting afternoon which I repeated several Sundays later. We drank beer, danced to loud music and ate rather spicy food. I felt however that I'd been accepted with certain reservations, and that beneath the friendly atmosphere there was an certain element of discomfort in some of those gathered that I been both White and a policeman.

*'Hell, Johnny. All I can say is the standard of training in Depot has deteriorated to hell and gone!'*

*'Give me the bloody TARB and piss off will you!'*

My first traffic accident; car versus car, both African owned and only bruises and cuts....walking wounded. The A/C, first policeman on the scene, was patently relieved his European superior had arrived to efficiently sort out the scene and record the necessary details. Except he'd forgotten to bring a TARB (Traffic Accident Report Book) with him! As luck would have it a Police vehicle from another station turned up enroute to his base and I took advantage of his generosity and his spare TARB; after I'd had to bear with his derisory comments concerning 'greenhorns' just out of the Training Depot.

*'Give me that bloody TARB, Johnston, and bugger-off! You're pissed!'*

After that I always carried a TARB; even in my civilian jacket! Early one evening in Salisbury when I'd had a few beers I was walking up to the intersection of First and Union Streets when an open top sports car 'ran the red light' and was hit by a another vehicle. Relatively minor damage to people and cars occurred but, tempers flared between the drivers until the young attractive blonde from the sports car found her voice and defused the hostility by engaging in a rising crescendo of hysteria. While a bystander and her boyfriend struggled to calm her down, I identified myself as a cop, took my TARB out from inside my jacket and had began recording vehicle and driver's details when a uniformed PO, Charlie Piscopus, a rather likable if somewhat extroverted member of the force, appeared on the scene. I informed him that all was in hand and he could have the TARB when I'd completed it. Charlie's response was predictable! The ingrate!

*'You guys are ok but keep that bitch away from me with her Mickey Finn!'*

SO Alan Stock and I were on duty one early evening when a phone call came in requesting our assistance at the facility that cared for Europeans with psychiatric problems. On our arrival the Duty Sister had explained that there were no male staff present who could assist her in sedating a male who'd gone beserk and wrecked most of the furniture in his 'locked cell'. He'd even shattered the reinforced glass of the 'spy-hole' of the cell. After we'd announced we were police we'd gingerly admitted ourselves to a scene of mayhem and destruction. The solidly built male of about forty-five had completely demolished an arm chair and had confronted us with a handful of the springs from the wrecked item of furniture. And while he'd accepted our presence, the very sight of the Sister with her kidney tray and hypodermic had been enough to send him beserk again. Alan Stock tried to reason with the man and had explained that he must accept the sedation but, all in vain. Tiring of our 'softly-softly' approach the Sister caught our attention and got us out in the corridor again where she'd explained that direct action was called for. Why else had she requested our assistance?

*'Ok, Johnny. We'll flatten him on the bed. When I say 'right' you go for the top and I'll grab his legs and we'll hold him secure until the Sister has done her thing.'*

'Right, Sarge'. Thanks! I get the end that wields the weapon!

He went quietly under our combined sudden assault. Turned his head aside to sadly announce: '*A man can't even trust the BSA Police these days.*'

I think Alan and I had both felt a measure of sympathy for the man after that! As we'd stood in the corridor talking to the Sister and listening to the slowly decreasing tirade from the man who wasn't going to accept his sedation we'd been approached by a slight, mousy-haired woman of about forty with sad eyes who'd offered to make us a cup of tea. She was in a dressing gown but the sleeves were short enough to reveal heavy bandaging about one wrist. We'd declined her kind offer. It was a scene I can so easily bring even to mind even today and it sometimes arises involuntarily.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

I was all but ready to go off duty late one afternoon at Stodart when a Salisbury United Omnibus Co. driver charged into the station yard on foot.

*'Bastards! They've burnt my bus! Bastards!'*

The palms of his hands were raw and bleeding, his eyebrows were singed and he stank of soot and sweat. With an A/C and the bus driver, a rather diminutive man still wearing his maroon beret, we piled into a vehicle and as we left the station for the short drive to the scene which was near Runyararo Mission, I learnt that there was one alive ...but badly burnt ... passenger still in the bus.

It was my fault....put it down to excitement....that I hadn't asked of the passenger situation. I radioed the station to get them to organise an ambulance for an urgent case.

The bus had been petrol bombed but the ensuing fire had been extinguished by the driver, first using his fire extinguisher and then his hands to throw gravel and sand on the last of the flames. The passenger, a heavily built African dressed in a black suit and seated about half way down the bus where a broken window indicated the petrol bomb had struck; was still conscious but was burnt from the waist down, the worst burns being on his lower legs. Between the burnt upholstery, flesh and clothing, the smell was most obnoxious. After I'd radioed Riot Stand-by as a precaution and told them as much of the details of the attack as I knew, the A/C and I could only offer ineffectual words of comfort for the sorely stricken man and hope the ambulance wouldn't be long.

Fortunately the ambulance was quickly on the scene. We decided we'd have to manhandle the injured man out of the bus because stretchering him was virtually impossible. The strongest of our group gripped him under the armpits and I grabbed a lower leg in each hand. He groaned terribly but we soon had him out and on a stretcher. As I released his legs big pieces of burnt suit material and his skin remained adhered to my hands. The bare burnt flesh above his ankles was a shiny purple-red.

Thank the Lord for a strong stomach and a farm upbringing!

My uniform was a soot marked mess but dried grass and dust got most of the 'material' off my hands. As I straightened up from my 'ablutions' I realised a European, well dressed in a gaberdine coat and hat... a man in his late forties...had arrived on the scene. At first I didn't recognise him and then I recalled that in my Depot training days I'd been on PGHQ guard duties one evening when he'd appeared and ordered I admit him. When I'd asked for identification, as I was required to do, he'd feigned impatience but had eventually produced his Police identity card and identified himself as a Special Branch officer.

I feigned ignorance of his rank that day, I didn't salute, plain clothes men were generally more relaxed in the field about such matters anyway.

*'PO Johnston, sir. From Stodart. The bus was petrol bombed'* I added rather unnecessarily. *'With no real description of the offenders available as yet. Except they appeared to be younger males.'*

*'If you've got the necessary details you'd better get back to your station and clean yourself up properly, Johnston'.*

I wasn't too sure whether he sympathised with my plight or was anxious I restore myself as quickly as possible to the high dress standard expected of a member of the Force! How he became aware of the crime....it was politically motivated and thus of interest to Special Branch....I was never to learn. My only 'public' details released had been the radio message to Riot Standby.

As far as I know the young men involved in the crime; the driver believed there were at least three who attacked the bus; were never arrested.

Aside from a Medical Report stating the obvious; severe burns including third degree, to the lower body; I never learnt the fate of the injured passenger.

However, I was asked to produce a statement detailing the SUOC driver's actions in saving his bus from total damage and subsequently was told the bus company had awarded him twenty-five pounds for his bravery and diligence. It doesn't sound much for a man who's hands were raw and bleeding from his exertions that afternoon but it would buy then what would cost us about two thousand dollars today.

*'Manheru, Maxwell...Josiah...Elias...Patrol Officer McDade.'*

Our BSAP Special Branch was looked on as being a rather autonomous lot with whom we junior uniform men had little cause for interaction. And as beffitted a 'secret organisation' they weren't very forthcoming with details of what they did. One member I knew at Harare did relate an amusing incident involving an operation. Apparently African Field Reserve patrols in Harare were increasingly being abused by members of the public. What better way to observe first hand the alleged abuse than to go on patrol with an AFR unit disguised as an African. So blackened hands and face and floppy issue hat pulled well down over the eyes, Gerry McDade, attached himself to the rear of a patrol and felt he was doing quite well undercover until the patrol encountered an affable African Sgt who greeted each AFR member in turn and a chastened DPO by rank and name as they went past him!

The world at large, including the major Western powers, were quick to condemn Rhodesia's 'illegal' Declaration of Independence and many countries prohibited entry to Rhodesians and imposed sanctions. It wasn't until the latter measures had begun to bite that people in Rhodesia realised just how limited the manufacture of certain everyday goods and items had been in their country. Confectionary, including chocolate, was an early casualty. Breakfast cereal, razor blades and females' lingerie were other items that came to mind. The latter articles gave rise to such 'inappropriate comments' such as 'So, which days, Jenny, are you economising and foregoing the wearing of undergarments' and retorts such as 'You can be certain you'll be the last to find out!' Given we shaved on a daily basis generally using electric shavers but having to use razor blades when away from a source of power, it was literally a pain...with the shortages they were used for far longer than usual...having to find blades. A brand, Minora, that literally cost...or had at one stage...a penny and were always referred to as 'penny-Minoras' were a favourite with the African police and they...cunning sods...bought up all they could find and despite dire threats and labels of their practice as 'corrupt' and 'black-marketeers' we European police were forced to

pay them two or three times the original purchase price when in desperation we went to them to obtain the necessary razor blades!

As I remember, the first locally produced breakfast cereal was Honey Puffs. I remember the TV announcer commiserating with the consumers and using words to the effect. ‘They don’t go ‘snap, crackle and pop, as we’ve been used to. When you pour milk over them all you can expect is a faint sigh of triumph as they subside in your bowl. But, they are ours!’

*‘We could have bloody well told them so’.*

I was at Stodart when an intake....the first ever, I believe....of African Policewomen completed their training. I believe they were posted to mainly urban stations in the Salisbury area and they were not welcomed with open arms by the majority of Member I/Cs by all accounts. There were dire predictions from some that despite the young women’s sound training and intelligence, they would unsettle the male African Police. Stodart didn’t receive a female A/C but Harare and I believe our neighbouring Matapi had at least one each. Sadly the predictions were borne out by an early discharge for several of women A/Cs, a number of them on the grounds of pregnancy and others resigning because of reported, probably able to be substantiated, sexual harassment from their male counterparts. Within eighteen months of their postings I believe that only a small number remained in the Force.

One European policeman who defended the use of African policewomen was Denis Castell-Castell. He worked with one at Harare and reckoned she was as good as or better than the average male A/C. However it was a lack of judgement on his part...or given it was Castell’s, probably bloody-mindedness...that saw an all stations directive from PGHQ regarding the transportation of female, more especially African personnel on the back of Police motorcycles.

Castell, as I’ve previously described, was a rather short rotund guy and the African policewoman had the same physical dimensions. And Denis didn’t see any problem with riding a Police motorcycle through the centre of Salisbury with a rather buxom African policewoman.... issue skirt hiked well up her shiny brown ample thighs....hanging onto him from the pillion seat. I understand it was members of the public who complained about what they saw to be an unsightly depiction of their fine and highly regarded Police Force at work. Denis laughed off the complaints and the directive from PGHQ forbidding such action in future. The story went round...probably invented to suit the occasion... that one of the persons expressing his displeasure had claimed that, *‘In a lifetime, much of it spent in the military, I’ve yet to see a more horrible depiction of uniformed personnel at work than I witnessed that afternoon!’*

Castell wasn’t above criticising his fellow police officers, especially his seniors.

One evening we had a group of darts players from the Caledonian Society visit our mess, ‘The Southern Cross’, to play against our members. I was behind the bar and shortly after the 10.00pm closing time I stopped serving drinks and locked the till. We were relatively restrained; talking with the visitors and finishing our drinks, when one of younger women with the group piped up. *‘What rank’s a policeman with three pips on each shoulder?’*

I glanced up and saw our Member I/C Chief Inspector Pickard... looking through the bar window at us. *‘It’s Mr. Pickard...’* I cautioned the others, believing I was about to get a ‘bollocking’ for not having the bar clear of drinkers.

*‘Who and what’s Mr. Pickard...?’* A drinker had to ask.

And true to form, typical Castell, he got his answer. *‘Dirty Bertie Pickard... looks like a sack of shit tied in the middle with a signal halyard!’*

Oh...shit!

Mr. Pickard came to the door of the bar and said, '*Johnston, the bar is supposed to be cleared by now. You'll have to tell your guests to leave.*' And then, just before he turned to go. '*Castell; your voice carries a long way!*' And that, most surprisingly, was the end of the matter.

When I was available I worked one night each week in Harare's 'Southern Cross' police bar, usually a Sunday, which allowed the regular barman, John, an elderly grey-haired African the evening off. I was paid the princely sum of twelve shillings and sixpence for my diligence and I needed it! Whilst some Monday mornings found the money taken equated to beer and spirit sales there were a number when SO Mike Abbotts, in charge of overseeing mess matters, would shake his head sadly and announce I was in arrears and due only a portion of my 'salary'. On one occasion I actually had to 'foot the difference' from my own money. As there was no stock-take at the point of my take-over from John, the situation was established for John to 'tickle the till' knowing well I'd have to make up any short-fall. We, the regular drinkers, all liked John and I decided not to initiate an investigation into his honesty or otherwise and accept the situation.

Being in contact with the mess SO meant I was privy to a much larger and more easily investigated fraud that took place. 'Ma-Mac...I won't use her full name because she was never charged with any offence but, those who ate in the Harare police mess in the late fifties and up to the mid sixties will know who I mean...was cheerful, friendly, motherly and obliging. If there were any complaints made of her running of the mess kitchen they would revolve around the seemingly high costs we paid per meal. Of the food itself, there was general satisfaction. On a couple of occasions SO Abbot asked my opinion of the seemingly large amount of certain items 'Ma' had submitted invoices for and indicated he 'had his suspicions'. The problem was 'Ma' was just so damned popular so he had to be careful about his suspicions. The opportunity to investigate in full came when 'Ma' took six weeks leave to visit a daughter in Canada. And the extent of a long-standing, but regular, over-ordering of mainly cleaning and dishwashing products became apparent. 'What the hell would 'Ma' want with three dozen packets of washing powder when it's only two months since her last order?' was typical of SO Abbotts rhetorical questions to me as we did a 'stock-take' of the kitchens pantry and cupboards only to discover that the existing dish-washing powder was near exhausted. I was shown some of the 'bogus' invoices and whilst not privy to the exact or full extent of 'Ma's' extra money-making scheme, was told it was bad, easily serious enough to warrant prosecution; but, I was not to pass on what I knew to the other members. SO Abbot would seek the advice of a senior man and it would be taken from there.

When 'Ma-Mac' landed back on Rhodesian soil at the conclusion of her Canadian holiday, undoubtedly she'd have been looking forward to telling us of her adventure. Sadly, for Ma, the first uniformed men at the Salisbury Airport she encountered served in the BSAP and they hadn't been despatched to take her to her home. In a move that most of those who knew 'Ma' felt was fair and compassionate, Ma-Mac was kept at the Airport and put on the first flight to England and ultimately Scotland, her country of birth.

'Ma's' exit from the mess scene saw a general tightening up of the administration of the mess which put an end to the occasional 'late night snack' several of us at Harare enjoyed. It would be unfair to blame Castell, but, it was him who put a number of we younger members up to what amounted to a midnight burglary of the kitchen. Entry was gained through a high window, usually by myself as the smallest of the

participants and I in turn undid the kitchen door locks to admit the others. Justification for our criminal behaviour was the high messing cost we paid and the idea we were probably often charged for meals we hadn't consumed anyway...for whatever reason. Nevertheless the cooked bacon sandwiches, sometimes with an egg included, went down very well with we late night revellers and surprisingly...unlike poor "Ma-Mac" we were never brought to task and made to account for our sins.

An incident that probably well typified Castell's often anarchic behaviour took place one evening after supper when Denis and I had decided to have a rare booze free evening and were alone in the upstairs lounge at the barracks smoking and swapping 'histories' when a loud explosion came from the Harare African Township.

*'What..the...!'*

*'C'mon, Johnny! We're out of here!' Denis could move when he had to.*

*As we hurried down the stairs the phone was ringing. 'Don't touch it!'*

We dived into his car and in seconds were at the station gates being challenged by the A/C on duty. *'No-one is permitted to...'*

*'Can't you see we have important business?' Castell dropped the clutch and we were off down town to the Golden Dragon, a restaurant owned by a Chinese couple affectionately known as Tommy and Mrs Tommy.*

Tommy would on occasion offer his regular guests a complimentary warm saki (rice-wine) and we'd downed one of those and started on a beer....so much for the booze free evening...when Denis wandered over to the public phone and placed a call.

Eager to 'hear what had happened' I watched Denis' progress back to us and knew I wasn't about to be instantly enlightened as to the mystery explosion. His normally ruddy cheeks were fair pulsing with inner mirth and errant tears ran freely down each cheek.

*'What! Castell?'*

Denis shook his head; lifted up his glass and took a few sips of his beer. Then wiped his eyes, coughed and blew his nose. Fresh tears made new tracks on his cheeks.

*'What?!"*

*"They've blown up the shit-houses in Vito's Tavern!" It was some time before Denis could again compose himself enough to elaborate.*

Political dissidents had put crude gelignite 'bombs' in several of the toilet cubicles in the Beerhall. Enough had been ignited to cause the explosion we'd heard but fortunately...make that miraculously... there'd been no fatalities or even serious injurious.

Denis and I were never asked to explain our absence or flight from the station confines.

Off-duty on the same day, Denis and I drove into town one morning and because the bars were yet to open I suggested we had time to answer the Hospital's plea for blood donors and give them a pint each. Denis apparently had never been a donor but I had in both NZ and South Africa.

*'Well done men...we can trust you BSAP guys to help out.'* The Sister in the Blood Bank welcomed our visit. And then announced. 'If you like you can have a beer each before your donation as a reward'.

In no time we were sipping on a 'stubby'. Then I went first after I'd assured Denis there was nothing to parting with a 'pint of the red stuff'. But, plainly he wasn't too sure about that.

*'What about another beer, Sister.'*

*'Alright, then.'* Perhaps the Sister reasoned Denis required more sedation before his donation!

Donation? Fat chance! While he wasn't expected to match his donation, pint for pint, with the beer he'd consumed, he could have given them something! Or at least when the time came to part with the 'red stuff' not bothered to concoct a far from credible medical history that included nearly every disease the Dark Continent could visit on a man!

*'Next time a man's short of money, I know where to go for a beer!'* He was incorrigible was Denis Castell-Castell! A man who jealously guarded his individuality and unique outlook on life.

BSAP was on occasion given to mean Broke Soon After Pay and Castell, frustrated at not always having the price of a beer until the next pay day decided to alleviate such a situation and make his own booze...rum to be exact...in his room!

Soon there was glassware with molasses bubbling away and giving off a very tell-tale aroma that suggested a certain room in the barracks was being 'put to a very improper use!'

The brew was just days short of completion....according to Castell's admittedly dubious judgement.... when the CO announced there'd be a room inspection. Denis co-opted me into helping him secrete the apparatus and bubbling fermentation in his wardrobe cupboard. The inspecting party wouldn't look there. But there was no hiding the aroma from the nefarious operation!

Room inspections were rare and not overly formal. The CO and Member I/C generally cast a cursory glance about the room, enquired of any complaints or problems and moved on. Such was the case with me.

But, my next door neighbour didn't fare quite so well. *'God, Castell, your room smells like a damned brewery! What is it?'*

I didn't hear Denis' mumbled explanation but, quite a long conversation ensued as I pictured Dennis diverting attention to other matters that occupied him and it was a while before footsteps in the corridor announced that yet again the 'bloody man' had escaped retribution. I suppose one could reflect in his defence the technicality that he was in fact operating a distillery, not a brewery as the CO had suggested!

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

The heavily built White man who came through the Harare Charge Office door late one afternoon was moving quickly despite favouring an obviously injured ankle or foot. And he was clearly rather distressed.

He spoke with a European, possibly German, accent and told me that he was an evangelist and along with a local African minister he'd been preaching in the township from his especially modified van when a gang of youths had attacked them with stones. He'd been hit several times, his worst injury being to an ankle, and when his African 'side-kick' had fled he'd decided that the Lord's word wasn't exactly falling on receptive ears and it was time for him to also beat a retreat. His primary concern, he pointed out a number of times, was for the African minister who was dressed in clerical garb. Otherwise he would not have come to our Police station. He wasn't laying a complaint, but was genuinely concerned for a fellow churchman.

I hoped I wasn't sounding rather off-hand when I suggested that if the black minister had any sense he'd have removed his clerical 'collar' and other identifying clothes and merged with the general populace. What was of some concern to me was that the white preacher believed the hostile crowd could number at least fifty. And he ought to know; the size of crowds attending rallies was normally a pointer as to how well a preacher was being received.

I immediately called up a Riot Stand-by unit, gave them the location of the incident and they advised me I inform the Duty Officer as well.

The best I could do to ease the preacher's fears was to take a description of his black friend and details of what church organisation he belonged to.

The first person to indicate the trouble hadn't ended with the departure of the men of God from the township was a patrolling A/C who'd wisely fled for the security of the Police station himself after encountering the mob who'd apparently now turned their anger on the Council Offices. He described the situation as '*Very bad, sir. They are causing too much trouble.*'

Supt. 'Spike' Hughes, Duty Officer, was soon at Harare in his maroon Anglia sedan and I filled him in on what I knew of the situation. He took an A/C with him after deciding to investigate the situation himself and instructing me to remain at all times by the radio and to maintain a log of all messages pertaining to what was now regarded as a riot situation.

Hughes was soon to inform me that he was at the scene. And shortly afterwards to radio again that his vehicle was being stoned. Could I get Riot Stand-by to hurry things up. Could I ever! Especially as Hughes' next message indicated he'd fired his revolver at and wounded a rioter who'd apparently been dragged away by his friends.

I was to remain by the radio for another two hours, faithfully recording each radio message, until the situation had obviously calmed down. Then I was sent to the Harare African Hospital on the off chance the wounded rioter may be brought in for attention to his gunshot wound.

I wasn't a happy man! I'd supposed to end my shift at five o'clock; had missed out on my evening meal and was down to start work on the day shift the next day! '*Sorry, Johnston, but that's the way the cookie crumbles.*' I'd have been happy with the cookie's crumbs and a cup of tea!

I did better than that. A sympathetic Coloured Sister at the hospital took pity on my hangdog plight and soon a handful of biscuits and a cup of tea were before me. And, yes, they'd inform me if anyone came in with a gunshot wound. I was finally allowed to go off duty in the early hours of the next morning.

When after several days the 'wounded man' wasn't brought in for treatment, there was some speculation that he'd either died of his wound or possibly even not been wounded at all. It may have remained a mystery for some time but, for the fact an African nurse was caught stealing certain drugs from the Harare Hospital. And she'd used them to try and treat her brother for a deteriorating leg wound caused by a bullet!

Brother and sister were tried and convicted but received relatively light punishment. The Roman Dutch Law we worked under had a compassionate and understanding element imbued in it.

While being stationed at Harare meant we dealt mainly with crime involving Africans; our area also included the Industrial Sites where Whites had businesses. We also were responsible for Remembrance Drive and vehicle accidents that occurred there but, I can only recall attending a couple of such incidents.

Shortly after my posting to Harare I was sent to investigate a break in of a factory, a wool-carding premise as I recall. I was directed to the owner's office and immediately had the feeling I'd seen the man before. And it hadn't been in Rhodesia.

I took a chance. '*I've met you before. Were you down in Jo'burg in late '64 or early '65.*'

He nodded. '*I go down a couple of times a year on business.*'

A woman slightly younger than the guy sat at a nearby desk but seemed engrossed in her secretarial work. Before I could say any more the factory owner was on his feet and ushering me out of the door of his office.

*'Let's go and see where the bastard broke in.'* Then once clear of the office.  
*'Phew! That is my wife back in the office.'*

The last time I'd seen him was in the Club Giselle, Johannesburg, and after an hour or two of drinking together he'd left me having 'organised a young woman' for the night!

The man responsible for the factory break-in had climbed onto a low structure below a window, levered off the security screen, smashed the window and entered the building. I searched through the larger pieces of glass which were very dusty and found what I was looking for. Fingerprints. He'd placed his hands against the window before breaking it.

The glass was taken back to Harare and placed in the Exhibit cupboard and then forgotten for the best part of eight months.... when they should have immediately been sent to the Criminal Records Office.... until an SO tidying up the cupboard shoved the wire basket containing the shards of glass before my uncomfortable gaze and then added to my discomfort. *'What the hell are these, Johnston?'*

They turned out to be the fingerprints of a habitual criminal who was currently awaiting trial on several other crimes, mostly house-breaking. My case was added to his woes. He received a lengthy prison sentence and myself a reminder not to be so careless with evidence.

Chasing speeding motorists was usually left to the Traffic Section with their cars suitably powered for such work Hell, the Landrovers we mainly drove would be hard pressed to overhaul a determined cyclist! But, one afternoon as I motored along Remembrance Drive on my way to begin the 5pm to 1am night shift on Stoddart's 650cc Matchless at the legal speed I was overtaken at speed by a large left-hand drive American car being driven by a teenage female with another young woman alongside her. The cheeky young thing. She was asking to be pursued and stopped. I must have been doing about 75-80MPH when I finally drew alongside the passenger door and yelled for the car to be pulled over. The driver complied rather suddenly and I was at least a hundred yards up the road before I could stop the motorcycle and motor back to the vehicle.

Yes, she was aware she was speeding but it was her Dad's car and they were supposed to have returned it at least an hour before to their home in Waterfalls. Her licence was OK. 'Alright then, driver, late or not you must keep to the speed limit in future. OK.'

*'Thanks officer.'*

*'Johnston; you're over ten minutes late.'* SO Bailey was still in his office.

*'I chased and stopped a speeding car, Sarge, on Remembrance Drive.'*

*'Oh, well, get the paperwork done while it's still fresh in your mind.'*

*'I let them off with a warning. True, Sarge. They were a pair of young girls whose father has probably already murdered them for being late back with his car.'*

SO Bailey's smirk suggested a similar fate for me if I was late again and tried the same excuse. Clearly he didn't know whether to believe me or not. It was the last time I tried doing Traffic Section's work.

I was at Stodart when a directive came from the CID 'powers that be' that night shift details in the Harare Township were.... when their normal workload permitted....to carry out random house searches for people who didn't have the necessary papers to reside in Harare. It was believed that as well as the fifty odd

thousand legal residents there could be another five thousand illegally living there and a fair proportion of them would include criminals. We were to be mindful of the legal residents rights and explain it was in their interests we apprehend the criminals who preyed on them.

The idea worked well; sometimes we picked up eight or ten 'illegals'....one evening there were eleven, nine in the vehicle and two on the roof!... and when they were processed by CID the next day it was rare that at least a couple weren't wanted for various crimes, some relatively serious. Most householders were quite willing to show they didn't harbour 'illegals' and apparently not too resentful of our intrusion in their lives which we carried out without any overt aggression or unnecessary exercise of authority. But, there were some who definitely resented our nocturnal interruption to their lives. One house we checked had a group of male schoolteachers living in it but, two were visitors and didn't have the required papers. Rather more erudite men than we'd become used to encountering, they argued strongly against our taking them back to the station. And even pointed out that our tactics of random searches were neither legal nor what they'd come to expect in Rhodesia from her Police Force. I recorded the names and tribal details of the pair who lacked the authority to reside in Harare and fervently hoping I hadn't been hoodwinked by a couple of notorious criminals, backed down on my original plan to take them into custody.

Until that evening I'd been an enthusiastic proponent of the 'raids' and like my peers welcomed the CID clearance figures and their acknowledgement of the worth of the exercise. The recalcitrant teachers gave me grounds to look at the whole picture concerning the raids and wonder whether, despite our successes, our actions were morally justified. In hindsight I feel that perhaps they weren't. We weren't a police state even if an increasing proportion of our work involved maintaining the status quo....keeping the minority White population satisfied that they could expect to see the future with them still ruling over the majority Black population.

I'd say that our 'raids' lasted for little more than a month. Complaints were made to the Anglican Church and they in turn expressed their abhorrence of our actions to the Government. And pointed out the obvious, that no White household would tolerate an after dark random Police visit merely to see if they were harbouring 'illegals' or criminals.

We were ordered to cease the raids on the houses forthwith. But, one early evening a relatively large number of details....every man who could be spared.... were ordered to report to Yotamu, a sister Police Station to Stodart but one that was only manned on special occasions. Senior CID and a couple of SB guys were there and we were briefed on our duties for the evening. Every resident of the Matapi Hostels for single men was to be checked and any persons not in possession of valid papers were to be brought to Yotamu for 'processing' by plainclothes details.

It was a big task involving at least ten hostels with at least a hundred, possibly two hundred residents in each. The hostel I was assigned to had about eight or ten men we deemed worthy of investigation and they were conveyed to Yotamu to join the queue to be checked.

All went smoothly at first; the majority of those we brought in were cleared to return to their hostel but a number of wanted men were detected and detained. One hostel remained outstanding and there was some muttering on the lines of 'What's that bloody man, Firth, up to? Why isn't he here?'

That 'bloody man', Martin Firth, a squad mate of mine from Depot days, had misunderstood his instructions. We heard them before we saw them appearing from the gloom. Over one hundred rather unhappy and volubly upset men.... many with

early morning jobs to go to.... being shepherded down the road by Firth and a handful of A/Cs. He'd brought the lot from the hostel he'd been assigned to check!

Fortunately by then the plainclothes men had checked to the others we'd brought in and it wasn't too long before the majority of the unfortunates Firth had rounded up were back in their beds.

Crimes involving violence were endemic in Harare African Township. Thursday was pay day for many of the Africans and by the evening many were rather intoxicated and became perpetrators or victims of violence. The victims had no problem in coming to a Police station to demand we arrest and punish the offenders. As did many township people who felt they'd be wronged. Simple straight-forward cases were dealt with by the African police. Not all involved any in depth investigation; generally the alleged offender was known to the complainant. Never more so than one evenings performance that for a time was referred to by myself and those A/Cs who witnessed it as the 'night of the strip-tease.'

*'Sir. This is the situation...this woman has been robbed of her clothes...by her boyfriend.'*

Oh, dear. The twenty something year old African lass was all but starkers! A piece of cloth barely the size of a face-cloth was held over her pubic area and an arm had to suffice to partially conceal her ample breasts from the lascivious eyes of the five African police details. It had to be a serious matter, even the A/C detailed for gate duty was in the Charge Office!

*'Why didn't she just go home, Constable?'*

*'He forced her from her home, sir. Without her clothes She is not married.'*

I had to ask: *'Do you think she is a mahuri (prostitute), Constable?'*

Loud denials as such from the hapless woman indicated that this probably wasn't a case where the client had enjoyed her services and then refused to pay; as was the basis of a number of complaints we received. It wasn't uncommon for prostitutes to even allege rape in such cases. I was reluctant to send her on her way even with an escort; the chances of 'allegations' against the African Police details was too high.

*'We'll have to take her to her place, Constable. Take her to the Land-rover.'*

As she left the Charge Office I looked over the solemn faces of the remaining A/Cs, shook my head in mock exasperation and announced.

*'It is so difficult being a policeman at Harare. I think I will apply for a District posting.'*

*'Ah, no sir. In Harare we have more interesting cases.'*

A sudden outburst of laughter from all present, myself included, set the seal on the unusual incident. Her 'boyfriend' apparently accepted her back.

Prostitution was a given in Harare African Township where a large number of single, but employed, males were housed in a series of hostels, mainly in the Matapi area. Sadly for many younger women selling themselves was basically their only option for survival if they'd been rejected by husbands. To return to their tribal villages as 'used goods' also meant they faced a life, subsistence at best, of drudgery and exploitation. No African male wanted to marry a woman who wasn't a virgin. I did learn that in cases of premature widowhood a woman would sometimes become a 'second wife' for her late husband's brother. Prostitutes, who generally 'plied their trade' in the vicinity of African Beerhalls weren't subject to arrest and prosecution. But, pimps...posing as 'boyfriends'...sometimes attracted the attention of the African police when assaults on their charges occurred and complaints were made.

One late evening when I walked into Salisbury Central the duty SO was diligently with the use of a mask and pump for air/oxygen attempting to resuscitate a young

Coloured woman lying in the middle of the Charge Office who'd overdosed...or whatever. The curious junior staff looked on. Apparently the woman, allegedly a prostitute, was no stranger to Police staff and had caused problems in the past. I believe she survived the collapse I'd witnessed.

One Thursday night when I was at Stodart on night shift I'd already taken three Africans requiring medical treatment for wounds inflicted by knives or other weapons to the Harare hospital ...and had particulars of their complaints recorded.... and I had another complainant in the Landrover awaiting transport when an African, well dressed in a black suit and hat, walked into the charge office holding a blood-soaked handkerchief to his lower jaw. He reeked of Chibuku (African beer) and had difficulty with his speech and with laying his complaint. When he uncovered his mouth it was revealed he'd had a cut right through his lower lip that exposed his lower front teeth.

He was very vague but believed he'd been hit by a piece of chain wielded by a man on a bike who was a stranger to him. He couldn't provide us with any further details to base a case on.

I was already facing a heap of paper work and basically told him that I'd take him up to the hospital for treatment. But, if he wanted us to investigate the assault on him he'd have to locate the offender himself and bring him to the station. I recorded his name and the date, time, and approximate place where the assault had taken place. Given I expected the complainant to have his wound stitched and that be the last we see of him, I don't know why, but as a last minute thing I quickly completed an 'Application for a Medical Report' and that action was initially to get me into a little trouble but, in the long run save me quite a lot of grief. And teach me a valuable lesson.

About a week later when I was again on night shift, I arrived at Stodart about ten minutes early, greeted SO Bailey and was about to head for the PO.s office when he called me into his office.

*'Johnston, I've got a completed Application for a Medical Report here from Harare Hospital that indicates a case of Attempted Murder but I've searched through your dockets and can't find anything to match the details. Can you find the docket and bring it to me.'*

*'Attempted Murder, sir? I've got a case of GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm) but not Attempted Murder.'*

He slid the form across his desk. 'Read that and put it with your other documents. I want to see the docket before I go off duty.'

Two paces inside my office and I knew I'd 'cocked-up' a week previously. An African Sgt. was taking a statement from the be-suited complainant with the now stitched up lower lip. Another forlorn looking African sat on a bench nearby.

*'This is the man, baas. I have brought him to the station like you said.'*

*'Oh, shit. So you have.'*

But, Attempted Murder?

I never read that medical form in full. Read down as far as I needed to see the complainant had suffered a two inch deep stab wound to his mid back region that had narrowly missed a vital organ. And another stab wound that had hit his scapular.

Bloody, hell! Why hadn't he told me? Why hadn't I seen evidence of those wounds? Blame it on the black suit and the Blacks stoicism fuelled by beer. And all the other blood and gore around that night that masked this man's injuries.

The Sgt. carried on recording the complainants statement and promised he would soon finish it, while I was soon at another desk on the other old Olympia typing faster

than I'd ever done; arguably even faster than I had in last typing speed test we'd had in Training Depot!

Ten minutes after he'd normally have left for home, SO Bailey was still in his office.

*'I've got the Docket, Sarge. The Attempted Murder case.'*

He took the manila Docket folder from me, opened it and cast but a cursory glance over it before adding it to other folders on his desk tray.

*'I'd better leave it until tomorrow... give the ink time to dry...before I look through it.'*

Bailey didn't often smile but I believe at least a wry smirk crossed his face before I left his office.

A few days later when I was on day shift and about to leave for the barracks and lunch, SO Bailey announced he'd like a beer at our mess.

Having a single beer before our midday meal wasn't in any way frowned on in the BSA Police. It was left to the individual to use his common sense and to not be on duty and under the influence of booze at the same time.

Bailey bought beers for both of us and as we drank them he related how as a junior policeman he'd been guilty of the same oversight as I had....it wasn't an uncommon oversight for inexperienced policemen... namely they hadn't checked out properly the injuries to a complainant. It was a diplomatic way of telling me to exercise more care in future.

But, what if the main subject of a case had just died and the check was not for wounds but vital life signs? On at least two occasions at Stodart I made a hash of the procedure laid down for such events, although one resulted from bad luck rather than poor management.

As a general rule, unless the deceased was very obviously dead, we police officers had to have a doctor concur with our 'suspicions' before we placed the deceased in the mortuary. The story was told of one doctor, new to Harare Hospital, who brought in a rule that all apparently deceased persons must be certified as such by a doctor. After all, how could a policeman, a man with little more medical training than a basic idea of first aid be trusted to make a life and death decision?

Quite. But, not all of the doctor in questions peers agreed with his ruling. The Widdicombe Railway Crossing claimed the life of at least one African pedestrian a year. And not too long after the rather rigid ruling from the Harare doctor a rather disassembled African male's remains were recovered from on and near the railway tracks, placed in a body box and conveyed to the Hospital.

No, the duty doctor was far too busy to take the time to certify the man was dead. But, the particular doctor who was sceptical of the average cops ability to decide between life and death happened to be on call-out duty if the matter meant life and death. It did; he had to state as such! And he also happened to be at a function near Beatrice, some twenty minutes drive away. But, duty was duty and he was on his way.

Legend has it he wasn't a happy man when the lid was lifted on the body box to reveal the rather revolting contents and the legend continues that the policeman was alleged to have said something in the order of ; 'Well, one can never be too sure; can they Doctor?'

The rigid rule was rescinded. Common sense prevailed.

*'Well you obviously think the infant is dead.'*

I'd stuffed up...made a proper bloody *tadza* (mistake...balls up)

Along with a grieving mother and other female relatives I'd conveyed a still warm but apparently dead child of about ten months to the Harare Mortuary where I'd

completed the Application for an Autopsy and attached an identification label to the infants foot. Only then did I decide I'd better get a doctor to confirm the baby was in fact dead! And so I set off carrying the baby myself with my A/C and the African females following through dimly lit corridors with their characteristic musty smell of stale antiseptic looking for the only doctor. He was neither affable nor sympathetic. And pointedly read the Mortuary label as if to confirm my procedural mistake before he began his examination which was long enough to add to my discomfort.

*'At least an hour...possibly two or three.'*

Back in the Mortuary I suddenly remembered that despite the doctor's examination with his stethoscope to confirm the infant was dead, I'd neglected to examine the deceased myself for evidence of foul play as was laid down in procedures. Without any explanation to the relatives I undid clothing and checked for bruising.

*'They say, are you still not sure the baby is dead?' The A/C translated a sudden outburst from the women.*

Oh, shit.

*"Tell them I'm sorry, Constable, but the infant is dead and she must be left here tonight. We will tell them when they may fetch the child for burial. We can take them home now.'*

Following rules and laid down procedures can be very cruel when it involves the death of a loved one. Even though I was to handle other sudden deaths involving infants, I can still remember that particular one with a residual feeling of guilt that in trying to protect my own butt, I'd perhaps acted rather callously and thoughtlessly.

But, evening shifts weren't all drama and sad experiences. Part of our Harare area included the Industrial sites and one of the businesses there was a bakery. Most nights we'd drive around to the back of the bakery and the hitherto mouth watering yeasty smell of freshly baked bread would be greatly enhanced when the baker opened a door to us and asked the obvious...indeed rhetorical...question: 'You guys hungry?' With or without icing, and always enough for the A/Cs as well, those buns come to mind even now when I pass a bakery and catch the attendant yeasty aromas!

Another establishment we visited on occasion late at night later proved to harbour the smell of international espionage!! True!

Tug Wilson, a former Lions Rugby player of the 'fifties came out to Salisbury in the mid-'sixties and set up a curry house, The Bombay Duck. Tug was an affable host and possibly aware we cops didn't have the wherewithal to dine regularly at his establishment when off-duty, he generously decided our late night shifts could enjoy a bowl of his fine fare 'on the house' if we didn't make it too much of a habit and discretely parked our Police vehicles 'around the back'. I'd heard about this 'arrangement' from the town cops and took the opportunity to try it out the first time I had to do a late night mail delivery to Salisbury Central. Sure enough, Tug made me welcome...especially when he learnt I was from the land of the All Blacks and from Colin Meads' hometown ...and I was soon handing a bowl of curry to my A/C with the exhortation 'Keep an ear to the radio...call me if I'm needed...I'll be just inside'. Curry needs a beer to dampen the fires and I insisted I pay for that to lessen any feelings of corruption I'd harbour over the free curry. Between supervising staff, Tug found time to talk over Lions/All Black encounters on the two or three occasions I visited his establishment.

Years later, back here in NZ, when I brought up the Bombay Duck experience with a former senior police officer, he pointed out with others present who were 'in the know', that there was solid evidence to suggest that Tug Wilson had been financed by

British Intelligence to gain and send home as much information as he could of post UDI Rhodesia's economic and political state of affairs!

Liked you all the same, Tug.

Another guy I knew of but didn't meet, who was allegedly involved in 'espionage' was a Kiwi born lawyer Alfred Trevor Gallaher who'd spent about twenty years in Rhodesia. I still have the photo, cut out from a copy of Truth, of Gallaher being escorted to the High Court by Nigel Seaward, a member of Special Branch and a good friend of mine from Kariba and Salisbury days. Nigel and I renewed contact by email in the early 2000s when he lived down in Natal, lost contact again when he and his family moved to Britain only to renew it again in 2010.

Annual Leave in the BSAPolice was a generous fifty days a year. Single members of the Force generally seemed to favour Beira in Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique), as an easily accessible and relatively cheap destination on the East coast of the Portuguese territory, when craving the feel of sand between their toes, spicy food washed down with cheap wine and dare I say it.... for some at least... young women who'd sell their favours for less than a Kings ransom!

As a NZ citizen, I had to obtain a visa which wasn't as easy or as cheap as I'd imagined but finally I had the requisite stamp in my passport. I'd already received a subpoena to give evidence in the Magistrates Court in Umtali, the border city of PEA so I contacted a Kiwi born member of the force, Ian Winters, who'd recently married Shirley, also a member of the BSAP who were stationed in the rather picturesque and historic city and arranged to stay with them until the Court case was concluded.

Ian and Shirley, who was Rhodesian born, were amenable hosts and met me at the Umtali Railway Station. I first met Ian at a bioscope (cinema) in Salisbury. Five or six obvious Police recruits had sat next to me and I identified Ian from his Kiwi accent. Another Kiwi born guy who'd served in the NZPolice, Peter Burridge, I met at the town Police Hostel. Today Peter will avow I was rather 'tipsy' at the time and in 9uniform! In my defence I'd argue that I couldn't have been on duty at the time!

As was not particularly uncommon, the circumstances of the Umtali Court case changed and eventually I wasn't required to give evidence. Ian suggested that rather than go on to Beira by train, I hitch a lift from the Border Post with a Rhodesian who was driving to the coastal resort.

Denis Patrikios was from Chippinga and best described as a de-tribalised Greek. He was certainly pro-BSAPolice and able to mention a number of acquaintances in the Force. And he was more than happy to have a travelling companion.

*"I bet they didn't have to pay for their drinks. Probably couldn't."*

We stopped at least once on the trip, calling into a small dusty settlement to get petrol and a cold drink. As we consumed our much welcomed liquid refreshment a small moped, overloaded with two young White priests in Catholic garb, pulled up outside the café with a cry that indicated a degree of relief their journey would be suspended for a while. We greeted them in English and had to do with a smile in return before they disappeared into the café, to emerge later with a bottle of Fanta each. They left before us, the passenger holding the riders shoulders with his long legs sticking out each side of the bike to help keep balance on the straining vehicle as it weaved down a small dusty and pot-holed side-road. PEA was a country that had long struggled economically and Denis' comment about the priests, who'd be paid a pittance, and their purchase, probably wasn't without some merit. I held a certain regard for those religious men and women, especially the Catholics, who selflessly served to better the conditions of the Africans. And can still bring to mind the image of the pair we saw that day as they wobbled off laughing together on their 'mission'.

Beira is an old sea-port city complete with a rusting hulk embedded on a main beach and a large coastal artillery gun installed in an era when an invasion was a feared possibility.

Denis suggested we rent a cabin at the Estoril, a popular seaside resort where the staff spoke reasonable English. That accomplished....the rent was surprisingly cheap...we drove into town towards the wharves.

*'That's the tanker that tried to break the Rhodesian oil embargo.'*

The Ionna V had received considerable media attention in her failed bid to discharge fuel for the increasingly oil-starved Rhodesian motoring community. Denis had the idea he'd love a cup of genuine Greek coffee and when none was forthcoming from the Ionna V his attention shifted to a Greek cargo vessel, the Captain Lomas.

*'That Greek ship there with the guy hanging over the rails...maybe we can get a real Greek coffee and even some American cigarettes.'*

We did better than that. The affable crew member invited us on board for a drink which became several, then a meal and more drinks. Denis used what Greek he'd picked up from his immigrant parents in his younger years, the crew members employed a mixture of Greek and what English they'd picked up in their travels. It was an enjoyable evening with much drinking, smoking and raucous male laughter. And late when we returned to the Estoril with a carton of American cigarettes to share between ourselves.

*'Johnny. Meet Inspector Butler. He's in charge of Chippinga.'*

*'PO Johnston, sir. Harare'*

The following morning as Denis and I prepared to head into town he recognised a man just leaving the Estoril with his family whom he knew well. The Butler family had towed a small yacht down to Beira and once I'd spoken of '*past glories at the helm*' the yacht was ours to use whenever it was available. We had a small sail; enough for me to demonstrate I knew the difference between mainsheet and a mainsail, but a lack of wind didn't make for exciting manoeuvres under sail in the Mocambique Straits.

Had Butler, who was a most affable and generous man....Denis and I had a couple of meals with him at his expense....been an SO I'd have risked using a first name basis for our subsequent conversations but, the divide between an Inspector and a PO is a mite too much. Nevertheless he referred to me as Johnny.

*'Wait a bit, Johnny, I've got company.'*

It was late again the following evening when I returned to the cabin after a night of drinking in town. Early in the evening Denis and I had chosen to go our ways...quite amicably...and I'd caught a taxi back to the Estoril about eleven o'clock. The door was locked and Denis' entreaty indicated he had female company. Not a problem. I wandered down onto the beach, and sat and gazed in booze fuelled reflection over the steely night glow of the Indian Ocean that lapped gently on the golden sands. Then as I did on occasion, finally lay back and sought out the Southern Cross and other celestial arrangements. Then fell asleep!

*'Eh. What! Sorry...sorry.'*

Initially the language was beyond me but the tip of the shoe nudging my rib-cage was quite pointed.

*'No sleep on the beach. Where is your room?'*

The Portuguese policeman wasn't particularly friendly. I indicated the cabin and he followed me to it. Fortunately for me Denis' 'company' had departed and the door was unlocked.

*'Sorry...sorry.'*

*'Ok. Next time there is trouble for you.'*

Later I was to learn it was the particular cops beat and keeping Rhodesian or other English-speaking tourists from sleeping or partying on the beach accounted for his bilingualism. And ultimately ensured a better occupancy rate at the Estoril who apparently actually owned or leased the beach!

Language wasn't a barrier when an Portuguese Army NCO who'd been drinking on his own at a café indicated he'd like to share Denis' and my company. It transpired Manuel had been born in the USA (Kansas) and not returned to the land of his forbears until his mid-teens. After being called up for compulsory military service he'd found himself being sent to Africa. His army unit was on leave in Beira, as was a number of Navy and Airforce personnel. It was possible to draw Manuel out on the war against Frelimo (the local African armed organisation attempting to overthrow Portuguese rule in Mocambique) but he seemed reluctant to initiate any stories of the conflict. He just wanted to go home and then return to the States.

*'Most of the soldiers you see are peasant boys. Joining the army meant they had to wear boots for the first time. They're only happy when they're drunk, are poor soldiers and honestly don't understand what the fuck they're doing here in Mocambique'.*

The same yearning for home applied applied to a young Army Lieutenant I shared an hours drinking with. He came from a privileged Portuguese family, was university educated in America and, despite having believed.... by virtue of birth and education.... that he'd been exempt from military training, had been conscripted. His background and education assured him of a commission but he was patently unhappy with his lot and I gained the impression he preferred not to socialise with other members of his unit, even the officers, unless it was absolutely necessary or his duty.

When one ordered a beer at a café in Beira it was automatically served with a side dish of spicy titbits or cockles. Despite what some 'impoverished' Rhodesian tourists...BSAP members included... would assert, one couldn't exactly sustain body and soul on the nibbles for the duration of a holiday. There was little need to try, for food in general...except for fish...was relatively cheap in PEA as it was in Rhodesia.

'Johnny's Place' ...it was never referred to by any other name... was a favourite haunt of Rhodesians looking for a meal. Johnny, a Greek, spoke English quite well and welcomed Anglo-Saxons to his establishment. Late one afternoon I'd decided to eat earlier than usual and as I approached the restaurant I was literally stopped in my tracks by the raised hand of an armed policeman. He smiled and gestured towards the park opposite Johnny's Place. Four rather overweight and unfit looking Americans, armed with sporting rifles and dressed in khaki safari suits complete with ammo loops, were being filmed from two angles as they sauntered through park trees followed by half a dozen Black porters carrying their gear ...including a set of elephant tusks..., much of it on their heads. Given the go ahead to continue, I noticed Johnny himself watching the carryings-on from the doorway to his eating place. He was chuckling and shaking his head with barely suppressed merriment. I learnt from him that the quartet of wealthy Whites had been elephant and other big game hunting in Northern Mocambique; had had their exploits captured on film only for the film processors in Johannesburg to report that very little of the filming had been viable. Hence the last minute recapturing on celluloid of their great African adventure!

Across the river from Johnny's Place stood a nightclub with a large neon lit widmill atop it. It marked the start of the street where 'all, or most of the night-life action' took place in Beira. One of the more popular nightclubs was the 'Compange' (or a very similar name!). Aside from the music and drinking there were also 'pros'

(mostly White) that one could hire for their services. Most of them had only minimal English and I was to learn that some were poorly educated and of peasant stock who had come out to the colony from Portugal and seen prostitution as a better paid option to a lowly paid office or factory work.

*'So I offered her a dime,  
And I offered her a quarter,  
She said ikona bwana!,  
I'm a headman's daughter  
Kuma..kayi..yi.yi.....'*

Some of the younger more attractive girls worked in the Beira nightclubs as hostesses on a similar basis to the young women I'd encountered and enjoyed associating with in Jo'burg. One literally paid for their company to dance with and drink with and whilst they might agree to spending the night with a client that was a separate matter to negotiate and pay for. There were also girls content to ply the world's oldest profession without any 'preliminaries' for a fixed fee. I indulged...I think many, if not most single Rhodesians who visited Beira did the same...just the once. But, the experience was rather mechanical, follow the girl upstairs, undress and be checked for obvious disease, do your business and be washed afterwards, and then return to the bar!

Denis and I had decided we'd remain in Beira until we had at least ten pounds each remaining and then we'd visit the Gorongoza Game Reserve which was located on a side road off the Beira/Umtali road.

*'Hey look, man. Four lemons...the jackpot, I reckon!'*

One afternoon when I'd spent a time reading and watching the antics of the Beira beach boys trying to impress and pick up any eligible looking young female tourist, I decided to cash a travellers cheque at the Estoril. On my way I had to pass a small kiosk type bar and on a whim decided to enjoy a small bottle of Manica beer and to try my luck on a one-armed bandit machine. I literally had only enough cash after the beer purchase to buy four tokens for the machine. On the second try up came the jackpot but down didn't come the winnings! The bar-tender laughed at my dismay as he reached over and gave the portable machine a good thump.

*'Tinkle..tinkle...rattle...rattle.'* I was in the money, but it was hardly a fortune. About sixty-five escudos he paid me; enough for about six large bottles of the local beer.

After six days we were heading back towards Rhodesia. I was to read several years after my visit that Gorongoza, whilst less well known and smaller than the Kruger Park, arguably had perhaps the most varieties and concentration of game in Africa. We booked into a tidy yet basic rondavel late in the afternoon and after referring to a map of the Reserve chose a loop road we could traverse in about an hour. Certainly we saw a number of species of antelope, including sable, reedbuck and nyala as well as zebra, hartebeest and Wilderbeest, baboons, pigs and warthogs. We even saw a crocodile before he slid into a lake that had a large flock of resident flamingos. But, most animals were quite a distance from us and the whole exercise became one of 'spot the different animal'. The following day we got up early and were rewarded by closer...make that closer than we'd intended or felt comfortable with... encounters with elephant and quite unexpectedly and about fifty yards away from us, the King of the Jungle, a large black-maned lion. Felix Leo seemed bored with our visit to his domain and allowed us to drive within thirty metres of his arrogant and supine presence. A rhino was spotted just before he trotted into an area of thorn bushes. Little did I know then that in little more than a year, and in far more stimulating circumstances, I'd encounter elephant, lion and rhino and several other potential

threats to my well-being when on foot without the benefit of a metal and glass cocoon for protection!

I bid farewell to Denis at Umtali and after contacting Ian and Shirley again for a bed, reported to the Police Station where I arranged for a lift the following day in a Minimoke with another PO to Salisbury.

I still had a weeks leave to go before reporting back to work but, sadly a check of my bank account revealed I had but four pounds to my name. Never mind I'd make my beers last longer. I didn't have to deprive myself for too long!

*'Johnny, you summa-ma-gun!'*

Gino Tozzi had come back into my life; was loaded with money and without any prompting paid up on a twenty-five rand loan he'd obtained from me two years previously! More on that later. Gino's story doesn't merit abbreviating!

Back at work and little had changed as a result of my short absence from 'the office'.

Sunday...bloody Sunday.

*'Come quickly, sir! My uncle, I think is dead!'* The ten year old was understandably upset.

His uncle was only in his mid-twenties, in reasonably good physical shape but showed no signs of life to my inexperienced eye. I had him laid out on the middle seat of the Land-rover, checked again and concluded it was very unlikely he was alive and headed for Harare Hospital. About a hundred yards short of the hospital gates there was a hell-of-a crash from under the bonnet of the vehicle and the engine stopped. The fan had gone through the radiator and all the water was on the road!

Bugger! Another check of the apparent deceased and I remained convinced he was indeed dead and actually pulled the blanket over his face....as they do in the movies.

A radio call to Harare finally located a sympathetic ear and the promise of a tow.

But, before its arrival. *'Can I help you, officer?'* The Peugeot station-wagon contained a young White family on a Sunday drive.

*'No...not really; I'm not going anywhere in a hurry. Thanks all the same.'*

But, curiosity meant he had to leave his car and wander over to us. When I was satisfied his wife and young children were staying in the car I took advantage of his presence.

*'Can you have a look at this fellow and tell me what you think.'* I pulled the blanket back from the 'deceased's' face and the young man jumped back with a curse and fled for the sanctuary of his driver's seat without further comment. All eyes from the passengers were on me as he drove off. I certainly hadn't endeared him to the BSA Police! Added a bit of spice to their Sunday drive I felt!

The PO from Harare was adamant the deceased was just that and that the body remain in my vehicle and he tow me to the mortuary. To get to the Hospital one had to drive uphill. The tow-rope broke, was doubled up and broke again. And again. Finally when it was about eight strands thick and the vehicles about four feet apart and the bumpers were frequently beating a metallic staccato we reached the mortuary. I left the vehicle at the hospital and the Harare guy had the decency to drop me off at Stodart.

Being they are artificially lit, Mortuaries in the middle of the night are probably no more daunting places than they are in daylight. But, I did get one very big fright on one occasion in the Mortuary at Harare Hospital.

I was on night shift at Harare when I received a call from a Salisbury Police vehicle requesting I bring a body box to a road accident at a certain place on the highway south of Harare. By the time I reached the accident... an African pedestrian

had been knocked down and killed by a European driven car... I figured I was out of the Harare Police area anyway but I was there with the only body box. There were three Salisbury cops, an SO, a senior PO and a WPO (Woman Patrol Officer) none of whom I knew by name.

The driver of the car appeared intoxicated and the SO broke off dealing with him to indicate the WPO and I get the deceased into my body box. Rather ungentlemanly I thought, but I exercised chivalry and indicated the young woman lift the deceased's lower limbs while I take the heavy end.

Oh...bugger!!

As the dead man's head cleared the ground his brain fell out from his skull, slid across my boot and landed on the road at my end of the box. The WPO hadn't noticed. I found a couple of twigs, wiped my boot in the long grass and returned to the body box without comment.

*'What are you doing?'* Feminine curiosity begged an explanation for my actions.

*'I'm going to use these sticks to pick his bloody grey matter up with.'* I could hardly intimate the sticks were for water divining!

*'How are you going to get the deceased onto a tray in the mortuary on your own, Johnston?'* Which was the SO.s way of saying; *'Why the hell didn't you bring an A/C with you?'*

*'I can help him, Sarge. And he can drop me off at Central afterwards.'* The WPO was being really helpful. Maybe it was even something to do with my dashing good looks or the calm and efficient way I'd reacted to the wayward brain shortly before! On the way to the Hospital the young woman explained that on the day when her squad went to the Mortuary to be shown around and to witness a couple of autopsies, she hadn't been able to go. Indeed, the deceased in our body box was the first dead person she had seen.

Harare Mortuary 'fridge' had about eight tall doors and behind each was three trays ranged vertically that were pulled out to facilitate the placing of bodies.

The SO had given me a reference to tie to the deceased for later identification. I could see the WPO was a little apprehensive as to what she may see when I swung open the first door.

*'You won't see anything particularly horrible.'* The 'voice of experience' assured the lass.

The first door I opened revealed that the three trays were all occupied, a couple doubled up with bodies. The same with the next door. 'We may have to double up with our fellow.' I put to the WPO.

*'I'll start the other end and see if I can find an empty one.'* I was glad the young woman had gained her confidence and was being helpful in what was not a pleasant environment.

A couple of doors in from her end and the rumble of a tray on the rollers as it is slid out. *'Here's one.'* And then a shrill, blood-curdling female scream!

My hair stood up on end but I whirled about and moved as quickly as I could; turning the tap on and snatching up the hose used to wash down the Mortuary area. The poor young woman had pulled out a top tray that had a pool of foul rusty water in the bottom of it and it had splashed all down her front. I sprayed the hose on her uniform blouse and skirt before turning down the pressure and handing the hose to her when she'd calmed down enough to further clean herself off.

*'It wasn't blood, it was rusty water.'* My assurances seemed rather feeble. To give the WPO her due she helped me heave the body....I took it on myself to place the brain beside the deceased and trusted the doc. doing the autopsy match the grey

matter with the empty skull cavity.... onto the tray before we set off for the Town Police Hostel where she could get cleaned up properly and changed. I reassured her I'd explain to the Duty SO at Central why she'd gone off duty early.

Sunday...bloody, Sunday.

*'Come quickly sir; my brother wishes to hang himself! He has written this letter for us and gone out from the house.'*

A Sergeant took the letter....a page from a notebook....read it fairly quickly and then handed it to me with a smile. '*You can see it is true sir.*' Cheeky bugger; it was written in an African language!

But, anything to relieve the boredom of office work and the two of us and the would-be suicide's brother piled into a Landrover and roared off down the road. For about two hundred yards anyway! An endless stream of African men, women and children streamed across the road before us and headed into a park where there were apparently convenient trees for one to hang himself from. Talk about doing things publicly!

We joined the 'rush' and made our way through the assembled onlookers until we reached the tree apparently chosen as suitable for his purposes by the poor young man. An African male of about twenty sat at the base of the tree.

The Sgt. addressed him in Mashona and showed him the note he'd apparently written. Yes, the man agreed, he had written the note. Yes, he was very sad and wanted to die.

Fearing matters could be unduly prolonged I asked the obvious. '*Where is the rope you were going to use?*'

The young man withdrew a hand from his shorts pocket and opened it to reveal a few pieces of light string joined together.

Harare Hospital assured us they would see the would-be suicide received the appropriate medication.

But, life in the BSAP wasn't all work and no recreation. On our days off we would invariably go into the city and seek the company of those we knew, often to be found in the Palace Bar, The Blue Room of the Windsor Hotel or Meikles bar.

It was at the Palace Bar on the corner of Union St and First Streets, run by Phyllis and Nick, where I first met Eric Papps, a grizzled and hard drinking Kiwi ex-pat. journalist working for UPI. Eric had a bulldog named Bully who seemed to accompany him everywhere, even into the Palace Bar. Bully made the front page of the Rhodesian Herald and was responsible for the headline: 'Rhodesia Loses Despite Bully's Valiant Effort' and gained in stature or notoriety.....it depended on which side you were on....after he ran onto the Police Grounds rugby field during a game between Rhodesia and a South African Barbarian side and was captured by a sports photographer hanging off the back of a South African player's shorts. Eric could chuckle when he recounted the incident with Bully but, he wasn't particularly forthcoming about his work and previous life and came over as rather cynical and world-weary. But, if one was to measure the depth of our friendship by the amount of beer we drank together, we certainly got on fairly well.

The rugby match outlined above I attended with a Special Branch SO, Paul May, a very keen rugby fan who also had tickets for the after-match function. There we were to meet the great Springbok forward, Fril du Preez and the Springbok halfback Dawie de Villiers who, becoming bored with the evenings proceedings, readily accepted the idea that they accompany Paul and I to downtown Salisbury. Somehow we all crammed into Pauls little Wolsley Elf and motored to the La Boheme nightclub where a striptease artist was just finishing her routine. Du Preez gave the impression of

being rather worldly and was certainly interested that I had met his great rugby rival, Colin Meads whereas de Villiers was of staunch and conservative Afrikaans stock and was actually studying to join the ministry (Dutch Reform). Striptease wasn't permitted in South Africa but allowed in Rhodesia if the artiste wore a small G-string and a couple of 'pasties' to cover the 'naughty' bits. Dawie was all for waiting for the young woman to appear again and we obliged. Paul and Frik apparently conspired in low tones when Dawie was taking a toilet visit which resulted in Paul leaving the lounge for a time. Shortly after his return the striptease routine began again and soon Dawie was again entranced in 'Salomes sinuous moves'. At the conclusion of the dance instead of exiting the stage the young woman, hips still moving sensuously, made her way through the audience in a bee-line for our table and shortly Dawie, too late, realised he was her target. Sliding his chair back from the table in a vain attempt to escape allowed the woman enough room to plonk herself on his lap and throw her bare arms about his neck before delivering a kiss to the mortified young man. It was all too much for Frik, he literally fell off his chair! On the woman's departure, Dawie found his voice again and swore Frik to silence over the events of the evening.

By coincidence I was to meet Eric Papps back in NZ in 1972 when he worked in Wellington for the NZ Truth paper. I rarely read Truth but saw Eric's name on a story he told of his dog, Bully, that related how the fearless pooch had encountered and put a hyena to flight when Eric had lived in Rhodesia. Weeks later I happened to be visiting Wellington with a delegation of Rodney people presenting a case to the Minister of Agriculture at Parliament and I took the opportunity to visit Truth offices and ask for Eric. Once I'd identified myself I was shown through to the man himself. How he appeared to have aged in the nearly five years since I'd last seen him. He sat behind a small portable typewriter and greeted me without any real surprise; but, that was the Eric I'd known anyway. He explained that 'he was a bit crook and had drank too much the previous evening and had lost his teeth down the dunny'. True! Any attempt to recall our Palace Bar days and ascertain the whereabouts or fate of mutual acquaintances we'd known there was out of the question. I didn't stay long and as I left the journalists room I looked back. Eric was head down tapping in a rather desultory manner on his typewriter. His Wellington job with a weekly publication was a far cry from his earlier life of immediacy and story gathering in the often turbulent Dark Continent.

Another Kiwi journalist I encountered a couple of times before he left Rhodesia, apparently to report on the Vietnam War, was Mike Smith. Mike had led an adventurous life in the Congo which included surviving a DC3 crash.

But, the Kiwi born journalist I was to see and associate the most with was John 'Johnny' Edlin. Like Eric he loved his beer but he was a much younger man and far more outgoing....rather uninhibited, on occasion, with a marked theatrical flair and little apparent fear of offending others.

Johnny didn't wait for life to reveal itself; he drove into it with an uncompromising zest. Meeting him was like stepping out of a warm room into a fresh cool breeze. I don't think everyone who knew him accepted kindly Johnny's wild enthusiasm for life but, I was drawn to him initially because of our shared Kiwi heritage and later because he intrigued me and also introduced me to some interesting people with diverse backgrounds, including Black politicians. He enjoyed dining well and I shared a number of evening meals with him at the Ambassador Hotel....always on his expense account. Dining out was relatively cheap in Rhodesia, but still generally considered beyond the income of a junior policeman; unless of course he was seeking to impress a fair lady.

I believe that in spite of his seemingly, almost ‘anarchic’ ways Johnny was damned good at his job and to a degree could pick and choose his work. I think he craved diversity and adventure in his life and Africa suited those yearnings. I read little of his work but what I did get to read always seemed to be economic with description and was matter of fact; no matter how dramatic the overall content. Even his description of life in a Zambian prison....where he was incarcerated for a year....when he wrote on his release : *‘It wasn’t always easy to get to sleep at nights because of the noise coming from younger prisoners, some in their early teens, being sodomized by the older lags!’* typified his professional....if somewhat uninhibited... reaction to his experiences.

I don’t know who Johnny worked for much of his time in Africa but I believe he was teaching journalism in Harare when he died suddenly in the early ‘90s while still only in his fifties. I see him now with his expressive eyes and mouth and ever ready laugh. And the heavy mop of fair hair that he’d flick away from his face as he animatedly related to me his latest journalistic scoop.

Ndabaningi Sithole of ZANU (Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union) and Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU were both in political detention; their parties banned from active politicking. But, Chad Chipunza of the UPP (United Peoples Party ) was free to try and gain support for his movement. Johnny Edlin apparently knew Chipunza well and introduced me as a fellow Kiwi. Chipunza was interested....or gave the impression anyway... in agriculture and farming and we soon struck up a rapport. We were to meet at the Ambassador on a number of occasions. Chipunza usually had his deputy, Patrick Rubatika with him. My police companions accepted that after a chat with Chipunza I’d rejoin them for the remainder of the evening. But, one evening when I’d entered the Ambassador alone and accepted Chipunza’s invitation to join him and his fellows, I noted another member of the force drinking alone at the bar. I knew him by sight only but after I’d made my farewell to Chipunza and his associates I moved to join the solitary drinker. He glowered at me and wasn’t a happy man.

*‘Do you know who you were getting all pally with?’*

*‘Of course. Chad Chipunza and Patrick Rubatika.’*

*‘You’re on dangerous ground associating with such men.’*

*‘Crap, man! We talk farming not politics.’*

*‘You carry on with that attitude and Special Branch will be on your case.’*

I moved away from the man. I saw no danger to my career in my rather casual and certainly social acquaintance with the Black politicians and Special Branch certainly didn’t get *‘on my case.’* Not that I was made aware of, anyway. Sneaky buggers our *malurkas!*

But, Patrick Rubatika saw fit to contact me by phone one weekend evening when I was on duty at Stoddart. He had a problem he wanted to discuss in private. I obtained his address and called in at his house on my way off duty. The problem wasn’t serious, certainly not political, and involved his teenage son who was present at our meeting. The youth had been getting into a certain amount of trouble, petty stuff, and would I point out to him the error of his ways. I left Rubatika’s feeling somewhat used...make that ‘underused’ ... but on our next meeting at the Ambassador he announced that my ‘cautioning’ of his son had had the desired effect.

One evening when visiting the Ambassador we were told that there was a function there....a Naval re-union (obviously not Rhodesian) as I recall....attended by the PM Ian Smith. Next door a few of us got talking to an affable American, Clay, a professor of music from the San Rosario College of Music, California. Clay was most interested in and obviously pro Ian Smith. When one of our members organised a

meeting with the PM through a security man at the door of the venue the American couldn't believe his luck. He was back with us twenty minutes later, excitedly repeating the conversation he'd had with Smith and waving his Pall Mall cigarette packet autographed 'Ian Douglas Smith' ...one momento of his African adventure he'll no doubt treasure for years to come. And when the band took a break another member of our group persuaded the hotel management to allow Clay to play on the hotel piano. He was a brilliant pianist, captured the mood of the people so well and had many of them soon dancing. When the band returned from their break the audience voiced the opinion that Clay remain where he was! Such sentiment wasn't well received by the band members.

Booze loosens tongues; any honest drinker will confess to occasions of indiscreet gossip or tall tales. One of the most bizarre stories I heard in a bar came from a former Congo mercenary I'd met on two or three occasions, but couldn't claim to know well. Quite dispassionately, and in my presence, he detailed how the group he was with at the time had fired the SAM (Surface to Air Missile) that brought down Dag Hammarskjold's ( UN Secretary General) plane near Ndola in Zambia several years before. What gave the story perhaps an element of some credibility were comments such as '*None of us had fired one of the things before*' and '*We were shitting ourselves, man*'. And '*We weren't that happy about our escape plan.*' When I dared to ask why they'd found the need to carry out the obviously dangerous mission I got a reaction that implied that any sane man would know that Hammarskjold and his organisation were a threat to world order and the money that they, his killers, were paid was secondary.

For Andy S., his problem was definitely a monetary one. He'd taken his discharge after ten years of service in the Rhodesian Army with the rank of Sergeant and a good gratuity payment. When I first met him money was apparently no object and he spent well on beer, women and entertainment. We were only casual acquaintances, meeting on occasion in the Windsor Hotel's well known Blue Room. When there was a time I didn't encounter him I figured he'd left Salisbury. He technically had, but not any great distance! One afternoon in the Blue Room he renewed our acquaintance and after some hesitation revealed he'd spent the last six months in Salisbury Prison. Apparently he'd continued to write out cheques long after the money...his Army gratuity...had run out and he'd been arrested and convicted of fraud.

*'Oh, well Andy, it's all behind you now.'*

Not so apparently. After leading me over to a secluded corner of the bar he explained that '*there are still a couple of cheques that weren't taken into account at my sentencing.*' And '*I know you're a cop but I'm telling you this because you're my friend.*'

Detective SO 'Johnny' Vye had dealt with the case. I knew Vye, ....a man who always groomed, dressed and carried himself well...., but not well enough to take him into confidence about the matter. In the end I told Andy that it was inevitable that he'd be found out and the best solution was to go to Salisbury Central, ask for DSO Vye and '*spill the beans*'. Hopefully Vye would feel Andy had already paid his dues in full and not proceed with a further prosecution.

I should have taken Andy to DSO Vye myself. There on the front page of the Police Gazette two months later was a photo and details of a substantial number of fraud offences listed below that had recently been committed by the former Army Sgt. who'd apparently fled to South Africa! Whoops!

*'They're all RLI down there. A couple or maybe three are underage, you know.'*

Give them a belly full of booze to inflame their youthful lusts and desires; then choose a function such as a dance where members of the opposite sex would assemble and you had the makings for a ‘rumble’ between the junior BSAP and RLI (Rhodesian Light Infantry) guys. I so often heard, especially during Depot training days, of such goings on, of fights over young women that there had to be some truth in it. I’d had little contact with any RLI guys myself until one early afternoon when I entered the Windsor and observed about eight or ten guys rather noisily enjoying themselves down the far end of the bar. Denzil, the long suffering...well that’s the impression he invariably gave...barman served me my Lion then waited until I’d checked its quality before he leant over the bar and basically challenged me to do my duty as a cop. That is, order the underage...some guys joined the RLI at seventeen....soldiers off his premises! Well, I’m sorry Denzil, but you served them and they’ve probably just come back from the Valley (Zambezi). Old enough to fight...old enough to drink! Besides, I was off duty. And rather averse to inviting damage to my person!

Don’t upset them; join them. One or two of the younger ones remembered the BSAP and RLI were meant to be ‘at war’ with each other but I was soon quite relaxed and enjoying the company of some of the more mature guys. It helped that I came from the land of the All Blacks and as a bonus could speak a little Afrikaans. The RLI had their own lingua franca, a unique mixture mainly of English and Afrikaans delivered in a rather ‘different’, if amusing grammatical construction. By the time I left their company most had concluded ‘*I was an ok ‘oan*’ (guy...pronounced ‘own’)

*‘You think we can’t get by without you bastards from down south, eh?’*

Petrol supplies to Rhodesia were a relatively early victim of the so-called international sanctions imposed on the country shortly after UDI. Once her plight had been publicised in South Africa, several farming districts and rural towns in The Republic decided to help out by raising the money to send laden...of course...petrol tankers to Salisbury. When the first convoy of trucks, each with the donor district proudly displayed on them, reached Salisbury the media and Govt. and Civic dignitaries made quite a fuss of the White drivers. I was in the Blue Room one evening when a couple of the South African drivers were being bought beer and being told what heroes they were. One of the Blue Room regulars was a big Afrikaner, Happy Scheepers, who on occasion definitely didn’t live up to his adopted first name! After muttering to a couple his mates about the ‘unnecessary fuss’ and ‘we don’t need the petrol anyway’, Happy challenged the drivers directly. They took umbrage at the ingratitude and one of them, a short stocky guy, prepared to sort Happy out. I hastily produced my Police ID and using a mixture of mainly English with a few Afrikaans phrases thrown in finally managed to pacify the angry South African. A mate I’d been drinking with managed with some difficulty to persuade Happy to behave himself but it was some time before we felt it prudent to leave the warring couple in the bar.

*‘Hang on guys, I’ve been fucking well stabbed!’*

I began New Years Eve 1966 in the company of two fellow Harare cops, Mick Richards and Mike Sergeant. We imbibed quite a bit in La Coq’ d ‘Or bar and decided on a change of bars. Quite a few younger and not so young people were drinking in the streets and some of the more intoxicated were even hurling their empty bottles at parking meters. It surprised me just how much the normally conservative Rhodesians were letting their hair down so to speak. Mick and I were ahead of Mike when the latter’s yell alerted us to a problem...of sorts!

Oh, shit.

Mike was still on his feet but leaning heavily against a wall as he held his suit jacket front apart to show us the ribbon of fresh blood on his shirt that ran from his upper chest down to his belt line.

Where? How? Who?

Mike didn't know. We undid his white shirt and discovered a small nick in his chest that must have been caused by a tiny shard of glass. We had seen him previously 'embrace' a parking meter. Case closed.

In one of the bars we visited I left my mates for the company of three Australian journalists I encountered who were up for the usual trans-Tasman baiting and banter. I remember they unashamedly tried to get me to reveal 'all the State secrets I was privy to!' Bloody hell, as a cop I must know of some Government carry-ons!...sorry guys. I also remember they had a Mk.1 borrowed Ford Prefect we drove from one bar or party to the next. Shamefully, I also recall how we pulled up at an inner city set of lights next to a pavement and I, feeling the sudden need to throw up, leant out my window and did so, and to a pedestrian passer-by who loudly proclaimed '*Someone ought to call the cops!*' one of the journos gleefully retorted '*But, he is a cop!*' and then added '*And a typical sheep-shagging Kiwi to boot!*' Bastard!!

Sunday...bloody Sunday.

On duty one afternoon at Stodart and probably writing a letter to my folks, my thoughts of home were interrupted by shouts and the sound of running boot shod men in the station yard. I hadn't been called for but decided an investigation was warranted.

Oh, no! They can't be!

In the middle of the road outside the station gates five A/Cs surrounded a seated African and his bike. And clearly one of the A/Cs appeared to be striking at the dismounted man with his baton! I trotted quickly after Sgt. Lawrence, a tall, clean cut, African... walking rather unconcernedly towards the action... who I felt wasn't exactly doing his duty at that moment.

*'It's ok, sir. That man is a real skellum, too cheeky towards African Police.'*

That didn't justify beating... Oh, right! Bike being beaten, not man.

To the chant in English of; '*You will not be cheeky to us again*' an A/C was systematically beating out the spokes of the unfortunate's cycle with his issue baton!

I subsequently learnt the cyclist was in the habit of 'giving the finger' and shouting an insult to the African detail on gate duty each time he passed the station and I couldn't see any problem with the summary justice dealt the man. Sgt. Lawrence would offer no other explanation as to how they actually caught the man other than to tell me, '*It was planned. Sir.*'

*'Still too many mombe, Sgt. Lawrence?'*

*'Ah, yes, sir. Still far too many.'*

I instinctively liked Lawrence. Promotion had deservedly come early in the career of the intelligent and diligent young man. After he'd explained to me that even on a Sergeant's salary he was finding it difficult to raise the *labola* (dowry/bride price), a seemingly large number of *mombe* (cattle), for the father of the educated nurse he planned to marry it became the subject of a light-hearted exchange between us when our duties coincided.

*'Ah, sir. It is better the father deals with the boy.'*

It wasn't unusual, but far from common to witness an African policeman meting out 'summary justice'. Usually such matters consisted of a firm telling off of the miscreant followed on occasion by a cuff across his shoulders to reinforce a point. One early evening at Stodart a teenager was arrested who'd apparently been up to

mischief on a number of occasions. His father was summonsed to the station and he too implied his son was getting out of control. The duty A/Sgt. appeared in my office and put it to me that the father was prepared to take his son into an office and deal to him with a short length of hose, rather than have us having to follow proper procedure. '*Not too much and on the backside, Sgt.*' I gave my consent to the idea. Soon the air was rent with the anguished yells and pleas from the young man. Wisely the A/Sgt. stopped the punishment before any real physical harm occurred and the father and son were sent on their way.

It was rare to witness a European policeman use any violence on an African. But, it happened.

I heard the thump; the sharp '*Ah!!*' and turned in time to see the tall African slide down the wall to the floor clutching his shoulder. SO George '*H....*' had been releasing a prisoner; an habitual criminal we were convinced was behind certain property crimes but had failed to find enough evidence to pursue a Court case. George, Rhodesian born, and a strongly built man who'd been a professional wrestler for a couple of years, had been seated when he'd delivered the blow.

*'Get up and get out! And stay out of trouble, you bloody skellum!'*

The shaken African didn't need a second prompting. George's delivery of summary justice hadn't unduly surprised me; there'd been stories of him getting into trouble previously with his superiors for using his fists.

A couple of weeks later.

*'Come quickly, sir! A piccannin has been knocked down by a bus in the township!'*  
*'We're on our way!'*

I followed George at a trot to a Landrover and with him at the wheel questioning the African informant as to the location of the accident we roared out of the station yard.

A group had gathered on the road about the motionless child who'd bled profusely from a deep impact head wound that appeared to have exposed a part of his brain. George didn't hesitate. In seconds the child, about six or seven years of age, was cradled in his strong arms and he was clambering into the back seat of our vehicle.

*'Get in, mdala!'*. To the elderly African identified as the stricken child's grandfather. And then to me. *'Drive like hell to the hospital!'*

At the Harare African Hospital George was still giving directions. *'Sister. Get a doctor immediately!'*

The unconscious child was carefully lowered to a bed and the curtain was drawn around him. A doctor was soon behind the curtain assessing the child's condition and chances of survival. The front of his uniform soaked in the child's dark blood, George approached the dismayed and stricken grandfather and rested a comforting hand on his shoulder. Speaking in a low voice and using mixture of Shona, Chilapalapa and English the White Police Officer sought to allay the old man's worst fears; convince him it hadn't been the child's brain we'd seen at the impact point. The doctor spent some time with the patient and passed his assessment on to George who in turn relayed the findings to the grandfather.

*'He will be ok, mdala. It was not his brain we could see. The doctor says he must stay in the hospital but he will recover with treatment. You understand?'*

Clearly the old man took comfort in George's words. His dark features relaxed with his gratitude. *'T'ank-you, baas.'*

*'That's ok. That's what we do.'* And as we left the ward to return to our vehicle.  
*'Isn't it, Johnston?'*

I was impressed. This was the same man who'd inflicted hurt on an African back at the station a couple of weeks before. And now he'd exercised all the compassion he could summon toward a stricken African child and his fearful grandfather.

There wasn't a contradiction or some perverse paradox; just an example of the White's attitude toward Blacks. Treat them firmly but, fairly...don't take any shit from them but, don't hesitate to use compassion when it's called for.

*I can't go back to the station looking like this. I'll drop you off and go home to change my uniform.'*

George's actions had given me something to think about for some time.

*'You bloody shit!!'*

My hand left my chin and the back of it smacked across the side of the African's face. My A/C raised his hand to strike the man further. *'Leave him, Constable!'*

The victim of my assault had objected to my questioning of him on a rather minor matter he'd strenuously denied being involved in. As I'd begun to warn him that in future we wouldn't let him off with just a warning the man had uttered a curse, lunged forward and spat at me, the issue from his mouth landing on the back of my fingers that had been thoughtfully massaging my chin. As quick as my angry reaction had been, so I'd cooled down and ordered the A/C to *'Tell him we'll be watching him. Tell him to go.'*

It was the only occasion in my over three years of active service that I was to strike a man. Sure, I'd used force to help restrain a man during an arrest but, I'd never struck out at a person as I did that day. And rarely witnessed other European police members doing so. We were a Force that prided ourselves on achieving good results with little or no violence.

*'You're bloody lucky the Member In Charge didn't see that, Johnston!'*

I can't recall what Section Officer was on duty the day I drove a Police Landrover onto the station's landscaped flower garden outside the Harare Charge Office. I'd been out on an errand or case and against orders...an order frequently ignored by many, I must add in my defence.... was smoking as I entered the vehicle park. Not wishing to be caught with a fag in my mouth I snatched at it and succeeded in pulling the burning coal off the end. With no time to look for the wayward coal I lifted my foot off the accelerator and had sadly only briefly and ineffectually touched the brake when I learnt to my intense and burning discomfort that the wayward coal had gone down the back of my shorts leg! The vehicle bounced over the low stone border of the well tended Member I/Cs pride and joy and mercifully stalled. Still in pain I started the Landrover and reversed out of the flowers, but not before a 'rat-fink' A/C had shot inside the Charge Office to report on the destruction. I was replacing stones and trying to erase the tire marks when the SO appeared from the Charge Office. I had to tell him the full story; smoking in a Police vehicle was a lesser offence than negligent driving!

*'If the crown was with his possession when he was booked in, he'll have to get it back on his release.'*

Perhaps the only time I was to 'pull rank' on a fellow PO occurred in the Harare Charge Office. A young, newly posted PO straight from Depot releasing an African prisoner, noted that among the latter's possession was an English Crown...a Churchill one as I recall ....and deciding he wanted the coin for himself proffered the man five shillings, arguing it was a fair exchange. The soon to be free man didn't think so and I had to intercede and rule in his favour. When the PO backed down from his demands rather reluctantly I took him aside and pointed out, for his ears only, that were the coin's owner to lay a complaint, the PO could be in serious enough trouble to

endanger his career. Proof of ownership of the coin had been recorded in the Prisoner's Property Book on his detention by another PO.

*'It's just like shooting ducks....give them a bit of lead and they'll come down every time.'* Jimmy Mandy as quoted in the Rhodesian Herald circa June '66.

The Cuban pilot had no way of determining how effective his strafing runs were. But, he was soon to realise when the rifle bullets slammed into the engine and cockpit of his piston-engine fighter and set his aircraft on fire that his Great African Adventure was over. As was shortly to be his life.

About a thousand feet below the stricken aircraft the mercenary soldier, satisfied that the ever increasing amount of black smoke pouring from the plane meant it wouldn't recover from its shallow dive, sought cover again and humbly acknowledged the cheers of his fellow soldiers of fortune before removing the empty magazine in his Belgian made semi-automatic rifle and replacing it with a full one.

Jimmy Mandy's Great African Adventure was still very much a work in progress.

*'I've had malaria and lost my false teeth. There'd have to be something wrong with a man to find himself in a place like this'* Jimmy Mandy from the detention camp in Rwanda where he is being held with 120 other former members of Black Jack Schramme's mercenary column. Rhodesian Herald circa August '66.

I've met enough Irishmen to know I'm easily drawn to them. And inexplicably they to me. Blame it on my paternal great grandfather, James Fredrick, late of County Meath... West Ireland.... born before the Partition, you understand.

So many of the Irishmen I was to meet and come to know were given to a dark melancholy when the drink took them. And soft aggrieved tones, which seem to either beg an understanding of a cruel Diaspora forced upon them by circumstances outside of their control, or were possibly displaying the mischievous and habitual use of a well rehearsed persona, usually only employed to explain a chronic absence from Mass to the priest when he came calling. On occasion I've witnessed sons of Erin so low I've wondered if a reminder that it's one hundred and seventy odd years since the potato crops failed or an apology delivered on behalf of my long departed Protestant Irish ancestor....James Johnston.... for any indifference he may have shown regarding the spud failure or any anti-Catholic sentiments he bore....and they were there, I believe....would be enough to initiate some recovery from the morose depths they found themselves in.

There were exceptions. Pat Twomey, a practising Catholic, I'd encounter in the Palace Bar was a steady, soft-spoken and mild mannered, yet rather interesting man and we'd spend quite some time swapping ideas and experiences. He worked as an accountant and had formerly been a work colleague of Wilbur Smith, the prolific novel writer, when both were employed in a Government Department.

Jimmy Mandy was another; his cup always seemed to be half full. When I learnt he'd shot down a Cuban fighter plane I wasn't alone in accepting the feat as only another example of what a man could do if he lived like Mandy; seemingly beyond any real restraint or curbs on his wild Irish spirit. Outwardly he was ever the optimist and opportunist: even a spell in Salisbury hospital and another in the Rwandan detention camp couldn't really keep him down. But, like all of us he had his weaknesses, even if a tendency to provoke scraps in a bar might be regarded as a mere manifest of the true Irish male spirit. Another thing he had to contend with was physical....a much abused lower leg.

Jimmy went to the former Belgian Congo for the first time as a mercenary in the early sixties. The opposition, one would hesitate to refer to them as enemy, included UN backed troops, Irish, Swedish and I believe units from other countries. White

killing White in Africa apparently just wasn't on. So they'd all, mercenaries and UN troops, drink and whore together in the bars of Stanleyville after dark, sort out any differences with fisticuffs, and with the coming of day return to their own lines and create a casualty-free atmosphere of war for the sake of the attendant media. Well, that was the popular spin Mandy put to me on that conflict anyway. One UN soldier...Mandy insisted he couldn't have been Irish, they wouldn't fire on their own... even accidentally, would they?....carelessly shot Jimmy in the leg and broke it. Months later, the leg ostensibly fully healed, Jimmy fell off a bar stool in Bulawayo and broke the same leg, same place. It healed again and he returned to the Congo with 'Mad Mike' Hoare's 5 Commando which was made up principally of South Africans, Rhodesians, British, Germans, Belgians and a sprinkling of other men from other nationalities including at least one Italian, Gino Tozzi, whom I referred to earlier.

When Ivan Smith introduced me to Jimmy in the Palace Bar he was in the company of several other 'mercs' recently returned from the Congo.

I remember also, along with Ivan Smith, meeting up several times with a Canadian mercenary, Barry Hobbins who, possibly because he was an officer in 5 Commando, seemed to prefer to drink apart from the other 'mercs' and was quietly spoken which only seemed to add a special irony, when one could get them out of him, of his tales of derring-do which anyone who reads Hoare's book, *Mercenary*, will see were many.

Ralph Hider, an NCO in 5 Commando, who with his partner, Rosemary, I'd often encounter in the Blue Room bar, was much more forthcoming and an enthusiastic and born raconteur who could hold the floor, so to speak, with stories of his Congo campaign which were all the more interesting because they didn't leave out any 'stuff-ups' or 'close shaves' of his or his men's making.

Boet Schoeman was your archetypal mercenary. His hair was cropped short and his cold blue eyes didn't reflect a 'thousand-yard stare', they zeroed in on you. Ivan Smith introduced me to him but frankly, I sensed that even he, along with others who knew the man, were rarely entirely relaxed in his company. On the two occasions I saw him in the Palace Bar Schoeman was seated alone with his beer and not inviting company to his table. Those few who did get close enough to at least gain some understanding of him, described him as a born killer, whether it was elephants in his earlier Kenyan days or black men in the Congo in the mid-sixties. And he was physically tough. Or damned lucky to have lived as long as he had.. When he was killed in a vehicle accident in about 2004, Ivan believed he'd survived at least eight previous accidents involving a fatality.

But it was Jimmy Mandy I seemed to encounter in the city and drink with the most often. I was still in the Training Depot when he returned to the Congo for another six month contract but I'd completed training and had been posted to Stoddart in Harare Township when he returned to Salisbury again in early '66. Our meetings were invariably random encounters but we welcomed them and had a good time.

In mid '66 Mandy was still in Salisbury and I was in the barracks at Harare when I received a phone call from him.

*'Kiwi? ....Jimmy Mandy.'*

*'Where the hell are you?'*

*'In the Avenues Hospital. Broke me leg again.'*

*'Same leg...same place?'*

*'Yeah, and it's not so good. Got osteomyelitis in the bugger. Anyway, I'm allowed out on day trips. How about organising a taxi and we'll go out on the town for an afternoon.'*

*“Yeah, but only if it’s ok with the Ward Sisters.”*

It was; they indicated they were only too glad to be rid of him and seemed to regret it was only for an afternoon. *‘But, don’t let him go mad, no more than a couple of beers, and have him back here by five.’*

Meikles Hotel by Cecil Square. A couple or three beers under his belt and Mandy was renewing the fighting Irish spirit held too long in abeyance. And was trying to clear the bar with a crutch.

*‘Get your bloody mate out of here or I’ll call the cops! ’*

*‘He is a cop!’* There seemed to be always someone who recognised me.

A couple of weeks later I received another phone call from, Jimmy. *‘It was good last time, Kiwi, how about another afternoon out and about?’*

*‘Yeah, ok. But you sit at a table and your crutches go behind the bar until we leave.’*

*‘Jeez, Kiwi, don’t be too hard on a man.’*

The prognosis for his leg didn’t look too good. He told me he’d been in an upstairs bedroom with a woman when her partner or husband pulled up in his car below the balcony. As the soon to discover he’d been cuckolded man came up the staircase Mandy vaulted over the balcony rail and landed on the roof of his car below. It was third time bad luck again for the leg.

Weeks later with a ‘*be it on your own head*’ warning from the doctors and six months supply of his medication, Mandy checked out of the Hospital and joined a former Angolan planter, Black Jack Schramme who’d organised a 120 strong mercenary column to enter the Congo in support of Moishe Tshombe who’d still hoped to cede Katanga from the rest of the Congo.

It was an ill-conceived venture and in hindsight doomed to failure right from the start. They faced 20,000 Armee Nationale Congo, troops who had air support in the way of several (one less after Mandy’s efforts) Cuban flown piston-engine fighter aircraft and the mercenaries were soon pinned down in one of the major towns.

I was to see Jimmy but once more. I’d heard that, through the Red Cross, efforts were being made to repatriate the detained mercenaries from Rwanda to South Africa but no date had been given.

I’d gone into Meikles bar about two o’clock one afternoon for a quiet beer before a planned meeting up with friends later. A solitary drinker sat on a stool at the bar and as he turned to note my presence I realised I’d encountered him several months before at the scene of a fatal car accident and again later in Court when he was charged with Culpable Homicide (Dangerous driving causing the death of an African pedestrian) and I’d given evidence against him.

*“Des.?”*

*“Yeah. That’s me.”*

There were no hard feelings. Des. had done his six months in Salisbury Prison and had already let bygones be bygones. As we talked I became aware that a small group of men had entered the bar behind me and had seated themselves at a table before ordering beers from the African waiter.

*“Don’t you drink with your old mates now, Kiwi?”*

Jimmy had a new set of teeth and like him his two friends were clean-shaven and smartly dressed in suits.

*“Jimmy Mandy! You’re back?”* I moved over to their table but, given my previous plans, had no wish to let other people down by getting into a lengthy drinking session with trio.

*"Sit down, Kiwi. What are you drinking? Take a look at this."* With that Jimmy flung his previously troublesome leg onto the low table and pulled up the trouser leg. *"All gone. Healed completely."*

*"Yeah, that's good, Jimmy. But, soon as I've finished my beer with my mate over there I've got to go. I'll catch up with you my next day off. Give us the number where you're staying."* I turned then as Des., stopped by me on his way out of the bar. *"Ok, Des. Meet up again some time."*

*"Yeah. Ok."* But, I don't recall we ever did meet again.

I took up my glass of beer from the bar counter with idea of finishing it, getting a contact number from Mandy and leaving for my other meeting.

Jimmy had other ideas. *"There's something I want to show you, Kiwi."*

The leg had gone from the table to be replaced by a large hand, palm down and obviously concealing something. His companions were looking at me, smiling with obvious expectation, awaiting my reaction when all was revealed. I didn't have a clue what it could be but, knowing Mandy, knew it would be out of the ordinary.

*"Pull up a chair and sit down, Kiwi."*

*"I've gotta go, Jimmy, I...."*

Fuck!

Jimmy slowly tilted his hand to show me the small pistol, barrel pointed my way, that his large hand had hidden. *"Fucking sit down, Kiwi!"*

What was the use? There were several courses of action I could have taken but I opted for the line of least resistance. Later, in a way I was glad I had that meeting up with and final drinking session with Jimmy. It was to be the last time I'd see him. Shortly after our encounter my application for a District posting came through and, as was typical of the BSAP, I was out of town on the next public transport heading North.

The mercenaries came from many backgrounds with their separate stories and motivations.

A young man, 'Died defending us from Communism' when ostensibly he'd only gone to the Congo to further his skills as an Armourer. Gerhard Joubert.... whose brother Nollie, I knew well, as an affable and well-liked Admin. Clerk at Fisons when I worked there...was a South African judo champion who went up as an unarmed defence instructor and lost his life in combat. Dave Linton was a QC and supposedly brilliant, if eccentric, Salisbury lawyer who in his youth had apparently cycled from Capetown to Cairo. Whatever drove him to the Congo, it was his last great adventure. One of the mercs, I think it was Ralph Hider, told me later, *'We drove into an ambush and Linton refused to take cover. He died standing on a bridge facing and firing at the enemy. God knows what made him do that.'*

My former cabin mate and Jo'berg coffee bar acquaintance Gino Tozzi was up there with Five Commando as a Quartermaster and, given his entrepreneurial skills and ability to obtain equipment, was apparently popular with the fighting men. Other mercenaries had told me that even after he obtained without cost to himself, American camouflage uniforms and Colt forty-five pistols, he'd sold them to the men for thirty-five US dollars a set! Understandably Gino now had money he hadn't had when I'd lent him twenty-five rand....and written off the idea of repayment...two years before in Johannesburg. But, Gino hadn't forgotten the favour which had got him out of trouble.

One afternoon as I stood at the Palace bar there was a hearty slap on my back. I turned and there he was!

*'Johnny. You summa-ma-gun!'*

*"Gino Tozzi!"*

Then. *'Before you tell me what you are up to.'* He retrieved a bulging wallet from inside his jacket, opened it and from the thick collection of notes there extracted thirty rand. *'Five for interest. And you dine with me tonight.'*

That was worth something; I'd just returned from a holiday to Beira and was low on cash. And Gino spared no expense when he could afford it!

We talked over 'old times' and speculated on the future of the Congo. Gino had some incredible tales to relate of his time there, a couple of incidents he'd been involved in he even had newspaper cuttings to prove they'd occurred. One I'd heard of...it made international news...involved the attempted rescue of four Catholic priests held far beyond mercenary held territory by the Simba rebels. One of the plans considered involved a 'sudden raid' using three helicopters, two to carry heavily armed 'mercs' and the other for the rescued priests.

Gino volunteered to seek an audience with the Pope...or at least a senior secretary...at the Vatican, to obtain the funding to purchase the military helicopters. He wasn't well received; the Italian media referred to him as an 'Italian born Freebooter', and he was still arguing his case and trying to establish his credentials when he received word the operation was off...the priests had been murdered. He showed me the large newspaper cutting with the photo of him alighting from a plane and the derogatory 'Italian freebooter label' and application placed on his mission. He was suing...unsuccessfully as it turned out....for untold millions of lire!

When Gino departed Salisbury a few days later it wasn't the end of our association.

*'Gino, somebody-or-other wants you on the phone, Johnston.'* I was on duty at Harare and the S.O. who handed me the phone pulled a face that begged the question; 'Where do you know an 'Eyetie' from, Johnston.'

I hadn't seen Gino for about five or six months. He was no longer in the Congo but on a mission as equally hazardous to life. Over a meal at an 'up-market' restaurant, Gino...knowing of my interest in matters African... picked my brain, so to speak. Where were the trouble spots....more especially those involving extreme violence and killing...preferably massacres!

He finally 'confessed' that he'd been hired as a 'military adviser' to an Italian film making company that specialised in making films that contained blood and gore and ritual killings so to speak. The R18 type films one can...or could until recently(I haven't)...hire from NZ video shops. The crews would use helicopters and film without permission.

I wasn't much help to Gino. This time when he left Salisbury I told myself I wouldn't be surprised to see him again. But, it wasn't to be. He'd be in his eighties now....if he survived his African adventures. He was certainly one of the most interesting characters I've ever met!

## SINOIA

*'Mama mia, not again!'*

Once we'd departed Salisbury city, the Rhodesian hinterland seemed reluctant to give up its secrets or in any hurry to reveal its beauty as yet again the train stopped, the engine was uncoupled, and soon was employed in shunting freight carriages on an adjacent track.

Some of my African fellow passengers had grown relaxed about sharing the carriage with a European, and a policeman in uniform to boot, who pulled faces and threw his hands in the air at each delay. And they openly laughed among themselves

and made gestures of sympathy at my exhibition of frustration. It may well be that my journey from Salisbury to Sinoia set some sort of record for a European policeman on transfer. I caught the train; after all it was a journey of only seventy-two miles. At an average of a mere twenty-five miles per hour it would take a little less than three hours. Wouldn't it?

Poor fool, I. Seven and a half hours later, right on dark, the train ground to a halt at Sinoia Railway Station There was an African Constable at the Railway station but he wasn't there to pick me up. He returned to the station on his bicycle and shortly a fifteen hundred-weight Bedford truck driven by an A/C turned up and transported me to the Police Station. The sole P.O. on duty admitted he'd been informed of my impending arrival but hadn't reckoned on me being so late. No-one... but no-one... caught the train to Sinoia! Well, no European anyway.

And the barracks. They were another trip by vehicle....over a mile out of town near the Sinoia Girls College.

I left my luggage outside the entrance and entered the living cum TV room. Perhaps ten P.O.s were watching the screen and I swear not one of them noticed my entrance, much less acknowledged it.

*'Johnny Johnston. On transfer here from Harare. Caught the train like a fool; that's why I'm so late getting here.'*

No response or even indication I'd been heard.

*'Any of you guys know where there's a spare room I can use?'*

Apparently not.

Bugger you then. I went back to the entrance, brought my gear into the room, and decided I'd have to search for a room myself upstairs.

*'Second room from the end on the left. That one's empty.'*

*'Thanks'.*

Back down below I gave up on the idea of a brew and a meal and parked myself next to a P.O.

*'Johnny Johnston'*.

*'You must be the guy replacing me. Colin Musson.'*

It had been little more than a year since I'd left the training depot and become a 'real policeman' and in that time I'd met the odd guy, usually an English born one, whom I'd never got closer to than a professional working relationship. Almost without exception....I can think of one or two individuals....I'd struck up an early and easy rapport with the Rhodesian and other African born men when I'd met them....perhaps it was a fellow colonial thing.... and generally was more than tolerated by those who'd been recruited in England. But, those Sinoia guys had to be the most uncooperative and unsociable bunch I'd met.

As a District Headquarters, Sinoia's Member I/C was a Chief Inspector, Monty Isikson. I reported to him first up the next morning. I'd looked forward to a district posting and had assumed that I'd meet more laid back and obliging guys to work with than had been the case in the city. I left the Member I/Cs office in no doubt that my assumption was a case of 'It ain't necessarily so'; as the song goes.

The 2 I/C, Robin Johnson was a reasonably approachable man and he took me on a quick tour of the station's offices and introduced me to the men, mostly senior to me, who lived with their families outside of the barracks. Then, as was the procedure with new men, he took me upstairs to meet the C.O. of Lomagundi District, Supt. John Cannon DFC. Cannon easily deserved the title 'one of nature's gentlemen'. I rarely if ever could recall hearing a fellow policeman pass a derogatory comment about Cannon, even half in jest. John Cannon had a civilian secretary, an attractive, very

friendly and single young woman who was being courted by a young P.O. who seemed to find far more than was usual excuses to visit his C.O. and civilian staff. I was in Cannon's office one day when Jock Saunders came in; paid due acknowledgement to his C.O. then gravitated to his 'lady love' for a brief conversation in an undertone before a quick, '*thank you, sir*' as he departed.

*'How many times does that make it we've seen P.O. Saunders today, Pene?'*  
Then, as Pene blushed, Cannon's approval of the 'match' became so obvious in his broad smile, '*Oh, to be young again*'.

Pene's father was Wattie Daniels, a well known and well liked NZ born citizen of some standing in Sinoia.

As I remember it, if the Police took a case to court and during the trial decided they'd have to withdraw it for any reason, the Police officer in charge of the case, or in some cases the Police Prosecutor, had to defend his decision before his C.O. who ultimately closed the case. It happened to me shortly after I began work at Sinoia.

To summarise the case; an African male adult allegedly entered the waiting room at the Sinoia Railway Station, espied a fourteen year old African female he 'fancied' and then dragged her to an area adjacent to the station where two African female witnesses allegedly witnessed him rape the hapless girl. There was no question of consensual sex.

The African was arrested, charged with rape, which he denied, and detained without bail. It should have been a straightforward case but the two female witnesses, wives of farm workers in an outlying farm in the Sinoia district, whilst their names and addresses had been recorded had disappeared before statements were obtained from them. A stuff up on the Police part. Finally an African Sergeant located the women and got their statements. A court date was set but on the appointed day the two female and principal witnesses were not to be found. The Magistrate was very unhappy but allowed a further and final remand.

The case was dropped on my desk at this point. '*Sort this mess out and get it to court as soon as possible, Johnston.*'

Not a problem, sir. Find the African Sergeant, get a few more details and then contact the farmer where the witnesses lived and see when he would next visit Sinoia.

*'You know the women concerned, A... and D...., wives of your farm workers, J...and S... We've got court next Friday. Any chance... You will be coming to Sinoia? Good. It's a serious case and very important they turn up. Thanks for your help.'*

Thanks for nothing. Later on the Friday in question. '*Sorry mate, something else came up and I changed my mind about coming into town.*'

There'd be no further remand and the prisoner, the alleged rapist, walked free. Robin Johnson was far from happy when I explained what we'd had to do and he and I walked up the stairs to the C.O.s office. John Cannon was more about pointing out what should have and will be done in future, such as having the witnesses, in serious cases such as this, brought to town before the court date and kept in the witness quarters so they'd be available to give evidence when required. He wasn't interested in recrimination or finding a scapegoat; what had happened, had happened.

The only occasion where I saw a policeman not accord John Cannon the respect due to an officer was a rather amusing one that indirectly involved me. I was doing road-block duties at Makuti when Cannon paid a visit to us. He soon had about five of us junior ranks having a chat to him about the general security situation and of how we were just managing to make do with the rather Spartan facilities at Makuti etcetera, when a Police Landrover came into the camp in rather a hurry and braked to a halt in a cloud of dust about twenty yards from us. The sole occupant, the young

European driver I recognised straight away. It was my squad mate and good friend from my Harare days, Peter Ruck, who'd followed my example and been posted to district. In his case it was a remote sole European posting far from 'civilisation'; Kanyemba, I think.

Peter climbed from the vehicle and what a sight he presented. Proper bloody *dogs brekkie!* His blonde hair was far too long by Police standards, his cap was perched on the back of his head, his jacket was nearly completely open down the front and his socks were down around his ankles. He strode towards us making no attempt to rectify his uniform 'deficiencies' and then saw me.

*'Tommy Thompson!!'* (Our private joke as explained earlier.) *'What the hell are you doing here, Johnny?'* His stride lengthened and he virtually brushed past our C.O. to close on me.

*'Ah...road-block... Pete. Mr. Cannon.'* Nodding my head in the C.O.s direction and pulling an anguished face.

*'Bloody good to see you, Johnny!'*

*'Yeah, Pete. Mr. Cannon's here, Pete. Mr. Cannon.'* All conversation except ours had ceased and all attention, somewhat bemused, was on us including that of our C.O.

*'Put it here, Johnny. It's been a while, eh!'*

I took Pete's outstretched hand and pulled him closer.

*'Bloody hell, Pete. Straighten your uniform up. Mr. Cannon is here.'*

*'Where?'* Pete. Looked about him. 'Oh..yeah' And almost reluctantly...with all other eyes on him by now... he did up his jacket. Then he slowly stooped and pulled up his socks and equally casually adjusted his cap on his flowing locks. *'Good morning, sir..P.O. Ruck from Kanyemba.'* The salute was sloppy, almost an afterthought.

*'Good morning, Ruck. And how long have you been at Kanyemba?'*

*'I think about six months, sir'*

*'Right. Well carry on with the purpose of your visit'*. John Cannon, far from being annoyed at Ruck's appearance, appeared to be fighting to contain his amusement. He shook his head rather sadly as Pete. disappeared in the direction of the JOC caravan.

*'I think Ruck's one young man who'll have to be transferred to a more populated area and the sooner the better.'*

I had the chance to have a chat with Peter before he left Makuti again and I believe it was the last time I was to see or speak to him. We'd had a lot of fun together, both in Depot and at our first posting, Harare. Thirty eight years later I received an email from him. A happy blast from the past!

*'Mr. T...., we cannot prosecute that man for having an affair with your wife. Adultery is not a criminal offence in Rhodesia.'*

When it was decided that the Zambezi river was to be dammed at the Kariba Gorge to create a lake, and subsequently provide hydro-electric power to Southern and Northern Rhodesia, an Italian company won the contract for the work. Given his only fair use of English, I assumed that one Vincent T... had in all probability decided to settle in Rhodesia after working on the dam rather than his being a case of an immigrant from earlier times. Whatever, he married, found employment with the Ministry of Works and undoubtedly enjoyed the Rhodesian way of life. Well at least up until when he believed his Works foreman, one Thomas D.... was conducting an affair with his wife. To the cuckolded Vincent; Thomas D.... was a criminal and Police Sinoia were the people to deal with him! It was only with some difficulty we managed to 'convince' Vincent that despicable as his conduct may appear, in criminal law D... didn't have a case to answer. End of matter?

No. Vincent a couple of weeks later. '*That D...; he steals oil and tyres from the Works and sells them in Salisbury. And he still sleeps with my wife!*'

Alright then, Vincent. African police did their best to obtain corroborating evidence from among Black road-workers but the case against Thomas D... was never anything but a shaky one dependant largely on Vincent T ..s evidence which had more than a suggestion of 'circumstantial' about it and everything about dropping his immediate boss in 'the proverbial', as a way of soothing the very real hurt he suffered.

On Court day I sought out T... and reiterated strongly that the alleged affair D...was conducting with his wife was not a criminal offence and once on the stand he was not to allude to it.

But, D...s defence counsel knew his stuff and for once didn't subscribe to the idea of dragging out the case to further add to his appearance fee. '*Mr. T...; am I correct in saying that you believe my client Thomas D... is conducting an adulterous affair with your wife?*'

Vincent lived far from his land of birth and his English was far from perfect but, the Latin temperament still burned brightly!

*'But, he is! That-a- bloody-bastard, he's a-fuckin' my wife! She goes with him and they are- a-fuckin'! That man and my wife, they....'*

Oh dear. It was all to much for the Magistrate who suddenly developed a coughing fit behind hastily snatched up papers; the Police Prosecutor couldn't decide whether to give full rein to his laughter or have a good cry and the defence counsel, satisfied of a job well done, smirked his triumph in the direction of the defendant.

Case dismissed! Hostile...make that distraught, and from the Police perspective, bloody useless witness!

I was put onto general duties at Sinoia and despite having the impression that we were not exactly overburdened with work, I was rostered on for twenty four days straight without a day off. Bugger this for a joke. I approached Insp. Robin Johnson with 'my problem'. While he didn't seem unduly surprised he was a little sympathetic.

*'Alright, Johnston, I'll send you out on a four day farm patrol from tomorrow. On your return you can have four days off. O.k?'*

Not a problem, sir. That's what I joined District Branch for; the chance to get out of the office and meet the real Rhodesians.

*'Not a very good start to the year I'm afraid.'*

Soon after my transfer from the city I had visited one farm in the Sinoia area to investigate a murder on New Years day 1967. It was a straight forward case, if such a description can be applied to something as serious as one human being killing another. An older farm labourer, Kamota, intoxicated after attending a beer-drink, had killed a younger fellow worker in a jealous rage apparently over a woman. Kamota had made no attempt to flee the farm or even deny his responsibility in the killing.

After being taken to the farm compound where the crime had occurred, by Roger, the farm manager, I looked over the scene and the deceased, obtained the names of potential witnesses and then went to the hut of the accused where he was formally cautioned and arrested. The body was placed in one of the specially designed coffin shaped metal boxes we used for the transport of bodies to the hospital mortuaries. I then visited the owner of the farm, a widow, who'd phoned Sinoia to report the murder. She was sad that one of her longest serving employees would be leaving the farm for some time; if not forever. I remember her saying. '*Mac (her late husband)*

*and I always took Kamota with us when we went up to the Zambezi on our fishing trips. He's been on the farm since he was little more than a piccannin.'*

In February, '67 I gave evidence against Kamota, charged with murder, in the Salisbury High Court. He was convicted of Culpable Homicide (Manslaughter) and sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment with Hard Labour with one year suspended on the usual conditions. I was happy enough with the relatively light sentence and pleased for the farm owner.... who I was to see on further occasions.... that she'd get her servant back again. I remember that when I'd asked her after the trial if she'd take Kamota back on the farm she'd almost seemed surprised I'd asked the question. And reiterated that he'd been on the farm longer than she had. Sadly I'd already learnt that Europeans almost took for granted that it wasn't unusual for Africans to settle their differences in a way that involved bloodshed. Perhaps they were lesser beings after all!.

An A/C and I duly commenced our farm patrol from Sinoia on a motorbike carrying a few provisions and a collection of cards....one for each farm....that gave details of ownership and employee numbers etc. I decided to stay at the farm where I'd investigated the murder involving Kamota and was made welcome there. I declined the offer of a bed in the main house and opted for a 'sleep-out' type room where the A/C and I could both sleep.

The police were mostly held in high regard by the farmers and we were generally welcomed on our visits. I learnt a lot more than I'd previously known of rural Rhodesia. Especially the relationship between White and Black. In the cities the Africans were mainly employed as domestics or as labourers in industry. True there were Black nurses, drivers, teachers, store-men, clerks, soldiers and of course policemen. But, with the exception of a few domestics, those in employment were paid a weekly or monthly wage and lived in a Council run township.

In the rural areas the farm labourers lived with their families in a compound on the farm and they relied almost entirely on the farmer for their wellbeing. But, of course the opposite applied as well, for a farmer to do well he had to rely on the efficiency and contentment of his work force. It didn't take me long, speaking to both farmers and their labourers to realise just how interdependent they were.

On the second morning of our patrol I arrived fairly early at a large, more modern than was the norm, farm-house only to be told by a house servant that the owner was away but there was a '*missy at the clinic*'. The clinic was detached from the house and there were perhaps ten Africans, men and women with children seated on benches outside a single room building. Inside the room a middle-aged White woman was speaking mostly '*Chilapalapa*' as she examined a piccannin who was held by his mother. She completed the examination, handed over a couple of tablets to the mother and verbal instructions as to their use before she acknowledged my presence.

*'Good-morning. Can I help you?'*

*'Good morning. We're just on a routine farm patrol. The boy at the house said the owner was away but there was a clinic being held. Do you go around the farms to other clinics tending to farm workers?'*

*'No. The workers and their families come here each morning. I trained as a nurse and when I married a farmer I decided not to waste my training. So we built this clinic and if the ailments are simple and straightforward I deal with them here. If the illness or injury warrants it we take then into Sinoia Hospital.'*

At the next farm there was a school with a single class of about twenty-five Black pupils ranging in age from about six to twelve. I stood in the open doorway and saw

the teacher, an African male about thirty, was smartly dressed. And I noticed the children were both tidy and attentive.

*'Mangwanena.'* (Good morning.)

*'Good morning, officer.'*

As soon as I was observed I greeted the teacher and was greeted in turn. Then the pupils all stood up, turned towards me and chorused; *'Good maa-hor-ning, si-r-r.'*

*'Good morning, children. Are you all happy today?'*

*'Ye-h-e-s, sir.'*

At this house, the farmers wife made me a cup of tea which we took out on the stoep, after she'd told my A/C he was welcome to a cup of tea himself round the back at the kitchen. Once I'd professed my ignorance of rural Rhodesia, and she'd learnt I was a Kiwi, the woman enjoyed telling me what the White farming community provided for the Black workers and their families. The school on the farm had been built with the financial assistance of several farmers living nearby. They'd also paid for the seats and desks. The teaching aids had been provided by a church, Methodist I believe, and the teacher's salary was paid by the Government. Apparently such a set up wasn't uncommon in the rural farming areas. In some ways this was a case of necessity; I read before I left the country that the Rhodesian Govt. spent twelve times as much on the education of a White child as it did a Black child.

*Years later after Independence and Zimbabwe came into being along with the ultimate seizure of White owned farms, the rural Blacks, to the real detriment of their health issues, would lose the farm based medical clinics ....they numbered in the hundreds I learnt... and all too often the schools. For sadly, the Mugabe Govt. ministers were all for enriching themselves through corrupt practices...theft in any man's language.... and staying in power. Not about providing for the needs of its people.*

In retrospect I don't consider that the education and medical treatment provided for the Blacks were all necessarily supplied out of sheer compassion or altruism on the part of the Whites; after all a happy work force is more likely to be a productive one. And so is a well housed one. Most farm compounds were tidy and comfortable accommodation was provided for each family. Some farms had a workforce of over a hundred and the compounds were veritable villages. Most compounds had extra land where the labourers could plant vegetables but their staple diet of mealie-powder and meat was provided by the farmer. As were dried fish, '*kapenta*', on many farms. Generally African beer was provided once a month by the farmer for a beer-drink which was often attended by Africans from other farms. Whilst they still had to carry a '*situpa*' (Registration Certificate) the rural Africans didn't appear to have the same restrictions placed on them as their city kin did, when it came to living in a certain area. The farms had 'boss-boys' to supervise the labour and as long as there was no trouble in the compounds, the farmers were mostly content to let their labourers and families lead their own lives outside of work time. It wasn't unusual for a city African wanted by the Police to take refuge in a farm compound with relatives and the farmer initially not to be aware of it.

Incidents of assaults by farmers or their farm managers, on their labourers, if they occurred, and I believe they did on occasion, didn't often come to the attention of the Police. Prosecutions were virtually unheard of but I was made aware that certain farmers had been '*let off with a warning*'. One case which came to the attention of the media and which many people felt had political overtones occurred on a large farming complex between Salisbury and Sinoia that was owned by Boss Lilford, who had supported Ian Smith's bid to become Prime Minister and was indeed a personal friend

of the PM. Allegations of Lilford assaulting his labourers on occasion and not being ‘taken to task’ for it because of his friendship with the Smith Govt. surfaced and for a time the media made quite a thing about it. Years later in Nelson I became friends with a former Rhodesian farmer who knew Lilford quite well and he stated that the man was ‘quite firm and strict’ with his African labour on one hand but very fair and not without compassion on the other. He told me and I was subsequently to read it elsewhere, that it wasn’t unusual for Lilford himself to speed away from his farm in the middle of the night or small hours of the morning for the Sinoia Hospital with an acutely ill farm worker or an African farm worker’s wife experiencing a difficult labour.

Perhaps the best farm I visited in the Sinoia area in terms of production and healthy livestock, mainly beef cattle, was owned by a Mr. du Toit. His pastures were well fertilised and fenced and while he also grew mealie crops, he concentrated on beef production. We had quite a chat about farming when he learnt of my background and he was very proud of his achievements. He took me down to the farm compound and like the farm it was tidy and well laid out and the Africans present appeared to be a happy lot and clearly welcomed his presence. It bore out the conclusions I was developing that look after a man well and he’ll look after you. It fitted nicely with my social philosophy.

One farm I visited, owned by Koos Pretorius and his wife was a smaller unit and Koos appeared to be battling to make a good income from it. He was also battling cancer in one thigh and when I visited him had not long been back from Salisbury Hospital after having radium treatment for his illness. Less than a year earlier the Pretorius’ had lost their seventeen year old son, an only child, also to cancer that had started in one leg. They showed me photos of their late son and told me he’d been a very promising rugby player. I walked with Koos down to his implement shed and remember his ‘boss-boy’ coming up to him and enquiring of his health. Koos spoke to him in *chilapalapa* for some time and as we moved on told me just how much he’d had to rely on the loyalty of his staff to keep the farm running in his absences from the farm getting medical treatment. Despite the sadness within the Pretorius couple they were so hospitable in the typically Afrikaans manner I had come to know in South Africa. Later I was to learn that Koos had been a Section Leader in the Police Reserve but had ‘resigned over some upset’. He certainly bore no ill will toward me as a member of the Police.

I see him now, looking over a farm that appeared not long hacked out of a wilderness....a real man of the land....a big man and a proud one as so many of Afrikaans ancestry were....and I shared his sadness that his illness would soon take away all the labour and love he had invested in his property. And I could only hope, as he must have, that his boys (farm workers) would show the same loyalty to his wife as they had for him, after he’d was gone.

I was on night shift at Sinoia several months later when I received a phone call telling me Koos had died.

For the first two days of the patrol I returned to the same farm and both evenings was invited for ‘sundowners’ and to share a meal with the widow farm owner and Roger her manager.. ‘Sundowners’ were a rural ritual, a reward for a hard days work, a time to reflect on the days happenings while seated out on the stoep (verandah) and enjoying a beer or spirits. Roger owned several shotguns and invited me to look over them. One was a Holland and Holland that had been handed down to him by his late father. It was one of a matched pair; his brother had the other. Before I left the farm to seek accommodation elsewhere I offered Roger one hundred pounds for the shotgun

in his possession and the one owned by his brother. He had no idea of the value of the guns...I didn't myself....but said he'd look into it. I saw the beautifully made pieces as future presents for my father and brother, both keen duck and pheasant shooters.

I remember that the 'sleep-out' where I slept had a large fig tree near it and when the A/C and I returned to the small dwelling after dark dozens of small bats flew out of the tree.

At the conclusion of the patrol, I wrote up the obligatory report and went back to routine Police work. Two cases I was involved with come to mind, possibly because they were more unusual than I'd previously experienced in that Europeans were the accused.

*'There's two young women here causing trouble here. Can you come and get them off my premises.'*

After I'd parked the Landrover in the yard of the Sinoia Caves Hotel and approached the tables on an outside deck I immediately came under verbal and physical attack from two young women in their late teens who were obviously rather drunk. After trying to throw beer over me the light deck chairs followed. I managed to deflect the unexpected missiles without getting any injury of note.

*'Show us how you're going to handle that lot, Johnny'*

Buggers. Through the open doorway of the inside bar I saw a cop from another station whom I recognised and he had another couple of obvious cops with him I didn't know. They'd been enjoying more than the odd glass and short of the unlikelihood of me suddenly facing real peril, I couldn't expect any help from that quarter.

I was getting nowhere.... one couldn't use force to make the arrest without the risk of a sexual assault being levelled at me....when a guardian angel, about thirty, well dressed and introducing herself as Susan Moulds, a legal secretary from Sinoia, approached and indicated she was aware of my dilemma and would help me. As we seized an arm each of one girl and secured her in the vehicle the other ran away up the road until she tripped and fell. Susan gripped her shoulders, myself her feet, the A/C who couldn't conceal his amazement at the rarity of an arrest of White females, opened the back door of the vehicle and at Susan's instigation we heaved the young woman into the interior of the vehicle.

Back at the Charge Office it was a struggle to get the identity of the women but, I eventually succeeded there and formally charged them with drunk and disorderly conduct etc. Basically their replies indicated I pull my head in and '*release them without further harassment*'. Sorry, ladies, but the joke is over.

Or so I thought. Following what must have been a prearranged signal the two accused suddenly bolted out of the Charge Office. I gave off typing out the case and gave chase and soon had one by an arm. I pulled her shouting, cursing and trying to kick me...bugger the protocols.... back to the Office and got her seated on a bench there.

But, the lass was far from subdued. '*So, Mr. Pig, do you think I'll stay here while you try to catch my friend?*'

Lady luck gave me a break then in the form of A/C Bunu entering the Charge Office. Bunu was perhaps the least intelligent A/C in the BSA Police and had been assigned to permanent patrol duties at night of the station's environs. And he carried a Greener shotgun. And I hoped, despite an apparent lack of general Police skills, that he'd retained enough from his training to know the regulations pertaining to prisoners.

*"Constable Bunu. The missy here has been arrested and she is a prisoner."*

*'I understand, sir.'*

*'Good. Now take your shotgun off your shoulder and hold it in your hands. Do you understand that if the prisoner tries to escape and you cannot catch her you shout loudly, 'Stop or I'll shoot!' three times. In English of course. If she refuses to stop you may shoot her. Understand?'*

*'Yes...sir. I...understand'.* One could almost certainly guarantee Bunu would always indicate he understood and provide the answer one sought!

*'If you have to shoot, shoot her in the legs, Bunu. I don't want you to kill her.'*

*'Yes, sir. I understand.'* Bunu was clearly relieved he wouldn't achieve the unique status in the force of being the first African policeman to fatally shoot a civilian and a European female at that!

The message had got through to the young woman. *'You, pig!'* Her head slumped and she dissolved in tears.

Her friend returned to the station voluntarily when she learnt from me that there would be no *'further quarter given'*. A/C Bunu would never have shot the prisoner had she chosen to *'do a runner'*. I'd have stepped in front of him, done anything to avoid the uproar and paper work that would have resulted had he even fired his Greener!

I prevailed on Pat Rogers, wife of a fellow PO, Graham, who was fortuitously the Duty Sister at Sinoia Hospital that evening to lend me some hospital blankets and the two accused were soon incarcerated in the cell block behind the station. And sleeping off their excesses. Or so I thought.

A/C Bunu came into the station a while later as I was preparing to go off duty.

*'Sir! The missies are shouting that you must come quickly!'*

The tarts!

*'What the hell is it now?'*

*'My friend is having a miscarriage and if she dies you'll really be in the shit!'*

On the phone to Pat again at the Hospital. I finished off my work at the station while she examined the prisoner. She was clearly annoyed on her return to the Office. *'Don't worry, Johnny. The bloody woman is only having her period. I had the necessaries with me and gave them to her. With a bit of luck that'll be the end of the nonsense.'*

The following day two very hung-over and somewhat contrite young women apologised to me when I conveyed them to the Sinoia Courthouse. In answer to their query regarding their possible fate, I pointed out that I'd not charged them with *'Escape from Police custody'* or *'Assault on Police'* as I may well have. A relatively small fine was my guess.

They pleaded guilty which meant witnesses including myself were not called to give evidence.

*'I sentence you each to a fine of twenty pounds or three months imprisonment ....'* Here the Magistrate paused for effect and I could only think; *'Bloody hell, he has dished out the punishment!'* Both young women had intimated they were unemployed and near broke; before he continued; *'The sentence will be suspended for eighteen months with the usual conditions.'*

General relief all round. I *'consorted with a criminal element'* and went out with one of the young woman a couple of times before she moved away from the Sinoia area. And I even assured her she wouldn't really have been shot the night she went wild!

April the 16<sup>th</sup> of '67 brought a time of reflection to those who had known Charlie Fox who along with a European Reservist and an A/C lost his life in a Land-rover accident the previous day. I'd never been stationed with Charlie but had met him on a

number of occasions. I can still bring him to mind coming into the Harare mess seemingly removing his cap and belt in one action, curling the latter into his cap and heading with a singular focus towards the Southern Cross bar and his beloved beer.

*'That cheeky bloody munt had it coming to him!'*

Aksel Omaadt's work saw him supervising African road-works gangs. He enjoyed an after work beer at the Sinoia Hotel.

I was on evening shift (4.00pm to midnight) when the manager of the hotel phoned. Omaadt had assaulted his African barman by breaking a broom handle over his head.

*'I must warn you that anything you say etc....' Now tell me what do you have to say about this matter?"* I put to the accused.

'I gave my newspaper to that cheeky *munt* to put behind the bar for safekeeping until I was ready to leave. When I asked for it he said it wasn't there. The lying *tsotse*; I sorted him out.' Omaadt was a tall and solid man with the temperament of his Viking '*berserker*' forbears and clearly felt he also held the high moral ground, so to speak.

I knew the barman to be generally friendly, obliging and efficient. He did tend to be a little more 'familiar' with the White patrons than some Blacks were but, I'd never heard any customer seriously rebuke him. His scalp wound had bled profusely leaving his white shirt mostly scarlet down the front. Before I could hear his side of the story the manager intervened and explained that he'd in fact taken Omaadt's paper without his barman's knowledge, believing it was the pub copy.

*'Ok. If I charge Omaadt with assault you'll both have to take time off work or whatever to attend court and give evidence. If I can get him to admit to 'Disorderly behaviour on Licensed Premises' and he pays you some compensation; say five pounds, will that satisfy you? The decision is entirely yours to make.'* I was going out on a bit of a limb to avoid the paper-work involved in a Court case. The Admission of Guilt idea was for relatively minor crimes where the accused was prepared to admit he'd erred and was prepared to pay a fixed monetary penalty. Assault would not come within the bounds of such a scheme. I felt justified in my 'departure' from standard Police procedure by my seeking some recompense for the aggrieved party.

The barman was happy enough to accept my suggestion.

Omaadt was far from happy that he admit to 'Disorderly behaviour' and pay a five pounds 'Admission of Guilt' fine. Wisely I didn't raise the idea of any compensation for the barman.

When I pointed out to Omaadt that in paying an 'Admission of Guilt' he avoided a Criminal Record, whereas if I took him to Court for Assault he'd not only pay a heavier fine, allowing he was found guilty which I assured him he almost certainly would be, but he'd also then have a black mark against his name, a Criminal Record; his reaction was predictable.

*'Do your worst, Mr. Policeman! I'm not the guilty one!'*

He presented as both ignorant and arrogant and continued his stance of being the aggrieved party even when later at the station I formally charged him with assault.

Court day and he was there with a lawyer. He pleaded not guilty but, after hearing the Crown witnesses, predictably the Magistrate found against him. His lawyer presented the usual plea for mitigation and pointed out that the offence was 'out of character' for his client and added a few other nice rejoinders before the Magistrate passed sentence.

*'I sentence you to a fine of three pounds.....'*

Bloody, hell. I couldn't believe it!

I commiserated with the Police guy doing the Prosecution before leaving the Court. Omaadt was just seeing off his lawyer as I walked towards him. There was unfinished business.

*'So, Mr. Policeman. You thought you could make me pay five pounds but, I only have to pay three, don't I?'* Omaadt all but crowed at me.

*'I'm sorry, Mr. Omaadt, but, you won't have the bill for that fellow yet and they don't come cheap.'* I gestured to the departing legal eagle. *'And I've further bad news. You will now have a Criminal Record. You are obliged to report to the Sinoia Police Station within twenty-four hours to have your fingerprints taken. Failing to do so could see you arrested.'*

I can honestly say that whilst I took a policeman's expected satisfaction in securing a conviction against a wrongdoer I never saw in a conviction any personal revenge against a person but I came fairly close on that occasion! And I didn't rub salt into his wounds by personally taking a very disgruntled Omaadt's fingerprints when he duly fronted up at the Police station later that day!

My next farm patrol was in a Mini-moke and I was happy to have four wheels under me rather than two as it was the start of the rainy season. Once again I elected to stay the first night at the farm where Roger was manager.

Yes, he had given the matter of selling the pair of Holland and Holland shotguns to me some thought but, when he'd contacted his brother, he'd ascertained they were worth quite a lot more than I'd offered and there would be no deal. Cheeky bugger that I was, I was still in his good books however and he reckoned I needed an hour off patrol duties to go Franquin pheasant and Guinea fowl shooting down in the farm's mealie patch. I rejected his offer of the Holland and Holland and chose a Greener from his arsenal and we were soon driving up and down the vehicle access lanes in the crop. We didn't get a bird but I managed to get the Mini-moke rather badly bogged in sandy soil trying to turn it around. Roger put his considerable bulk to use and we freed the vehicle but not before a horrible 'V' shaped indentation was made in the front of the vehicle. Not to worry. He pushed it out again. Good as new, he reckoned.

I left the farm with the idea of visiting a small private gold claim, Montana, that was in a fairly remote area. Light rain was falling as we drove through an African Tribal Reserve until we came to the Biriwiri river. Where for perhaps ten months of the year it would be dry, there was perhaps about six inches of water flowing in it. The 'Mokes' didn't have a lot of free-board so I proceeded slowly. All went well until I reached the other side of the river and lost traction trying to get up the opposite bank. Attempts to go ahead were futile and by the time I worked out I should have reversed back across the river it wasn't an option. Fortunately my A/C had been to the claim before and he set off briskly on foot to cover the ten minute walk.

The river continued to rise and the water was well up the back wheels when the claim owner, a Mr. Edward Lovejoy, arrived in his old Mk.1 Ford Prefect with three of his workers. With a tow rope to the 'Moke' and plenty of pushing and heaving we got the Police vehicle up onto safe ground and I was saved from a major embarrassment, not to mention a lot of paper-work!

At the claim I was given a tour of the area and Lovejoy explained that he was required under the Mines Act to do so much excavation each year to be allowed to keep the claim. He wasn't recovering much gold but he'd retired from his job...I believe as a Road Engineer.... on a pension, was a widower with no children and had no desire to return to England, his country of birth which he'd apparently left as a

young man. He clearly welcomed the chance to talk to a European and patently didn't want me to leave his company too soon!

My A/C went back to the river mid-afternoon and returned to say the water was even higher according to the marker stick I'd left there. Lovejoy at least was pleased; he had a dinner guest!

We'd have a stew made from an impala he'd shot for meat, he decided. And rice which I discovered he stored underground in sealed containers. He had other bits and pieces in holes dug in the ground including a few bottles of pleasantly cool beer. When the stew was ready a large portion of it was given to Lovejoy's three labourers and my A/C to go with their sadza. The rain had stopped as we drank the beer and ate our food. The night sounds began as dusk slowly crept in. From their fire near their sleeping huts the labourers voices came as a murmur broken by the occasional burst of laughter. The air was clear after the rain and the sunset was the 'Blue and old Gold'; our Regimental colours. This was the Africa I'd imagined it would be....perhaps for the first time I felt a certain melancholy part of it....certainly I began to understand why Lovejoy had chosen to spend the rest of his life in Rhodesia rather than return to the land of his birth. He'd been back, he told me, to visit his siblings but Africa was now where his heart was. He had a thatch walled and roofed hut with boards on the floor as his living quarters. A simple narrow make-shift bed ran along one wall. I ran my sleeping-bag out on the floor parallel to his bed. We smoked and talked far into the night until sleep overtook us.

At some time in the small hours I heard the rain start again. And later was aware of a torch light and movement from Lovejoy's bed. He was kneeling on his bed with his face to the wall. With a torch in one hand he was probing in the thatch with the spike of a pocket knife. I saw him pause and then very slowly and carefully insert the spike into the thatch. Suddenly he flicked it out and in his torch-light I briefly, but quite unmistakably, saw a two foot long snake flying through the air before I felt it land fair on top of me! I yelled and was out of my sleeping bag with my own torch in hand in record time. Lovejoy's near hysterical laughing was punctuated with bouts of coughing and he reckoned he hadn't had better entertainment for years!

When he recovered the use of speech again he explained that it wasn't rare in the rainy season for snakes to crawl up into the thatch after mice which had taken refuge there. And he'd been after the snake in question for a few nights in a row. Thankfully the reptile had scarpered and Lovejoy promised there wouldn't be a repeat performance if it returned.

The next day a claim worker went back to our vehicle quite early and returned to say the water level had not changed from the previous day. Whilst I had no contact with Police Sinoia I did have a couple of days up my sleeve. Clearly Lovejoy would have me stay another night but about midday again I sent my A/C to check on the river level and he returned to say it was well down. I thanked Lovejoy for his hospitality and bid him goodbye. Years later when he came to mind I wondered that with the change in political climate if he did last out the rest of his life in Rhodesia, or Zimbabwe as it became after Independence in 1980.

*'You bloody nitwit, we'll all have to write our reports like yours from now on!'*

At the conclusion of a patrol one had to write a report that covered about a dozen or more headings. Where the average length of a patrol report was four typed pages mine was about eight and I'd carelessly, of my own volition, included rough statistics of the percentage of non-indigenous to indigenous African labour in the patrolled district. The outcome of my report was a mixed blessing; the CO told me personally it was one of the best rural patrol reports he'd read at Sinoia, and because it had never

been done before, I was to consult ‘the official records’ to get accurate figures regarding the labour force percentages. And because I’d set a precedent length and detail wise in submitting such a report I earned a mild rebuke from several of my peers and the nickname ‘*Our Correspondent*’ generally delivered in less than complimentary tones to add to the other names I went by!

*‘Ah..ah, sir. If he drowns it is his own fault.’*

The station had an old 15cwt Bedford truck, a relic from the pre-Landrover days I assumed. Usually it was driven only by African Police but late one afternoon it was the only transport available when I had to visit a Greek owned store in a farming area. I soon mastered the 3 speed gearbox and was progressing well when the sealed road ran out, I rounded a bend and there before me was a downhill of about a hundred and fifty yards with a narrow one-way bridge at the bottom. The road was metal packed into a hard wet clay made greasy on the surface by light rain and to say I lost traction was an understatement! I was all over the road, into the ditch and out again, sideways-on one minute gazing fearfully at the bridge I must negotiate, the next minute briefly gazing at one very ashen faced A/C uttering an ‘Ah-Ah...sir-sir’ mantra to add to my concerns. Somehow I made it across the bridge and stopped on the far side to light a cigarette and let my racing pulse ease up a bit. Minutes later I rounded another corner and there was an African male lying in the middle of the road. In the light drizzle we climbed out and approached him. He was ok; just dead drunk, presumably from a nearby beer-drink on one of the farms. We took an arm each and dragged him off the road and the A/C sternly admonished him although the man appeared barely conscious and receptive.

We sorted out our business at the store and set off back to the station and there he was again! One very drunk farm labourer back in the middle of the road! My A/C took a personal affront to the man’s actions.

*‘I will fix him, sir.’*

*‘Don’t arrest him, Constable. It isn’t worth the trouble.’* I figured the man was entitled to get pissed on his day off. I often did myself! But, I certainly didn’t choose a road to sleep my excesses off!

The A/C grabbed him by his lower legs and dragged the man on his back towards a sizeable puddle on the side of the road. And into the puddle, deeper and deeper until the man’s face went under. He was blowing bubbles and feebly struggling when I reached him.

*‘I think you have fixed him enough, Constable.’*

*‘Just a little more, sir. He is a bad one, I am sure.’*

I made sure the hapless farm worker was in the ‘recovery position’, had finished coughing and spluttering and was breathing normally when I left him. The A/Cs could be a little over fond of ‘summary justice’ on occasion. There were no reports of any unexplained Sudden Deaths in our area in the next few days which indicated he must have survived!

Sudden Deaths weren’t unusual in our area. Any death that was unexpected was classified as a Sudden Death and became the subject of an Application for a Post Mortem and a report would follow from the MO who performed the autopsy. Sometimes the officer investigating the case would be required to attend the autopsy but it wasn’t normal practice.

However, one morning at Sinoia I reported for duty and was told by the 2 I/C that I was to go to Sinoia Hospital to attend the autopsies of two young African brothers who’d died suddenly barely half an hour apart the previous evening shortly after their

evening meal. Poisoning was suspected and I was to obtain stomach samples from the deceased for forensic analysis.

I'd attended autopsies both at Harare and Sinoia before and I generally found them interesting rather than repugnant or something to get apprehensive about. The first of the children was already on the table in the small mortuary when I arrived and the Medical Superintendent of Sinoia Hospital, who'd served in that capacity for many years, soon entered the room. He was obviously in a less than cheery mood but allowed my request to smoke while he carried out the procedure in a hasty manner beginning with the chest cavity.

*'Put those on.'* He indicated a pair of rubber gloves which I donned before he indicated I hold apart the victims rib cage while he inspected the lungs. This was something new; I'd only ever been an onlooker before!

*'See that. Double pneumonia.'*

The next young victim was placed on the table and the same conclusion quickly arrived at.

It seemed all too easy. Both the children looked particularly well fed, had had no previous illness and had died suddenly after taking food. I couldn't in my layman's mind see pneumonia as being a cause of death in this case.

The MO was about to take off his gloves to complete his paper work.

*'I'm sorry, sir, but would it be possible to obtain stomach samples from the deceased? I have the plastic bags.'*

*'I've told you what both died from. Double pneumonia. They weren't poisoned.'*

*'But, sir, I've been instructed to...'*

*'Alright then!'* It was a horrible few moments I'll always remember. The MO snatched up his cutting instrument and viciously slashed, rather than cut into the stomach cavity of the first victim, delved into it with his gloved hands and deposited a mess in the bag I held, splashing some on my arms above the gloves. Thank, the Lord I had a strong stomach. Then. *'Is that where you wanted your sample from, or was it here?'* He then slashed open the front of the thigh of the young victim.

*'No it wasn't, Doctor.'* I wasn't going to show I was repulsed by his vulgar, if stress related actions. But, I had one sample, I hoped, and wisely decided not to ask for one from the other victim.

I related what had happened to the 2 I/C and was basically told I should have accepted the MO. s findings but, it was worth having the stomach sample analysed anyway, now I'd gone to so much trouble to get it.

The report found no trace of poison in the sample and cause of death entered in the Sudden Death Register was 'Double Pneumonia.' It was a finding that I found hard to accept and years later on occasion when it came to mind, which admittedly was rarely, I'd sometimes ask the person I was relating the story to, to give their opinion regarding the instant pneumonia idea. All concurred with my feelings until I asked a surgeon friend of mine nearly forty years after the event and he said it wouldn't be a common cause of death in the young but it was definitely possible! Sorry, Doctor Allingham!

The cause of the next sudden death in a child was beyond question and lead to one of the more stressful days in my Police career.

It was an hours drive into a Tribal Trust Land where an African child of about four had gone under the rear wheels of a bus after alighting from the vehicle. The scene hadn't been altered, the child lay face down in the soft clay, the bus was barely three metres from the body and had skidded to a halt. The driver explained he'd heard an adult scream as he began to pull away and had braked immediately.

I moved to the dead child and saw her head had passed under the rear wheels. The A/C and I turned her over on her back. Her facial features were uncannily intact, the imprint in the soft red clay under her face was as the mould for a death mask. We placed her in the body-box and explained to the grieving relatives that we'd have to take the body to the Sinoia Mortuary and those closest to the dead child could come with us.

An older man stepped up to the A/C and spoke rapidly in his own language and gestured to the bus. I wrongly assumed the matter of compensation was being raised.

*'Tell him it was a sad accident. I do not believe it was the fault of the bus driver.'*  
*'No, sir. That is not what he is saying.'*

As I watched the A/C went to the side of the road. He returned shortly with two sticks, both about a foot long. *'Please come with me, sir.'* I followed him to the rear of the bus where he gestured with the sticks. *'Please, sir, can you do it for the family? It is very important.'*

I took the sticks. The child's brain, surprisingly intact, was resting between the dual rear wheels of the bus. Wordlessly, as the women cried loudly and wailed their grief, I used the sticks to transfer my grisly burden to the body box. At that moment it wasn't a *kaffir piccanin or munt* I had in my possession but a loved child of Africa.

I took a brief statement from the bus driver and told him he was free to leave. It was very late in the afternoon when we set off for Sinoia with the deceased child and four or five of her relatives in the vehicle.

*'Hazi..peri.i..i., oh, Hazi..per..i..i!'* The grieving had begun in earnest. There was no other traffic on the road and it was after dusk before I decided to switch on the Landrover's headlights.

Nothing. Damn! I could radio Sinoia for them to come to the rescue but couldn't expect much sympathy or instant action from them. The evening shift was a single PO, an African Sgt. And about four A/C.s

I lifted the bonnet and jiggled wires but it was a futile exercise. As was trying to ascertain if a fuse had blown. I could see clearly enough to keep on the road as long as I travelled slowly but my worry was that as we neared Sinoia we would encounter traffic that couldn't see us in time to avert an accident! I conveyed my worries to the A/C and, as so often I was to experience with an African policemen, he came up with a ready response.

*'Sir. There is an African store not so far from here. Perhaps we can get a torch from there so other cars can see us.'*

The store was closed but, the shop-keeper lived at the back of it with his family. I didn't have much money on me, just enough for a two battery torch with batteries. I'd have to arrange for payment for the other two batteries I'd need as spare. I'd give him an IOU.

*'Ah, sir. I cannot do that. The owner has said, no 'squirit' (credit).'*

Bugger the man! My nerves were somewhat on edge. The grieving had intensified and much as my sympathies were with the dead child's next of kin and their sorrow was understandable, I'd be more than a little happy to see the day over. I kept my equilibrium and decided against arguing or exercising any heavy handed authority. We'd use the torch sparingly to alert other traffic. Sinoia could meet us with a vehicle when we neared town. Fortunately the VHF radio still functioned.

*'Send, Magayisa, with the Bedford.'*

*'Roger, Sinoia One. What's your ETA?'*

*'Make it half an hour.'*

It was a harrowing thirty minutes. I strained my eyes to follow the road and the A/C waved the torch when a vehicle approached and showed me the edge of the road to pull over and stop. A/C Magayisa was waiting for me. He was one of the few A/C.s I didn't get on with. He was one of the 'elite' Black policemen permitted to drive Police vehicles and felt that gave him greater status than his peers. I'd had a run in with him a few weeks previously when I'd been on night shift and he'd returned to the station and swung into the station yard with gravel flying, in the Bedford, driving well above the 10 MPH permitted.

*'Constable, Magayisa. You're driving a Bedford, not a bloody Formula One racing car!'* I'd greeted him as he entered the Charge Office. I'd intended the rebuke to be light-hearted but it wasn't taken that way.

*'What are you saying about a racing car. I do not understand. You have no right to swear at me.'*

I'd made a mistake in my choice of language but I wasn't going to apologise in front of the other A/C s and lose face. Especially as I was aware Magayisa wasn't all that popular with them anyway.

Any attempt at my explaining what I'd intended; that was to caution, the belligerent A/C about his speed in the station environs, added fuel to the fire. I was saved by the African Sgt. who 'stepped into the fray' and informed Magayisa that if he persisted he would be taken before the Member I/C for his insolent behaviour.

Magayisa was a senior African Constable nearing the end of his service and I was reluctant to have his record marred by a relatively minor issue. Besides, I wasn't that sure the Member I/C would take my side, given the full story of the language I'd used to rebuke the man! *'It doesn't need to go that far, Sergeant. I was afraid Constable Bunu was sleeping out there and in danger of being run over by Constable Magayisa.'* This time some of the A/C.s gave an obliging chuckle at my attempt at levity.

Magayisa was never happier than behind the wheel of the Bedford. *'We have to go to the Mortuary, Magayisa. Can you travel about twenty miles per hour and I will follow you.'*

Once we'd completed the work at the Mortuary, my A/C explained what the procedure would be concerning the return of the dead child to her relatives and I turned to Magayisa.

*'Constable Magayisa. I want you to take these people to the Chinoya Township. They have relatives there they can stay with'.*

*'Ah. But, sir. It is not too far. They can walk.'*

*'They can. But, it has been a very long and sad day for them. You will take them on your truck. I was supposed to be off duty three hours ago but I will return to the station to complete the paper-work.'*

Wisely, Magayisa chose not to further question my instructions. He'd probably sensed I too had had a rather long and sad day.

But, life wasn't all dealing with doom and gloom and tragedy at Sinoia.

One evening, it must have been about midnight I was awakened by the light on my room being switched on and by the time my eyes focussed properly I was looking at the head of a writhing snake barely six inches from my nose. And better awareness revealed the culprit holding the reptile; Patrol Officer Mike Knight, our amateur herpetologist.

*'Brought you something to put a little wriggle in your bed, Kiwi.'*

*'You, bastard, Knight.'* I croaked through dry, constricted vocal cords.

A laugh and he was off to find another victim. A short while later I heard him walking back down the corridor. He paused outside my door. '*Don't worry, Kiwi, I looked it up in my book on snakes. It's a Herald snake. They're only mildly venomous.*'

*'I don't give a bugger. I hope when it bites you it's fatal!'* I retorted.

Well, it didn't bite Mike, but it put a real dampener on his love-life for a while. He'd recently bought a late model car and for reasons best known to himself, he put his snake, a specimen about fifteen inches long and about as thick as a ball point pen, in the glove box of his vehicle. He was also at the time going out with a teacher from the nearby Sinoia Girls High. The snake escaped from its' confinement.... the teacher found out from sources never revealed.... and Mike suddenly found he couldn't persuade her into his car to go on dates and pursue his courtship.

*'It would have got out of the car, wouldn't it?'* Almost became the lovelorn Mikes' mantra for about a week.

Then one lunchtime as I was returning to a vehicle to go back on duty and Mike's car was parked near the mess entrance I saw the snake draped about the steering wheel of his car with its' head probing at the small gap provided by a partly open side window.

*'Mike, there's a bloody nyoko trying to drive your car away!'* I yelled back towards the mess. Mike was out like a shot and soon carrying the reptile over to the nearest bushes. *'Bloody good, Johnny. You guys will tell her we found it, eh?'*

We did. We weren't that cruel we'd deny a man and his love the use of a now reptile free conveyance.

The average Rhodesian, especially those in the rural areas, didn't kill every snake they encountered just because it was a snake and possibly venomous. Certainly if the reptile was located in a house its' life was forfeit. I met one PO who'd been called to a house by a woman who feared for her life and that of her children after she found a poisonous snake in her kitchen one evening. As he put it, he chose a Greener shotgun, went to the house and to the near hysterical exhortations of the woman to 'Shoot it!!...shoot it!!'; he did just that. The problem was the snake had gone into the lounge by the time he arrived. The carpet was near new and the Greener 'buck-shot' pellets tore quite a hole in it. Far from being grateful the woman phoned his Member I/C the next day to complain about the damage caused!

Legend had it that another policeman shot a snake that had curled itself around a rather elaborate and valuable porcelain hand-basin pedestal.

*'What did you expect him to do; stand back fifty yards and take pot-shots at it?'*

Sinoia was where I was first called out to put down an animal, a German Shepherd dog that had been hit and badly injured in the residential area by a vehicle early one evening.

It had been pointed out to me that the small locked safe where we kept the .38 Smith and Wesson revolvers also contained a heavier calibre revolver specifically kept to destroy animals. It was veritable cannon! I think the calibre was .454 and it was a Webley Scott (or vice versa!). I know it was dated 1908, had a lanyard attachment on the base of the butt and the ammunition wasn't nickel plated. And the whole caboodle looked like it was capable of knocking out a tank!

A large crowd of Whites and Blacks had gathered around the poor animal, a large male that turned in a circle as it dragged its obviously smashed up hind quarters and snapped at anyone who drew close to it. A European approached and told me the owner of the dog was absent and concurred with me the hapless animal was beyond veterinary help.

The decision made I didn't believe in prolonging the suffering. '*Get the Africans to move back, Constable. Move back people. Come on. I'll have to put it down.*' I realised I'd have to shoot the dog point blank, given the proximity of people and the fact the bullet may well strike the road and splatter pieces of lead about. My farm upbringing and association with dogs served me well.

I walked straight up to the animal, pistol in hand and as the dog lunged towards me I raised a foot and pushed it over on its' side. I placed a foot on its' neck, the pistol to its' head and literally in three seconds flat the sad deed had been performed. I kept my foot on the animals neck for a few seconds longer to make sure it was dead and then straightened up and broke open the pistol..

*'Did you have to do it like that?'* A middle-aged woman moved out of the crowd to accost me.

*'Like what, madam?'* I'd been a little shaken by the recoil and loud report of the pistol, not to overlook the fact I'd just had to destroy some-ones' apparently much loved pet.

*'Putting your foot like that on the poor animals' neck. Did you have to do that?'*

I'd already experienced peoples' somewhat strange reactions in moments of stress and chose to ignore the woman. She then made the mistake of trying to solicit support for her argument from others present.

*'For Gods' sake H....'* A male voice from the gathering. *'I couldn't see any other way he could have done it.'*

There was a general murmuring of consensus that I'd despatched the poor animal as quickly and humanely as was possible.

When I think back on the woman's reaction and similar incidents I'd witnessed or been directly involved with, including the infamous killing of the cat in my Auckland college days, I think people seek to find someone to blame so as to empower themselves... feel they've at least done something.... when they encounter an animal too ill or maimed to be kept alive.

A year later when I was stationed at Kariba I was on duty when a young Army Captain phoned to say he was looking after an old dog for an owner who was away on holiday and the animal was clearly dying. It would have to be put down.

*'Can't you do it, sir? You've got access to a firearm.'*

*'It would be better if a member of the Police did it. That way you could support the fact the animal had to be put down, to the owner on his return.'*

*'Ok. I'm on my way.'*

I drew out a .38 from our firearms safe; we didn't have a special pistol for killing animals, and drove up Kariba Heights to the property.

The dog, a Golden Labrador was bloated with fluid retention and seated on a sack on the back lawn of the house facing away from me. I noticed a hole had been dug on the edge of the property and a garden servant was dutifully standing by with a shovel. The Army Captain, a young guy still in his twenties introduced himself as we walked over to the animal.

*'There's nothing we can do for the old, fellow.'* I placed the barrel of the pistol at the back of the animals skull and did my duty by the poor beast.

*'Why didn't you shoot it between the eyes?'* The Officer put to me in his best incredulous tone of voice, despite the fact the poor animal had obviously died instantly.

This time, unlike the Sinoia incident where I'd put down a dog... and officer or no officer... I wasn't going to bite my tongue.

*'To my mind it's the quickest and most humane place to put a bullet, sir. It's where the bloody Nazis used to shoot people in their mass executions'.*

He shrugged and invited me into the house for a cup of tea. In hindsight I realised I'd reacted rather crassly but I had at least had recognised his commission by addressing him as 'Sir'.

Before the escalation in guerrilla activity and the formation of PATU (Police Anti-terrorist Unit) I believe the average junior policeman had limited contact with.... other than fights with RLI 'troopies' outside of Salisbury dancehalls,...members of other military units. Given we considered that the pre-entry criteria to become a policeman and the subsequent training was of a rather higher standard than that required to become a '*foot-slogger*', we junior cops, if asked to draw a parallel in rank structure, would probably rate us on a par with at least a full corporal or perhaps even a sergeant in the Army. And it didn't follow that we necessarily felt particularly subordinate to the young twenty something year old Army officers. Our Police Officers were in the main at least twelve year and generally nearer fifteen...or even older... year veterans of the Regiment before they gained their commissions. They'd earned their swords and we respected them for that. If there was any drawback in the way our promotions were structured it lay in the fact that if one transgressed as a junior and was hauled up before the CO to account for his 'sins' there was little to gain by offering half truths or lying in his defence. The CO had in all probability been taken to task for committing the same breach of conduct himself as a younger man!

*'He was supposed to have brought the firearm into the station today. You'll have to go and pick it up.'*

It was a sad situation, a woman had left a marriage of twenty years leaving a bewildered and bereft husband to drown his sorrows and act in a way that spoke of possible suicide. It was after nightfall, but the curtains to the lounge hadn't been closed leaving the subject clearly visible as I strode up the path to the subject's house. Clearly the man wasn't surprised at my visit. I declined the offer of a cup of tea but spent at least twenty minutes offering a sympathetic ear to the sad man. At some time he walked across the lounge to a china cabinet to point out a large wedding day photograph of the couple resting on the cabinet. I could only offer sympathy without any solution to his situation. He made no comment when on my departure I took up the .22 calibre rifle, that leant against one wall. I waited until I was in the vehicle before I checked the firearm and took some comfort in the fact it was unloaded.

I can't recall where it was when I first met an interesting Sinoia character, a watch-maker, named Humphrey Thwaites. Humphrey told me he'd joined the Rhodesian Airforce as a young man and had specialised in avionics. After succumbing to a wanderlust he'd transferred to the RNZAF for a two year posting. Whilst in NZ he'd done a course in watch-making. He'd subsequently joined the Australian Airforce and continued his interest in watch-making. Rather than fly home to Rhodesia via London, or catch a liner to Durban, Humphrey had elected to sail a yacht home to Africa!

'Humpty Dumpty', his thirty-foot yacht was beamy and apparently rather slow on the wind. Humphrey carefully selected a number of books he felt 'he should read' and packed them in a box. Three days out from Fremantle and all going well with easy sea conditions it was time to begin a good read. Alas, the books had been left behind! No turning back, Humphrey elected to spend the near three month trip becoming a 'self-made philosopher'. I was quite fascinated with Humphrey's take on the human condition, more especially when we'd had a couple of bottles of beer each. I'd visit him in his narrow shop off a side-street and invariably there'd be a discussion which became a '*Let's have a beer*' and he'd close shop so we could retire to the Sinoia

Hotel. Perhaps Humphrey drank too much to conduct a good business. One day I met his wife...an older person than Humphrey...and she pointed out, without any rancour I must admit, that Humphrey was easily lead when it came to drinking and could I make my visits later in the day so he could get more work done before we went to the pub. I obliged; I didn't get the impression the couple were financially stretched, but I had to be fair by his wife, a rather gracious, if not long-suffering woman.

Another interesting character...if one could describe an habitual criminal as such....was Garth Hapgood Strickland. Garth moved to Sinoia to look for work after his release from prison. A senior man at Sinoia made it known that Strickland was on parole and any offence would see him returned to prison. Somehow he struck up a friendship with me and he'd often visit the station when I was on night shift. Perhaps he felt a kinship with a Kiwi because his older brother Richard had emmigrated to NZ. One day another local guy came into the station to report that Strickland had 'borrowed' a pair of his trousers without permission and spent the ten shillings he'd found in the trousers. With a bit of effort and cajoling we managed to get the guy to accept reparation from Strickland and thus avoid having him re-incarcerated. Strickland had apparently done a course in accountancy whilst in prison and took great pains to try and convince myself and other cops he encountered that he was turning his back on crime and was determined to lead a blameless life. He obtained a job at the offices of the Mangula mine with the proviso he didn't handle any money; payrolls etc. I'd moved on to Kariba when a Police Gazette had him listed prominently. He'd apparently either 'picked' or blown the safe at the mine, taken the considerable payroll and fled to South Africa!

One day when I was having a beer at the Sinoia Hotel I struck up a friendship with a couple of local guys, brothers in their early thirties by the surname of Bezuidenhout, who ran a nearby quarry. Both unmarried, they lived with their widowed mother a short distance north of Sinoia and owned a road metal quarry. They invited me to have an evening meal with them on a particular date that apparently was of some significance to them.

Their hospitality was typically that of their Afrikaans heritage; one was urged to eat as much as possible of the very welcome alternative to Police mess food, Mrs Bezuidenhout, a most genial woman, had prepared and the beer glasses were regularly filled. During the early evening meal veiled references were made to a family ritual that was always carried out on the date in question; a custom that had apparently been instigated back in the days when the boys father was alive. As was the inviting of a guest to share in the meal. After an after-dinner smoke the elder of the brothers suddenly stood up and announced. '*Right. It's time. Come on, Johnny.*'

I looked to their mother for confirmation of '*the ritual*' and she smiled somewhat sympathetically. '*Sorry, Johnny, but the men-folk always do this after dinner on this day.*'

*'You run down this road, Johnny, around the crushing plant and back to the house. The last one back has to run again.'*

Bloody, hell. I was absolutely and uncomfortably bloated with fine food and gaseous beer. But, they were off, big solidly built men as so many Afrikaners were, running heavily but, initially outpacing me. The run would have been better than half a mile but, I valiantly battled on, determined to show them we Kiwis weren't quitters. I caught the first brother hanging onto a loader behind the crusher noisily disgorging his evening repast and shortly after the younger sibling now down to a walk, wheezing and gasping for air. Slowing to match his pace, I was given no respite from

my own laboured breathing as he flung and arm in the direction of the house; '*Go on! Don't wait for us!*'

Suddenly I was aware the elder brother, now shed of his 'ballast' was coming up fast behind me and as he drew alongside the younger man he too found an extra energy. By the time we reached the house we had achieved a dead heat between the three of us, an outcome I learnt that they apparently always strove for. We still had enough energy left to have a good laugh which the mother joined in with before ordering us inside to partake of a delicious dessert she'd prepared.

It wasn't the only ritual I was undergo with at least one of the brothers anyway. One evening, I can't recall the minute details of what occurred... I know I was off duty and had been drinking... when something arose that was serious enough for me to need to record some information quickly and the elder Bezuidenhout brother who was present volunteered the use of his flat pack cigarette case which was blank on the back after I'd already filled the space on mine. '*I'll keep the packet for you after the smokes are finished, Johnny.*'

I believed I could remember enough of what had transpired from the notes on my own cigarette packet to put it down on paper the next day at the station and then carelessly forgot about the matter. And discarded my packet when empty. But, within a few days another policeman made reference to the same incident and I unwisely confirmed I knew something about what he was referring to. But, I had to admit I couldn't remember certain details. I made a phone call.

*"That night, last week when I wrote some stuff down on your cigarette packet..."*  
*"Don't worry, Johnny, I kept it for you."*

Phew! I retrieved the packet from him, deciphered my scrawl which had arisen from both my inebriated condition and poor light to write by and a case was drawn up, the outcome of which I can't recall. I do know that when I next encountered the brother in a bar he turned his cigarette packet over and asked the barman for a pen. '*Just in case, PO Johnston, needs to write something important down!*' It became a ritual, a standing joke on the few occasions we met.

*'Get it altered by an Indian tailor; they'll probably only charge you ten shillings.'*

As I remember, we only donned our winter uniform, the smart No.1, barathea khaki jacket and long trousers with a green shirt and blue tie, for about three months of the year. Given the order to change uniforms, literally the next day, I found to my dismay that my jacket was just not going to fit. On weighing myself I realised I'd put on an incredible two stone (about 12kgs) since my Depot training days. The kindly and somewhat amused Indian tailor decided he'd let the jacket out overnight for the full extent of the material available. It was still tight but well worth the ten shillings.

And then came notice of an impending Annual Inspection.

Depending on station size and status and how efficient the day to day running of the station was, the inspections could involve nothing more than an annoying interruption to everyday station life; or they could be hell. They had a purpose; for at least one day a year all station records had to be up to date and the troops had to be smartly turned out and able to show they hadn't left their parade and foot drill skills behind them in the training depot. We were after all a paramilitary force, even if we weren't armed in the normal course of our duties. And as the only Police force in the world that had regimental status, discipline was paramount in the BSAP.

Sinoia, as District Headquarters for the Lomagundi area had a relatively large complement of European and African policemen. It also had a poor morale problem when I served there, more especially among the single members, that I certainly hadn't seen and experienced at Harare where there were even more police staff.

Whilst it seemed a problem attracting good catering managers for the single men's hostel....probably a low pay issue.... I think some of the antics I witnessed at the barracks were as much a question of a symptom of poor morale, rather than poorly prepared food. It was far from being a rare occurrence for a policeman to get his evening meal from the kitchen, loudly exclaim words to the effect of, 'I'm not eating this shit!' and then throw his meal, plate and all, through the open window into the garden outside!

Perhaps the worst 'performance' that took place was Christmas Day. 1966 and whilst it may have had a certain edge of humour to it.... the participants in the impromptu drama certainly thought so.... the fifty something year old widow who ran the kitchen was left '*completely gutted*', to use modern idiom.

Much publicity had been made in the papers and even on TV to the effect that the units of the Security Forces, mainly RLI and a few RRAF, who were operating in the field in the Zambesi Valley area would receive their Christmas dinners still near hot and near freshly prepared.... all the trimmings were promised...after delivery from Salisbury by a RRAF DC3. Sadly Sinoia was far too far from the 'Valley' to qualify for the food drop. Such a bonus would have been much appreciated as it turned out!

I worked that Christmas day and didn't get back to the barracks for my Christmas fare until the others had finished their meal. I fetched my meal from the kitchen and before I'd reached the dining table realised why so many of the other plates of food were still there and many had hardly been touched. The chicken and vegetables that passed for the special Christmas dinner Mrs W. had promised us was nearly beyond belief. It was mush surrounding 'chicken biltong', except in my case my meal had been in the warmer long enough for a crust to form on the vegies and for the peas not trapped in the mush to be hard enough to be loaded into shotgun cartridges! The Christmas 'pud' was a hard brown volcanic lump rising from a sea of thin anaemic looking custard. Now the Johnstons like their food but after a desultory pick over my food I settled for the free beer that went with the meal. I'd been aware that my off-duty peers, and there were quite a number, given only a skeleton staff were working, were imbibing quite noisily at one end of the mess and the cook, Mrs W. who enjoyed a drink.... some thought too much.... wasn't with them.

*'She's gone off to her room in a sulk. I've got no sympathy for the bloody woman. Call that a Christmas dinner! Reckons she's going to lay a complaint with the Member In Charge.'* Was basically the answer to my enquiry as to the whereabouts of the author of our culinary disaster. I had a certain amount of sympathy for Mrs W. who was quite a lonely person and perhaps a little more 'unsophisticated' than most women of her age group. Hell, destroyer of good food or not, it was Christmas day and a little charity and compassion was called for.

*'Who is it?' The voice that answered my tentative knock wasn't exactly inviting.  
'Johnny Johnston', Mrs W.'*

The door opened. The woman had obviously been crying but now seemed fairly composed. *'Have you come to apologise for what you all did to me? Well, I've had enough. It's gone too far. I try and do my best with the amount I can spend on you and you do this to me. I'm going to the officer on Monday to tell him what you all did to me.'*

And she did.

But, before that I learnt from one of the others who'd been present at 'the upset' basically what had taken place. It appeared that whilst the first guys who'd been served their meal were openly and loudly declaiming its merits a later arrival had burst into the mess loudly exclaiming words to the effect. *'Here comes the Dak. with*

*the Christmas scoff for those guys up the Valley!*' And apparently almost to a man the mess had been vacated and soon half a dozen or more men were leaping around outside barracks waving tea-towels and yelling such heartfelt pleas as '*Drop it here! For God's sake can't you see we need it here more than those Army bastards do! It's needed here, not up there!*'

Not surprisingly a few of the lads had had quite a bit to drink before the episode that had taken place. Even less surprisingly Mrs W.s reaction to their behaviour didn't indicate she'd seen the funny side of the impromptu performance!

Preparations for the Annual Inspection, apart from the paperwork, included making sure that each member of the establishment was at his parade ground best before the actual day itself. To that end the station 2I/C, Insp. Robin Johnson, decided a little drilling wouldn't go amiss and so all available details formed up for about four consecutive mornings and went through a few basic drills for about ten minutes. All knew the response to the commands...they were seared in one's memory in the five months each of us had undergone in our training in depot....but we were truly awful and Robin was no drill master. Where perhaps he should have exercised stronger authority he instead tried to appeal to our better natures and common-sense; two attributes sadly kept on hold at Sinoia for the moment. He reminded us that on the day we'd parade with our service rifles and to make sure they were....

O, my God! In many cases the rifle's woodwork was a bluey green and the metalwork several hues of brown! Whilst Sinoia Police Station had an Armoury where firearms were regularly checked and cleaned, our service 303 SMLE rifles, often only ever 'disturbed' once a year, or if the owner went on transfer, were kept in an armoury at one end of the ground floor of the barracks and in effect were stored underground in a cell like concrete walled room that could well have doubled as a sauna!

I'd not long before been transferred from Harare and my weapon wasn't too bad. There were about four of us, all off duty that morning, and in a rare moment of charity, given the prevailing attitudes at Sinoia, we decided to clean all the rifles. What a job. The laughter and wise-cracks that greeted each '*sadly corroding fire-stick*' (the description 'bio-degrading' wasn't around in that era) had given way to expressions of despair. Oily pull-throughs in the barrels and cloths on the worst of the rust patches weren't working until Mike Knight disappeared in the direction of the kitchen only to return shortly with a packet of wire-wool. When progress still seemed a little slow cleaning the barrels Mike, with Chunky Watson (another senior PO) adding his bit, somehow managed to rig up a system where two pull-throughs were joined with two hunks of wire-wool attached and with one end tied to a weapons rack a rifle was 'threaded onto' the device. While one held the other end of the 'cleaning string' the other worked the rifle up and back. My caution that such crude behaviour on Government property could invoke a Courts Martial was met with ribald laughter and increased efforts. It's an image I can easily bring to mind; two guys so proud of their 'innovation'.

But, it was in all in vain. On the appointed day before the less than amused gaze of the Inspecting Officer, Dispol, Sinoia's European contingent of 'Rhodesia's finest' were neither resplendent of uniform and arms, nor sharp of footwork. The African Police, as usual, were immaculately turned out and drilled sharply and smartly.

I can't recall how the general station inspection went but our Member I/C, C/I Monty Isikson, was informed there would be a further inspection of the European members at a date not too far in the future. And he was a far from happy man. Almost immediately he issued a directive that all European details on the daytime shift would,

each morning, fall in, be inspected and then do at least ten minutes foot-drill. It seemed near draconian, but an ‘order is an order and has to be obeyed’ as the words of a popular song from the fifties goes.

What really annoyed us as we ‘about and right-turned’ each morning was that there always seemed to be African police onlookers taking no pains to conceal their glee at our misfortune.

With the general morale of the junior ranks remaining low, matters came to a head one morning when Mike Knight, arriving on duty and driving a station Mini-moke, entered the station grounds rather faster than was normal or permitted and then braked sharply and broad-sided the vehicle in a cloud of dust and flying gravel right outside the Member I/C’s office window.

Oh, shit! Knight came in for the expected bollocking but shortly afterwards Insp. Robin Johnson, looking quite serious and on a specific mission called me into his office.

*‘Right, Johnston. The reason I’ve got you here is because you were the last detail posted here, you’re a little older than most of the others and I want you to tell me what’s going on. Why am I getting complaints of misbehaviour in the barracks from Mrs W. the mess caterer and why such behaviour as Knight just exhibited? What’s wrong with you guys?’*

I told him I believed that morale was rock bottom. Illustrated it by relating the reception I’d received on arriving at the barracks. I told him the ‘troops’ didn’t socialise together like we had at the Harare barracks. We weren’t really even into drinking together which was unusual for single policemen. Morale was at a very low ebb.

*‘I want you to come with me now and repeat what you’ve told me to Mr. Isikson. (Member I/C).*

I wasn’t invited to take a chair. And I soon figured out the situation would be rather confrontational with me trying to overcome my initial unease and stand my ground.... get my story across without being cowed in the presence of a senior man.... whilst not being seen as acting insubordinately.

*‘Well, Johnston. What’s going on?’*

I told him of the messing situation. Of the often poor food being served and of how it was invariably cold when those on duty ate later than the others. I told him that being made to drill each morning in front of the African Police was a real blow to both ego and morale and Knight’s act was only illustrating that.

*‘You all know why, you’re doing the drill!’* The Member I/C was keeping the taking of prisoners an option!

I didn’t particularly like the guy and risked further rebuke by telling him I believed it was low morale that had caused the European Police to perform so badly on the day of the Annual Inspection. I gave him other examples that I felt caused resentment among the junior ranks. Especially the way the rosters were made up. I related my personal experience of working twenty-eight days straight without a day off when I’d first arrived at Sinoia and of how I’d had to ask why I wasn’t being given a break when there appeared no reason, such as an emergency or whatever, to not be given time off.

*‘Alright, Johnston, what changes can you suggest that might improve this morale problem you think exists?’*

It was a rare thing for a junior such as myself to be asked for advice by a Chief Inspector!

I told him I believed the rosters should be reviewed to make them fairer. That the parade and drilling in the morning should cease; that that gesture more than anything would buck up morale somewhat. And I suggested that perhaps the apparently perfectly good, but long disused bar at the barracks be brought back into operation. There were one or two other minor details that skip my mind.

But, I do know I was shaking when I left the Member I/Cs office to return to duty!

Whilst the immediate doing away with our morning ‘foot-work’ helped, it would be wrong to say that morale improved overnight at Sinoia. But, it definitely, if only slowly improved. The organisation and setting up of the bar, much of which I missed being away on road-block duties at Makuti, was a definite plus in bringing the men together in the barracks. I was back in time however for the grand opening which was a real success judging by the quality of the next mornings hangovers! All regular force and police reserve ranks and anyone else we could invite was there with music, dancing and imbibing going on until well after midnight. I remember I singled out Hilda Hill, daughter of Norm. our Police Reserve Training Inspector, as a dance partner and made promises to visit her in Salisbury where she worked. Sorry, Hilda, my promises weren’t all that much to rely on, especially as I already had Rose in Salisbury to visit. And sorry again, Hilda, that I never personally thanked you for the pendant of a Rhodesian penny you later gave me via your father.

*‘An African woman is bleeding badly following child-birth. The hospital wants someone with Type A Positive blood to perform a direct blood transfusion. See if you can find one suitable among the A/Cs.’*

Clearly there were A/Cs with the right blood type but equally certain was that none of them wanted to part with any of it. My blood type was suitable and I was given...somewhat reluctantly I felt...permission to assist the ailing woman. I phoned the hospital only to be told the woman had been transferred to Harare Hospital; but thanks all the same.

An unexpected chance for a temporary transfer from Sinoia came via the radio.

The message was A category... Immediate..., which rather than imply a Mashona uprising was believed imminent, or worse still the station’s Annual Inspection by the OC had been brought forward a month, simply meant all details were expected to read it.

One could make an application, make a request or even within limited guidelines negotiate, but nothing in the BSAP, as far as I am aware, was truly voluntary except a request for a discharge from the Force.... or a posting to Vila Salazar.

I’d heard of the place, tucked away down in the South-east of the country on the Portuguese East Africa (Mocambique) border on the railway line to Lourenco Marques where Joshua Nkomo and about three hundred other of his Zimbabwe African Peoples Union members, mostly members of the Matabele tribe, were in the Gonokudzingwa Political Detention Camp.

My enquiries as to the nature of the place from the more knowledgeable members at Sinoia were mostly met with a shake of the head and an involuntary shudder. All implied it was a rather God-forsaken place. One, I recall, even suggested that details posted there either became ‘born agains’ or alcoholics.

Nevertheless the posting was only for six months and it was apparently the only station in Rhodesia where the messing was free. I wasn’t particularly enamoured of Sinoia and I duly applied for the posting without any great expectation it would be met.

*'Johnston, you're off to Vila Salazar. Make your own travel arrangements and sort out any warrants you'll need. Take all your kit with you. This is the date Member I/C Vila Salazar expects you.'*

I had about ten days so I immediately applied for three days Occasional Leave which would allow me to travel in civvies at a more leisurely pace. I fluked a lift to Salisbury and a spare bed at the Police Town Hostel. It was one of the 'perks' of the BSAP; that as long as there was a bed available and you paid your messing you were permitted to stay at other stations overnight. I was on the train the next day to Gwelo but, rather than stay in that city, immediately caught the train that went to Lourenco Marques.

I was invited into the cab of the diesel-electric train by an affable driver who even let me pull out of a station. It was simple, one click of the throttle and the slack between the couplings was taken up; two clicks and the train began to slowly move; three and you could wave imperiously to those slowly disappearing onlookers who'd always aspired to be train drivers and had been rejected as colour blind or under-educated. I was allowed to take it up to about six clicks before I had to cede control to the 'real' engine driver. However I soon grew tired of realising every young boy's dream and retreated to the dining car and an ever welcome beer.

It was just after dark when the train clanked and squealed to halt and noticing a young P.O standing expectantly by the line I realised I was at Vila Salazar and there was literally no Railway Station there. The P.O was Mike Gale whom I recognised from my Depot days. I was to be his replacement.

*'Give me your rifle; you can't take that over the border. The others are at the Malvernia Railway pub. They're expecting you.'*

Such a contrast to my welcome...or lack of it...when I'd arrived at Sinoia! All members except the Member I/C, Pat Deasey, were enjoying the Manica Portuguese beer and after introductions I was soon taking pains to establish my reputation as a man who could also enjoy his beer...and plenty of it. But, there had to be an initiation to Vila Salazar. It came in the form of small glasses of Aquadente; (literally Firewater) which were drunk as Russians drank their vodka...down the hatch in one gulp!

The others must have known something; they'd taken the firewood truck across the border to the pub that night instead of walking as I soon learnt was the custom. I was soon near legless and decided on the advice of the others to retreat to the truck until they'd finished carousing. Unfortunately the cab doors were locked so I clambered with some effort onto the back of it. I was soon retching my heart out over the tailboard when a rather heavily built figure in a dark suit appeared out of the gloom.

*'Who are you, young man?'* His English had a Latin accent.

*'What the fuck's it got to do with you? Your bloody Aquadente has poisoned me!'*

*'I am Arriosa. It's better the others take you to your bed now.'*

I woke up with the early morning sun blazing through my bedroom window and a pounding head. Shortly I was aware of voices talking as they approached. I saw one from his rank as Pat Deasey, the Member I/C, the other was chuckling as he explained away my condition. I was preparing to force myself from my bed and explain it was my last day of Occasional Leave when, Deasey, 'tut-tutted' his disapproval of my state and told me to stay where I was. Thank, God, for my foresight in taking leave; I wasn't fit for duty!

Later in the morning after a shave, shower and much needed coffee, I reported to Pat who accepted my explanation with a wry grin then adopted a more serious mien.

*'Johnston, we have an understanding with the local Portuguese authorities where members stationed here are freely permitted to cross the border into Malvernia. It was reported to me that you encountered Mr. Arriosa last night at the Railway Station and were less than civil to him.'*

*'Yes, sir. I was. I'm sorry.'* I had no excuse. But, even through the last vestiges of my hangover I still a little curious as to just who I'd insulted.

*'Mr. Arriosa is a very important man in Malvernia. He's a senior officer in P.I.D.E. You're lucky he hasn't barred you from entry to his town. I suggest you apologise to him as soon as the opportunity arises.'*

I soon learnt that P.I.D.E ( Policia International e de Defesa do Estado) was the Portuguese Intelligence service. I later learnt a Police member had been barred from entry to Malvernia in what had to be a modern 'Romeo and Juliet' story that just needs to be told. The story is very much second-hand but I'll try and relate it as I heard it.

Apparently Arriosa had an eighteen year old ward... a niece I think... who had been sent to Malvernia to be under his watchful eye. It wasn't an unusual situation in Portuguese culture; they're...or were then... very protective of their nubile daughters, even to the extent of chaperoning them when they are courting. Well, the young lass soon caught the eye of a young Patrol Officer and a friendship developed and grew to a romance where the couple met secretly. Arriosa found out about the secret trysts and warned the niece and the P.O in no uncertain terms that the courtship had to cease. It didn't of course...love always finds a way...and the meetings continued. On discovering this a furious Arriosa told our Member I/C to inform the P.O that he was not permitted to enter Malvernia. Now the boundary between Rhodesia and P.E.A in that part of the world was a single iron arm across the road on a hinge and it was never manned. Rather than the P.O disregard his order and suffer disciplinary procedures, he somehow arranged for the girl to meet him at the border arm and it was there they met, conducting their courtship whilst both stood in their respective countries! The Member I/C soon found out about 'the arrangement' and after ascertaining from his junior staff members that 'it was true love' and not mere lust that underpinned their relationship, he took the bold move of approaching Arriosa and explaining the couple's situation and their way of circumventing his orders. Arriosa's hard heart apparently softened and the couple were allowed to continue the relationship under his or his wife's supervision until they finally got married. I don't know if they lived happily ever after but, once again hearsay, I heard that the guy had died relatively young. I hope it wasn't so, he deserved a long and happy marriage after the effort he put into wooing his bride!

It wasn't long before I encountered Arriosa again and proffered my apologies.

*'The Arquadente man again'* Arriosa was a rather taciturn man but, he allowed a small smile to cross his lips and a nod to indicate I was forgiven.

I soon learnt that our main task at Vila Salazar was the administration of the Detention Camp which was a few minutes drive from the station. An investigation of the Crime Register had indicated that crime investigation seemed at a minimum after the relatively heavy workload at Sinoia. I didn't know what to expect at the Camp and it was with some expectation I travelled with another P.O in the Police Landrover on my first day of duty on a mail delivery. The camp was situated on rather flat ground in an area of sparse vegetation of stunted trees and thorn bushes. The region looked desolate, brown and arid. The camp itself was divided into two larger high wire enclosures which were some distance apart. The first thing that struck me was that there were no guards as such and the gates were not locked. Some of the

detainees approached on our arrival and returned our greetings, but without adding the deference to status, the customary ‘baas’ I’d become used to from an African civilian. If some appeared bored, they all appeared to be well fed.

I learnt that a number of them were studying by correspondence, doing degree courses from the London School of Economics, while others did their local exams. They cooked their food themselves over fires and the wood was supplied to them. Cutting the wood into manageable lengths was the only physical labour outside of preparing meals that they had to endure. Their accommodation was practically as good as any in an African township.

They were asked if they had any concerns but apart from one or two grizzles about mail apparently not arriving when they expected it and a few other seemingly minor matters they seemed as content as could be expected with their lot

The P.O with me picked up on my surprise. *‘They don’t need guards. Run away from here and they’re scoff for the lions.’*

As I left the camp I wondered if the wire enclosure was protection for the detainees from marauding carnivores, rather than an indication of their boundaries.

*‘We’ll go visit Josh now. There’s always mail for him.’*

Unlike Ndabaningi Sithole, leader of the ZANU party, whom I’d encountered while still a recruit, I’d never seen Joshua Nkomo before.

He was a solidly built somewhat overweight Matabele and quite affable to the point of welcoming our visit. If he harboured any hard feelings they were for the Smith Government who’d detained him, not those who oversaw his political restriction. There were only two other men with Nkomo. I remember one of them, I think it was Lenias Nkala whom I’d previously heard about from SB guys, was less than friendly; more like what I’d imagined a political prisoner to be.

Unlike the other detainees with their high wire fence, Nkomo’s dwelling was not fenced off. Maybe that was in the vain hope a lion would get him an help ease the pressure on Smith’s government by Black Nationalist activity!

Vila Salazar, named for Salazar the long serving Portuguese dictator, had nothing in the way of entertainment for an off-duty policeman. No pub... no club ...no shops. But, Malvernia, named for Lord Malvern who’d previously held an important post in Rhodesia, had the Railway Station where there was food and beer, another more ‘up-market’ bar and several shops.

Malvernia also, as was to be expected given the struggle by Frelimo guerrillas to overthrow the PEA administration, had a contingent of Portuguese soldiers stationed there. Mostly, primarily because of the language difficulty and possibly because we saw ourselves as being somewhat a cut above them, we rarely mixed with them. But, there was one soldier we knew, Cheffy, who after he laboriously pointed out to us that he was Corporal in the kitchen who hoped to be reinstated to his former rank of Sergeant, we met quite often. ‘Chef de Cuisine’! we greeted him on each encounter and he welcomed our presence, even if he could only afford the occasional glass of wine on his relatively poor wages. Some days he drank what sounded like Trico Fect, a mixture of one third wine to two thirds lemonade. When one of we policemen had to meet the train from LM (Lourenco Marques) in the early morning, and especially if we were suffering a mite from the night before, we’d shout ourselves a Trico Fect at the Railway bar to ease the pain. If he suspected we were more amused than interested in his company, ‘Cheffy’ never let on. He laughed easily at anything vaguely amusing and was definitely of peasant stock with little education as so many of his fellows were. We would buy him the occasional wine without any expectation of him returning the favour. Often, if I was on my own and encountered him, I’d try and keep

him happy. I needed the company more than he did! The day his Sergeants stripes were restored he was ecstatic with joy, it meant more pay and we had a minor celebration. Before I left Vila Salazar he'd been demoted back to Corporal but he didn't stay glum for too long. I can still bring to mind his wide mouth, with its tobacco stained and wide gapped teeth, below his flashing brown eyes that lit up his face when he observed my arrival at the bar.

If we went across as a group in the evenings we'd drink at the 'top bar' which was a bit more exclusive than the Railway one. And when we left to go back to our side....gods who recognised no boundaries... we'd often link arms and raucously sing songs as we swayed and trudged along the unsealed road. I cannot hear the song 'Rambling Rose' now without recalling that brown sandy road with the barrier arm halfway along it.

Our food at VS came down by train and was adequate and complaints were few because it was free. One luxury we could arrange at VS was large prawns from LM for about six shillings a dozen as I recall. We'd all put in so much each, give it to a train driver and he'd deliver the goods on the return trip from LM.

I don't really see a connection but not long after the first time I had a meal of prawns done Portuguese '*piri-piri*' style (spicy hot...very!), rather than endure an inflamed 'ring-piece', I discovered I was in virtual agony when I tried to pee and had a yellow discharge. I determined it wasn't the dreaded '*gonners*', I'd not been exactly overactive or careless in that department in the previous months!

VS didn't have a doctor but it had a clinic for the detainees staffed by a well-trained Black male nurse. I visited him seeking penicillin. He was rather sceptical that my condition was an infected urethra rather than VD but, readily acceded to my wish for a '*shot of the good stuff*'. That injection hurt far more than I'd expected and on my somewhat indignant enquiry I learnt it was procaine penicillin, which could give one a bit of a hurry up, and that I'd need at least three more on succeeding days. I warned him to silence about my visit and I didn't reveal my complaint to the other White cops. The shortest way to the clinic was through the African Police Camp and when after work the next day I dutifully strode in that direction I was greeted by grinning Black faces and an 'Off to get your next injection, sir?' Cheeky buggers, you couldn't keep much from them!

I was to have cause to visit Nkomo about four times on my own and once he learnt I was a Kiwi with some farming background he'd find an excuse to delay me and talk farming matters; just as had Chad Chipunza of the United Peoples Party from my Salisbury days. If not well educated in the formal sense, Nkomo appeared well read and intelligent and seemed to be genuinely be interested in what I had to say. I was aware his apparent interest could have been a ploy to 'butter me up' to do something illegal for him, but on reflection don't think it was. The last time I visited him the Landrover I used had a faulty starter and had to be push started by station members. Naturally I left the engine going as I delivered Nkomo his mail. Then as I spoke to him the engine stopped suddenly of its own accord. The conversation was a bit longer than usual that time but Nkomo and his lieutenants had no qualms about push starting the vehicle to get it on the way again. I half hoped that if there was to be a Black Government that he'd be the first Prime Minister and I could tell my friends, the PM of Zimbabwe once push started me in a vehicle!

When I'd been nearly a month at VS the CO, a Superintendent whose name I don't recall, paid a visit to VS. Usually with these visits we junior ranks carried on our duties as usual while the officer had a talk with the Member I/C. This time it was to be different for me.

*'P.O Johnston; report to my office now!'*

'Yessir!' Put cap on, stride purposefully into the office; come to attention and salute. '*P.O Johnston, sir.*'

*'At ease, Johnston. Now tell me, why are you at Vila Salazar?'*

Not the usual question one expects of an officer and I was initially a little confused. But, clearly the CO was in the same state.

*'Well, sir, there was an All Stations message received at Sinoia ...from Compol , I believe....asking if there were any P.Os who wanted to volunteer for a six month posting here and I applied and was accepted.'*

A deep sigh and a shaking of the head from the Supt. '*Do you have a copy of this message, Johnston? What date was it received?*'

*'No, sir, I don't have a copy of the message.' I gave him a rough estimate of when it would have been received.*

*'Are you sure it couldn't have been a lot earlier than that? A month or two earlier perhaps?' The mystery was deepening.*

*'No sir.' Then I hesitated. 'But, I didn't check the date it was sent, to be quite honest, sir.'*

Then followed what was often referred to as a '*pregnant pause*' before the Supt. made his decision. *'Well, Johnston, the bottom line is you were never supposed to be transferred here in the first place. The volunteer idea for junior ranks at this station was reviewed and done away with at least four months ago. God, knows why the message was sent in the first place, but you'll have to return to Sinoia as soon as it can be arranged. O.k?'*

*'Yes, sir.' I was rather disappointed. 'Sir, is there any possibility that I could be transferred to this Province and remain here for the full six months?'*

He could sense my disappointment and I'd picked up that he wasn't one of those authoritarian types who'd react adversely because he felt I was questioning his decision.

*'I'm sorry, Johnston, but I doubt it. It doesn't usually work that way. Perhaps Inspector Deasey could send a message off to Mash. Prov. HQ and sound them out but I don't fancy your chances.'*

Bugger.

And bugger again when my Member I/C confirmed a couple of days later it was off back to Sinoia for the likes of me. I immediately applied for and was granted my remaining couple of days (we were allowed 5 days per year but it couldn't be accumulated like Annual Leave) Occasional Leave. I had ideas that I might stop off in Gwelo for an overnight stay...see, however briefly a little more of the country....or at least the inside of another Police bar!

*'I'm Ronald Fox and I've come to give myself up.'*

And bugger yet again!

Early on the day I was due to leave Vila Salazar, Pat had summonsed me from my quarters. *'I want you to go across to the Railway station, meet the early train and bring a European male back here.'*

Talk about last minute work. And I was supposed to be on leave!

He was about twenty-four, black wavy hair, of slight to medium build, around five foot eight and carrying a small suitcase. He needed a shave and was generally untidy of appearance. And I soon learnt from the man himself that the horrible bugger was wanted by no less than four Southern African Police Forces!

*'I'm Patrol Officer Johnston, Police Vila Salazar.'*

*'Ronald Fox. Ron. I've come to give myself up to the BSA Police.'*

Oh, God. I could sense my departure from Vila Salazar and ideas of breaking my trip to Salisbury were not going to proceed without some hiccups. And I was right.

*'Right, Johnston. Fox is wanted on a couple of relatively serious fraud charges in this country and he has previous convictions. He's the subject of Police Gazette entry number so-and-so. You're just the man to escort him to Salisbury and hand him over to them. I know you're supposed to be on leave. I'll sort that out and organise a travelling permit for the prisoner. You'll have to be in uniform. O.k?'*

I found us a four berth sleeper and within ten minutes of leaving Malvernia had changed back into civilian clothing. Prisoner or no prisoner, I was on leave!

Fox told me his 'sad history'. He'd been a morticians assistant when he'd committed a couple of fraudulent acts against his employer and had been convicted. When he'd been caught a second time by a new employer, rather than face the Police and Courts again he'd fled to South Africa where he'd been criminally dishonest again and fled before the police could arrest him to Swaziland, entering illegally. The cops there were soon on to him for some crime and he'd fled to PEA ending up in the capital, Lourenco Marques. Again an illegal entry and some minor crime...stealing to stay alive, as I recall. This time he'd made it to the British Embassy or High Commission, whatever the British Govt. had in LM, before the Portuguese Police could nab him. He told me he'd been made an offer; renounce his Rhodesian passport and citizenship and they'd issue him with a British passport and put him on a plane to the UK. It seemed overly generous of the Brits to me, but then they did have the pip well and truly with Rhodesia over the UDI affair.

Sadly for me, Fox had decided his roots in Southern Africa were too strong to break.

Part of my escort duties were, apart from making sure the man didn't escape, was to ensure he was fed. At lunch time we went to the train's dining car and bar and ordered a meal. I decided I could have a small bottle of beer to wash the meal down with but couldn't be so horrible as to enjoy it and not buy one for Fox. I think he was rather taken with my generosity. We repeated the same procedure at the evening meal time. I'd decided against the use of handcuffs on the prisoner when it came time to turn in as I'd lost the keys for them! I barely slept that night and when Fox had to make a toilet visit went with him to ensure he didn't scarper.

Fox was easy to talk with and kept me amused with tales of his '*adventures on the run.*' He asked, but I could only guess as to his fate in Salisbury. I remember telling him it was unlikely he'd have to face charges in South Africa or Swaziland. And certainly not in Mocambique. I suppose we became quite friendly even if I wasn't taking unnecessary chances with him. I'd put my issue SMLE rifle under a seat with my suitcase but Fox had somehow caught a glimpse of it.

*'Is your rifle loaded, Johnny?'*

*'No, but it wouldn't take long to be loaded and if you tried to escape I'd be legally allowed to use it if there was no other way of stopping you.'* I returned in formal Police tones.

Fox went a bit quiet and morose after that and I sought to cheer him up a bit.  
*'Don't worry, Ron, I'm a bloody lousy shot with it and would be bound to miss you anyway.'*

In the middle of the morning we stopped and I soon had two Rhodesian guys in our compartment. They were late teens or early twenties, had done at least some military service and were more than a little talkative and boastful. I saw no reason to inform them of the status between Fox and myself. It wasn't long before one of them began relating some misdemeanour '*the cops tried to get him on*' and failed because '*he was*

*smarter than them.*' And shortly, with Fox joining in, even if he fought to keep a straight face, the two guys and my prisoner were really slagging off the BSAP. Proper useless bunch of bastards we were! Given I was still a little miffed that my travel plans had been ruined by 'higher ups' in the BSAP I even managed to deliver the odd 'negative' view myself concerning the '***fine force***' when it seemed appropriate! Before long the lads had retired to the dining car and bar. When Fox and I went there for lunch they were noisily enjoying themselves. This time it was food and despite the derision of the pair of fellow travellers, only the one beer shared between myself and the prisoner. I didn't want Fox breathing beer fumes over the Salisbury Police guys!

When I deemed we were about twenty minutes out of Salisbury and the two other occupants had returned to the compartment, undoubtedly because the bar had closed earlier, I decided I'd better change back into uniform. After I dragged my case out and opened it to reveal my uniform there was a shocked silence.

'*You're a cop!*' One managed through suddenly constricted vocal cords. '*And him?*' He pointed to Fox..

'*No, he's not a cop, he's my prisoner.*' I was enjoying the bewilderment of my fellow passengers.

'*You even let him have a beer!*'

'*Yeah, well, it could be his last for a while and I couldn't have one myself in front of him. Wouldn't be fair.*' I returned.

Little more was said until the train was about to pull into the Railway Station and one of the guys, sensing he hadn't 'revealed enough of his criminal past' to warrant me adding him to my escort, gave a wry laugh. '*Can you give me your name so's if I ever get picked up by you guys and have a cop escort me to another town, I can ask for you?*'

He got a short laugh rather than my surname or the assurance he sought.

It was a short walk from the Railway Station to Salisbury Central. Fox grabbed my kitbag and I took up my suitcase. That left my rifle and Fox' smaller suitcase. Bugger it; why not?

'*You carry my rifle and I'll take your case, Ron.*' I quickly removed the bolt from the rifle and put it in my jacket pocket.

I recognised the Duty Inspector behind the desk from my Harare days. A man generally easy-going and less authoritative man than some. '*Good afternoon, sir. PO Johnston on prisoner escort duty from Vila Salazar.*'

'*Good afternoon, Johnston. And where's the prisoner?*'

'*Fox, here, sir. Reginald Ronald Fox.*'

Who else? I retrieved my rifle from the prisoner handed him his suitcase and consulted a piece of paper I'd retrieved from a pocket. '*He's the subject of Police Gazette number 'so-and-so'. He gave himself....'*

*And he, the prisoner, has just carried your service rifle along Railway Avenue and into my Charge Office, Johnston! It's not a bloody wonder you got sent to Vila Salazar!'*

'*It was a voluntary posting, sir.*' I rather ineffectually bleated in my defence.

The PO. s with him behind the desk were making little effort to hide their amusement but, I knew the moment for the Inspector to really tick me off had passed. Publicly, anyway.

'*I've bloody seen everything now. Go down the corridor to 'such and such' a room and bring me the Gazette that refers to this man's offences. And leave your rifle behind the counter, Johnston.*' The latter command came in tones that suggested the

Duty Inspector couldn't wait for his shift to end. Especially if it involved dealing with idiots who wore the same uniform!

It annoyed me having to do what I saw was their work. Lazy bastards, those town desk-wallahs. When I returned with the Gazette, Fox had gone...presumably he was being booked into a cell for the night. I never learnt what he got for his crimes....wasn't interested anyway.

After securing a bed at Town Police Hostel for the night and grabbing a meal, it was back into civvies and a couple of phone calls to mates to check out their plans for the evening. Then a lift into town and a round of familiar bars. The city was good in short bursts but I wouldn't have swapped it; even for Sinoia.

I could hardly have expected there to have been any changes to Sinoia in my month's absence, but there was in a small way. There was talk of possible 'terrorist activities'. Attempts by small groups or even solitary individuals to cross into Rhodesia from the North, infiltrate into the general Black populace and indoctrinate them into the idea of majority rule. With perhaps the odd act of terrorism thrown in to show they were serious about their cause.

Not long before my transfer to Sinoia a group of seven terrorists had crossed the Zambesi and got as far south as rural Sinoia before they were located and all killed in a shoot-out with a Police group, comprised mainly of Police Reserve men. This went down in Rhodesian history as The Battle of Sinoia.

Terrorist, C-T (Communist terrorist) or guerrillas, call them what you may, we in Uniform Branch got on with our normal duties and left matters of State security to the Special Branch guys.

Then one day we all got involved and as an indirect result my police career had an extra dimension added to it.

*Early one afternoon it was 'Everybody draw a weapon and ammunition from the Armoury and get in a vehicle as quickly as possible!'*

We were briefed on the move as we drove north from the town by John 'Butch' Fletcher, out SB Inspector. There was information that a pantechnicon ....what we in NZ would see as a large covered removal or goods transportation truck....from Zambia was travelling towards Sinoia and it was believed there could be terrorists in the vehicle. There was some discussion as to how far we travel before we set up our road-block but the question was answered for us when we rounded a corner and there was a pantechnicon no more than five hundred yards away coming towards us.

'Pull over and de-bus!' Our convoy of three vehicles ground to a halt and with a mixture of excitement underpinned with a certain degree of uncertainty, we clambered from our vehicle and spread out with loaded weapons at the ready.

The large vehicle stopped on command and the driver climbed out with his papers leaving his passenger in the other seat. As we watched expectantly from the side of the road the SB guys took the driver to the rear of the truck and ordered him to open the doors. He complied and there was more than a slight relief that we weren't greeted with a hail of AK 47 bullets. It was then that one member of our police party, S/SO Eric Fowlis, a relatively small guy who had a 'gammy leg' and who rather than carry out normal police duties, was employed in a clerical capacity in the CO. s office....but, in no way was he going to be excluded from any excitement....ran to the back of the truck leaping about, grimacing and aggressively pointing his Sterling sub-machine gun towards the vehicle's interior to show he'd give any terrorist skulking in the back what for. It's an image of defiance in the face of potential threat that I can easily bring to mind and will always remember. Like all of us, Eric's expectation on joining the force would have included the anticipation of a certain

amount of excitement in his life not given to most jobs. I feel his action that day, even though we others saw in it a certain comic element, went somewhere towards compensation for the injury that had so frustratingly robbed him of the chance for action we fellow able-bodied cops potentially faced daily.

The truck's passenger didn't have the appropriate papers with him, but fortuitously, despite him having nothing obviously incriminating about him, such as Chinese made clothing or footwear, it was decided he be taken to the station for further questioning. Later at Sinoia I was told that a Russian made pistol.... apparently smaller than a Togarev, the pistol usually associated with the Reds.... was discovered taped to the man's inner thigh on one leg which went a long way to identifying him as a Communist trained guerrilla. It went without saying that any suspects after that were soon in their 'Adams suit' at the time of their arrest!

The following day it was decided by SB at Sinoia that we maintain a static road-block north of the town for a few days to check all trucks moving south. Of course we fearless Uniform Branch details were elected....make that ordered....to man the road-block!

Graham Rogers, Jock Saunders, myself and an A/C strategically placed signs reading 'Police Road Block' where the vehicles were almost on the signs before they saw us. All cars and any local trucks were waved on. We got the drivers and any passengers to dismount from the cabs of their long-haul pantechnicons, show us their papers and then open the rear doors of their vehicle.

As we dealt with one commercial vehicle, a car, despite our signals to move on, pulled to a stop and the guy who climbed from it identified himself as a journalist for the Rhodesia Herald.

No....there weren't terrorists swarming about the place. We were doing no more than routine checks. No, you may not take a photograph of us at work. If you want any information contact our Press Liaison Officer in Salisbury. O.k?

Ok, men I understand.

The following day at Sinoia Police Station. '*You know the rules concerning providing information to the Press. So how do you explain this?*' A copy of the Rhodesia Herald lay on the Member I/Cs desk before us.'

*'Sir, we followed procedure with the journalist concerned. He must have sneaked around to the front of the truck and taken the photo from there without our knowledge. He learnt nothing from us. Definitely not, sir.'*

The photo was a bloody shocker! The A/C had his Greener slung on his back, Rogers held his Sterling by the sling, Saunders looked like he meant business but Johnston, even conceding his FN was pointing in the general direction of the truck, had a hand on his hip in a very relaxed pose. Worse still the stance he took made him look about three stone overweight. When he was only a mere two stone overweight! And while that latter appearance could be seen in a negative way as my undoing, it was from the positive angle the precursor for more adventure in my life.

We'd heard rumours that the Police were going to become more engaged with forming small anti terrorist units, or sticks, of about five men; a helicopter or Landrover load with their equipment. Those involved would still carry out their regular duties; just be ready at all times for a sudden call-out if necessary.

*'Johnston. We have to send at least one Regular Force detail from Sinoia on a training and selection course for PATU...Police Anti-Terrorist Unit, and we've marked you down as the one we can spare at the moment and the one who could most do with the exercise. Alright?'*

'Yes, sir.' If it wasn't a direct order given me, it would need a strong argument to challenge it.

There were fifty-four of us, all European, collected together from throughout Mashonaland Province. About two thirds were Regular Force and the rest Field Reserve guys. I recognised the sole Inspector from my Harare days and two or three of the others. Some claimed to have put their names forward but most I suspect had, like myself, been 'press-ganged' into the idea of the selection course.

At the pre-course briefing we were confronted and addressed by Supt. Buck Buchanan who'd replaced Supt. Bill Bailey who'd been the instigator of PATU. He introduced his 'side-kick' as Reg. Seekings who was an NCO in the original SAS in WW11 and had served with some distinction in many a sticky situation. On retirement from the Army he'd emigrated to Rhodesia and taken up farming. We learnt that the course was both a training and selection exercise at the end of which two 'sticks' of four men each; one Regular Force and the other Field Reserve would be chosen.

Basically we would travel to and spend our first night sleeping out in the area chosen for the exercise. We'd be given maps and co-ordinates, check-points we had to reach, our resourcefulness and morale under bush conditions would be assessed over a further three nights and four days. We'd also be tracking a group of ten Field Reserve and local farmers acting as 'bandits', whom we would attempt to ambush on occasion and in turn expect to be ambushed by them. After the course was over we'd all return to Sinoia where the successful candidates would be announced.

At the exercise area we were broken into groups of four (a 'stick'). Later an A/C would be attached to each stick to make up the optimum number of five details. My group contained the Inspector who soon made it known, that senior rank notwithstanding, he wasn't to be automatically regarded as our stick leader. We had our evening meal and arranged our ponchos into bivouacs and crawled into our sleeping bags. It began to rain. Bugger; my first real night sleeping out in the *bundu* (bush) and the elements had perversely turned on us. Ponchos made poor tents and many guys were in damp clothes by the next morning. A feed, a poring over our map and a consensus arrived at as to our route and we were off.

I've never been very competent at map reading. In School Cadets and the Territorials I'd be the guy who'd nod wisely and concur with every decision arrived at when it came to map-reading. It was the same with navigation when I was at Nautical School getting a 'ticket' to operate my fishing boat. Perhaps it's because map-reading or chart plotting involve the use of geometry and I was a failure at that. I can look at a map and get the general idea of the lay of the land but when it comes to precision work and plotting courses, or whatever, I definitely begin to falter.

*I'm more of a 'bugger-it... 'let's get on with it, head off in the general direction and see what we find'... kind of guy.* Part of the problem is I don't mind walking the extra distance involved if one gets lost ....or geographically embarrassed....to eventually reach the predetermined destination! That day, perhaps the hardest to date physically I'd endured in the BSAP, really put my '*let's get on with it*' philosophy to the test! On my own I'll try and get a picture in my mind of the general lay of the land; determine which way the streams and valleys run, always roughly assess and keep in mind which direction I'm travelling in and generally rely on instinct. By mid-afternoon it became apparent that we were probably lost....certainly it was unlikely we'd make the RV where we were promised water. There was no way I could blame the others, I hadn't contributed to the map reading. It wasn't our only problem, one of our quartet, a Field Reservist who should obviously never have volunteered for the exercise was by midday out of water and rather out of spirits. By late afternoon he lay

down on the track we were following and refused to carry on. We left water what water we deemed we could spare with him and carried on until about nine o'clock when footsore and thirsty we called a halt for a meal and the last few mouthfuls of our water. Musing over a map by torchlight, we figured we were at least a mile but possibly nearer two miles away from the rendezvous point...if we'd pinpointed our position correctly. And so decided to make camp...as in roll out the groundsheet and nod off! Bugger having a 'dry camp' and after a brief discussion another member of our stick volunteered to accompany me on a mission to try and locate the rendezvous point where we knew there'd be water. After a half hour walk in the dark we were successful. And we learnt that only one other of the dozen or so sticks had repeated our feat! Loaded with water bottles and lighter of spirits we returned to our camp to be greeted by our members...including the recalcitrant Reservist who'd finally decided that lying and dying alone in the Rhodesian *bundu* held special terrors....and another stick of four who'd joined ours... as heroes. After the course was over the popular rumour had it that those running it had deliberately set up the first day rendezvous point at a distance beyond the furthest point they determined a nominally fit group could reach in a day as a way of sorting out the wheat from the chaff, so to speak!

Perverse nature meant that barely more than an hour after our return to our camp with the water the heavens opened up. When we broke camp before daylight ourselves and our kit were soaked. But, there was to be no respite; the bandit camp had been located and we were sent in to attack it. After a lot of bang-bangs, yells and curses the bandits revealed that they'd hoped for a lie-in that morning because along with the having the rain to contend with, a pair of roaring lions had kept them awake for most of the night!

After the 'attack' our destination was an abandoned mine about ten miles away. We saw quite a lot of game that day including a group of at least a dozen sable antelopes. I felt our Reservist only kept going because he could see the rest of our group would leave him behind, if needs be. We were angry, rather than sympathetic to his plight. We had our own discomfort, passing showers meant our clothing and gear didn't have a chance to dry out. We were told there'd be one, perhaps two assessors observing us at certain points on our 'hike' and we were to acknowledge them when sighted. Once again I was happy to be 'tail-end Charlie' and to rely on the dubious navigational skills of our nominated leader. The first assessor was easily identified but later in the day those ahead of me walked right past an observer...whom I'd noticed from a few yards back and assumed the others had too....crouched in a patch of shrubs. As I drew level with him I couldn't resist a '*Nice day to be out and about, sir.*' Which drew a chuckle from the man and the attention of the rest of our group.

When late morning saw the sun appear the morale of the stick improved somewhat and even the Reservist made a better effort to keep up with us. Apart from the sweaty armpits, most of us had near dry clothing when late afternoon the light rain returned. Packs were dropped and ponchos dragged on. I'd just got my pack back on when a puff-adder snake about fifteen inches long came wriggling between myself and a fellow patrol member going straight for the Inspector! I yelled... snake!... and pinned the reptile to the ground with my rifle butt. Observers were to later note that my efforts to keep my feet clear of the brute were akin to watching an overloaded helicopter trying to take off! A Rhodesian guy despatched the adder with a derisory '*It's just a tiddler, Kiwi.*'

The Inspector was suitably grateful for my efforts and concurred with my observation that the hapless adder had showed class in by-passing the junior ranks in favour of going for the senior man present!

Several other ‘sticks’ had encountered snakes; one had actually skinned a large puff-adder they’d killed and another reported a close encounter with a cobra.

Passing showers saw most of the guys once again pretty wet and miserable. All sections, all fifty odd of us, made camp in the same area. I got a fire going and decided to ignore the light rain; it was no worse than what I’d faced working on the farm or on hunting trips in NZ. Most of the others crawled under their makeshift bivouacs and ate cold food, smoked and moaned to fellow sufferers about the weather. I got water boiling and was enjoying a hot feed with a brew when a Field Reservist about my age came up to me.

*‘I heard you’re a Kiwi.’*

*‘That’s right. And from your accent I’d say you are one too.’*

He was from Auckland and worked on a farm not far from Salisbury and we were soon sitting in the rain yarning away about our home country. Like me he didn’t see the inclement weather as any real deterrent to ‘*a trip away in the bush*’. Unlike me he’d volunteered for the selection course and was keen to be accepted.

It wasn’t long before there were complaints from some of the others that we were keeping them awake and the occasional request from others for a brew, if there was one going. We eventually turned in and had a reasonable nights sleep. We awoke to find the rain had eased somewhat and to the sound of a Landrover making its way to our camp. Summoned by radio the previous evening it took away five of the group, two who’d become ill from suspected food or water poisoning, one who had a malaria recurrence, our Reservist who’d lapsed into a state where he’d even lost the will to eat and a SO, hitherto keen and fit, who ‘didn’t know what was wrong with himself’ except he felt awful. We weren’t surprised for long at his early departure from the exercise. When a fellow stick member picked up the man’s sleeping bag, inadvertently left behind, a six inch puff-adder fell out of it! They’re born poisonous and it was subsequently determined the poor SO had been bitten twice by the unwelcome bed-mate!

That day in intermittent and sometimes heavy rain, we were instructed to show our ambush skills. I chose the vegetation on the side of a large anthill and was soon rewarded by observing the less than cautious approach of the ‘enemy’. It would be poor tactics, to say the least, that I decided to fire a blank cartridge, a rather loud ballistite one, before the other members of my stick matched my observations but, as I put in my defence later, I was keen to dry out the barrel of my old SMLE!. I received as big a fright as the enemy when a large reed-buck leapt out of a patch of rubbish less than twenty metres from me! So much for my observation skills!

That night was a repeat of the previous one, sans the snake incidents, and we broke camp next morning while it was still dark to trudge a couple of miles to our pick-up point.

We hadn’t gone far from our camp site when one of the Field Reserve guys with local knowledge pointed out a small white house amidst a stand of trees and said an ‘*elderly widow*’ had lived there on her own since the death of her husband. I can still bring to mind the house nestled in the trees and wonder, as I did then, at how people, especially women, can live alone with their own company and thoughts. Especially in the wilds of Africa.

The vehicles for our transportation were in the yard of a farmhouse and before we boarded them a cheery Rhodesian housewife informed us that breakfast had been

prepared for all fifty of us! An amazing and most welcome example of rural hospitality!

By Sunday afternoon we were all back at Sinoia station and gathered in the largest room which just happened to be the Police Reserve bar. Norm Hill, an affable full-time Reserve Inspector, employed to train the Field Reserve who hadn't participated in the exercise, went behind the bar and soon co-opted me as a Sinoia man to assist as he was snowed under with work with fifty odd thirsty bogs all trying 'to rehydrate' in the shortest time possible.

Buck Buchanan and Reg. Seekings sat together at the back of the bar huddled over a few papers. Eventually a call went out for '*silence!*'. Just at that moment Norm handed me a small white box and murmured '*A little something from Hilda*'. I opened it and it contained a Rhodesian penny mounted as an ornament. I was taken with surprise and not a little guilt for being given something I didn't deserve. I'd already decided not to pursue any relationship with Hilda and I felt uncomfortable because I knew Norm liked me and saw me as '*a nice sort of bloke*' one at least worthy of seeing his daughter who worked in Salisbury. As I blustered thanks and reflected on the gift, Buchanan was reading out names of Regular Force guys he wanted in the first PATU stick. My odds of selection were near one in ten and I didn't think I had a dogs show given what I saw as my ordinary performance on the course. I didn't pick up on the names until the last one read but, hands were already stretching across the bar in my direction.

*'Well done, Johnny.'*

*'What?'*

*'You were the second name called. Bloody man, you were talking to Norm. instead of listening.'*

I had to down a quick couple of beers myself to still the excitement! Later when I was called over with the three others, only one of whom I knew, Seekings basically told me that I was one of the very few guys on the course whose morale hadn't apparently been unduly affected by the inclement weather. And furthermore he'd served with Kiwis in the War and liked them both as fighting and resourceful men. My after dark mission on the second night to find the rendezvous point had also served me well! Not surprisingly the civilian Kiwi was picked for the Field Reserve PATU.

Bill Bailey and his successor, Buck Buchanan, apparently had had quite an ongoing battle to get the idea of PATU accepted by Police General HQ and it soon became apparent that it was one thing to pick hopefully suitable men and another one entirely to get suitable equipment and time off for training.

Our training was woefully minimal. One weekend we spent at a jungle lane exercise to which we'd taken our newly issued FN.s (Belgian made .762 semi-automatic rifles). None of us mourned the passing of the SMLE.s They'd have been near useless in the sort of work we'd possibly be doing. I say 'possibly' because there were no apparent terrorist groups operating in our area after the Battle of Sinoia, and our capture of the 'pantechicon character'. A small group in the Lupane area further south from us had been the last guerrillas captured. We were to do normal Police duties and be ready for a 'call-out' should it be required.

The FN.s had aperture sights, which I normally preferred, but I was never better than fair to middling with my accuracy with the weapon. On the jungle lane exercise one walked through singly and as a target popped up we had about three or four seconds to put a bullet in it. I was bloody awful! Too slow in spotting the target and rarely hitting it. But, no-one said I couldn't try shooting from the hip. I think the

instructors were a little amused, if not despairing, but my hit count improved quite a bit and if there was any inference that I carry a bayonet and rely heavily on it on any future operations, I didn't pick up on it!

I bluffed my way through with the map reading and other exercises. We learnt that we'd patrol in our Riot Kit, grey shirts and navy-blue trousers. And floppy navy-blue hats. Later captured terrorists would say our navy-blue trousers stood out in the *bundu* like the proverbial dogs balls. PGHQ.s belated response to that information was to issue us with a camouflage smock we pulled on over our Riot Uniform. We then resembled a bunch of heavily pregnant women!

I'd been at Sinoia for a while when I decided to contact Cyril Egergluszc, a cabin mate of mine on the 'Southern Cross'. He lived on his father's farm about twenty minutes out of Sinoia and was somewhat surprised to hear I was in the local BSAP and welcomed the idea I come out for a weekend. It was several weeks before I got a weekend off and I hitch-hiked out to his farm. He was married and lived separately in a house from his parents. An uncle owned the adjacent farm.

Cyril was a rather laconic guy who seemed content to listen to all that had transpired in my life since we'd parted in Durban three years previously without going into his own life in any detail. The next morning I had breakfast and Cyril had plans to take me over the farm when the phone rang. It was Cyril's uncle. A leopard had killed one of his cattle beasts and was believed to be hiding in one of the farm's kopjes. On the way to the Uncle's farm-house I learnt from Cyril that wild animals including predators weren't uncommon visitors to the farms. Somehow I'd been under the misapprehension that we were miles from anything feral.

I was given a shotgun with buck-shot cartridges which I deemed a suitable weapon for defence should the worst scenario I was imagining actually happen. Those Rhodesian buggers weren't getting me to clamber up a kopje and sneak around in the trees looking for a leopard! I felt that was well outside my duties as a cop!

As we approached the dead beast a few vultures voiced their disapproval of our intrusion on their feast and took off from it. They really were ugly birds with a head a bit like a turkey's. I couldn't help but recollect the film with Victor Mature 'Where No Vultures Fly' that I'd seen in the 'fifties. I was quite happy to be 'tail end Charlie' but, when the first kopje didn't reveal the carnivore, I plucked up the courage to at least volunteer '*I'll move around the side of this one a bit in case he takes off from there.*'

Late morning ...and no sighting of the leopard... we had a visit from an African farm worker who'd obviously ran quite a distance to catch up with us. He glanced in my direction as he blurted out a message to Cyril in '*chilalapa*'.

*'The Police in Sinoia have phoned, Johnny. You've got to phone back as soon as possible.'*

We motored back to Cyril's house and various scenarios went through my mind. Had word come through of the death of a parent or sibling back home in NZ? Or had a fellow member of the force I was close to been killed. Fortunately it was neither.

*'Get back here as soon as possible, Johnston. There's a chopper arriving at Sinoia in an hour to take your PATU stick up to Makuti.'*

There wasn't much time but I declined Cyril's offer of a lift into town so he could go back and help in the leopard hunt.

Hitchhiking on a Sunday wasn't the easy exercise I'd hoped for. Three cars passed without even slowing down before I decided '*Bugger it, I'm a man on a mission*' and stepped out onto the road, a hand up in the stop signal, to force the fourth to stop.

*'I have to get to Sinoia urgently. I'm a cop there.'* I showed him my ID and he eventually let me into the car. As with Cyril I couldn't tell him much about my mission. I didn't know much myself!

They knew little more in Sinoia. We PATU guys had been warned that given a call-out we had to be ready for an indeterminate absence from our stations, with rifle, ammo and provisions, in fifteen minutes! We fed ourselves but got the princely sum of twelve shillings and sixpence per day to compensate for that.

I just made it in time but, as with the old Army saying, it was a case of hurry up and wait. The Chopper was eventually cancelled and we went to Makuti by road.

Makuti was near the junction of the roads, one leading to Chirundu at the border with Zambia and the other leading to Kariba and was situated on a high point of the Zambesi Escarpment overlooking The Valley. The camp consisted of a collection of tin huts and tents surrounding a caravan that contained the radio comms. and was the JOC (Joint Operational Command) for Police, Army and Airforce personal. There was a small rather sparsely stocked store owned by Indians near the camp and a pub higher up the road that was quite modern and even boasted a swimming pool.

I'd been to Makuti once before for a week of road-block duties. These were carried out south of Makuti on the main south road. Forty-four gallon drums and two inch iron pipes were set in a configuration that meant traffic had to slow right down to negotiate them. A PO and an A/C stopped all vehicles but, those we knew as locals or regulars who'd been checked before, were soon waved on. All other vehicles had a cursory search made of their interior and boot. The long-haul pantechnicons we paid more attention to and checked the driver's and their co-driver's papers before opening the rear doors for a check. Apart from the terrorist we'd taken from a vehicle near Sinoia we were never to find anyone 'dodgy' when I did road-block duties.

Months later however a group of terrorists did proceed south in the back of a pantechnicon but as I understand it the driver managed to alert the Rhodesian authorities at the border crossing of Chirundu to the presence of his rather lethal cargo and the vehicle was allowed to travel quite some distance south until it ran into an SAS ambush. The shooting wasn't all one way, the terrorists had set up a machine gun in the rear of the vehicle and a fair old exchange of gunfire took place before the inevitable outcome was reached.

When the odd person we stopped pointed out how vulnerable we were.... just two policemen who could potentially face a truck load of terrorists.... we sent him on his way believing we were the match for any exigency that may arise rather than reveal that on the bank above him two well concealed members of the BSAP Support Unit had their semi-automatic rifles trained on his vehicle! That's if they hadn't dozed off, the lazy buggers!

Most people took their unscheduled and unexpected stop in good part. The Rhodesians probably felt more secure knowing that their Police weren't all sitting behind desks thumping typewriters in their stations, and for those from other countries, it was another paragraph to add to their travel adventures. The Black truck drivers, local and South African, were generally always co-operative and relaxed with us. White or Black road users, we were polite to them all. There were occasions when the occasional car driver felt he had no need to actually stop and he got a loud verbal 'Stop!' and a sharp rejoinder when he did so that he could have been shot had he ignored us and driven on, but generally road-block duties were rather boring. One day when I was on duty I saw about four or five vehicles approaching from the north that were loaded high with household materials and cases, much as one still sees on TV when people in North African, Middle East or Balkan countries are forced to flee their

towns before invading forces. The number plates weren't familiar but the cars were mostly Puegots and the people in them were a sorry lot of families who'd been yet again caught up in and subjected to abuse in the former Belgian Congo. And this time they'd had enough of the place and were getting out. Few spoke or understood English but, their beaten and defeated demeanour told all and once we'd recorded their vehicle details.... as we did with all vehicles.... we waved them on and wished them good luck. I knew the Belgians, beginning with their corrupt King Leopold, had treated the Black people of the Congo very badly as they'd exploited the country for its' considerable natural wealth but, as with all colonisation stories, there were innocent victims to be found even from within the ranks of the oppressors.

One feat we carried out at a road-block I feel verged on the super-human! A heavily laden pantechnicon from South Africa stopped at our road-block and the driver dutifully climbed down from the cab with his papers. As with most vehicles travelling North our checking of them was minimal. But, as we asked the driver a few details about his load the vehicle's engine stopped. The driver had informed us the engine had been overheating a little but the look that crossed his face on the demise of his engine spoke of a bigger problem.

*'Baas. The starter-motor of the engine is stuffed. For more than two days we have not stopped the engine, even to refuel.'*

Oh, dear. We could have told the driver it was his problem to sort out and shifted the road-block enough to allow other vehicles past. But his bosses were far away in South Africa and we were the BSAP; caring people, mindful of the problems of Black as well as White. Well, that's how we generally thought of ourselves when it suited us!

The truck, we learned to our dismay from a crestfallen driver, carried a total of thirty-eight tonnes. But, it was stopped on an ever so slight downhill slope. And it was several hours before the Landrover, which we could have employed in a tow start, came with the changeover details. But, we Kiwis love a challenge; and don't give up easily!

*'We'll push start the bugger.'* I announced as if such a feat was an everyday event for me.

*'Ah...ah..no, baas. There is too much weight.'*

But, the driver did agree with me that we'd only have to get it moving at a snails pace to effect a push start. And he did have two quite long crow-bars in the truck. And we had a couple of steel pipes from the road-block we could use. And security risk or not, it was time those two lazy layabouts from the Support Unit did something physical. I called them down from their concealment and soon with much heaving of bars and pipes behind the dual wheels and with me continually asking of the driver *'Are you sure the bloody handbrake is off?'* we set to with a will. And the vehicle moved ever so slowly until suddenly the driver was clambering up into the cab with my exhortations *'A low gear, but not the lowest!!'* ringing in his ears. He dropped the clutch, the vehicle jerked and the engine coughed, then roared into life!! That Black drivers smile was a wide as his side window!

*'T..ank-you, baas....t..ank-you, baas'* And he was on his way.

The only danger I faced that week up in Makuti came in the middle of one night as I ended my shift and drove back to Makuti which was uphill nearly all the way. As the Landrover struggled up a hill in second gear a female lion streaked across the road from my right, leapt at the high near vertical bank on my left and scrabbling frantically and in vain for a foothold, gradually slid backwards down the bank!

With my foot flat to the boards, the A/C emitting cries of ‘Ah...ah. Sir, sir!’ and myself near doing my own ‘Ar..ars’ of a more disgusting nature, I swerved to my right and happily my vehicle missed Mrs Felix Leo!

At Makuti for the PATU call-out we were briefed by Butch Fletcher, Lomagundi District Special Branch Inspector, and learnt that a group of six terrorists had crossed the Zambezi from Zambia into The Valley. There were virtually no permanent African inhabitants in this part of the arid and near waterless Valley and it was assumed the infiltrators....if people re-entering their own country after military training could be described as such....would make their way through to the inhabited areas that began on the Escarpment. Rather than go skulking around amid the baobabs for several days on end hoping to come across the group, our PATU stick would do short patrols and spend just one night at a time in the *bundu*. We’d be dropped off relatively early in the morning and make our way slowly and carefully towards a waterhole at which we would set up an ambush with there always being at least two details awake should the group arrive after dark seeking water. At all times we were to look out on any game trails we crossed or followed for the figure 8 pattern of the Communist made boots the group were wearing. And we were also to sweep the tracks we crossed so as to check the next day if there’d been human traffic passing in the night.

It was at Makuti that I first heard of the Wadoma ‘two-toed’ legendary trackers who lived in an isolated community near the Zambezi river. Before we set off on our patrol a chopper landed and one of the trackers, an older man dressed in discarded Police uniform, alighted. Surprisingly he wore footwear so we were unable to view the ‘two-toed’ abnormality that characterised his people.

Our stick leader Ted Hunt was an older PO from Karoi... I think... and as with the rest of us, not very familiar with The Valley or the bottom of the Escarpment where we patrolled. It was hot... damned hot... but we did our best to keep alert and I for one conserved my water, even if our evening destination was supposed to be a water-hole. An ever present menace, especially if we sought shade to take a break from patrolling were the tsetse flies. Their bite was quite sharp and left a raised lump like a mosquito bite. By staying in the open areas one naturally avoided most of the tsetse fly but another fly with a bite, the buffalo fly just happened to prefer sun to shade! And there were the ever present mopani flies...about the size of a sand-fly but much more solid...that hovered around our faces seeking any source of moisture. A man couldn’t win.

The water-hole when we reached it was what I came later to nearly always expect....fouled by animals and green with slime. We carried tablets to purify such water and other tablets that were supposed to take away the foul taste. One of our group, out of water for some time, eschewed both. The first couple of mouthfuls he heaved up again, fortunately not back where they came from! I kept hold of my good water for the next day and did the tablet routine on the water-hole muck with the idea of having a brew. The tea, when it was finally made, still tasted vile; a sickly rotten taste, only made worse with the addition of sugar, that meant one had to sip it slowly to keep it down.

We set up our ambush on a convenient rock ledge about thirty metres from the water hole, selected who would take each shift and generally got on with the war. I ended up being awake all night because I snored as soon as I dropped off to sleep and soon got a prod from a nearby rifle barrel! We’d earlier heard a troop of baboons higher on the slope above us and at some stage during the night there was a dreadful heartfelt screaming carry-on and the Rhodesian born PO next to me whispered ‘Just a

leopard having a go at one of those baboons. They love them.' It was a bloody long night I couldn't ease by smoking because it was a no-no along with the use of soap and toothpaste and anything else that a keen nose could detect. The powers that be in PGHQ and Provincial HQ.s....especially some of the old school.... would have sobbed into their after work gins if they could have seen the unshaven, unwashed and generally unkempt members of Rhodesia's 'finest' emerging from the *bundu* at the end of some patrols.

We returned to Makuti the next day without incident or any sighting of the enemy or signs of his passing.

But, he was still there. Days later one member of the group walked into a Support Unit ambush, was challenged and then was chased by a tall, fleet-footed African Sergeant shooting from the hip with his FN. The shots were audible from Makuti; thirteen in all before the guerrilla was felled. Wounded, he was taken to Karoi Hospital for treatment; our SB men felt he was potentially a valuable source of information regarding guerrilla training and deployment.

The next terrorist to be brought into Makuti was still alive but beyond restoring to a state where he could be questioned. As the Political Commissar of the group, Patrick had one evening approached a camp of Black tsetse fly cullers, men employed under a White supervisor to eradicate all the game within the fences set up to control the spread of the fly and its attendant 'sleeping sickness'. One of the cullers had sneaked away from the camp to alert his supervisor, a young English guy fairly new to both Rhodesia and the job, to the presence of the stranger. The supervisor, SMLE .303.... the weapon all cullers used at that time... in one hand and torch in the other had challenged the terrorist, Patrick, who'd informed the young White that it wasn't his war that was being waged and had turned to walk away from the camp. The bullet when it came was meant to hit the terrorist in the legs but smashed through his pelvic area. The cullers used military ammo with the tips cut off...dum-dum bullets... so the damage was considerable.

Brought back in a Landrover to Makuti, it was decided the terrorist would be taken to Karoi Hospital and I was detailed to do the night trip. The wounded man was in a deep coma and it was intimated that I wasn't to break any speed records.

It wasn't long before the combined smells of stale sweat, fresh blood and shit permeated the vehicle. Somewhere short of Karoi I pulled over to check on the man and the A/Sgt. and I came to the conclusion that Patrick was dead. We left him in the Karoi Hospital mortuary and drove back to Makuti.

A couple of weeks later when I had occasion to open the Sudden Death Register in Sinoia I noted an entry for the man by Butch Fletcher and learnt that Patrick had been '*Shot while fleeing from a Tsetse-fly.*' Perhaps Butch had sought to keep both the occupation and identity of the shooter secret rather than it be a case of him having made a mistake!

Back at Sinoia again I had no tales of derring-do in the Valley to relate to the other guys; not that they'd have been very interested anyway. Unless an incident was particularly humorous, ironic or unusual, we didn't tend to talk about work a lot. It interrupted ones drinking!

Drinking got me into a little bother one early evening. I'd had a session in the Sinoia pub one afternoon and returned to the mess in time for the evening meal. I'd had no plans to go out again but a couple of the guys persuaded me to go with them to a party in Sinoia. As I left the mess I encountered an unmarried Reserve Inspector who was employed to assist with Field Reserve training and who lived at the barracks with us. I wasn't alone in not particularly liking the guy; he was openly conducting an

affair with the wife of a popular local doctor and the doctor had reacted badly to the infidelity with heavy drinking that on occasion had him publicly in tears and an all round sad spectacle..

*'You've had enough to drink today, Johnny. Better you stay in tonight.'*

The Res. Inspector's observation probably had a lot of merit but, coming from him, was like red rag to the proverbial bull. *'I don't take orders from fucking reservists!'* And I continued on my inebriated way.

To his credit he didn't report me to my superiors and to mine the next day he received a belated, if somewhat conditional and watered down apology!

Sinoia had quite a large Indian population who were mostly traders and storekeepers. Their shops were in a street behind Sinoia's main commercial area. My first encounter with one of them followed our Member I/Cs directive that our summer uniform would be replaced with winter uniform 'two days hence' and struggle as I may my barathea jacket would not button up.

What now?

*'Go find an Indian tailor, Johnny, and get him to let it out for you.'*

The job was done overnight and cost me ten shillings. There was a warning. 'I cannot let this jacket out any more. You will have to lose this, sir' And he patted that part of his anatomy that corresponded to my own protuberance.

My next encounter with the local Indian people was in less than happy circumstances and had unusual and rather far reaching legal consequences.

Gulab and Patel spent an afternoon drinking at the Banquet pub, south of Sinoia, and late afternoon set off for Sinoia in their Nissan pick-up. About a mile south of their destination they hit an African pedestrian and dutifully stopped at the scene of the accident which occurred on a long sweeping corner. I organised an ambulance and got to the scene before it. The pedestrian was beyond help and indeed died before he reached the hospital. It didn't take me long to ascertain that Gulab and Patel were rather intoxicated, and their vehicle had possibly travelled at least forty yards from the point of impact....noted from paint and rust flakes; apparently from their vehicle, collected on the road... with the dead African on the bonnet of their vehicle. And the point of impact was actually on the opposite side of the road from where they should have been! To my mind it was a clear case of Dangerous Driving causing Injury and should the pedestrian die...as later happened...one of Culpable Homicide under the Roads and Road Traffic Act.

Gulab identified himself as the driver and I duly cautioned him and had him accompany me to the station where I soon learnt the pedestrian had died. Damn! The typewriter was in for a hiding that night!

Drunk or not, I decided to risk formally charging Gulab with Culpable Homicide. His reply had ramifications that had 'legal eagles' scratching their heads at a later date and actually brought about a change in the law, albeit not earth-shattering.

*'I was not the driver of the vehicle. It was Patel. I own the vehicle, but I do not have a driving licence. Patel always drives when we go out together.'*

I decided to wait until the next day to interview Patel and instead concentrate on getting identification for the deceased, an application for a post mortem on him and statements from any witnesses to the accident. And get all the other paperwork done, which wasn't inconsiderable, before I went off duty that night.

The following day Patel ruined what I'd thought was an open and shut case.

*'Gulab is lying. It is his vehicle and he drives it.'*

I consulted Chris Looker in our CID and he was keen to assist. We decided to investigate the scene, take measurements and observations, look for and collect

forensic evidence (including the paint flakes I'd mentioned earlier) and at his instigation, mark out the scene with mealie powder, while I had a couple of A/C.s slow down and direct traffic away from our labours. Chris then selected a point from where he could overlook the whole scene and then photographed it.

The paint flakes predictably matched paint samples taken from the vehicle involved in the accident. Either Patel or Gulab were very culpable when it came to the death of the pedestrian. But, both persisted in naming the other as the driver involved in the accident. I took my concerns to SO. George Goldie who hadn't been all that long at Sinoia.

George was a real character, a man somewhat resembling both physically and in attitude Denis Castell-Castell, or rather he had been in his earlier days in the Force as a single man. When I met him he had settled down into married life and indeed his first child, of whom he was immensely proud, was born when George was at Sinoia. George had long figured he wasn't going to scale the ranks with regular promotions and had settled into consolidating the idea that stress was bad for oneself, and an undue fixation with work was somewhat unnecessary! Somehow he managed to secure one of the better offices at Sinoia and then promptly set about creating his own comfortable empire. His superiors seemed to turn a benign eye to some of the furnishings and accoutrements that turned up in George's office from heavens knows where. Even our CO, John Cannon, would have envied his lowly SO.s plush carpet and beautifully polished main work desk with the best chair on the station parked behind it. And as the 'acquisitions' grew and the office became more opulent, so George would proudly invite us in for 'another inspection'.

Back to Gulab and Patel. As I remember it, George as an SO had the authority under the Roads and Roads Traffic Act to formally demand , in a court of law, of an accused if he was the driver of a particular vehicle at a certain point in time. If an answer was given that was later proved to be false, the accused could be charged for it.

And so one morning in the Sinoia Court, with the Magistrate being in the picture regarding the unusual aspects of this case, George formally demanded of both suspects the question we wanted answered and predictably got no closer than I had to ascertaining the truth.

The Magistrate called a recess and asked George and I to accompany him to a back office. We got out Gardner and Lansdowne, the bible of our Roman Dutch Law, seeking to find a previous ruling we could work by. There hadn't been a precedent recorded...not one...to fit our case in either South Africa or Rhodesia!

The case against Gulab and Patel was dismissed.

As George was to bitterly point out later. '*One of those bastards is guilty of perjury and one of them has very likely got away with Culpable Homicide.*'

Not long before I left the BSAP and was stationed at Marandellas, the Member I/C , Chief Inspector Dick de Courplay, called me into his office.

*'This had come through for you attention, Johnston. You apparently investigated this case at Sinoia.'*

It was a directive, a new ruling that had been taken into our Roman Dutch law; one the English legal system had apparently used for years. In layman's terms it stated 'Where two or more persons are in a vehicle involved in an accident where criminal charges could be laid and all deny being the driver of the vehicle in question, then all persons in the vehicle will be deemed to have been the driver and all will be charged accordingly.'

As simple as that.

Exactly what George did at Sinoia...other than search out and add more amenities to his 'enclave'...is open to question. He was however given the task of preparing a murder case that would lead to a High Court trial. The case couldn't have been more simple and straightforward. An elderly African had been hauled before a sub-chief's court for allowing his cattle to stray into and damage a fellow kraal inhabitants mealie crop and was ordered to give one of his cows to the complainant as compensation. The defendant's reaction to the directive had been both instant and bloody. He'd seized a *badza* (native axe) from the carrier of his cycle, rushed at the sub-chief and killed him with one blow. Basically all that was required by way of preparation of the case...the accused had admitted to the killing when formally charged.... was the obtaining of statements from several of the reliable witnesses to the crime, the Post Mortem Report and a brief sketch plan of the scene.

George's sketch; if such a monumental work of art could be described as such; was to put even John Constable in a lesser light where landscape artists are compared. He used a pencil for preliminary work and once satisfied with the results made them permanent with Indian ink. It was a work of painstaking detail and, as with exhortations to inspect each new acquisition for his office; so we had to regularly view and pass comment on each stage of progress on his sketch. If asked for our opinion on his case, most of us would have concluded that the accused, who'd acted on impulse and without any real premeditation, would in all probability be found guilty of Culpable Homicide (Manslaughter). George was adamant that the man would hang. Why else would he spend so much time in preparation of the case?

Either by coincidence or design George's case and a murder case I'd prepared for Court were held in the Salisbury High Court on the same day. I enjoyed travelling down to Salisbury with George; marriage and fatherhood hadn't completely crushed the 'renegade' attitudes in the man and he had some amusing stories to recount.

I believed that my case involving an African male, Mawodza, would see a conviction for murder with little or no leniency given when the sentence was passed. I can still recall Mawodza's reply when I formally charged him. 'I waited and when he came I struck him. I struck him a second time and he fell down. Then I remembered that this was the man who'd caused me so much trouble so I struck him again.'

Murder? Chief Justice Sir Hugh Beadle didn't think so and Mawodza was found guilty of Culpable Homicide and received a much lighter sentence than I'd anticipated.

I could hardly believe it when Beadle found the accused in George's case guilty of murder and sentenced him to death!

George was less than magnanimous in his little 'victory'. '*I told you, Johnny. When I put the work into a case they hang them!*'

*'Ishe kombarera i Afrika...''*

One evening when I was off duty I was drawn to an open air meeting where most of the people present were African but there were a number of Europeans scattered amongst them. The gathering were being addressed by Arne Pilay, a relatively 'moderate' man with political ambitions and policies not exactly favoured by the present government. There appeared little chance of the listeners being inflamed to the point of creating disorder. I caught the eye of an SB SO who was present along with an African SB man and their facial gestures to me indicated Pilay was boring, rather than a rank subversive. At the conclusion of the gathering those present burst into the song, 'God bless Afrika...*ishe kombarera i Afrika....*' I'd previously heard the opening lyrics as '*Nkosi sikelel' i Afrika*' (another dialect?) and knew that whilst the lyrics to the song weren't seen as being exactly subversive, those who sang it

seemed to be invariably people opposed to White rule. However I don't believe the song was ever actually banned in Rhodesia.

An interesting task that would occupy me for a couple of weeks was the re-visiting of Incomplete A and B dockets for Sinoia.

As I remember, Incomplete A dockets were those where a serious offence had occurred and the cases were kept open indefinitely. Incomplete B cases referred to lesser crimes where there was still a chance the case could be closed with a conviction should the offender be caught and there still be witnesses alive to give their testimonies.

A quick check through the pile of dockets; there were thirty or forty as I recall, gave me the impression that previous reviews of the cases had in a number of cases been rather 'slap-dash' and cursory. I was determined, one way or the other, to close as many as possible. I enjoyed the challenge because I was working independently of the other station members, except when I needed the services of an A/C to check a property for witnesses.

Some of the A dockets were fifteen or more years old and I had no luck in progressing them any further except for being able to record that the odd witness would not be around anymore to give evidence should he have been required.

But, I got stuck into the B dockets with a will. My determination to clear or close at least some of them saw me sending a number of radio messages off to other stations '*Requesting they check the kraal of Headman so-and-so on their next patrol for the possible presence of NMA (Native Male Adult....sometimes AMA African...) So-and-so 'RC No. ...'*' I had our station A/C.s carrying lists of potential witnesses when they visited African areas and I made a number of phone calls to farms asking if they still employed certain individuals. Most farmers co-operated but there were a few who chose to adopt a '*buggered if I know*' attitude.

At the end of a couple of weeks I was able to have two cases closed, both without any conviction and both involving rather minor offences. The station Inspector was reasonably impressed; apparently managing to close just a single case was deemed '*par for the course*' at Sinoia.

But, shortly after I'd returned to normal duties luck struck in the form of a radio message from Police Hartley. A routine patrol of a Tribal Trust Land there by an A/C in possession of a copy of a radio message I'd sent to them had located and arrested a wanted man. We despatched an A/C to Hartley and he brought the prisoner to Sinoia. There'd been a warrant for his arrest for 'Wilful damage to property.' A farm labourer in the Sinoia area, he'd three years earlier, got a craving for honey and had attempted to smoke some wild bees out of their hive. Long before the resultant out of control fire wiped out 6000acres of prime pasture he'd been well away and probably thanking his lucky stars that he hadn't fallen foul of summary justice in the form of a White farmer's summary retribution.

I had to ask him. '*How long have you been back at your kraal?*'

*'Not even one month, baas. I knew the mapolisa would search there for me, but I thought it would now be safe to return.'*

It was a relatively serious offence to light a fire in the dry summer months and I was not surprised that the offender received six months imprisonment. But, my satisfaction at having a three year old case closed was somewhat tempered by a reflection that the man was only doing what his forbears undoubtedly did long before the arrival of the White man came and began his pastoral farming.

In contrast to the case just outlined, that took three years and the co-operation of another Police station to bring it to a conclusion, I had a far more serious case at

Sinoia that involved four Police stations and was all over .. discounting the paperwork...in a couple of hours.

*'You run into a kaffir down south, man, you don't stop to see the result.'*

On night shift one early evening I received a phone message from the African attendant at the Banket Garage to the effect that a car had called in there to refuel earlier and the sole occupant, when asked about a broken offside rear window and blood smears on the side of the vehicle, had told the attendant that late that afternoon he'd hit a wandering donkey south of Salisbury. Before he'd driven off the driver had expressed his sympathy that the attendant had to work at night and had offered him a packet of home-made, grease proof wrapped sandwiches from the back seat of the car. When the 'grateful' African took the sandwiches into the garage office to eat them he noticed that, apart from a few small pieces of glass, the packet had a number of hairs on it. And the black and curly hairs were much more likely to be those of a human rather than a donkey!

The car was a big early American sedan and had South African registration plates.

Banket to Sinoia was a journey of perhaps fifteen to twenty minutes. I radioed Karoi with details of the vehicle and when after a wait of twenty minutes in the main street of Sinoia... and the vehicle in question hadn't appeared.... I concluded it must have already passed Sinoia. I then drove to Banket to retrieve the packet of sandwiches and get a statement from the garage attendant.

By the time I'd got back to Sinoia, Karoi had radioed to say they'd stopped the car, detained the driver and were bringing him and his car to Sinoia.

All well and good so far. I then radioed Salisbury Central, admittedly without any high hopes of a result, to ask them if there'd been any report of an African pedestrian being struck by a car in their area.

Bingo! They'd just received a report that an African male's body had been located in the bushes....later I was to learn that it was by sheer fluke....near the main road in the vicinity of Beatrice. And glass at the scene and the multiple injuries to the deceased suggested he'd been struck by a vehicle.

The South African appeared somewhat in awe of our 'efficiency' and when I formally cautioned him he readily admitted to his involvement in the death of the African pedestrian. Because there was no evidence to prove he had driven carelessly or dangerously prior to the impact, the South African motorist received a fine for failing to stop after an accident and was eventually allowed to proceed on his way to Zambia.

*'That's Des. And Dawn. They've must have been up at Kariba.'*

One morning when there was little work on at the station, Chunky Watson and I with an A/C were sent out to do road-block duties on the road to the north of Sinoia. I think we were rather more casual than diligent in our duties; I got on rather well with Chunky but he was no ball of fire when it came to Police work and our checks of vehicles were in the main cursory without any expectation of making any discovery that would stir us from our lethargy. The approach of a large American sedan didn't at first evoke any particular interest.... many of the local farmers owned such vehicles....but, as it neared us Chunky had recognised the two occupants; Des Linberg and Dawn Silver, Des and Dawn as they were known in the entertainment world. Both seemed slightly bemused to see a pair of White and one Black policemen and I was quick to put their minds at rest and was soon having a '*conflab*' with Des. Watson, the shameless bugger, had meanwhile gone around to the passenger side of the vehicle and was all but, half way through the open window on a mission to gauge Dawn's interest in men in uniform and laying on the rugged charm much better!

Given more time I swear he'd have asked her for her telephone number! Des.' occasional side-ways glance didn't convey any concern that Watson would imperil his relationship with his talented and attractive partner...later to become his wife.

The next visit to Makuti with my PATU stick came after another crossing of the Zambezi by twelve guerrillas.

*'They're a bunch of bloody rogues and vagabonds. Leave any gear around and they'll pinch it. They bloody can't help themselves! A proper bloody shower!'*

The guy who imparted those cautionary words of advice to us was referring to Three Commando of the Rhodesian Light Infantry (the RLI used 'Commando' instead of 'Company' and the private soldiers were Troopers ) whose arrival at Makuti coincided with that of our own. My only experience of RLI members had been encounters I've already outlined when they and I were off duty in Salisbury.

We were soon...literally on our first day... made aware there'd been some merit in the warning.

*Ra..aa.aa..kk!*

*'What the fuck!!'* Twigs and leaves from the large tree next to the Joint Operational Command caravan, which housed most of our communications equipment and virtually always had personnel present, fluttered to the ground. And then the near hysterical screams of an NCO from the adjacent Army camp made us aware that the offender who'd accidentally discharged an LMG had been identified. Had the weapon not been with the tripod extended, and thus had had the barrel elevated skywards, the four rounds expended may well have gone through the caravan. An embarrassed Company Commander promised the offender would be dealt with by a spell at the Army Prison in Salisbury and promised his men would be kept in better control.

Poor man; it was wishful thinking. Within a fortnight two belts (500 rds) from two LMGs had been fired at a rhino....popular rumour had it that 270 bullets hit the unfortunate animal... which had two further miscreants sent off to Salisbury; several 'troopies' had been caught selling Army rations to a local Indian storekeeper, a kudu was shot and sold to the same Indian and as a grand finale to the misdeeds a large and spectacular fireworks display took place; a pole and thatch rondavel containing four FN rifles and several cases of rounds and a number of grenades with a few packs to add to the conflagration was set on fire! With the offenders once again Salisbury bound there was some speculation Three Commando of the RLI would eventually be reduced to a skeleton staff of cooks and drivers!

Not so. After we'd spent a couple of nights on ambush duty at likely tracks when nothing of any interest or any major drama took place our powers that be...Special Branch and Intelligence 'wallahs' ....decided that our stick would join a section of the RLI in a sweep between two dried up river courses right down in the Valley itself. Ill-disciplined as we considered they were, the young soldiers would give us a run for our money in the fitness stakes we felt. We were trucked in separately to the sweep area and once de-bussed we had a chance to eye each other up. In terms of rank the RLI Sergeant was the senior man but he soon disabused us of the idea he'd be alone in giving orders and after a discussion over a map we lined up at the end of the 'Troopies' and on a signal moved forward line abreast with about five metres between each man, on a mission to find any sign that terrorists had been through the area in recent times. The terrain was mostly flat with the odd dried-up small watercourse to cross but heat wise it was like walking in a sauna without the steam...it had to be in the 40s...however at the end of the about two mile sweep we'd kept up with the soldiers without having to exert ourselves. The return sweep saw several soldiers

beginning to lag a bit. It amused us to observe that the smallest man was carrying the LMG and a belt of ammo' while another kept close by with another belt of rounds. Each sweep was of shorter length as the two rivers finally converged but each sweep found more soldiers dropping back and not behaving in a manner one would want and expect of them. The Sgt. and his Corporal issued dire threats to their men but they seemed to fall on deaf ears. Finally at the end of one sweep a couple of men were literally missing and were eventually located seated behind a big baobab tree having a smoke! After he'd bawled his men out the Sgt. apologised to us and indicated he'd drawn 'the short straw' in having to lead this particular section of troops.

*'I'd say we're down to about two thirds of a mile, four thirds of a mile at the most to get back here.'*

I'll always remember that Sgt. and his '*four thirds of a mile*' and his 'hard case' gang of 'brigands' who passed for soldiers. Perhaps they were young and bored, even spoiling for a fight. I've no doubt that when it came to the crunch they'd perform well. Indeed they did, those 'troopies' of the RLI, in the cruel and useless Bush War that came later.

On one of the sweeps I picked up a round piece of cardboard of about 70cms diameter with faded what appeared to be Cyrillic type print and some numbers on it. The Special Branch guys determined it was reasonably old...possibly from an earlier group...and again only possibly was the end disc from the tube used to carry Russian made grenades.

In the early days of the guerrilla crossings it wasn't unusual for we PATU guys at a briefing to not only learn of the the number of 'terrs' in the group, but to sometimes even be given the names of the men and their tribal details. Most were killed or captured. However there was one rather resourceful, elusive and better trained guerrilla leader, Moffat Hadebe. It was believed Hadebe had crossed the Zambezi, both ways on several occasions. It was known from captured guerrillas that they were often issued, along with their equipment, the sum of eighty pounds Rhodesian. This money was presumably to assist them to merge into the general African populace without having to intimidate, beg, borrow or steal. Hadebe it was rumoured carried the rather large sum of eight hundred pounds. And from our Police point of view, given our regard for, and what we knew of the RLI, his capture was bound to be seen in RLI circles as akin to a welcome lottery win! As much as the BSAP wanted the man's capture, they also wanted the money to try and trace from the serial numbers on the notes the path the money had taken before issue to the terroists.

*'That's the 'terr' that everyone was after.'*

I arrived back at Sinoia from PATU duties to be told Hadebe had been captured by the Army, handed over to the Police and indeed was held at Sinoia. I wasn't to learn whether he was found in possession of any money and only saw him the once. A rather solid character being lead back to the Police cells after questioning, he slowly walked upright with a certain dignity and cast his eyes over me in passing before dismissing me as a man of little consequence in his life. Whether he was eventually executed or not for his 'crimes'...and I doubt he was... he was a man whose life's story would have made interesting reading!

Following a time of rumours of more guerrilla crossings from Zambia my PATU stick was sent back to Makuti. It was good to catch up with the other members; even better to get away from the routine and often mundane police work at Sinoia.

Mana Pools was a popular holiday resort on the Zambezi. Our PATU stick was dropped off early one morning to the south of the Pools to do a general patrol in the area. It was a long and hot day and when we decided to stop for an evening meal we

were only about two miles from the resort itself. Our leader, Ted, decided after the meal that we'd go on to camp the night in the vicinity of the pools. It was just on dark when we reached the perimeter of the resort and we decided to turn in alongside a low (approx. 18" high) hedge. Ted went into the resort to report our presence to the management and we laid out our poncho/groundsheets and sleeping bags in a line alongside the hedge, had a last cigarette and turned in. Tired as I was, it often took a bit of tossing and turning and hip wriggling before I could fall asleep under the African stars.

*'Aaww...shi.iit!! Why me, you bastard??'*

It was definitely fauna, not flora; probably not a dreaded black mamba; more likely an almost as venomous Egyptian Cobra given the shape of the head. And it was on the other side of the hedge....it's head about a foot above the shrubbery....and dead opposite me! And as I cautiously moved so did the head! Given my companions were above and below me in a line, and generally already in the land of dreams, I had to deal with the reptile myself! Carefully I manoeuvred my rifle from alongside my sleeping bag and pulled it across my body into a position where I'd at least be able to discharge it in the general direction of the snake. It was then I heard the soft thuds of Ted's return to his patrol. A squawk, a '*fuck-off*' from Ted that had me sitting bolt upright and the cobra metamorphasised into a hitherto curious young ostrich that fled for the sanctuary of the inner resort!

Woken by mine and Ted's unrestrained laughter of relief and my exaggerated account of the '*mortal danger I'd faced*' the other members of the stick were soon grumbling about lost sleep. Ted had stayed with the management for a brew but had gained the impression that while uniformed members of the BSAPolice were always welcome, our '*armed and dangerous*' PATU stick might lead the tourists to believe they were in imminent danger from a terroist attack. We broke camp and moved away from the Pools before daybreak. Today I confirm, when asked, that I did indeed visit the well known and popular Mana Pools and generally omit the fact that I arrived in the dark and left again in the dark!

*'Hell, are they accepting anyone in PATU these days?'*

Dusty Miller had been a fellow training squad member and arrived at Makuti with a PATU stick from Salisbury when I was there on general duties. After the usual exchange of '*unpleasanties*' we were able to catch up on our career histories to date before Dusty and his stick went out on an ambush patrol. They returned the next morning to report that '*something had traversed the path*' in their ambush area during the night. They'd held off opening fire and whilst they couldn't prove otherwise, felt the animal may not have been a targeted biped. As Dusty was rather animatedly relating his '*adventures*' to Supt. Ron Pilbrough, OC Border Control, he stepped backwards and briefly disappeared down a deep hole freshly dug for the erection of a new VHF arial! And with barely a break in it.... emerged unscathed of body and spirit ....to continue his narrative!

If I look closely at my right inner arm at a point just above its crook I can see a faint scar. My Bush War scar I call it. Wounded in action. Actually I was returning to my hut in Makuti late evening from a session in the Makuti Hotel and forgot the VHF mast with its stays had been erected the previous day. Walking into a stay in a '*very happy state*' I ended up sliding an arm down it and incurring a nasty enough wound to leave a lasting legacy!

*Bo.o.oom!*

An FN when voluntarily fired on a range or whilst on exercise makes a fairly loud report. When accidentally discharged in a military type camp it makes a hell-of-a noise!

The miscreant was a PATU leader, an SO to boot, who'd cleared the chamber of its round as laid down in firearms handling procedure, but had neglected to remove the full magazine from the rifle first! The Army guys were quick to make observations such as '*well that evens the score, doesn't it?*' Our man didn't end up in a military prison as had the RLI miscreant with the LMG, his mortification was punishment enough!

## KARIBA

*'Tidy up any unfinished cases you may have and prepare for a transfer to Kariba, Johnston. The Member In Charge, Inspector Carver, will pick you up in a couple of days.'*

If the ten months (less one I spent in Vila Salazar) I'd been stationed at Sinoia had been a somewhat disappointing introduction to district policing for me, the ten months I was to spend at Kariba were the best of my time in the BSAPolice.

I instinctively liked Chris. Carver, Kariba's Member I/C. And learned that whilst he could get 'rather authorative' when challenged or stressed, he had certain qualities...fairness is one that comes to mind... that made you want to do your best for him. And if one fell short of his expectations...stuffed up....you didn't always get a severe 'telling off' as such, more of a '*You know where you went wrong...fix it.*'

Once at Kariba and settled into my quarters after organising yet another batman to attend to my uniforms, I checked out the Crime Register to try and get an idea of the cases one could expect to have to handle. There weren't a lot, a few Assaults, Burglaries and Traffic Offences; and something I hadn't seen before, offences under the Wildlife Conservation Act, animal poaching or taking game without the appropriate permit etc, made up the majority of cases. From the other personnel I learnt that Road Block duties at Makuti came around more often than they had from Sinoia, foot patrols along the lake side and into the *bundu* proper, including the Zambezi Escarpment, could be expected on a regular basis and that Police Kariba had two launches, a larger craft, 'Sir John Chancellor' and a smaller but faster outboard powered craft that was always referred to as 'Papa Five'.

I had an early and somewhat frightening introduction to boat patrolling on Lake Kariba. George Peterson had done a course in Police boat handling and him and I were instructed to travel down to Bumi Hills, a tourist resort on an area of high ground above the Southern shore of the Lake. On the way George pointed out the smaller islands that had formed when the Zambezi had been dammed and the areas where underwater trees still posed a threat to navigation. Operation Noah had succeeded in capturing and relocating most of the animals threatened by the rising waters but George indicated a rather small island, of barely more than half an acre, where apparently five impala had been trapped and deemed not to be worthy of rescue. The hapless antelope were doomed to be killed and eaten, not starve to death, after a lion swam out to them and took up residence for the time it took him to dispose of them!

On our return trip to Kariba when the wind had freshened and the lake conditions had become somewhat uncomfortable, George became a little concerned that he'd have to pour some of the spare fuel into the main tank that fed the outboard. It was a difficult exercise to say the least, one we accomplished by idling slowly into the seemingly ever increasing waves and pouring the fuel in the quieter moments. Given my previous experience on a boat consisted of a row or two across the Awakino river to the Bakers, I was more than happy to set foot on land again. Any expectations that I

may at a later date make my living for over two decades on the sea were far from my mind!

*'Scroll back, Matt, towards Kariba Dam. There, that's the Charewa river where I did my first foot patrol at Kariba.'*

Thanks to modern technology I was even able to pinpoint, nearly four decades later, possibly to within half a kilometre, of where my first patrol at Kariba could well have been my last!

Hugh Sayers was of English origin, a former ship's purser turned policeman, who was mature, laid back and interesting enough to be an enjoyable patrol companion. As our briefing hadn't indicated we spend a lengthy time *bundu-bashing* as patrols were oft referred to, we decided to set up camp near where we'd been dropped off by vehicle and to do day patrols from there. We'd...well Hugh and I...had even taken stretchers (Houndsfield) to sleep on and I was soon rapidly gaining the idea that Kariba patrols weren't particularly arduous! That the camp-site was relatively close to a swampy area was seen as a bonus...water would be more readily obtainable. The two African Constables, veterans of a number of foot patrols, were happy with that idea and we'd soon left the bulk of our gear behind at a camp site and were tramping through relatively open country, that was dotted with small clumps of *mopani* and *masasa* trees and larger areas of *jessie-bush* (thorn-bush) which we skirted by following animal trails. The only animals I recall seeing that day were a family of warthog, who in order of size with Papa hog leading, all trotted, tails upright and curled, away from our approach in a rather pompous and imperious fashion.

I was relatively fit from my PATU patrols on the Escarpment and down in the Valley itself but was quite happy to agree to Hugh's suggestion we return to our camp mid-afternoon. After an early evening meal, a night plagued by mosquitoes followed and there was no dissension to Hugh's idea the next morning that we seek out an alternative site, one hopefully in a drier area. With water bottles filled to the brim and packs on our backs we moved about half a mile to the West and set up camp again under the shade of about five *masasa* trees adjacent to a dry watercourse. After having a brew and 'suggesting' to the A/Cs that they gather further wood for the evenings requirement we followed the watercourse for about a mile and then circled back to the camp reaching it about midday.

*'Fani, what was that snort. Was it a rhino?'* Hugh seated on his stretcher, as I was, had unlaced but not removed his boots, but had taken off his shirt.

Cst. Fani and the other A/C slowly climbed to their feet. *'Ah, sir; I didn't hear it. Perhaps it was....Chipembere!!'*

Oh, shit!! No more than a hundred yards to the west of our camp was a wall of *jessie-bush* from which a charging rhino with a calf by her side had just burst! I had half a nano-second to reflect how cute junior looked bouncing alongside a rapidly accelerating mama *chipembere*, when an arm through my rifle sling, I myself charged the three metres to the trunk of the nearest *masasa* tree trunk. Cst. Fani was already scrambling up the same tree but his unlaced boots slowed his '*return to the trees*' and it wasn't until he reached the safety of a side branch and reached down to grasp my rifle barrel and thus assisted me in getting safely above the belligerent animal that I considered I'd avoided accomodating a foot or so of lethal horn in my nether regions! Mother and calf were satisfied with flicking a stretcher over before they trotted off triumphantly further eastwards. Apparently a snort is the only vocal noise emitted by a rhino but, I'm sure a mother imparted to her offspring that morning something in the nature of '*And that's how you deal with those arrogant bipeds. It works every time!*'

*'Where the hell is PO Sayers, Fani.'*

The other A/C was perched in his own tree but, Hugh had obviously elected to be British, and thus manly, about the whole matter and deal with it on foot!

*'There, sir. You can see him. He is so white that man.'* Fani pointed to the north and I glimpsed a flash of white about a hundred and fifty yards away as Hugh moved swiftly behind a clump of bushes. Shortly he appeared and looking our way and by using anxious hand signals enquired of the rhino's whereabouts. Fani pointed in the rough direction the beasts had disappeared in and I, in the afterglow of silliness that often follows a perceived life-threatening experience, frantically indicated that Hugh move to his left. Shortly Hugh paused again to 'enquire' of the danger and again, this time to the laughter of the Constables, I indicated he move rapidly again.

Finally. *'Rude bunch of bastards you lot are.'* Hugh announced when we tired of our game and had indicated it was safe to return to our camp.

When Hugh and A/Cs didn't appear to be in the mood for a further patrol that day, I decided about mid afternoon...I could have ordered an A/C to accompany me but chose not to... to follow the watercourse towards the Lake. Giving Hugh an idea of my plan, the direction I'd take and my estimated return time to the camp... as well as indicating that three shots in rapid succession meant I was in trouble...I set off with my rifle and waterbottle.

I moved rather slowly and cautiously; we hadn't seen any snakes but that didn't mean there weren't any about! It was to be the first and last time I'd leave a camp and patrol for any distance on my own. After an hour of following the watercourse and actually glimpsing the lake in the distance, I turned to make my way back to the camp. Rather than retrace my steps I decided to leave the watercourse for a time but circle back to it well before the camp-site. I came across a dry gully on what was presumably a tributary of the main watercourse and began walking up it. It was stony underfoot with a covering of dead leaves. Slowly the gully deepened and narrowed until the trees on the banks were nearly forming a canopy over my head. I can easily bring the scene to mind for my senses were heightened by a certain unease. Then a cough from a bank above me halted me in my tracks. Off with the rifle's safety catch. Another cough and movement, from the opposite bank. I carefully scanned the banks and realised that I'd walked into a mob of baboons. I was uncertain as to what if any danger they posed to humans but they were soon snarling, following and baring their teeth at me. And weren't in any hurry to disperse. It was with a degree of relief that I walked out the far end of the gully and finally observed that the primates had given up on frightening the crap out of a supposedly higher member of their order!

That night was a foretaste of quite a number of patrol evenings spent in less than a blissful slumber.

*'Oh shit! She's back again!'*

We'd left a small fire going and were just planning to turn in when a snort indicated a rhino was in the near vicinity. Shortly another snort was followed by a rattling of stones. The A/Cs were on the alert but didn't appear as concerned as I'd expected them to be. Finally Constable Fani pointed out that rhino hate fires; as in sometimes approach them and stamp them out!

*'Oh, shit! We'd better put it out then!'*

Unlike later patrols I was to go on, obtaining water wasn't a problem at that time and half a bottle soon reduced the fire to a smouldering mess. This seemed to placate the rhino and after half an hour and no snorts from the monster we deemed it safe to turn in...poor fools.

*'Wa.a...ooora!!'*

Four hearts simultaneously missed a beat, three pairs of hands sought reassurance and comfort in the cold steel and wood of weapons; one voice uttered an unnecessary confirmation.

*'Oh, fuck! Shumba...lion!'*

*'We must light the fire again, sir. Then the shumba will not come closer.'* This time the A/Cs were showing their concern and had resurrected the fire in record time. A further series of distant roars and moans indicated the lion wasn't too anxious to put us on his menu...for the time being at least! Sometime about midnight, and at least an hour after the last challenge from Leo, the bloody rhino was back again! Another half bottle of water and a camp again wreathed in acrid smoke.

Time meant nothing that night except it went on forever and the eventual departure of the rhino had the lion return. I'd had enough drama for one night. Stuff lying under the African stars listening to the hunting cries of a predator with only 'the stick that smokes' between me and his dinner and the dubious comfort of equally uneasy companions! Removing a strap from my pack I climbed up into a tree and tied myself to a branch. Bugger, rhinos, lions or even a green (tree) mamba should I share the tree with it, it was all too much. Needless to say I didn't sleep and sometime before dawn rejoined the others who'd also admitted to spending a largely sleepless night.

Later that morning our transport arrived and we returned to the station and reported all was well in the Charewa river area. Apart from the odd niggling animal!

My next patrol was up the Nyanayana river to the east of Kariba and quite a distance from the Lake itself. The transport dropped four of us off on the main road and despite the growing heat, we were soon following the dried up river through open bush at a steady pace. After an hour we came to a large and quite clear pool in the bend of the river. Elephant and other game hoof-prints indicated we weren't the only animals to make use of the pool and it bore a slight tang that I'd learnt meant it had been fouled by elephant urine. However, we were glad of that water; our proposed patrol area took us away from the Nyanayana and the next two points marked 'Water ?' on our maps revealed none of the life-saving liquid. The other PO was George Petersen who indicated, that apart from the major pool we'd filled up at, obtaining water in the Nyanayana river area was generally a problem. The further we progressed, the drier and rockier the terrain became. When by late afternoon we hadn't found a water supply, we reluctantly concluded we'd have to settle for a dry camp. PATU patrols had taught me to conserve water, to always ensure I had at least half a bottle in reserve. George and the A/Cs were also low on water and after a night that passed without incident we were aware that finding water had become a priority. George and one of the A/Cs who'd been in the area before decided, and I agreed with them, that the barren type of relatively high country we were passing through was most unlikely to yield a source of water and we'd have to descend to a lower more fertile area.

*'That looks like a pool of water down there on the rocks between those trees.'*

George had exhausted his water supply a couple of hours before and 'led the rush' to the scum covered water collected in a shallow depression in a solid rock formation.

*'Fuck! Be..e.ert! It's fo..o.ul!!'*

George had stretched out full length on the rocks, scooped aside the brown surface scum and taken a few hearty gulps before turning his head aside from the water source to bring it all up again! I scooped up some of the liquid in the palm of my hand and tentatively tasted it. George hadn't exaggerated!

RHODESIA

RESIDENCE  
PERMITN<sup>o</sup> 42101 B

File No. 2573/05

Year .....



The under-noted person (and dependants named below), is/are authorized to enter Rhodesia not later than

*21st December 1965*

to reside in Rhodesia subject to compliance with the provisions of the Immigration Act, 1954, as amended.

2. (wife)

3. (Child under 18 years) .....

4. (Child under 18 years) .....

5. (Child under 18 years) .....

6. (Child under 18 years) .....



A valid passport (not a tourist passport) is essential in addition to this permit.

This permit is granted on the condition that the holder shall follow the occupation of *Policeman*.

in Rhodesia for a period of not less than two years from the date of his arrival in Rhodesia. It may be cancelled if during that period the holder, without the permission of the British Immigrants Selection Board, Salisbury, Rhodesia, engages in any other occupation or fails to engage in that occupation.

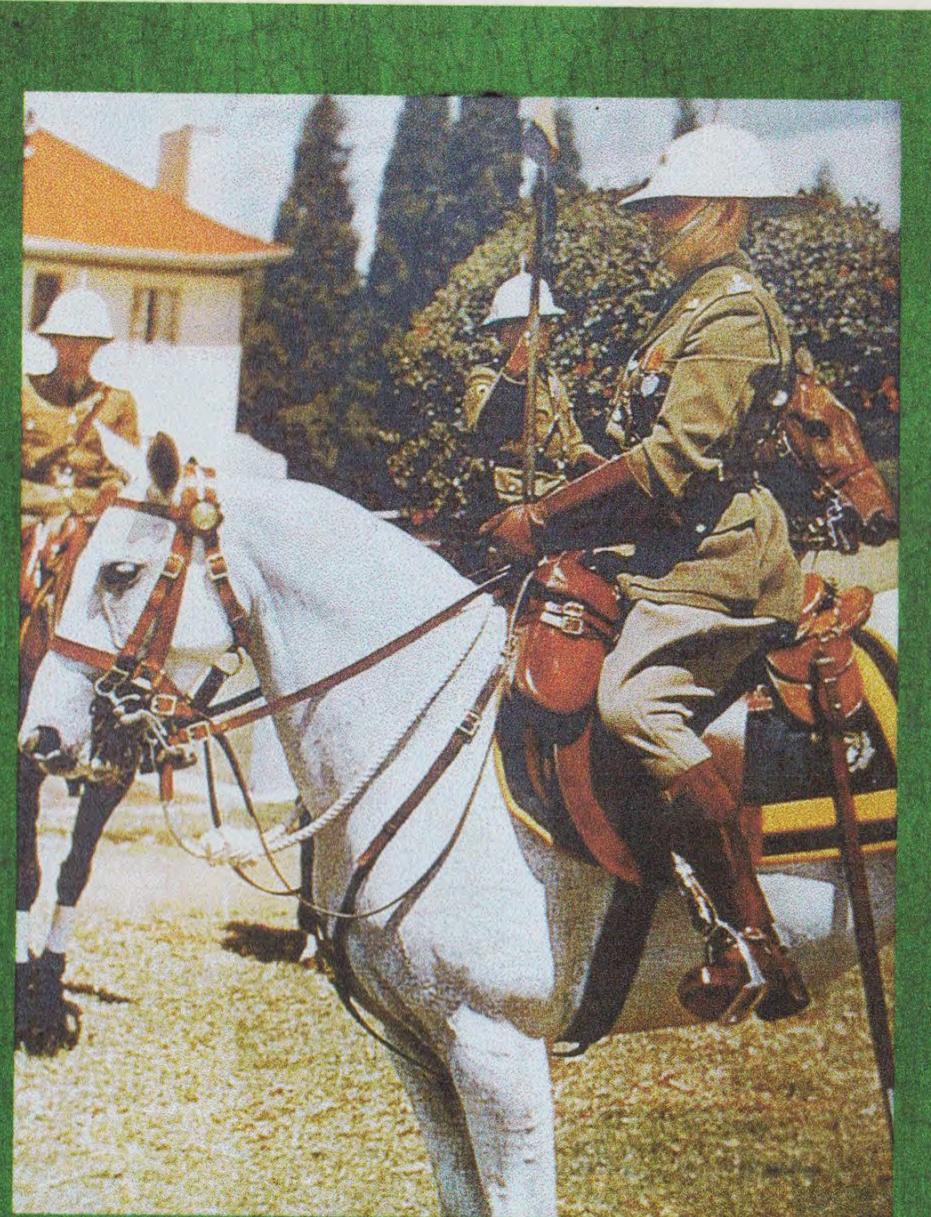
This permit will cease to be valid if the holder departs from Rhodesia outside Rhodesia with the intention of making his home outside Rhodesia or is absent from Rhodesia for a period of six months before he has acquired domicile. The Board may extend the period of six months.

Secretary,  
British Immigrants Selection Board.

Ordnance guard duty while in Depot. Single shot Greener shotgun on shoulder.



Mounted equitation instructor (Possibly "Smudge' Smith). While we rode horses in Depot we did not take part in any mounted parades or ceremonies.



My 'Dog-tag'. 'Something to send home to your Mum if a bloody lion eats you!' Gerry Winchcombe...Depot. (Pg. 117)



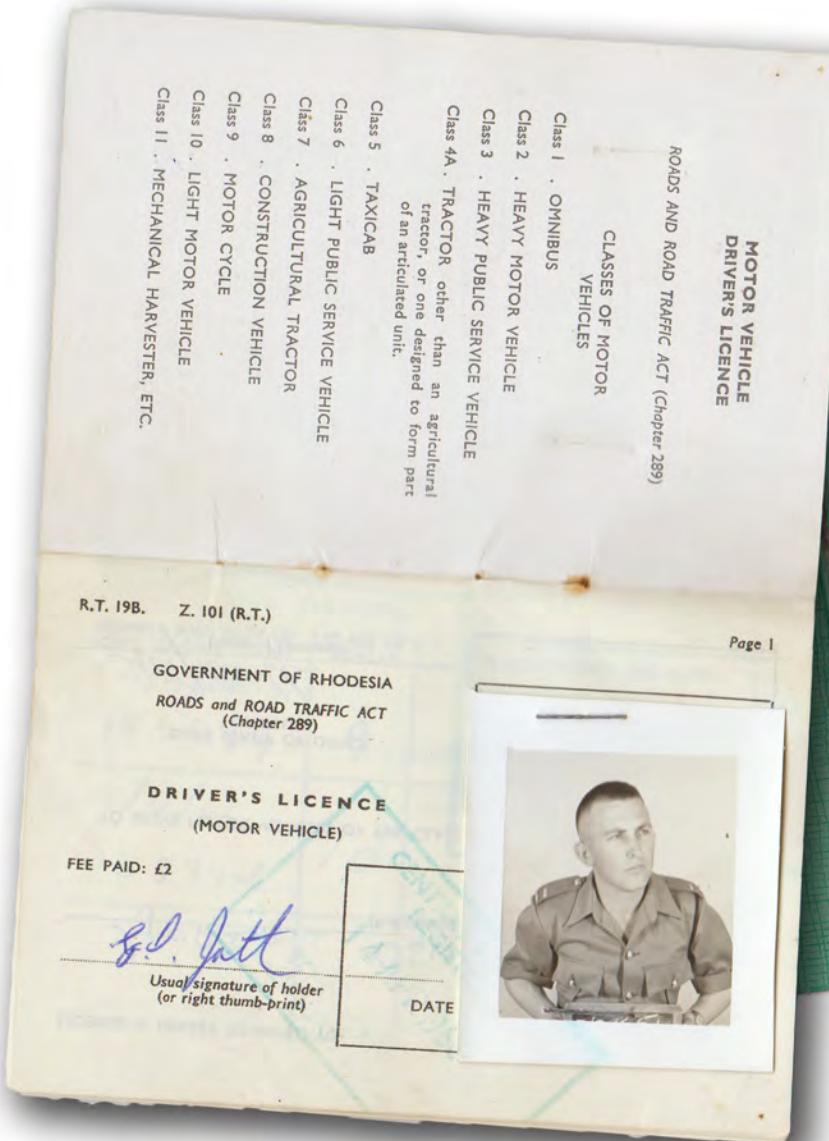
**Pass-out Parade. I'm in the middle column fourth from camera.**



Pass-out formal photograph. I'm in the middle row of recruits, 3rd from left. Eric van Sittart (Depot Commandant) is 3rd from left in front row, 4th from left is Comissioner Frank (aka Slash) Barfoot and our Depot Chief Inspector, Ron Trangmar is on the far right.



Rhodesian Driving Licence. My head's to one side because of a cut to it on the left side incurred during PT.



My first posting. Stodart was a 'satellite' station of Harare Police station. The riding trousers were infrequently worn and the across the shoulder strap was done away for POs in late 1966. Most urban and several rural stations had the 650cc Matchless motorcycles. (Pg. 119)



Stodart. The bus in the background, a SUOC (Salisbury United Omnibus Co.) vehicle is the same type as the bus involved in a petrol bombing that I attended shortly after the incident occurred in Harare African Township. (Pg 135-6)



### B.S.A. Police Radio Message Form

Message Number	Transmitting Station	Priority	Number of Words	Date and Time Handed In	Time Received	Time Transmitted	Operator
2			32	140840			

**ABOVE THIS LINE FOR USE BY SIGNALS BRANCH ONLY**

FROM HARTLEY	TO MARANELLAS	NORMAL URGENT IMMEDIATE
-----------------	------------------	-------------------------------

RADIO 418/67 / DATED 13/4/67

REF YOUR RDO 603/67 dated 13/4/67 KRAAL PARTICULARS OF 10230 HARTLEY NAME UN KN PARTICK C. MASHAYAMOMBE T. MZEZURA K. MUDZENGI F. CHIBANTU D. HARTLEY RADIO SENT TO MUBAYIRA AS KRAAL IN THEIR AREA PSE LIAISE WITH THEM STOP

ORIGINATOR	Date	Time	Initials of Member i/c
(Name) ..... (Rank) ..... (No) .....			

**NOTES**

- (1) Messages should be typed or written in capital letters.
- (2) Priority messages must be authorised by the Member-in-Charge, who will initial in the space provided.
- (3) IMMEDIATE priority takes precedence over all other radio traffic and is reserved for matters of special importance such as internal security, serious crimes, major accidents, etc.
- (4) URGENT priority takes precedence over all other radio traffic except immediate and is reserved for matters where a reply is required within a few hours.

**Radio message giving details of African male Patrick Mashayamombe, wanted for serious offences under the Law and Order Maintenance Act, who I arrested while stationed at Stodart in the Harare African Township. (Pg. 128)**



security patrol searching a pantechnicon at a road block yesterday.

The photo taken on the Salisbury-Chirundu road North of Sinoia that was to 'add a new dimension' to my everyday duties. I'm at the back in casual stance, Graham Rogers is on the left and Jock Saunders is in the foreground. The photo was not posed. Indeed we'd warned the journalist against such an action. (Pg. 200)

## TERRORISTS SOUGHT IN LOMAGUNDI

Sunday Mail Reporter

RHODESIAN security forces are hunting a group of terrorists believed to be at large in the Lomagundi area, north-west of Salisbury. The search began after security forces captured a small party of terrorists who had crossed the Zambezi from Zambia on Friday, an official spokesman said last night.

Blocks were set up on roads north of Salisbury and security forces opened fire on two motor vehicles after they failed to stop at a block 14 miles outside the city on the Sinoia road.

No one was injured, but one of the vehicles was slightly damaged.

All day yesterday vehicles were stopped and searched at a series of road-blocks on the main Salisbury-Chirundu road.

Passengers were ordered to leave buses and trucks while they were searched by armed security patrols. Some of the road-blocks were manned by police reservists.

A joint statement from the Ministry of Information and Police Headquarters issued on Friday night said the arrested terrorists abandoned their arms immediately they arrived in Rhodesia.

The statement said that in view of the arrests security forces were maintaining a close watch on movements on the border with Zambia.

### GUN BATTLE

Three weeks ago four heavily armed African terrorists trying to make their way to Salisbury were killed in a bullet-riddled pantechnicon in a battle with security forces 25 miles north of Karoi. One member of the security patrol was injured.

The gun battle took place eight days after a small group of Africans who had infiltrated from Zambia gave themselves up to security forces on the southern shore of Lake Kariba.

They said they had been trained in Tanzania and had abandoned their weapons and ammunition as soon as they landed in Rhodesia.

**Photo from newspaper clipping (pg 200)**



check ~~LION~~?  
Sergewa F.C.  
check FINOLLEY  
check with CASTELL (KARO)  
Wild - Life Conserv. Act  
Chapt. 199  
c/s 16 (2)(c)  
Hunt w/o license.

29/4/68 0940 hrs  
Report MR R FRANCIS (F.W.C.)

MALE LION Lying Dead 5 miles  
west O.C.s Camp, approx 2 days  
old. One bullet hole: ~~bullet~~ 22  
through back. Shed for  
bullet on trees / ground etc.  
Smooth leather sole type footwear  
observed near lion.  
30.06 shell recovered at scene.

Spoor of vehicle L/Rover?  
pattern DUNLOP

[Wavy line] 25 paces ~~empty cartridge~~  
~~bullet to~~  
dead lion.  
4 paces vehicle head from  
See next pg. road to edge of bush.

Map references of possible sources of water on Zambesi Escarpment. Finding water on our four day patrols was often an ever present worry.

## WATER

Q7 057769 (Dig 2') Not here.  
Q7 097794 (Rock hole) Not here.  
Q7 100800 (Dig 2') ---  
Q7 099820 (Rock hole) after here  
(Cat shot near)  
--- (hole) after here.

13 14-3

See below

East

G B 234(2)  
G B 1917  
G C 1916  
G 235489  
G 1917

12. Vehicles still at scene? Are they causing obstruction?
13. Weather conditions at time of accident and street lights.
14. Existing speed limit at scene.
15. Licences:
  - (a) Driver's and type of licences held, i.e. Public Service, heavy, etc. Number of licence and where issued.
  - (b) Vehicles.
16. Insurance. (Third Party or Comprehensive. Number of policy and name of Company.)
17. Lights, result of test.
18. Hooter, result of test.
19. Brakes, result of test and how tested.
20. Steering, result of test.
21. Tyres, condition of (tyres with canvas showing are considered dangerous).
22. Windscreen wiper, efficiency of.
23. General mechanical condition and if examined by Government mechanic.
24. Position of gear lever.
25. Position of switch.
26. Any evidence of driver being under influence of liquor, drugs, etc.
27. Statement of investigating officer:
  - (a) In support of plan and key, i.e. visibility, etc.
  - (b) As to probable cause of accident.

## SOUTHERN RHODESIA

ELIZABETH THE SECOND, by the Grace of God,  
Queen of this Realm and of all Her  
Other Realms and Territories, Head of  
the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

To Patrol Officer Gordon Oswald Johnston. (No. 7354) B.S.A. Police, Sinoia.

GREETING! — We command you that, laying aside all and singular business and excuses, you be and appear personally before our Judge at the session of the General Division of the High Court of Rhodesia to be held at Salisbury and commencing on the 27th day of February next at ten of the clock in the forenoon to testify all those things which you know concerning an indictment then and there to be preferred against

KAMOTA

charged with the offence of Murder.

(N.B. Convicted Cul. Homicide (1½ years H.L. 1 year wrt.  
on usual conditions)

and this you shall by no means fail to do under the penalty upon you of a fine of twenty-five pounds or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one month.

Right  
WITNESS: The/Honourable Sir Hugh Beadle.

Chief Justice of Our High Court of Rhodesia, this 9th day of February , in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and sixty seven.

H. Hartley Wiley.

A/ Registrar of the General Division of the High Court

C.M.Holdstock.

**Subpoena for High Court trial of African male Kamota who killed a fellow farm labourer near Sinoia on New Years Day, 1967. Kamota was found guilty of Culpable Homicide and would spend one and a half years in prison. (Pg. 171)**



## SUBPOENA

Court of the Magistrate for the Province of MASHONALAND.

To the Member in Charge,

British South Africa Police,

You are hereby required, in Her Majesty's name, to summon

P/O JOHNSTON

BUS: B.S.A. POLICE, STATIONED AT MARANELLAS.

that he/they, and each of them, appear personally before this Court at NO. 1, COURT, SALISBURY.  
on 30th day of SEPTEMBER, 1968 next, at 9.00 o'clock in the forenoon, to  
testify and declare all he/they, and each of them, know concerning a certain charge preferred against

THOMAS D [REDACTED]

for THEFT.

and that he/they, and each of them, bring with them and produce before this Court

Serve on each of them, the said P/O JOHNSTON.

a copy of this Subpoena and return to this Court, on that day, what you have done hereon.

Given under my hand, at SALISBURY.

this

day of

, 19



The case we lost because our only credible witness was a rather excitable Italian who believed the accused was conducting an affair with his wife and very volubly and crudely referred to as such during the defence councils questioning of him!

(Pg. 170)

## RHODESIA

ELIZABETH THE SECOND, by the Grace of God,  
 Queen of this Realm and of all Her  
 Other Realms and Territories, Head of  
 the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

To Patrol Officer Gordon Oswald Johnston (7354) B.S.A. Police, Sinoia.

GREETING! — We command you that, laying aside all and singular business and excuses, you be and appear personally before our Judge at the session of the General Division of the High Court of Rhodesia to be held at **Salisbury** and commencing on the **13th** day of **September** next at ten of the clock in the forenoon to testify all those things which you know concerning an indictment then and there to be preferred against

## MAWODZA

charged with the offence of **Murder.**

and this you shall by no means fail to do under the penalty upon you of a fine of twenty-five pounds or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one month.

**Right**  
 WITNESS: The Honourable **Sir Hugh Beadle.**

Chief Justice of Our High Court of Rhodesia, this  
**23rd** day of **August**, in the year of our Lord  
 one thousand nine hundred and **sixty seven.**

**H. Hartley-Wiley,**  
 A/ Registrar of the General Division of the  
 High Court

**C.M. Holdstock.**

High Court subpoena for African male Mawodza. Despite confessing to premeditated murder when I charged him he escaped the death penalty. Not so fortunate was an African male who SO George Goldie of Sinoia had in High Court the same day; despite what appeared to be lack of premeditation in the killing he was involved in he received the ultimate penalty. (Pg.212)



RHODESIA

## SUBPOENA

Court of the Magistrate for the Province of Mashonaland

To the Member in Charge,

British South Africa Police,

Marandellas

You are hereby required, in Her Majesty's name, to summon

Patrol Officer Gordon Oswald JOHNSON

that he/they and each of them, appear personally before this Court at Macheke

on 4th day of February, 1969 next, at 0900 o'clock in the forenoon, to

testify and declare all he/they and each of them, know concerning a certain charge preferred against

Anthony Bruce [REDACTED]

for Culpable Homicide

and that he/they and each of them, bring with them and produce before this Court

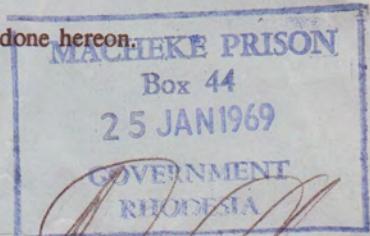
Serve on each of them, the said

Gordon Oswald Johnson

a copy of this Subpoena and return to this Court, on that day, what you have done hereon.

Given under my hand, at Macheke

this 25th day of January, 1969 . 19



Clerk of the Court

Issuer of Process.

The case I gave evidence in at Macheke after my discharge from the BSAP that involved an SAS soldier being charged with the Culpable Homicide of a friend and fellow soldier. I believe from what the accused mans fellow serving SAS men have told me in latter times that the defendant was found guilty of a lesser charge.

(Pg. 313)

Myself as 'Two-bar' Patrol Officer shortly before leaving the BSAP.



My Certificate of Service showing I'd 'done my three' and a bit more.

B.S.A.P.—1M—14-1-68.

NO DUPLICATE OF THIS CERTIFICATE CAN BE GRANTED

B.S.A.P. FORM 19.

BRITISH SOUTH

AFRICA POLICE



## Certificate of Service

This to Certify that GORDON OSWALD JAMES JOHNSTON was appointed in the British South Africa Police on the 15th day of June, 1965., that he served for a period of 3 years and 231 days and leaves the Force on the 31st day of January, 1969.

Force No. 7354

Conduct Good. \*

Rank Patrol Officer

*L. Lamm.*

Date 31st January, 1969.

Assistant Commissioner,

for Commissioner, B.S.A. Police.

Member's Signature G.O.J.J.

\*Exemplary is not awarded to members with less than ten years' service.



"Yours"  
matandello

We carried, aside from our anti-malarial pills, two other types of pills, one that sterilised any suspect water obtained in the wild, and another that was supposed to remove the bad taste from such water. Generally we used neither but we had to do something if we were going to utilise this water. I popped the pills into a bottle full of the foul brew and after a wait of twenty minutes tried it again. 'Yuk!'

So we boiled the billy and made tea. The sickly sweet and foul taste persisted but, if one sipped it slowly, it stayed down! We moved on but late afternoon made our way back the same area for our evening camp, ensuring we didn't have another dry camp to contend with.

The following day we made our way out of the camp and I knew we were nearing the water source in the Nyanayana when George emptied his last bottle of the foul brew that passed for water onto the ground. As with the Charewa patrol we had nothing important to report. Essentially our brief had been to look for both signs of human activity...as in past or present terrorist presence...and to mark on our topography maps any sources of water that could be used by those bent on infiltration and mayhem.

Dave Barber was tall and lanky, had done his three years, tried 'civvy' life and then rejoined the BSAP. He also informed me he had not long got over a bout of recurring malaria. Together with two A/Cs we were dropped off on the shore of Lake Kariba near the Dandawa Fishing Camp for a patrol of three days and two nights.

The inhabitants of the camp were friendly enough and pointed out an abandoned 'pole and dagga' hut with a thatched roof where we Europeans could sleep and put our gear surplus to daily patrols. The A/Cs found accommodation elsewhere in the camp.

*'You're not in any danger Dave, but for fucksake keep still.'*

After a hike of about three hours and an attempt by me to catch a fish using a hand-line and spinner which produced what 'Paddy shot at', we returned to the camp, had an evening feed and turned in to smoke and yarn about past experiences. The mosquitoes were particularly bad, something I hadn't experienced in the waterless *bundu* of the Escarpment. But, knowing we had a long days walk the next day, we were soon asleep. In the small hours I awoke lying on my side facing Dave who was perhaps four feet away and blissfully snoring. Moonlight streamed through the open hut doorway and something very black, shiny and definitely alive, perhaps an inch and a half wide, extended right across my companions sleeping-bag about his waistline. My hair prickled with fright and my hands trembled as I took up my torch. Snake or not I had to be careful not to provoke Dave into any movement.

Ants!! My sigh of relief was tempered with the knowledge that the often bad-humoured Matabele ants, took their name for the hitherto warlike Black inhabitants in the south of the country. I'd encountered them before and knew them to be big and black with a very fiery bite! Dave stirred and I cautioned him about the column of intruders. Wisely he heeded my warning and soon I was able to tell him the insects had moved on.

Laxman's Mine was clearly marked on our map. And it was equally clear that the mine was close on ten map miles from Dandawa.

We set off early and Dave set a cracking pace....I took four steps for every three of his I determined....that belied any apparent after effects of his tussle with malaria. For over two miles we followed a path along the Lake edge and then we began a long climb to the higher country. And Dave's hitherto strong striding slowed and eventually he began to struggle. As did A/C Nelson. Nelson had aspirations to become the first Black Patrol Officer in the BSAP, was intelligent with an arrogant

edge to his demeanour which didn't particularly endear him to Black and White alike. And he hated going on patrol.

It soon became obvious that Dave's recent illness meant he didn't have the stamina needed to make it to the mine and back in one day. His breathing was laboured to the point where he was close to vomiting and Cst. Nelson wasn't much better, although I suspected he was exaggerating his symptoms of distress. My suggestion that I carry on to the mine with the fit A/C whilst Dave and A/C Nelson drop back down to the Lake.... do a patrol along to the next fishing camp, and then return to Dandawa.... was readily taken up. The A/C with me wasn't a young man but, he'd shown a willingness to keep going on the climb. Once the other pair had departed I assured my companion we would take regular breaks and wouldn't push ourselves to the point of exhaustion the others had reached. He gave a broad toothy grin as only an African can and a compliment.

*'I think you are very strong, sir.'*

Once we reached the summit of the escarpment I dragged out the map to look for features as reference points. To go straight to the mine meant a long descent into a valley followed by another climb equal to the one just undertaken. But, if we kept to the higher ground we'd nearly double the distance we had to travel. I was mindful of a previous patrol's problems visiting the mine. A Rhodesian born Police Reservist on permanent attachment to Police Kariba.... who should have been far more careful in his conservation of water.... had drank his last drop of the precious liquid and then punched holes in his tinned food, including a can of fish in sild oil, to suck the liquid out of them before lying down and determining he couldn't carry on! His A/C was of more determined character and had gone on to the mine to get help. The A/C was to later say that Laxman, a Indian born man in his forties, had trotted virtually all the way to the stricken man with a cooler bag of water. In the meantime the Reservist had fired a number of shots from his rifle, ostensibly to drive off curious baboons but possibly to draw attention to his plight. Once he'd re-hydrated fully he'd been fit enough to return to the Lake.

Conserving water had never been a problem with me. Nor was climbing hills. We descended into the valley.

Laxman had observed our approach and his hearty welcome was genuine. There was very welcome cool water for us and the promise of a cup of tea. The A/C wandered off to talk to the work gang of about eight men who were digging into a hillside with picks before scrabbling with bare hands in loose stony material and periodically dropping something into the sack each man had next to him.

Beryl, the mine owner informed me. Beryllium Aluminium Silicate to give it its full name and it was found in hexagonal form in pale green 'sticks' of varying length and diameter. The workers were paid for the amount they won from the ground and they appeared a rather contented lot. They stopped for a break when Laxman indicated they should and I was satisfied that my A/C would pick up on any complaints the men may have. Laxman indicated that the 'piece-work' basis of payment found favour with his workers. Even in a slow production week their income was far more than they could expect as farm workers. Their accomodation was rather basic but, Laxman fed them well and they rotated in taking leave to visit their families. The Beryl was taken out by vehicle in a rather rough road that lead to the South.

Before I left the Mine I wandered over to the work site. The men were happy, laughing on occasion to indicate the recovery of a 'big piece'. My A/C confirmed that a number of the men had been at the mine for several years and Laxman was a good

employer in their eyes. Their only complaints, if they could be seen as such, was the isolation and Laxman's policy of not allowing women in the camp.

I bid Laxman farewell about mid-afternoon and I must admit my A/C and I were a weary pair trudging the last few miles to Dandawa which we reached not long before dark.

The six legged visitors of the previous evening didn't return.

Kariba seemed to have a junior detail at Makuti on a virtually permanent basis.

When about one hundred and thirty terroists crossed into Rhodesia at a point south of Chirundu...the border post with Zambia...the security people called the campaign against them Operation Cauldron. And I was sent to Makuti; not with a PATU stick, but to do general duties there. Incidentally, the NZ media announced that the crossing had been across the lake near Kariba dam and about two hundred terroists had been involved; a report that had my parents questioning my safety!

*'There's a phone call from Salisbury for you, PO Johnston, from a young woman in Salisbury.'*

I had barely been at Makuti for a day when a senior man poked his head through the tent door where I was manning a radio and trying to look otherwise engaged to announce I was needed in the caravan to answer a phone all.

It was Rosemary and, along with a friend whose boyfriend was in the BSAP Support Unit section at Makuti, she planned to visit for an evening! And I was supposed to be involved in a war of sorts! Rosemary would never reveal the nature of her work but I know it involved a Security Clearance and presumed she was with a Govt. Dept. I tried to put her off believing she, Security Clearance or not, and her companion wouldn't be allowed into Makuti anyway given the Operation going on. There were about four officers or senior men in the caravan including an Army Captain and it wasn't the best atmosphere to put a lady like Rosemary off what she'd planned. Especially when she guessed an Operation was underway. '*Ask the officer in charge*' she put to me a couple of times. I didn't have to; our senior Police officer present had obviously overheard some of my conversation at least...he was about four feet from me after all!... and surmised my apparent dilemma. Indicating I put a hand over the phone's mouth-piece he smiled and said something along the lines of. '*It's ok, Johnston, your lady friend can visit as long as you stay Mum about the nature of our work here.*'

I hadn't seen Rosemary for several months and along with her friend and the Support Unit guy who I'd met before without knowing very well, we visited the Makuti Hotel for a time before returning to the camp. I'd been sharing a tin hut with a guy on road-block duties and thus needed that night, as did the Support Unit guy, alternative accommodation if we were to engage in uninterrupted 'carnal bliss'. Once again the officer 'had come to the party' and with an '*oh, to be young and single again*' sigh had allowed us the use of two of the camps tents that were vacant but set up for occupation if needed with both stretchers and mattresses. And don't forget you're on duty tomorrow!

The stretchers were narrow but after a lot of comments on their value, especially the idea of accommodation for two; ...comments echoed from the adjacent tent's residents..., a blissful night was spent by all. Rosemary and her friend departed before I was required for duty the next morning.

Early in the afternoon a message came in that a Uniform Branch A/C, who'd been on a 'recce' in a Landrover with a SB SO, had been wounded after he'd accidentally discharged a Sterling into his thigh. He was brought into Makuti by vehicle and laid out on a stretcher... minus its legs... pending the arrival of a chopper to '*casa-vac*'

him to Harare Hospital. I was detailed to be a stretcher-bearer once the chopper arrived. Of course, one was a little intrigued as to how the man had got three 9mm rounds into his thigh from the underside! Puffing on a cigarette in true '*battle casualty*' style he revealed the SO had gone off alone into the bush to check on something leaving the Sterling with the butt folded... but a full mag. in place... leaning against the passenger seat. Having had no training in sub-machineguns the A/C sought to remedy his dearth of weapons handling experience by pushing the '*little-thing-a-me*' (cocking-handle) on the right side of the weapon down and then letting it go! He was bloody unlucky! The mechanism went down far enough to engage a round without actually locking pending a trigger pull. And a worn or faulty sear saw three rounds discharged into his upper leg despite the weapon being on semi., not fully automatic. Incredibly only one round went right through flesh, one went nearly right through and one had hit the femur without breaking it. All of which confirmed my suspicions that the Sterling and its predecessor, the Sten, might have been ok for '*house-clearing*' but, bloody hopeless weapon for the sort of bush warfare we potentially faced.

The chopper LZ (Landing Zone) had recently been hacked out of light bush with an axe or panga (machete) and I'd sat with boot laces undone to keep my feet cool in the oppressive heat. When the Rhodesian Air Force chopper, a French made Alouette, touched down and the pilot indicated we load the wounded man I'd taken up my corner of the stretcher and, half-crouching as taught, had run for the chopper, only for a boot to come off! And a sock clad foot to come down heavily on several of the diagonal cut stumps of the former bushes. It was touch and go whether I crawled into the chopper after the hapless A/C and several days before I could walk without limping on the badly bruised foot! Fool that I was.

*'When you break out of the bush proper there's a couple of hundred of yards of open country where the track is on quite an angle. I put my foot down and got on with it!'*

The next chopper LZ I visited was the only a couple of days later but well into the *bundu* proper. My mission was to convey to the landing zone two drums of aviation fuel in the back of a three door Landrover. Somehow we (the BSAP) had obtained the use of a number of jungle-green Landrovers... popular belief had it they were of South African origin. I was briefed as to where the track began off the main road and set off loaded rifle by my side, but without the usual accompanying A/C.

Coming out of the bush I remembered the earlier fuel delivery guys advice and increased my speed. If the left side wheels never actually left the track they had to be close to doing so. Instinctively I leant uphill and prayed the fuel drums wouldn't shift as the vehicle seemed to lean at a sickeningly impossible angle. Gaining flat ground again in the bush I couldn't even stop, '*And no smoking, Johnston!*' for a celebratory fag. I pulled up at the LZ, climbed from the vehicle and after I'd unexpectedly encountered and briefly saluted Supt. Ted Mallon, who was normally based at Kariba, agreed that the bush track left a bit to be desired.

Because of the sometimes erratic hours worked at Makuti, time off seemed to be quite generous as compensation.

*'That man you refer to only looks like ...the bank teller you describe...he's a ho-o-  
orrible bugger when the mood takes him; kill you with his little finger!'*

He was a man in his mid-fifties, tanned, fit looking and tough with an impressive RAF style moustache. And a rather educated English accent to boot. Major Dudley Coventry of the Rhodesian SAS... British Army retired... was the man whose abilities and exploits are the true stuff of legend. Patently his men, about eight of

whom enjoyed a beer with him one afternoon at the Makuti Hotel, near worshipped...secretly, as beffited the derring-do types they were... their CO. He was affable, interested in me as a Kiwi (*Good fighting men you blokes*) and quite outgoing in matters military but not where his unit was concerned. And when I pointed out that a rather small, bespectacled, little more than a lad, member of his unit didn't seem to fit the archetypical profile of a Special Services soldier Dudley was quick to put me right. I can still bring Coventry and his soldier to mind. Two other SAS men I was to meet later in sad circumstances may well have been present that day but I wasn't to meet them then.

*'No...didn't see them. Wa-a-art-hogs you say!?'*

On another late afternoon visit to the pub I wasn't unduly surprised to see a Rhodesian Air Force Alouette chopper parked in the pub yard. But, I was slightly taken aback however to see the rear compartment of the chopper, usually reserved for four men and their gear or 'casu-vac' cases, had at least five very dead wart-hogs stacked in it. Flt. Lt. Ian McLean and his Tech. Sgt. 'Fats' Coetzee I'd heard of...stories that often told of how McLean, as good...some would say brilliant...a pilot as he was, could be a madcap bugger on occasion and the bane of his superior officers.

That I turned a blind eye to the contraband cargo in the chopper went without saying, despite the pub owner drawing my attention to their existence. I was introduced to McLean and Coetzee....the latter was surprisingly rather more casually attired, even by operational standards, in an untidy pair of well-worn overalls...and briefly passed the time of day with them before moving off to mingle with other patrons I knew. Shortly a low but earnest: '*Johnny!*' and a hand gesturing towards the road below the pub. Still over a mile away but steadily making it's way uphill towards the pub was the Game Dept.s grey pickup. Peter V., the Game Ranger, might have a different take on the poached game from mine!

*'Game Department's on its way. Reckon you guys had better move on.'*

Both men downed their beers and soon had the chopper rotor gaining speed. Not a moment too soon; the Game Dept. vehicle was actually forced to draw to a halt to allow the aircraft to take off and, as it gained height and the engine noise faded, we continued supping our beers.

*'Thacka-thwacka-thwacka... 'Ooh, shit they're coming back!'*

Whether McLean felt the rather abrupt curtailment to his 'quiet beer' merited some redress; or was a natural attention seeker....whatever....the skids of his chopper lowered gently onto the pubs roof soon had the Manager's full attention and as the building creaked so the outraged man rushed outside to throw gestures and strong imprecations at the offending pilot. Honour apparently satisfied, the latter departed to never return.

And I soon learnt from a still disgruntled Publican the reason behind Tech. Sgt. Coetzee's less than presentable attire. On his approach to the pub McLean had lowered his aircraft down over the pool with the down-draft sending towels flying and bikini tops fluttering from the suddenly shrieking young women who'd hitherto been relaxing and sun-bathing around the pool. And Coetzee had further announced his arrival with quite a splash; fair in the middle of the pool in full flying kit! Minus headphones of course!

I don't know if Coetzee's impromptu '*dip in the pool*' set a precedent, but I heard another chopper pilot Ian Harvey had a Tech. with he same predilection for entering the Motel's pool from on high.

McLean was barred from the pub....permanently; *he could have wrecked the bloody place!!*... and, not surprisingly, due to some misdeanour or whatever, was later apparently suspended from flying for some time.

Coetzee, a large affable guy who suited his 'Fats' nickname was an inveterate gambler...poker, pontoon...you name it... who carried a small fold up card table with several packs of cards in his chopper. Once landed the game was on with any guys he could coerce to the table but, the stakes were generally on the low side commensurate with the rather average salary of most military men. He played fair and most of us were drawn...some may say conned!... to the rather jovial NCO to enjoy a game or two with him.

Whilst one couldn't help but be aware of the comings and goings of the choppers at Makuti, we generally didn't pay much attention to them. However one mid-afternoon a South African chopper landed and shortly afterwards the pilot and his Tech. Sgt. were engaged in a rather heated debate as they pulled out any loose equipment from the craft and checked under seats and behind any fittings. Anywhere a snake may have taken refuge! They'd apparently put down on a *kopje* in the *bundu* and ,whether one believed it or not, the Sgt. had sat down...on a puff-adder snake! He'd caught the reptile, placed it in a spare flying helmet under a spare pair of overalls with the idea...god knows why... of bringing it to Makuti. Maybe, or maybe not, the snake had tumbled from the sky enroute. But, it definitely wasn't where it had been placed!

Shortly after putting down the pilot received orders to go on a mission. He did his best to delay take-off as along with his Tech. Sgt. and equipped with a stick each they checked anywhere...even the engine compartment...where a snake could hide away. Finally a senior officer approached the pair who owned up to the cause of the delay. Their plea for more time fell on deaf ears and to less than comforting expressions of farewell from the amused bystanders the machine took to the sky.

I'd assumed that my return to general duties at Kariba meant the end of my involvement....as minor as it had been... in Operation Cauldron. Most of the terroists had been accounted for but it was believed there were still a few small groups afoot. Call it coincidence or whatever but, shortly after my return to Kariba two incidents happened that meant months later I would again meet European individuals indirectly involved.

*'There's an African male turned up at the banana plantation who bears out further investigation. Take an A/C and a weapon, arrest him and bring him back here for questioning.'*

The banana plantation was an experimental one run by the Agricultural Dept. situated a few miles south of Kariba. We'd recently seen our Sterlings replaced in a lot of stations with the Uzis and it was one of those I took from the station armoury complete with a full magazine of ammo.

He was seated at the base of a mopani tree. A tall and fairly well built individual, he was heavily bearded and clearly malnourished and exhausted. From the local Africans who surrounded him I learnt he'd wandered into their camp earlier in the day and didn't respond to any of their dialects, or English or *chilapalapa*. Thus, he had to be mad! A check of his well worn shirt label didn't prove it had its origins in a foreign country but faint marks on his shoulder blades may...or may not ..have suggested he'd recently carried a pack or weapon. Whatever, he needed further investigation. I radioed Kariba with the message I'd picked up the individual concerned and he definitely would be of interest to the SB guys.

Later as the A/C lead the man into a station office I took up the Uzi to return it to the armoury only to have the magazine fall out because I'd obviously not engaged it properly earlier on. Insp. Carver favoured me with a frown and a sad shake of his head. He knew a lesson had been learnt.

The obviously malnourished subject of our enquiry was promised food once he'd answered a few questions. Three African dialects, English and *chilalapa* brought no response from the African. But, I'd watched his eyes as the senior SB African and European police details had asked their questions and seen the man was both listening and despite his debilitation reasonably attentive. There was one language they hadn't tried.

The others were debating their next course of action when I stepped closer to the Black and caught his attention; '*Jy kaan Afrikaans verstaan, jy blixem!*' (You can understand Afrikaans, you bastard!)

*'Ja, baas.'*

The others whirled on me with smiles and chuckles. I had to extend my moment of fame.

*'Waat es jou naam?'*

The man hesitated. *'My naam, John Bombella es, baas.'*

I then had to confess to my superiors that my ability with Afrikaans wouldn't be enough to conduct an in-depth interrogation. Nevertheless, while an Afrikaans speaker was being sought, I was able with frequent commands of '*Stadig, stadig!*' (Slowly, slowly!) to gain a story from him (later proved to be entirely fabricated) that he was a South African citizen who'd been working in Botswana when he'd become lost and he'd accidentally crossed into Rhodesia and spent several weeks wandering about in the *bundu* before he'd ended up at Kariba.

Taken down to Salisbury, for a full interrogation by Special Branch, John Bombella became George Tau and confessed to being a member of the South African ANC (African National Congress), a number of whom had trained with the local Africans (mainly ZIPRA) and crossed into Rhodesia from Zambia with the Operation Cauldron terroists. He was the first ANC member arrested in our area and one of the thirty-two survivors of the original group of over one hundred ...who'd been lead by the 'infamous' Moffat Hadebe... and who would subsequently stand trial for treason.

It was at that trial in the Salisbury High Court that I'd meet a man I'd subsequently encounter on two more occasions; the last meeting....if it could be seen as such....as he was unconscious and lay dying. More about that later!

A man could join the Rhodesian Army or Airforce at the age of seventeen but I believe had to be at least eighteen and well trained before he could go on active service. Chris Wessels was one of a number of young RLI trainees in the Zambezi Valley on a training exercise when a group of terroists crossed the Zambezi and made their way towards the escarpment. I was on late shift which finished at ten o'clock, as I remember, when I was informed on the SSB (Single Side Band) station radio to stand by for a message, Category Immediate and in code, that would shortly be transmitted to Kariba. I immediately phoned the CO, Supt. Ted Mallon as only he (and possibly the Member I/C) were allowed access to the Slidex Code book which was kept under lock and key and gave the go ahead for the message which would come through in a series of double letters such as GK LH AD etc.

The message was a long one and Supt. Mallon had retrieved the Code book and begun working...decoding... from the top of the message as I typed it out. Finally he had the full message and it wasn't good. Two RLI 'troopies', Wessels and Binks had been shot and killed when in pursuit of a group of terroists near the Zambezi

Escarpment. A number of the terroists had been killed and captured. I was told later that Wessels and the other recruits encounter with the terroists had been purely random rather than the outcome of a set ambush. The latter had fled but one member of the gang, Sly Masurka, had set up an ambush with his RPD (a 7.62 calibre Russian made Light Machine Gun) and Chris Wessels and Binks had walked or ran head on into a hail of bullets and been killed instantly.

Chris' only living relations were a sister and I think a step-mother. Months later, purely by coincidence, I was to meet his sister, Diane, a Nursing Sister, and have a relationship with her lasting several months.

Apart from the Slidex Code, at Kariba we also employed the much simpler Swan Code which was number based and had relevant current...often, but not always changed daily...code words such as 'Back door', or 'Blue car'. At Kariba we often seemed to often use code words pertaining to items of clothing such as 'Black hat' or 'Red belt.' It goes without saying that one was supposed to know the code words before leaving the station; guessing them or asking for them over the VHF vehicle radio was a no-no!

Late one morning I was sent out at short notice to investigate a matter that may have been of some security interest and had got a few miles down the road when Insp. Carver called me up to remind me to use the Swan Code if any details of security interest were to be transmitted back to the station.

*'You do know the current code, PO Johnston?'*

Oh, shite. I'd left the station without checking on such detail and was far from certain. Nor was my A/C.

*'I think it is Top Coat or something like that, sir.'* From my A/C trying to help me. He may or may not have been on the right track. Certainly 'Top Coat' had been the code words about three days previously and I decided to risk my own form of code in reply to my superior.

*'Is it the item of clothing one would expect a smart male dresser to wear in England, sir?'*

A pregnant pause while the Member I/C worked out a suitable punishment for my dumb attempt to learn what I should have already known: '*Affirmative.*'

That narrowed my options somewhat. And fortunately I didn't have to use the code. Later as I passed on my findings to Insp. Carver I confessed I'd only guessed at the Swan Code words.

His confession; '*I'd forgotten to change them anyway so your guess was as good as mine,*' brought a consensual chuckle.

I don't know what code system the Rhodesian Army employed....the RLI with their *lingua franca* spoke in...to the average man in the street... their own code anyway! I recall one attempt by an RLI patrol to transmit 'disguised details' relating to their pursuit of a wounded terroist who'd lost his life to a crocodile as he attempted to swim back across the Zambezi had '*the subject of our exercise is dead after being grazed by a mobile handbag!*' I suppose the reference to the croc. was a departure from their usual description of the reptiles; *flat-dogs!*

Makuti again for general duties. And a summons to the JOC caravan along with Pete Standalof who was in Support Unit at the time.

*'You two are going to be working for the Army today as drivers.'*

I'd last seen Pete, a former member of the Northern Rhodesian Police Mobile Unit, in the Training Depot as a recently sworn in member of the BSAP. But, our only real mutual connection would have been through Bert Cubitt who'd served in the same NRP unit and was in my squad for some time.

The Landrovers were military green and had been loaded with provisions by a couple of Army guys. They climbed in with Pete and I followed him down the main road to the South before turning off onto a dirt track that led towards the Zambezi. Barely more than a mile along the track we halted at an Army encampment that consisted of a couple of large accommodation tents, two mess tents and a set-up that passed for a cook-house.

I climbed from my vehicle and saluted a young 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. who stood with an older man, a WO 1 I learnt was the Company Sergeant Major. And further learnt that they would travel in the front of my vehicle and we'd follow Pete's vehicle which had a further three Army guys crammed in the back. As to our destination; '*Quite a distance into the Escarpment to a place called Machukete where we'll drop off the personal in the other vehicle and bring out any sick details. As well we'll re-provision the men there with the boxes of food in your vehicle.*'

We weren't long into the journey which apparently was an old Game Dept. access track which initially wound through relatively open and generally easy country bisected by a number of dry water courses which required ones extra concentration; before the pair with me offered a form of apology for not being very communicative after confessing to having 'over-indulged' somewhat the night before.

Slowly the country became steeper and the track less navigable. In places it wound around the side of kopjes and small slips meant we had to proceed with extra care. At the foot of a long straight up and quite steep climb. Pete stopped his vehicle only long enough to engage the lowest gear and I allowed him a greater distance between us. Perhaps twenty or thirty metres from the summit of the hill Pete's vehicle lost traction, slid sideways and became stuck. I chose a less steep part of the track below him to stop. We all got out of my vehicle and as we climbed up the hill to the other vehicle a soldier was descending to get the portable winch from the back of my vehicle. Fifteen minutes saw Pete's vehicle extricated and on the summit of the hill. He'd used first gear, Low-range. I returned to my vehicle, climbed in and decided to use 2<sup>nd</sup> gear L-r. And keep my speed up. I had the poor engine fair screaming as I neared the group standing by the scene of Pete's earlier problem. The officer made 'go-go-go!' signals with an arm; the Sar/Major had one hand over his eyes and the other was gesturing down the hill. I'd forgotten to check the tail-gate of my vehicle had been closed after the winch had been removed! A glance in my rear vision mirror revealed a horrible sight. Compound boxes of bread bounced down the hill and at least one had broken open to scatter loaves on the track! Reaching the summit of the hill without getting stuck brought a definitely qualified sense of triumph!

The soldiers from Pete's truck soon had gathered up what I'd 'cast to the wind' and we were on our way again. Now the track was particularly bad in places. More than once my passengers alighted at obstacles, especially when there was a steep drop below the track, ostensibly to show me the best angle of attack' but, to my mind they exercised self-preservation! Basically I relied on following Pete's tracks and hoped he'd exercised sound judgement. But, it didn't do my nerves any good to see his vehicle sliding sideways on the track on occasion! In places trees had fallen across the track and these were either dragged aside by the soldiers or on occasion attacked with a handy axe.

*'This vehicle with the rations will carry on to the main camp. Your mate will take out the 'casa-vacs'.*

Mid afternoon we reached a rendezvous point where about six or seven soldiers awaited our arrival. The Sar/Major engaged them in conversation for a bit and two of them clambered into the back of my vehicle. The remainder climbed into Pete's

vehicle which headed back the way we had came. I drove on and the track grew even worse. Indeed, I doubt it had been used for a long time. Sometimes we slowly pushed through tall elephant grass, at other times we crawled around the sides of kopjes. Fallen trees saw the pair of soldiers fair leap from the track to remove the obstacle. They weren't about to walk when they could ride in a vehicle! Even their senior men joined in when necessary.

I reached a point where there was a steep descent with a nerve-tightening camber to it and a shallow running stream at the bottom. The far side of the stream was a more gentle climb but tall grass covered the track. Any relief at crossing the stream and beginning the ascent the other side came to a horrible and painful halt! A hidden log on the track hit the steering rods of the vehicle; the steering wheel twisted violently in my grip and my right elbow hit the unpadded door of the vehicle leaving it completely numb! I played down 'my injury' as we all climbed out, removed the obstacle and decided to carry on. Well, the Army guys decided just that and they were in charge! Steering the vehicle was difficult for a time with my numb elbow but not impossible and without further mishap we reached the camp about mid-afternoon. It was well concealed and apparently contained about two platoons of men, few of whom were visible to me. The fresh rations were welcomed and after a halt of barely long enough to down a mug of tea during which the officer and his Sar/Major delivered instructions to senior NCOs we began the return journey minus the two soldiers from the back of the vehicle.

There was no cause to stop on the return journey but, I was rather hungry with somewhat frayed nerves when we finally reached the base camp after driving the last hour in the dark. We'd covered a distance of about fifty-five miles that day; the most challenging trip I was ever to make in a vehicle during my service in the BSAP.

*'You will eat with us in our mess. Can't send you on your way starved.'*

The skeleton staff at the camp had prepared a reasonable meal. I'd have eaten '*the arse out of a rabid hyena*' as hungry men were want to say in Rhodesia. I made my farewell and drove back to Makuti soon after the meal was over. I needed a good sleep that night.

*'There seems to be quite a lot of Army activity in the area. Got any idea where their camp is?'*

*'No, man, I've seen the odd vehicle but I haven't a clue where they're based.'*

There was a sequel to my days work with the Army. I was enjoying a beer at the Makuti Hotel one afternoon shortly afterwards when a rather well dressed and well spoken guy of about thirty approached me and asked of local Army activity. My instincts told me he was a journalist and I was immediately on my guard. When he bought a bottle of coke to enjoy, rather than a beer, I wasn't so convinced the man was seeking out a story as part of his job. All journalists I'd met to date seemed to particularly like their booze!

I told him I was BSAP, not Army and at Makuti doing routine work. He tried several different 'tacks' to get the information he wanted but I continued to plead ignorance. Eventually after a fruitless enquiry of civilian pub patrons the guy left the bar.

*'PO Johnston. Did you have a guy approach you yesterday afternoon in the pub asking questions about the Army?'*

When I answered in the affirmative and affirmed the man hadn't got any pertinent information from me my senior smiled.

*'Good, man. He was Army Intelligence on his own exercise.'*

Without admitting it as such to the Inspector, I had to privately conclude I hadn't guessed the man's occupation!

Police vehicles involved in Road-block duties came and went without little attention being paid to their occupants. But a 'blast from the past' arrived one late afternoon.

*'What the hell are you doing here, Dennis? PATU...special duties?'*

*'Nope. Here to do road-block duties. I'm stationed at Karoi now.'*

Denis Castell hadn't changed a bit. I hadn't intended going up to the pub that evening but when old acquaintances meet up again....

Denis knew a Game Ranger or Tsetse Fly officer in the area and we visited his residence with beer and bonhomie that evening. At some stage in the evening Castell felt our 're-union' warranted a 'special salute'. Taking up and loading an SMLE....the issue weapon for Black Tsetse Fly Control men....Denis, after uttering some arcane expression, raised the weapon skywards and discharged it. He repeated the exercise three times....despite mine and the officers reservations about rifle reports after dark in a sometime operational area....before he was satisfied the occasion had been solemnly paid its dues. I wasn't unduly upset that the next day would see my departure from Makuti; Denis was ok in small doses.

Back at Kariba I learnt that a rather sad European death of a nineteen year old woman had occurred in my absence. Doubly sad in that the man who'd be charged in relation to her death was well known and liked by our Police details. 'Ray'...name changed...who owned a small holiday camp on Kariba's shores had constructed a number of basic *rondavels*; circular single room units with concrete floors, as cheap accommodation. Unfortunately Ray had done the electrical wiring himself and apparently not had it checked out by a professional. When Helen C. the young woman had entered her unit with a dripping swimming costume and taken hold of the fridge door handle she'd received a fatal electrical shock. It was a sobering time, one to reflect upon, for those relatively young men involved in the investigation as to just how mortal they really were.

Another incident involving Europeans that may well have had fatal consequences also took place in one of my absences from the station. Apparently Kariba Police decided to hold a fancy dress party at the Jam Jar Inn. A well known Kariba Field Reservist, very much against his wife's wishes, decided to give the function a miss. When the woman exited the shower to discover her husband had made no attempt to dress for the party an apparently violent and booze-fuelled argument took place, the upshot of which saw the woman stab her man in the back with a pair of scissors. When he collapsed on the bedroom floor, the unrepentant wife exited the house, stark naked, and ran across her lawn shrieking; *'I've killed the bastard...killed the bastard!!'* Legend had it that Chris Carver attended the 'crime scene' dressed in a ballet tutu! Apparently, due to the warring couple coming to their senses and no complaint being forthcoming from the wounded husband, no charges were laid.

I wasn't long back at Kariba when Insp. Carver sent me out on another patrol up the Nyanayana river. My European companion was a Police Field Reservist, Reg. Anderson who worked at Kariba for the Electricity Supply Commission. I'd met the rather laconic and likeable South African born Reg. on several occasions at the Police pub, The Jam Jar Inn, simply named as such because apparently shortly after its construction in the mid sixties, jam jars were put to use as glasses until the real thing could be obtained!

Of the two African Constables, one was an older veteran of a number of Kariba patrols, the other a young, bright newcomer to Kariba and as was to be revealed on the patrol, rather a stranger to the Rhodesian hinterland!

*'Don't worry, men, an hour or so up this river we'll find a good source of water.'*

The older A/C concurred with me. I'd like to think Reg. was impressed with my knowledge of the area. Sadly he had no reason to take comfort in my statement!

We heard the water splashing well before we reached the large pool. The possibility of terroists being present was remote but couldn't be completely discounted. All was soon revealed in the large grey/black bulk of a solitary bull elephant disporting himself in the middle of the pool. Reasonably well concealed in bush we stopped about eighty yards from the despoiler of our fresh water supply and waited and hoped for a speedy conclusion to Jumbo's ablutions. Popular theory had it that once an elephant became aware of human presence he or she would eventually depart the scene. After a few moments, Reg. tapped me on my shoulder to get my attention and gestured down to the open piece of sand before me. An olive/ green snake, almost as slim as a pencil and about eighteen inches long slowly, and seemingly without any haste, wriggled its way towards the shelter of a patch of low shrubs. It's a scene I can today easily conjure up, the elephant in the pool and the snake in the foreground.

As I can bring to mind our encounters with a wide variety of less than human friendly animals on that patrol!

Once the horrible *pachyderm* had finally vacated the pool and lumbered off we waited some time for the water to settle before filling our bellies and bottles with the less than salubrious Adam's ale.

*'There's no saying where we'll find the next supply of water. Use what you carry in your bottles sparingly.'*

I'd been up the Nyanayana before and knew the area to be difficult water wise. I'd also heard the stories of the terroists who'd given themselves up after trying to exist in the Valley and Escarpment by drinking their own urine. And more than one Police patrol in the area had ended with... generally a European ...detail out of water and being assisted by others in the patrol.

I was particularly disciplined when it came to the use of water whilst on patrol in arid areas as were most of the A/Cs. My comment about water conservation had been directed at Reg. and the younger A/C.

*'Look at those bastards!'*

*'No Reg!. No shooting!'*

*'Just wanted to give them a hurry-up, Johnny.'*

Reg. had chosen an Uzi sub-machinegun to take on the patrol; more I suspect to be able to legitimately handle the near 'legendary' weapon....by Hollywood standards anyway...rather than for practical purposes. And he'd suddenly cocked the weapon and brought it to bear on a group of about six 'painted' dogs that we'd encountered as they'd crossed our path and trotted seemingly without concern through open *bundu*. These dogs are native to Africa and today at least, apparently uncommon. They differ from domestic dogs in their 'patch-work' colours and in that they have distinctively rounded ears and have a rather higher pitched cry in contrast to the bark of the common pooch.

*'Eini lo! Sir! Sir!'*

How the four of us....perhaps tiredness was a factor...could get within a hundred yards of a mob...well I counted at least six...buffalo grazing in rather heavy bush before we became aware of their presence.... The junior A/Cs cries certainly alerted

the beasts and with loud snorts and even louder crashing they bolted away from us, leaving us all a mite shaken. That occurred late morning. Mid afternoon we encountered a trio of animals capable of a really shaking us up!

My patrol brief was to cover ground further to the East than I'd previously been in the area and to check out two rivers, the Rifa and a tributary, the name of which escapes my mind, for any signs of human passage. As best as I could determine from my map we'd reach the Rifa before dark on that first day. And even hopefully find somewhere in it to locate water!

*'O-ooh, sh-i-it!! Bastard!!'*

As we crossed a broad dried up *vlei*, (swamp or marshy area) we saw two adult rhino with a half-grown calf at heel trotting down an open ridge toward us until they disappeared into tall elephant grass on the far edge of the *vlei*. We hastened forward to the dubious sanctuary of three or four *mopani* trees on a small island of higher ground in the middle of the *vlei* and dropped our packs. When after a couple of minutes there was no apparent movement in the long grass about eighty yards from us...no visible indication we were about to be charged!... I instructed the youngest...and presumably the more agile of our two A/C.s.... to climb a tree.

Carelessly I assumed he'd immediately provide a report on the situation from his vantage point as he saw...or hopefully didn't see...the goings on, *vis-à-vis chipemberi* times three versus *homo sapiens* times four. Fat chance! A minute later.

*'Can you see them??!!'* *Sotto voce* but, with dire undertones of retribution if he didn't immediately find his own voice.

*'Yes, sir.'*

If it was a pregnant pause that followed it had an agonisingly long gestation period for the expectant trio below whose racing minds readily conjured up the worst scenario. Even imagined a phalanx of sheer beligerence psyching itself up behind the tall grass for the charge!

*'Wha-a-at the hell are they do-o-ing????!!'*

When the answer came, delivered from on high, it should have carried an edge of muted hysteria, rather than, as it was, delivered in tones almost completely devoid of any excitement: *'Ah, sir, they are coming towards us.'*

Clearly the bloody man was 'tense-confused' and relating to me what he'd previously seen, not the vital, possibly life-preserving information, we all so craved in the present!

*'Can...you...see...them...now????!!'*

*'Ah; no, sir.'*

*'We're going back.'*

We'd have to be British about the situation and retreat in an orderly fashion, silently praying the rhinos would remain in their cover until we'd crossed a hundred or more yards of open ground. I'd already experienced their nasty habit of recklessly charging from one of my earlier Kariba patrols at the Charewa river. I turned to Reg., a Field Reservist, and gestured back the way we had come. Reg. needed no second bidding and he and the older A/C had soon turned a steady pace into a fast walk into a stumbling trot, a hitherto dignified withdrawal into an exercise regularly practised by the Egyptian Army for times of threat! Foolishly determined to endorse that as patrol leader it was expected of me to set a higher example, I strode nobly, if not somewhat arrogantly, in the wake of my fleeing companions. Admittedly I carried the only weapon ...my Police issue .762 FN...capable of tickling a rhino's hide!

*'Save me, sir!! Don't leave me, sir!!! Save me!!!!'*

Oh, my God!

Somehow ‘Junior’ A/C...straight from Tomlinson Depot....born and raised in a city location....no previous experience of the *bundu*... why the hell had he applied for a District posting and then been taken seriously by some clown in PGHQ...had not heard my order or seen my gestures to retreat and had assumed, quite correctly, that he’d been wilfully left to his fate. And was now with his gangly legs and arms doing his best impersonation of a set of Dutch windmill sails torn loose in a gale to cartwheel along over the uneven ground, in my wake only briefly, before he passed me heading for the sanctuary of the bush!

And. Oh, Gawd!! He’d left his pack back at the trees!

*‘Go back and get your pack!!’*

*‘No, sir. I can’t, sir!!’*

Beyond any recognition of authority or heed of command, he’d torn past me with no intention of retracing his steps. Bugger! I dropped my own pack and with rifle at the ready...as useless as it quite likely would have been in my hands if the rhinos had charged...and with a system flooded in adrenaline, still expecting the rhinos to appear, I crossed the eighty yards or so of open ground to the trees; picked up the A/Cs pack and, still refusing to move at more than a marching pace, finally.... carrying two packs and a rifle.... reached the sanctuary of the bush where the others waited. I shook my head but made no comment as I handed the young African his pack. And cautioned Reg. when he appeared about to give the crestfallen Constable a talking to.

*‘No, Reg. It was my fault. I should’ve made sure he knew of our intentions.’*

After that I had to sit down and have a smoke. And hope my patrol companions didn’t notice just how badly my hands trembled.

Today;.... even as I can laugh about it now.... if ever asked of my *‘bravest deed as a policeman’* I can’t think beyond the two or three minutes I spent that afternoon, vulnerable and scared, with an underpinning of anger that circumstances and carelessness on my part had placed me in a very real danger.

Having to by-pass the supposed location of the rhinos by a healthy margin meant we were later than I’d planned reaching the Rifa river. I’d hoped there may be some signs of water but, we pressed on down a very dry and waterless river course until I finally called a halt late afternoon.

I’d seen Reg. unscrew the cap of a water-bottle on occasion for a gulp or two but it came as a bit of a bombshell to learn he was virtually out of water; as was the junior A/C.

*‘Mr. Anderson. He has no water, sir. He has made a hole in a can of his food.’*

The senior A/C reported to me early the following morning, out of the hearing of the others, what I’d already suspected. I dragged out the map of the area. A couple of hours or so of walking along the river-bed and then a descent of about seventeen hundred feet and we’d have all the water we wanted. In the Zambezi!

What could a man do for the best? Could one actually get down to the river? Why if there were buffalo and, from the signs, elephant, in the area...both animals that needed a regular supply of water, antelope apparently didn’t... hadn’t we located water? The senior A/C had patrolled the area before just the once, hadn’t gone down to the river on that occasion and couldn’t provide any useful solution to the problem.

By midday we’d all be out of water and we still had two days to go!

*‘We’ll take our water-bottles, weapons, some scoff and go down to the river?’*

It was quite cool with a clammy and gloomy mist as we set off down the Rifa. We hadn’t been on the move for more than half an hour when the senior A/C stopped and looked concerned.

*‘Sir, maybe I can smell a shumba...lion.’*

*'He could be right, Johnny.'* From Reg.

*'Wa-a-ar...e.e.err!'*

A very light wind was coming up the river-bed towards us. So was the unmistakable warning from a lion! And he/she wasn't that far from us. We stood our ground, weapons at the ready. The growling continued at perhaps minute intervals but, it soon became apparent the beast had left the river-bed and was moving into higher ground. We continued on and had travelled barely a hundred yards when we came across the remains of a freshly killed rather small antelope, possibly a steenbok or grysbok, Reg. reckoned. No wonder Leo was annoyed!

It took longer than I'd anticipated to descend to the river but at least the going was neither impassable nor particularly dangerous.

So this was the mighty Zambezi, the river that had fired my imagination when I'd read of it so many times since I'd been a kid. It was relatively fast flowing and about 60 to 70 metres wide where we'd reached it. I was mindful of crocs and kept a wary eye out...not that I was exactly sure what I'd see in time to save a life if one did turn up!...as the others filled their water-bottles and drank deeply of the life-preserving water.

As I pondered on what fish life the river may support, I suddenly remembered I'd been given a length of nylon with a spinner attached by a PO on transfer from Kariba. I retrieved it from the pack.

*'Fish for tea, you guys!'*

There was about thirty metres of line and a good twenty of it sailed across the calmer waters where I'd chosen to demonstrate my fishing skills. And fish, mostly tiger-fish I learnt from Reg. rushed at the lure from all directions without actually grabbing it! Reg. suggested I alter my retrieval tactics and I'd soon hooked and landed a tiger-fish of about two pounds. The A/Cs joined Rex in the congratulations before suggesting they may like to have a swim...*'It is so hot, sir!'*... Reg. agreed to take my rifle and perch on a rock above the river on croc. guard. I caught another smaller fish before snagging the lure on a rock. The younger of the A/Cs volunteered to wade out and unhook the spinner which he did from a depth of well up his chest before telling me he couldn't release the lure until he reached shallower water again because he couldn't swim!

Fishing's in the blood! And my diligence was soon rewarded when I hooked a beauty that dragged out all the spare line and had me running up and down the river bank to play the brute, all to hoots of laughter from Reg. and the A/Cs. After a fight that had my hands feeling raw I got the fish into shallow water and the A/Cs got behind it and threw the fish of five or six pounds onto dry land.

It was just as well I was enjoying myself and hadn't fixed a time to leave the river, because in seemingly no time, the senior A/C and Reg. had a small fire going and a gutted and split open fish being *'cooked up for our lunch, sir. They are so nice when they are fresh!'*

Both the smaller fish were eaten for lunch and they truly tasted wonderful; even when the cooking left a bit to be desired. The larger fish would be kept for our evening meal when we got back to our camp on the Rifa river.

We all drank as much water as felt comfortable and began our ascent to the Escarpment at about two o'clock. And it wasn't long before Reg. was back to his old tricks; *'Just a mouthful, Johnny.'* I could only repeat; *'You'll need water for tomorrow, Reg.'*

Because we'd basically lost a days patrol in the designated area, I veered away from the route we'd taken on our descent to the Zambezi, got my calculations right...

for a change ...and we soon reached the tributary of the Rifa as had been our original plan for the second day.

*'There'll be water under that mob of butterflies.'*

Once we had the climb up from the river behind us we'd been making quite good progress along a game trail next to the river when below me, hovering over a relatively broad expanse of sand we observed a cloud of fairly large, bright blue butterflies. Somewhere, I think it was from a lake-side patrol or perhaps earlier from a PATU patrol at Makuti, I recalled that a *mdala* (elderly African) had told me the presence of butterflies indicated a water source. My fellow patrol members appeared a mite sceptical but as we clambered down the bank to the sand below we became aware that elephants had recently frequented the place. An A/C chose a likely spot and just inches below the dry surface he struck moist sand. Soon both Africans were head down, bum up burrowing into the sand and shortly announced; '*There is maningi mvura (much water), sir!*'

The great White *Bwana Mkuba* (he who knows-all) from Over the Water had taught the indigenous people a lesson in survival!

I calculated we couldn't be more than an hours walk from our camp of the previous night but, with nightfall looming, decided we'd spend the night at our newly discovered water source. The A/Cc soon had a fire going and before long had suitable embers to cook our fish on. Reg. and I gathered up as much wood for the fire as we could. It was going to be a cold night and I also wanted to deter any night visits from elephants...or God forbid...a lion seeking retribution for his interrupted breakfast! The fish, our only food was shared equally and was enough to fill the belly. A last smoke and we chose our sleeping spots as close to the fire as was deemed safe. And wriggled our hips and shoulders into the sand, mindful that it may be moist should we go too far down.

That was the coldest night I spent under the stars in Africa. The light-weight sleeping bags we'd been issued with went a little way to easing us into the land of nod, but our cotton shirts and trousers alone were a useless barrier to the cold. It was fifteen minutes with the back to the fire, roll over and give the front a turn to warm up.

*'Oh, God, not the boody jumbos come for their water!'*

Sometime in the early hours of the morning I must have fallen asleep because in my foggy-groggy state I heard a loud crashing and it was very close; just metres away! I took up my rifle and in a kneeling position looked for my companions. Gone. They were the dark shapes I finally focussed on and the crashing was their valiant labours to drag a large dry log to the fire!

*'Ah, sir, you were sleeping so loudly!'* Was the senior A/Cs explanation as to why I wasn't co-opted to join in the struggle. We half-slept, taking some comfort in the revived fire but as soon as there was sufficient light and I'd made sure all water-bottles were filled, we set off to our original camp. And once there we wasted no time getting our packs on; it was going to be a very long day.

We'd been going for a couple of hours through sparse shrubby vegetation interspersed with clumps of thorn bushes and small patches of bush and could actually often see the distant low range we would cross before we reached our pick-up point when we had an '*Oh, shit!!*' moment. After crossing a dry and sandy river bed and exiting it between a couple of large clumps of thorn bushes we'd barely gone thirty yards when there was a hell of a clatter of hooves from ahead of us. As one we all turned and bolted for the sanctuary of the thorn bushes. Then observed from the

swishing tails and manes that we'd disturbed a small herd of zebra. African and European joined together in the laughter that follows a swift resolution to fears.

Zebra were responsible for as many heart-stopping moments as most other animals. Especially if they were upwind from us, hidden from sight in vegetation and close when spooked. They also apparently needed water daily which added to my frustration that we found it a struggle to find water for ourselves on that particular patrol.

The next animals we were shortly to encounter were far more graceful and lighter of foot. Indeed the half dozen sable antelope, noble black and white beasts with horns sweeping right back to near their rumps didn't seem overly concerned with our presence and we were as close as forty metres to them before they gracefully trotted away from us. Today they are regarded as being relatively rare; I was to only see them twice when on patrols.

Reg. and the A/Cs were aware as I was that we'd need more water that day and that we had to make it over the range that loomed before us; down the other side and on to a marked Game Dept. track to obtain what we'd needed before we made our evening camp. When the terrain wasn't too steep we pushed ourselves quite hard. We were following a game trail through open country that I could see would lead us through a patch of bush. Before the bush was broken down elephant grass and shrubs about two feet high. Had we been on a PATU patrol during an operation I'd have been particularly aware that the spot I just described would have been ideal for an ambush by terroists. The ambush came in the form of a large grey/olive snake that reared up fully a metre high and ever so menacingly before me from behind the low rubbish. Two more paces and I have been within striking distance!

*'Look out!!!'*

I turned in my tracks and fled, as did the others. Only the senior A/C confirmed he'd seen the reptile, when we stopped about thirty metres from where the danger had lay in wait, and he concurred with me that only one snake could rear so high and that was the black mamba! The Egyptian cobra would rear up but they had a distinctive hood, the mamba had a head shaped not unlike a coffin!

It was only in a conversation, with a former Rhodesian about snakes, years after I left Africa, that I learnt the black mamba got its name from the jet black interior of its mouth, not its exterior colouring. Long before that I'd conceded that I'd have been a dead man that day if the snake had struck me!

*'What's so special about that bush?'*

It was during one of our infrequent short rests that I observed the older A/C explaining in Shona the significance of a rather scrubby bush, standing alone in a stony area that had been washed out during the last rains, to the younger A/C with obvious relish and a degree of reverence.

*'Ah, sir. If you take some bark from this tree you will be very strong.'* We all laughed at the A/Cs universal gesture...well amongst men anyway...of a male erection. I left the tree intact but strangely can still bring the scene to mind!

We made our destination as light was fading, tired out and in need of rehydration. While Reg. and the senior A/C, who knew where water could be obtained, went off with our water bottles, I set to get a fire going with the assistance of the other A/C.

Just because we desperately needed a good nights sleep... after our rather broken slumbers of the night before and our long hard days tramp...didn't mean we were going to get it!

*'Phaw..ch..ch..chew!'* Rattle..rattle..rattle. *'Phaw..ch..ch..chew!!'*

*'Fucking rhino!!!'*

It wasn't the first night I'd experienced a nocturnal visit from the nasty behemoths. But, this time there were a pair of them and they were determined to keep us from our much needed sleep.

Reg. was all for getting up one of the nearby trees and had soon convinced me it may be our wisest course of action.

*'Ah, sir. I don't think it will be too bad.'* Came from the older of the A/Cs when I made our intentions known.

From our vantage points in the trees it was possible on occasion to pick out the dark forms of a pair of rhino as they charged back and forth probably only seventy metres from our camp.

*'I'll bet those A/Cs don't get to sleep in a hurry.'* Reg. had hardly made his statement when the rhino whirled closer than previously to the subjects of his observation. *'Chipembere!! Hokoyo..hokoyo!!'* (Danger..danger!)

A/Cs were issued with white singlets and white boxer type shorts. As one our pair of no longer staunch constables vacated their sleeping bags and were a bounding blur of white as they fled for the sanctuary of a tree each!

Reg. and I laughed so much we were in danger of suddenly exiting our trees in turn and engaged in a good natured ribbing with our A/Cs once they were safe. As quickly as they'd arrived, so the rhino departed and we managed a fair nights sleep without further interruption once we'd plucked up courage to climb down from our leafy perches.

I had nothing out of the usual to report to the Member I/C on my return to the station. Animal adventures, however frightening or exciting, aren't the subject of Police work! I'd marked the spot where we'd located water on the map we'd carried. The next patrol to that area would take the same map. Best of luck guys!

*'I...I..wonder if one day that... you'll say that.. you care...say you love me madly...I'll gladly be there...Like a puppet on a string...'*

One doesn't hear the song 'Puppet on a String' very often these days but back in late '67 if one visited Gordon Bunney's lake-side bar, the Cutty Sark, in the evening it wasn't unusual for a habitue of that establishment, a woman of about forty, to launch into a spirited rendition of the aforementioned song. Indeed it was unusual if she didn't manage it at least once each evening, perhaps twice, depending on her state of alcohol fuelled happiness. She was one of lifes 'characters', free-spirited... beholden to no one ...and rather free with 'her favours' when the mood took her. I wasn't a recipient of the latter, at the time I was in a relationship with a Sister at the Kariba Hospital. But, there was the occasion when she thought we had shared a bed and I was able to convince her we hadn't. And another occasion when I averred we hadn't shared a bed and she was able to prove we had!

It all began when a married SO visiting Kariba for a few days on special duties and staying in our single men's quarters approached me as he was departing for his own station and surreptitiously handed me a pair of ear-rings before quietly explaining that they belonged to the songstress down at the Cutty Sark with the sultry, smokey voice and could I return them to her. And *'Don't tell the other guys.'*

The Cutty Sark: *'Thanks, Johnny. We had a good night, eh. Man I enjoyed myself. I haven't...'*

*'It wasn't me, S... It was D...and he's returned to Chirundu.'*

*'Really!!'*

*'Definitely.'*

A couple of weeks later I had the far less than onerous early morning duty of driving about twenty miles down the main road and stopping at a number of

predetermined points. At these positions I'd enter the *bundu* and check the game trails to determine whether or not terroists had passed through leaving their characteristic 'figure eight' boot imprint in the soft sand. Then I'd brush the trail clear of animal tracks and move to the next position. About fifteen miles down the road was a stone quarry leased by a guy in his fifties we knew simply as 'Bill'. Rhodesian-born Bill was another of life's characters with a raft of stories to relate and we'd occasionally met at the Cutty Sark bar. Noting my morning ritual near his quarry he'd issued an invitation to '*Call in for a coffee some morning.*'

A few days later after accepting his offer: '*I thought you and Bill were never going to stop talking the other morning.*'

Accommodation at the quarry was rather basic, a cook-house and ablution room with an attached tent for sleeping quarters. The morning I visited Bill he was up and organising a brew. His bed had a white mosquito net still in place with the bedding being a raised ridge along one side of it. Over a period of nearly an hour and a couple of cups of coffee Bill and I swapped experiences before I determined I'd better return to the station. The raised bedding in the bed had concealed the songstress of the lake-side who'd accompanied Bill to his humble quarters the previous evening! And all the while my bum had been parked on the bed, a scant few inches from the supine and, by her own admission, unclad form. Hence her assertion a couple of nights later at the lake-side that we *had* shared a bed! I saw the funny side of it immediately; the lady in question took a couple of drinks and an apology to come right! Never did share a bed with her though.

When the subpoena came for the High Court trial of the ANC guerrilla I'd arrested at Kariba I welcomed the chance to catch up with mates in Salisbury and to enjoy the 'bright lights' for a night or two. It wasn't that easy. Just days before the trial the defence team for the thirty-two men facing treason charges came up with the idea that the Rhodesian Judicial system of the '*de facto*' Government couldn't legally try the men! After a time of verbal '*argy-bargy*' and much profound legal debate it was decided, '*de facto*' or not, the Govt. was '*de jure*' and the trial could proceed.

I moved down to Salisbury to stay in the Town Police Hostel until I was summonsed to give evidence. After a couple of days I received the call and was allocated a motorbike as a conveyance. I'd struggled to get into my No 1 uniform but finally decided I was presentable enough to face '*My Lord*' and the legal teams. I nearly didn't make it to Court! It had been raining and as I approached the changing traffic lights at Union and First Street I unwisely decided at the last minute to brake to a halt. The bike slid on the shiny white surface of the pedestrian crossing and down I went!. Fortunately the bike's crash bar saved me and the uniform from any appreciable damage; indeed I managed to hang on to the bike crouched on top of it until it stopped spinning in the middle of the intersection. Shaken, I held up all traffic until I'd dragged the bike upright and brushed my uniform down despite the odd car horn indicating its owners displeasure and more than a few caustic, if light-hearted remarks in the vein of '*And for your next trick, officer!*' Understandably I was more than faintly relieved when the engine started without any trouble and I could flee the scene of my embarrasment!

At High Court I was one of several witnesses gathered outside the building. I soon got into a conversation with an SAS Corporal, Joe Conway whom I hadn't met before. He was quite ready to engage and had a good laugh at my description of my recent mishap. I learnt he'd been in an engagement with a '*group of terrs*' but he was discreet...as beffited members of his elite unit...about any details of the event. It wasn't difficult for me to play down my capture of the ANC terroist. Joe was amused

when I mentioned how I'd '*I'd tripped him up*' with my use of Afrikaans. Our exchange was interrupted by the arrival of a clip-board bearing official looking for me. I followed him into the Court. Proceedings hadn't commenced but, not unlike the photos I'd seen of the Nazi Nuremberg trials, each of the seated accused had a numbered board before him.

*'Now, Patrol Officer Johnston; you'll be asked when you take the stand to identify the accused, George Tau, whom you arrested.'*

Oh, hell. The arrest had been weeks before and the accused man I'd only known as John Bombella! To my obvious question, the slightly bothered Prosecutor could only reply: '*Whatever name he gave you he is now George Tau.*' I followed him to confront the line of men. '*Now, can you point him out to me?*'

Whatever name he went by my accused had sported a full and very dark beard at the time of his arrest and perhaps only five or six of the thirty two accused now bore facial hair. Bloody hell! I looked over the bearded men and finally conceded to the Prosecutor, that I couldn't swear on oath as to the identity of the man I'd arrested.

Then a wry grin and a short laugh from the man; '*He's number 6, Patrol Officer. He now shaves regularly!*'

Thanks! If Tau remembered me he didn't indicate it when I stood before him.

Once sworn in I '*identified the accused*' I'd arrested to the Prosecution, gave brief details of the capture and hoped like hell the Defence wouldn't challenge me on the identification issue. Very likely Tau was the only member of the accused who could speak Afrikaans but I could hardly assert I'd confronted each man with a '*Kaan je Afrikaans praat?*' until I'd received a positive response!

*'I have no questions of this witness.'* The defence.

*'You may stand down. You won't be needed for further evidence.'*

Oh, the relief. But, all things aside my '*terroist arrest*' would hardly feature in the Rhodesia Herald or any future annals of the BSAP.

I had the chance to say a '*Catch you again.*' To Joe Conway without any real expectation we'd meet again. We did catch up however, a year later, one day in Marandellas and by the close of that day poor Joe was fighting for his life. A fight he lost several days later.

*De facto* or *de jure*; thirty one Rhodesian men were found guilty of treason for bearing arms in their attempt to create an insurrection....ostensibly to gain the Black right to vote and thus by sheer numbers gain majority rule..... in a land where they had mostly been disenfranchised. But, one man...South African born...certainly had no bloody right to bear arms in a country foreign to him.

Capital punishment wasn't a given for a premeditated killing in Rhodesia; under the Roman Dutch code of law judges were often known to extend compassion where extenuating circumstances....provocation and ongoing physical abuse comes to mind.... surrounded the killing, planned or otherwise and a lesser sentence be handed down.

However the penalty for treason was death by hanging and it was unlikely a judge would exercise any compassion for such a crime. The Crocodile Gang, a group of terroists funded by Sithole's ZANU party, had been executed... to international condemnation, and that of the Queen; the latter's opprobrium seen as blatant interference outside of her statutory powers and so incensing a number of Rhodesian WW11 heroes that they returned their medals to Buckingham Palace...but, the Gang's actions had included the killing of Peter Oberholzster at Melsetter, perhaps the first, certainly in modern times, political murder of a White in Rhodesia and one that sent a chill through the minority White population.

An ‘invasion’ that didn’t result in a sudden call to arms occurred the early spring morning when forward units of the Zambian Army...well a L/corporal in a Land-rover ...without prior declaration of war, drove across the Kariba dam wall. God knows what the individual thought he was doing but he was soon trying to make excuses to a number of young fresh-faced National Servicemen who guarded the dam. His vehicle was brought to the station and while the appropriate staff sought an explanation for his rather bizarre behaviour from the rather crestfallen soldier... who didn’t choose the excuse he was defecting as a way out of avoiding the inevitable punishment by his Zambian superiors ... I was instructed to make a full inventory of the Land-rovers contents. I wasn’t to discover any concealed weapons or items of any particular interest.

In a way the hapless mans’ actions were a blessing; several months earlier a Kariba fisherman, Chris King, had run out of fuel on the lake, drifted ashore on the Zambian side and been arrested and detained as a ‘dangerous spy’ by Zambian police as he ‘wandered up town, fuel can in hand’, looking for a source of fuel to purchase.

*Of course we’ll release your man and his vehicle; but let’s discuss the matter of Mr King you’re holding...*

King was brought to the dam and the exchange made late afternoon. But, not before the Zambian vehicle with its’ rather slap-dash camouflage job...basically it appeared someone had applied four different colours to the vehicle by ‘dabbing it on’ in a haphazard fashion...was taken to *bundu* near Kariba and after being placed in the same area as camouflaged Rhodesian Army vehicle, had been subjected to a mock ‘aerial attack’ test to compare concealment abilities. We’d all scoffed at the Zambian style of camouflage and had to swallow our opinions when the pilot of the Hawker Hunter reported that he’d ‘picked up’ the Rhodesian vehicle but had failed to find the Zambian one!

Shortly after my transfer to Kariba I was made aware that a regular duty was a vehicle patrol of the township of Kariba as well as the various commercial enterprises, Council operated premises such as the African Beerhall and of course Govt. installations including the Electricity Supply Commission depot, the Airport and the experimental banana farm where I was later to arrest George Tau. I was taken on one such patrol and the PO used my police notebook to record each of the premises and places, so I had a list of what had to be visited. At some of the places one had to sign a watchman or guards record book, and the time of doing so, so there was no ‘skiving off’ on any personal errand. It was made known to me however that on the late afternoon/evening patrol, as long as discretion was exercised, it wasn’t unknown for the PO to occasionally include a civilian passenger such as a girlfriend or visiting relative in the vehicle as well as his A/C.

I was on the ‘evening patrol’ shift when one afternoon before I was on duty, but whilst in uniform, I encountered a young married Kiwi couple up at the Kariba Heights shops. Their accent had given them away! We chatted for a while and I generously offered them their own ‘*free safari*’ that very evening were they interested. Were they ever!

*‘You’ll see crocs galore!’*

After driving slowly past the Cutty Sark bar, Venture Cruises, the African Beerhall and other premises on my list we ventured out into the more rural areas. All the while the young woman especially was both intrigued as to why a fellow Kiwi had joined the force and ‘*would we see any game*’. The crocs I’d promised were at Jeff Stuckbury’s Crocodile Farm and the juveniles....I never actually saw any big mama or papa crocs...numbered in their hundreds. Jeff was always happy to welcome our

visit and given time and prompting would give us the ‘lowdown’ on his operation. Understandably it wasn’t easy to get my guests away but duty called. I explained the significance of the Tsetse Camp and some of the other points of interest we visited.

*‘Now we go cross-country for a bit, some of it alongside the Lake.’*

Once we’d checked out the Airport we turned towards the lake and had about a half hours drive along a dusty track. Night had closed in but the Land-rover’s headlights were sufficient to allow me to drive at about fifteen to twenty miles per hour. The young woman’s wish to ‘*see some game*’ was rewarded in spades!

*‘Oh, shit. I think that may be Charlie.’*

Elephant! Right on the track, big and black, a solitary male as far as I could see.

Several of the other PO.s had talked about a lone male elephant, that they’d encountered on occasion. They’d given him the name Charlie and, whilst he wasn’t any giant, they’d warned me that he could be cantankerous on occasion. And that it was best to be patient and to wait out Charlie’s special routine for humans who interrupted his own pachyderm feeding, defecating and musing routines.

And so we waited, perhaps fifty metres from the beast with me trying to sound relaxed and every bit the man who could deal with such situations. Charlie wasn’t in any hurry. I’d been told he sometimes reacted favourably....as in pissed off....if one tapped the outside of the driver’s door with their knuckles. I tried it. And oh, shit I wished I hadn’t! Bugger the man who’d given me that advice! Charlie gave off meditating on his fall from grace and subsequent banishment from his herd to swing his trunk about and them move toward us at a fast walk with his ears flapping.

*‘Don’t worry. It’s just a mock charge; a warning. Eh, Constable Mapfumo?’*

*‘I think so, sir. But, this one, he can be maningi trouble.’*

My A/C hadn’t exactly given me the assurance I’d sought. But, Charlie stopped in his tracks barely twenty metres from us and began throwing dust around. Reversing the vehicle through a bush track wasn’t an option. After what seemed an interminable wait, all the while with conversation in whispers and with everyone’s attention fixed on the beast, I decided to try a much lighter tapping on the vehicle door. It worked! Charlie finally decided he’d made his point as to who really ruled this part of the *bundu* and slowly walked off the track.

The rest of the patrol passed without incident. I was driving up a well formed but, rather steep section of road to the CAPCO (Central African Power Co.) installation and was able to tell the pair that on the previous occasion I was half-way up the hill when a large wild pig had run across the road. I’d hit the brakes, engaged first gear, dropped the clutch and broke the vehicle’s stub axle! Thank heavens for four wheel drive! I’d enjoyed being able to show the Kiwi pair ‘*some game*’ ; and they’d survived to tell the tale! And I imagine they’d long remember the fellow Kiwi who was paid to live a life of excitement in a distant land.

The next time I encountered Charlie he was on the main road from Kariba to Makuti and I deemed I was in too big of a hurry to wait out his ‘routine’. I slowed down and pulled off the seal into the metal on my left and did that annoy the beast! Charlie screamed as I accelerated.... always a slow exercise in a Land-rover.... and a glance in my rear vision mirror saw the horrible image of a charging bull elephant with trunk tucked away, ears laid back and what was once considered a rather ordinary set of tusks now enormous and hell bent on ventilating the rear of my vehicle! The A/Cs mantra of ‘Ah, sir...ah, sir...ah, sir’ did little to lessen the dramatic moment as I pushed the poor engine way beyond its normal working revs, risked a gear change...another relatively slow exercise in a Land-rover... and outran

the belligerent brute. The next time I saw Charlie he was dead and his tusks had been removed by the Game Dept.

Insp. Carver had summoned me to his office.

*'An elephant was shot a while back on the track that runs along the transmission lines by a Tsetse Fly Control officer, a Frans Potgeiter. The Game Dept. aren't completely satisfied with Potgeiter's story that he shot the animal in self-defence. I want you to go to where the dead animal is, try and work out what happened and then go on to the Gache Gache Camp further around the Lake where Potgeiter is at present and get his story. Write up a report when you get back that we can pass on to the Game Dept.'*

That's the police work I enjoyed!

Charlie....if indeed the dead beast was 'our loner'....was a rather 'pongy' mass of near dehydrated guts and bare ribs covered in part by dried, vulture shit stained, grey-black skin. He was about twenty metres off the track and about thirty metres from a narrow culvert crossing of the track. Potgeiter had told the Game Dept. guys he'd encountered the lone elephant blocking his path at the culvert and as he'd waited for the beast to clear the track, so the animal had become aggressive and threatening. He'd had his wife's and African assistants' welfare as well as his own to consider.

Boom!! One dead jumbo.

As a counter to Potgeiter's account there was the possibility, given the position of the dead animal, that the Tsetse Fly vehicle had already passed the elephant before it was decided to shoot the beast. Also Potgeiter had come out of retirement to work for the Tsetse Fly people, he'd had previous experience in shooting elephant and on this occasion may well have decided his elephant gun needed a barrel clean!

On the often slow and winding track to the Gache Gache I briefed my A/C on what I wanted of him. Basically, find out from the African staff what they witnessed when the elephant was shot; especially the position of the vehicle and animal when Potgeiter decided to shoot the beast. And did he appear nervous or anxious before the act. What could they recall him saying?

As for myself, I decided to err on the side of discretion. Use similar 'tactics' to what one did when on enquiry in an African kraal....discuss the weather, crops, health of the people and cattle before broaching the true subject of the visit.

The Potgeiters were 'old school' Afrikaners, welcoming, hospitable and relaxed about my visit. Their dark brown and wrinkled skin told me I'd met people of the land. Mrs Potgeiter in short order had produced camp oven scones and a mug of coffee. I revealed my country of origin and soon rugby and the All Blacks were discussed and current politics were aired. Mrs Potgeiter was concerned I lived so far away from my family and proudly outlined the achievements of her offspring.

Finally the dead elephant.

*'That elephant was a bad one. Frans did right in shooting it to protect us.'* Mrs Potgeiter.

*'When an elephant gets kicked out of the herd he resents it, he becomes a rogue and it's better he is put down. Sooner or later he could kill someone. When he went for us I didn't hesitate.'* Frans.

*'He really was a bad one, that elephant. If we hadn't had Frans with his rifle we may not have been here now to tell the tale.'* Mrs P.

From my perspective there was little further discussion warranted. I had no way of disproving their story. Nor was it in my heart to do so.

On the return journey to the station, the A/C outlined what he'd learnt. And it wasn't much. He thought that perhaps the officer (Potgeiter) had instructed his staff

in what to say of the incident. They had stopped '*near the nzoe* (elephant)' and Potgeiter had shot it because he said it was '*maningi* (much) trouble'.

My two encounters with Charlie hadn't been without some trepidation. Perhaps it had been only a matter of time before the lone elephant became a real rogue and hurt or killed someone. Whilst I had some reservations with the Potgeiter's account of what took place, I hadn't been there and they had. My report didn't imply any unlawful killing of the beast on Potgeiter's part..

There were no further lone elephant encounters reported from my peers or others whilst I was at Kariba. Sorry, Charlie, someone called your bluff.

*'Sir...sir! Chipembere!!'*

It wasn't an elephant but a rhino that was next to take exception of my presence in his 'turf'.

Along with A/C Fani I was doing the late afternoon patrol in a Land-rover on a track near the lake. I'd just driven up a slight incline and over a low *kopje* when Fani's warning alerted me to a lone rhino in open country about fifty metres off my side of the track and slightly ahead of us. It charged!

I was in second gear and there was poor tyre traction on my section of the track due to the fact I was driving across formally pugged but now dried up animal tracks. My full concentration had to be on gaining vehicle speed. Fani's '*Ah..ah..sir..sir!*' kept me alerted to the very real danger we were in. I risked a quick gear change and was very relieved to see in the rear-view mirror the galloping grey beast pass closely behind the vehicle.

*'So close, sir.'*

*'So...so close.'* Fani had got that bit right!

*'Ah, sir, they do not stay in the same place.'*

The following evening I'd just explained to Constable Nelson where the rhino had been the previous evening and heard his take on the probability it wouldn't be back. Nelson always had an answer. And it wasn't always right! The rhino was back in the same place!! This time I was ready but didn't have to rise to the challenge. The beast seemed to have been caught off guard....perhaps he'd been musing on his previous evenings putting to flight of the big square alloy beast....for he gave a start that saw his bum hit the ground momentarily before he gathered his wits and trotted with a lordly and dignified gait into the nearby bush.

*'Until such time as I give you permission, only myself or Section Officer Lebeish will drive this vehicle.'* Insp. Chris Carver, Member I/C Kariba.

Time erodes precise details of bygone events and names. But I can well remember PR 58, the brand spanking.... possibly sanctions breaking.... shiny new Landrover that was issued to Kariba Police.

Insp. Carver's verbal directive didn't remain in force for very long. One evening, with our other transport elsewhere engaged, and me needing a vehicle for an afternoon enquiry, I was reluctantly handed the keys to PR. 58. Before setting off I checked the fuel guage and realised that one tank....Police Land-Rovers had a tank under the drivers and another under the passenger's seat...was rather low so I switched to the other and drove off down the main sealed road feeling very privileged to be the first PO to drive the 'new' vehicle.

*'Brr.rrr..bang..bang...BANG!!!'* And we coasted to a silent halt. Wha-a-at the fuck??!

Nothing seemed amiss under the bonnet; even if it would have had to have been major for me to recognise a problem anyway. I tentatively pushed the starter and the engine sprung into sweetly purring life. And we were off....for all of about four

hundred metres and *brr...bang..bang*, road noises only before the dreadful silence. What the hell was going on?! Think! The engine was starving for fuel? Check fuel tank under my seat. Nearly empty. Under other seat; virtually full. And the removable card-board type composite airtight seal the manufacturer had fitted under the fuel cap hadn't been removed prior to use. Hadn't needed to be; I'd been the first driver to use the reserve tank. Insp. Carver pulled a '*what-the-hell have you done now face*' on learning of my dilemma but heard me out and a couple of nights later allowed me to use the vehicle again just before nightfall. Three or four miles down the road and I deemed it necessary to turn the lights on.

Nothing. Yes there was; blue/black smoke pouring out from under the bonnet!! I grabbed the extinguisher from inside the cab, hoisted the bonnet and let fly at the source of smoke. When all had settled it became apparent the wiring to the lights had shorted and burnt out. I drove back to Kariba rather slowly without lights.

*'Sir. Has anyone driven PR 58 after dark before?' Myself, near bleating on the phone to Insp. Carver at his residence.*

It appeared I'd scored a second 'first' but I still earned a '*What the hell have you done to our new truck now, Johnston.*' before I deemed it prudent to hang up the phone.

Insp. Carver must have been working on the theory that lightning can't strike thrice in the same place. He should have stuck to the maxim that disasters come in threes. With a newcomer to Kariba, PO, Henry..., a well built...just out of Depot...son of the Mother Country and an A/C.... whom I was to deliver to Makuti and to return with the man he replaced.... it was going to be an evening of driving and little else in PR 58.

It was well after dark on our return when we neared the Kariba Airport and, against the unspoken rule that the senior man drive the vehicle, Henry was behind the wheel. After all he'd only just left Driving School; far too early in his career to pick up bad driving habits!

As we cleared the top of a low hill travelling at fifty plus MPH it appeared a myriad of stars blocked our way...only it was the eyes of a great mob of impala...and it was too late to stop...and I don't think Henry tried too hard anyway! And crash and graunch!! And '*Oh, shit!!*'

Out of the vehicle and in the headlights...mercifully intact...of our vehicle, we, Henry, the A/C and myself, mindful of the sharp horns, grabbed an injured antelope each. We had no knife but Henry was strong enough to despatch the unfortunate animals by breaking their necks. A search for further victims was fruitless, but two other impala had been killed outright in the crash.

*'Maningi, nyama!'* (Plenty of meat!) The A/C concurred with me there. The five dead animals were loaded into the rear of the vehicle. Whilst there appeared to be blood on the front bumper and on one mudguard, in the relatively poor light, no damage to the vehicle was apparent.

Back at Kariba we fortuitously had four African prisoners detained for the poaching of buck and the like. In exchange for the animal's lungs, liver and other highly prized internal 'bits' they were more than willing to dress the animals then and there in the cells exercise yard. A supervising A/C assured us the beasts would be hung from a rafter in a spare vehicle shed.

Now to a close inspection of PR. 58. Aside from a splattering of blood and a few bits of fur, the only damage as such appeared to be a slight, one inch wide, depression in a mudguard. Not to worry; Henry put his strength to use yet again that evening and

pushed the depression out. Good as ...*bugger it!* The paint fell away leaving bare metal where the depression had been!

Stable parade at six am the next morning: '*Morning, sir. P.O. X and I had a slight mishap last night but we got....'*

*'I know, Johnston. I've seen the results hanging in the garage. And the small piece of paint off the vehicle. Come with me.'*

I followed Insp. Carver to the garage. *'I know you're off today but as the son of a Kiwi farmer you'll know how to cut up meat.'* A close inspection of the animals. Pointing to an animal with less obvious bruising. *'That one. Remember, second from this end. Just a hind quarter. Take it over to Moira (his wife) and I'll accept last night was an accident and you couldn't brake in time to miss the animals. Make sure all members, including the African police get equal portions.'* In some way I felt vindicated then. Even forgiven. Lady Luck had finally stood by me where PR. 58 was concerned!

One of the men detained for poaching was from the Omayi TTL and quite elderly. Judged to be a particularly low risk 'escapee' he was employed to work in the station's grounds without supervision. Often such work found him in the vicinity of the kitchen and accepting handouts from our cook but we trusted him implicitly not to run away. After all he got meat...albeit of poor quality by European standards... each day and it was an attempt to get meat....he'd apparently set snares and inadvertently killed a lion....that had got him into trouble in the first place. On completion of his six month sentence he was given a shilling for the fare on an Irvine and Johnson fishing boat and left to make his way home. He was back at the station that night! The next day he was taken down to the boat harbour and instructed to board the boat when sailing time came around. And once again he was in the queue for his evening meal at Kariba Police station. Finally he was put on the boat and eventually arrived at his homeland. I know that for a fact because I was to meet him again several months later in his kraal.

Monkeys weren't an animal I saw very often. We enjoyed watching a small troop of them which we on occasion saw in a particular tree near Kariba but, the day they visited our Police station they were most unpopular! For days we'd watched 'Lady-finger' bananas forming and ripening on a tree just inside the station grounds. Speculation was rife as to when they'd be ready to eat. The monkeys knew and one morning there they were, feasting on the fruit and all but ignoring the curses of the higher order of bipeds, even the A/Cs who threw sticks into the tree, risking the wrath of our Member I/C. We didn't get to eat a one!

I could be forgiven for believing the 'gods of misfortune' had completely banished Lady Luck from my life when I decided to visit Beira again for a week!

As I enjoyed a meal and a beer in the dining car of the train a large molar tooth filling fell out and an inspection with my tongue revealed a rather jagged edge to the cavity. And then later as, elbows on the sill of an open window, I gazed out on the Mocambiquean landscape, a rather sharp object, possibly a cinder, went into one eye.

I was a really sad young man when daylight in Beira confirmed both problems were still with me. I'd decided to stay in a room in the Estoril complex proper, rather than in one of their cabins near the beach as I had done on the previous visit. I needed attention to my 'injuries', at least for the eye which was very red and painful. Desk staff at the Estoril spoke English quite fluently and were helpful. They summonsed a taxi for me and directed the driver to take me to the Public Hospital.

*'Faschmal...faschmal.'* I'd learnt the Portuguese word for trouble whilst stationed at Villa Salazar and used it then as I pointed to the obviously stricken eye

after I'd fronted at the Information Counter. The staff were in nun's habits and clearly none spoke English.

I was escorted to what was clearly the Accident and Emergency area. And there was no such thing as the privacy of cubicles. Lying on a bed near one wall a rather portly European guy periodically groaned loudly and clutched his midriff. A couple of Coloured guys clutched bloodied rags to injuries and several other patients had less obvious reasons for being present. A young Coloured medic....about mid-thirties, I'd say....glanced at me on my arrival and turned back to the patient he was working on. As that person rose and departed from the room, the doctor...if he was as such...spoke to me and gestured I approach his 'work bench'. Happily he understood a little English. I was soon seated on a chair with my hands on the edge of the raised examination bed. A brief examination and my '*last night...last night*' to try and confirm the duration of my problem saw the man nod wisely and move to a bench behind me. A couple of minutes later he returned to face me and my blood ran cold. In one hand he wielded a very large hypodermic syringe with a long and thick needle one wouldn't use on a horse...make that an elephant!

I'd just have to be brave and as the needle was carefully lowered, without any explanation as to what was about to take place, to the stricken...about to be ruined forever....eye, my grip on the bed must have near warped it.

A.a.ah. Merciful relief; the man was using the syringe to wash out the eye! Then followed Novocaine to numb the eye and a hastily written note on a pad with an official letter-head which I took to be the bill for services rendered. It wasn't. The woman behind the desk pushed it back to me with an explanation in Portuguese and indicated there was no charge for my treatment. I noticed a Charity Box on the counter and felt better after I'd put some money in it.

*Perhaps you should wait until tomorrow morning. If you are better you don't need to see a specialist. They are very expensive.'*

Back at the Estoril the doctors note was translated for me. My eye was back to normal the next morning and I was keen to get on with the holiday despite the fact that I was practically restricted to soup, wine or beer as a result of my jagged tooths depredations of the side of my tongue.

Late afternoon I met a Rhodesian guy, Garry, a man a little older than myself who had a vehicle. We enjoyed a few beers together and I managed a little softer type solid food. When he suggested we seek out some female company for the night I was all for the idea. He'd been to Beira on a number of occasions and well knew both his way around the city and where to obtain the company of women. After assuring me he'd soon be back he departed in his car leaving me at the café to continue drinking.

Garry was soon to return. Seated alongside of him was Queenie and in the back seat, Sylvia. Both were Coloured, perhaps in their mid twenties and English speaking; both having been born and raised in Swaziland. When Garry intimated the women would like some food, I volunteered to buy a cooked *huku* (*chicken*). I also bought a couple of bottles of wine. We retired to the young women's place of residence which appeared to be the upstairs part of an older type former factory which had been divided into five or six separate rooms using drapes and plywood. Food and wine had barely been consumed when Garry and Queenie became increasingly amorous and despite Sylvia's not appearing unduly abashed at her friend's indulgence she readily agreed we retire to her room where Sylvia generously exercised several routines pertaining to her profession before the question of money arose....'*Perhaps some money towards rent and food for me'....and 'Of course you will stay the night.'* I did, as did Garry.

*'So I shagged her standing and I shagged her lying;  
If she'd had wings I'd of shagged her flying.  
Kuma kayi..yi..yi...'*

Garry disappeared back to Rhodesia the next day and I spent the day sight-seeing and periodically stopping at a bar to drink cheap wine. Seated in a bar at about nine o'clock, intent and interested in the interactions of working girls and potential clients, I felt a hand lightly on my shoulder and looked up to see Sylvia with a smile on her face and a question in her eyes. Why not. Then followed a repeat of the previous evening. With the same again for the next two nights. Sylvia wasn't too forthcoming about her life's experiences but I did learn she'd married young, had been abandoned and had left for Beira where she'd found that whilst Coloured people enjoyed a better status than in her country of birth, without certain qualifications employment prospects were bleak. Meeting Queenie, who'd also been born in Swaziland, and had already began to practice '*the oldest profession*', Sylvia had stayed in Beira and made her living in the same way. As to her future; that question earned a shrug. Let me worry about today, not what may come in the future.

My immediate future was going to require the services of a dentist and a doctor. Too much alcohol and not enough food had left me rather poorly and dispirited. I caught the train back to Salisbury and hitch-hiked only as far as Sinoia when I realised I was sicker than previously determined.

Pat Rogers, wife of Graham, a PO, was Duty Sister and had a word with the hospital doctor before returning with a container for a requested urine sample. My offering was a dreadful yellow brown colour and without further ado the doctor scribbled a note and had me transferred to the Police Hospital in Salisbury. After four alcohol free days of food and injections followed by a replaced filling it was determined I was fit enough to return to Kariba. I celebrated my impending release by sneaking out of the Camp Hospital, having a few beers at the Regimental Mess and making it back to my bed almost without my absence being noted. The occupants of the two beds I stumbled into weren't of a mind to report my erratic passage to my own bed the next day!

*'There's a Dak. going up to Kariba on Friday. Turn up at the base by 0800hours. If there's room we'll take you.'*

I'd phoned the RRAF and learnt of the possibility of flying up to Kariba with the Air Force. Friday and I reported to the base, identified myself and after a period of indecision it was decided I could board the DC 3.

The plane's interior was configured for parachutists but the seating was comfortable enough. About twenty of us, Army in the main with a few RRAF personnel sat facing toward each other over a large heap of gas cylinders.

*'Shit! This many! Be lucky to get this fucking old crate off the ground!'*

Just prior to take-off an older and archetypal '*RAF type*' Flying Officer, complete with large handlebar type moustache appeared from the cockpit with a clipboard from which he silently ticked off the numbers. A last shake of his head, a '*Fasten yourselves in. No smoking until the sign goes out.*' And he carried his reservations about surviving until his retirement years forward into the cockpit area.

Soon the Pratt and Whitneys coughed, farted and seemingly reluctantly burst into life. And did they smoke! The oil streaks along the engine cowling did little to assuage any fear of flying concerns any passengers may have harboured. Given the DC 3s great claim-to-fame was its short take-off/landing ability we seemingly rumbled along the tarmac forever before terra firma relaxed its grip and we were airborn.

*'If any of you bastards light up I'll break your fucken' neck!! Can't you smell the gas?!"*

He may have been only an Army Staff Sergeant, but he was a big man and the fumbling for cigarette packets after the demise of the 'No Smoking' sign ended without a word of dissent.

I enjoyed the flight. It was a clear day and the plane didn't exceed the minimum permissible flying altitude. Nearing the Zambezi and the DC 3 descended until we were low enough to pick out African kraals and even the villagers themselves. Then the No Smoking sign again and a rejoinder to fasten ourselves in as we descended even lower and finally landed on a strip carved out in virgin bush.

*'Everybody out! We're unloading the gas cylinders and taking on the empties.'*

About six African men appeared from the tin shed and as they laboured to swap the cylinders we passengers were ordered to line up across the front of the aircraft.

*'Walk down the strip line abreast and if any of you come across a dassie's (rock rabbit) burrow stop and stand still until I give you the order to return.'*

We did as ordered but the bunnies had apparently made their homes elsewhere. Presumably the pilots had to rely on luck when landing in the bush strips!

Back at Kariba I was soon made aware of developments in my absence. Operation Griffin, the pursuit by Insp. Eric Saul lead BSAP and a South African police unit and the eventual encounter with a group of terroists in a gorge....ever after referred to as Griffens Gorge...whilst it had resulted in the death or capture of all the 'terrs' had also cost SAP Constable Daniel du Toit his life. 'Souvenirs' of the engagement, Russian made infantry helmets, water-bottles and a couple of rather bent and scorched metal cylinders.... I was to learn they'd been 'home-made' napalm bombs dropped from a slow flying RRAF Harvard aircraft during the gorge encounter.... adorned the walls of the Jam Jar Inn.

The South Africans were all volunteers, much better paid than we were but,...by the average BSAP member at least.... not considered to be particularly well trained or even overly needed. At least they were young, generally fit and rearing to go. But, I was soon to learn their care of their weapons was appalling. About fifteen of them were trucked to our station for a chance to relax in our canteen. I was on duty and Insp. Carver instructed me to '*Check over their weapons and give them a swipe with an oily rag if needed.*' Then quite unambiguously. '*Treat every weapon as loaded. They're in the spare office.*'

They were grey/blue 9mm German made Walther sub-machineguns, markedly different from the Uzis we had or the Sterlings we'd previously had in our armoury. On first impression they looked to be press-metal, simple and cheap. And they were in the middle of the office floor in a heap, much as that made by a surrendering army. All had magazines *in situ*, most fully loaded, and at least four weapons were cocked one without the safety catch applied! Most of the weapons had sand in the workings, some to a degree where the weapons actions were absolutely....criminally I concluded....grating. I worked quickly....buggered if I was going to work into my off-duty time....and soon had the weapons clean enough to function and lying in a line with the magazines removed.

Insp. Carver was in the canteen chatting with our 'guests'. '*Finished, Johnston?*' His tone of voice and demeanour suggested: '*I've already determined what a slack bunch they are without your endorsement or comment on the state of their weapons.*' The bottle of beer he shouted me sealed my private vow of silence on the matter.

Nematombo, Mudzimu, Nyamunga, Dandawa, and Msampakaruma; fishing camps all adjacent to the Matusadona Reserve, they're all brought to mind when I

peruse a Police notebook (BSAP Book 6..for the pedantic) I brought back from Rhodesia. And the Tsetse Fly Control camps, Baobab and Gache-gache one, two, three or four. I met Danie Erasmus, who was in charge of the forty-one hunters at Baobab and spent a couple of hours with him. He was either born in Northern Rhodesia or had gone up there for a lengthy period of time to work, as had so many Rhodesians, in the copper mines as I recall. A quietly tolerant and observant man, who'd obviously gained the genuine respect of his staff, he unreservedly praised the skills of his two long serving trackers, Tumba and Jomboyi, within their hearing. I learnt he'd worked for a time in Zambia after the change to Black rule before opting for a change of life-style in Rhodesia. He was a pragmatist... who saw a better opportunity for himself and family in Rhodesia... rather than a man grown bitter and frustrated that the life he'd known north of the Zambezi was no more. I remember an observation he made concerning the efforts a number of Whites made in Zambia to integrate socially with the Blacks after independence, and of how the daughter of a family he knew well was overtly discarding any previous ideas of a separation of the races and 'was mixing with Black guys' which had led him, Danie, to try and carefully explain to the young woman...as opposed to criticise her...that her behaviour could ultimately see her ostracised by both White and Black.

Before I left Gache-gache, Danie explained that the berries of the *marula* trees were ripe and were I to go to a certain area, he named, I may well observe the deleterious...or should that be hilarious...effects the consumption of the fermenting fruit was having on the resident herd of elephants.

Sandy, the headman, at the Nematombo Fishing Camp confirmed that were my A/C and I to climb the higher ground beyond the camp we'd see the '*panga nzoe*' disporting themselves. About twenty minutes on foot saw us on the high ground right on dusk and looking down a long gradual slope towards a herd of perhaps twenty or thirty...they never stood still long enough to get an accurate count!...apparently '*pickled pachyderms*', as they are want to be referred to when intoxicated on the fermenting berries. We prudently decided to keep about three hundred yards between us and the elephants who periodically ran in aimless circles, randomly mounted each other and deliberately tried...or perhaps they were shaking down more berries...to push over trees bigger than was their capability. Their sounds, the trumpeting and brief screams, the crashing against the trees came to us even as their dark forms finally became more difficult to register in the dying light. When we reached the camp again, after nightfall we both concluded the exercise had been well worthwhile. Later I was to learn that 'the jury was out' as to whether it really was the consumption of fermented marula berries that brought about the elephants uncharacteristic behaviour but it was one possible reason for their hi-jinks.

Nematombo, I recorded, nominally had thirty fishermen but eleven had gone back to their Trust Lands at Urungwe to assist their tribes people with the ploughing. The majority of the fishermen, who employed set nets, at Mudzimu and Nyamunga Fishing Camps were from the Urungwe district and apparently came and went between the fishing camps and their homelands quite often. However... how they managed I don't exactly know... the headman of each camp seemed to be able to provide an accurate count of members present or absent when asked.

It was customary when interviewing those in authority at the camps to get their *stupa*...R.C. (Registration Certificate) details. Thus I recorded that the kraal head at Mudzimu was one Masoldier X.14161 Urungwe, the Fish Guard was Nikos X.14713 Urungwe and the manager of the Irvine and Johnson store was Singer X.14902 Urungwe. Many Africans used a mixture of European and African names and some

used made-up names. If anything, the R.C gave them a fixed identity with their tribal details for those times when they came in contact with any of the Government departments, including the police of course. Anderson Kaphwiyo, who managed a rural store for Terry Eleftheriades of Kariba when asked for his R.C. smiled, said, 'Sorry..sorry..baas' and produced a Malawian passport.

Whilst Irvine and Johnson had a concession to operate on the lake, apparently independent fish-buyers from other areas were permitted to purchase fish once they'd obtained a permit from Kariba. Thus we weren't surprised to encounter one, Mananji of Gutu at the Nyamunga Camp who sold fish from his shop in the Joburg Lines, Harare, Salisbury and a Wilson from as far away as Umtali with a legitimate permit to purchase fish from the Dandawa Camp. Denis Castell-Castell even had the idea for a time that he and I could purchase a truck once I'd '*done my three*' and buy fish from an area on the lake edge (Milibizi...I think) and sell it further south for a handsome profit. I don't know that he'd exactly done his homework on the enterprise but fortunately the idea was eventually shelved.

Crime must have been a rare event in the area; my notebook records that on the 1/7/68 Crop Guard Uliya observed one N/M/A Sandwell in possession of four mealie cobs on Rivermead Farm and arrested the poor blighter.

Bumi Hills, a holiday resort on the southern shore of Lake Kariba, was accessible by a rather long and sometimes tortuous road from the south but more commonly accessed....especially in the case of guests...by boat and on occasion plane. The resort's own fast boat was named 'Playboy'. Aside from the resort, Bumi Hills had a Game Dept. Depot, another depot for the Road Works, an airstrip for light planes and a small rather infrequently manned Police Post.

Police patrols from Kariba of the Omayi Tribal Trust Lands that encompassed Bumi Hills were generally confined to the lake edge and the fishing camps but at least once a year a month long patrol.... using a vehicle where possible but, often periods of time on foot...was carried out of the interior of the Tribal Trust Lands when the four Batonka chiefs, Mola, Msampakaruma, Mberi and Negande as well as the senior men in as many kraals as possible would be visited..

Our Member I/C, Insp. Chris Carver had intimated on occasion that a 'Bumi Hills patrol' was due. He'd also been considering who would be appointed Police Prosecutor when our existing man was transferred. It seemed to be a choice between George Peterson and myself as to who was to take over the Prosecutor's role. I wasn't in the least bit disappointed when one day George announced he'd been designated Kariba's Court Prosecutor. He seemed comfortable about his new position. He had recently begun courting Topsy Mitchell, a Sister at the Kariba Hospital and for a young guy a month is a long time to be away from ones lady-love.

*'Right, Johnston; I've assigned Constable Toto to you. Before you make use of the Land-rover over at Bumi you'll have to change the oil and the shock absorbers. Check in by radio from the post when you get there.'*

Shock absorbers! I'm not a qualified mechanic! But, I accepted the jute sack with its clanking contents without question or demur. There was a will so there had to be a way! A/C Toto I knew but hadn't previously patrolled or worked with. My initial impression of him was of an intelligent but rather shy type of about my own age but with a longer length of service behind him. He seemed quite happy to be going to Bumi Hills.

A trip across the lake in the 'Sir John Chancellor' to the small jetty below the Bumi Hills resort followed by a short Land-rover trip over a dusty road and Toto and I were at the Police base. The building was small and utilitarian with accommodation for

a couple of Europeans and the same number of African details. The radio was battery powered but satisfactory for communication with Police Kariba. I contacted Kariba and after being told to stand-by for Insp. Carver received more than I'd anticipated.

*'First up, Johnston, you'll be getting a visitor...a civilian lady...arriving tomorrow afternoon on the resort boat for a couple of days. Secondly; we've had a report from one Patrick Findson (surname altered for reasons later to become apparent) that he has shot a large python that attacked his pet dog. Pythons are Royal Game and we have to recover the skin if possible. Get details of what happened....sort out what you can.'*

*'Yes, sir. Civilian lady? Did she give a name, sir?'*

*'One Rosemary from Salisbury, Johnston.'*

Oh, dear. Really? I hoped my Member I/C wasn't aware of my existing ....if somewhat on again-off again....relationship with a Sister at the Kariba Hospital. I didn't really want to impart the impression I had women clamouring for my attention. Certainly not at the start of a month long patrol. How did she find I was at Bumi, anyway?

No time for musing on my love-life; I had work to do.

Patrick Findson, as I recall, worked for the Roads Dept. He seemed affable enough on our initial meeting, if somewhat and understandably angry and saddened by the death of his dog, apparently now a bump in the large reptile's stomach, which in turn had been buried near Findson's house. Killing a protected animal to protect one's own animals and property was permitted under the Wildlife Conservation Act. Findson had technically contravened the Act.... he'd shot the snake out of revenge as his well loved pet had already been killed and ingested.....and I carelessly pointed out as such before adding that because of his loss I understandably wasn't interested in pursuing a case against him. From that point, until several weeks later when Findson admitted to and was convicted of an unrelated and relatively minor breach of the Wildlife Conserv. Act, my relationship with Findson was a rather tenuous one underpinned by certain suspicions of him on my part and bad feeling towards me on his part.

The fourteen foot python was disinterred by labourers under A/C Toto's instruction and dragged onto the back of the well-deck, Landrover whilst I....with what was to be my last reasonably amicable interaction with the man.... had a cup of coffee and a chat with Findson over details of the killing of the snake. He also produced the 30.06 Sako Finnbear rifle that had done the deed.

I returned to the Land-rover to discover the reptile had decomposed well beyond any hope of retrieving the skin. Findson suggested I get permission from the management of the resort to cremate the snake by feeding it directly from the back of the truck into the exterior coal fired boiler. With borrowed garden forks this was finally accomplished followed by a much needed scrubbing of the vehicle's deck..

Findson had also indicated that were I to 'speak nicely to' one Hans Retief (name altered because he was a mate of Findsons), a supervisor with the Works Dept. ...as I recall.... he'd sort out the service on the Landrover and the changing of the shock absorbers.

*'Leave it with me. Pick it up midday tomorrow and the job will be done.'*

Retief was a matter-of-fact and obliging man from whom one gained the impression that nothing was too much for him or beyond his capabilities.

True to his word Hans had the vehicle ready for me in time to drive down to the wharf to meet the water taxi that arrived in the late afternoon with Rosemary on board. I'd left Toto behind but still felt rather self-conscious in uniform delivering a

hug and a kiss to my seemingly long-time lover and then driving her away in a Police vehicle.

I learnt that Rosemary had a weeks leave to take, had phoned Kariba and spoken to a rather obliging senior man who'd both informed her of my whereabouts and indicated how she could travel to be with me. At the resort we learnt that there wasn't a room available until the following day, a fact that didn't appear to upset Rosemary. A few beers, dinner, and with arrangements for Toto to sleep elsewhere sorted out, Rosemary and I caught up with what had gone on in our lives since our last meeting until it was time to convey her to the Police post for an overnight detention and a more thorough....albeit undocumented....physical investigation.

The next morning I conveyed Rosemary back to the resort where she was able to secure a room in the annex. I was keen to get on with local work before she departed back to Salisbury town and I could head into the interior of the Omayi TTL.

Chief Mola was a relatively small man by Batonka standards and his kraal was about a twenty minute drive from Bumi. I'd been warned that he could be somewhat irascible when approached by Europeans. I had also been informed that the crop growing experts in the Agricultural Dept. had distributed a certain type of experimental mealie seed among his senior people believing it would be more productive in their area than the staple crop of *mapfundi* (kaffir-corn). And would I report back on the viability of this crop. Sadly where the 'new' crop should have been apparent I viewed bare fields.

Greetings exchanged, we were provided with water and a small but strong hand carved wooden stool each. When visiting kraals, especially those presided over by a chief, it was customary to avoid any talk pertaining to the purpose of the visit...however urgent or pressing it may be.... until one had enquired of the general welfare of the people and their animals. '*Be careful not to ask of his family. Mola has nine wives but no children*' I'd been previously informed. I'd also been warned the man could be evasive and conniving towards any European authority. When he accepted a cigarette from me I noted the customary African gesture of gratitude....the bringing together of the hands....was a perfunctory action at best. And when, using Toto to interpret, I finally got around to the subject of the non-existing 'second crop' of maize a veritable outburst greeted my enquiry. Toto was obviously, if not intimidated, at least somewhat ill at ease but passed on what he'd learnt. They'd tried the new maize and found it was no good for beer making. I had to ask. Did they try and make beer from the seed of the new maize or did they actually plant it and use some of the resulting maize harvest for beer? Toto tried but was cut off by Mola. '*No good! No good!* End of mealie discussion.

I remained perplexed as to why the opportunity to increase the mealie yield in the area and ensure full bellies had been abandoned entirely because of the reason provided. When I caught Toto's eye and shook my head slightly to indicate he desist in further enquiry, he was plainly relieved.

When asked if he had any problems to put to us, Mola came up with a perpetual grievance of many of the Batonka people. The Government had not adequately compensated them for their displacement from ancestral lands when the resultant lake (Kariba) from the damming of the Zambezi had driven his people inland and to a different way of life. The Batonka were regarded as a rather more insular and primitive people who'd had less previous interaction with the Whites than the Mashona or Matabele tribes. Among their customs they still practised ear piercing ...with large wooden inserts...and it wasn't unusual to see filed teeth or men puffing their crude tobacco mix on home-made pipes. I had already learnt that negotiations

had been difficult and protracted between Batonka people and the Government when the time had come to move away from Kariba's ever rising lake. The issue of ancestors burial sites being flooded had been addressed in a novel way. Soil from the sacred sites had been collected and spread thinly along the roads....the spirits of departed ancestors had followed the displaced people... that led inland to the new settlement areas.

Aside from '*showing the flag*' and trying to gain a general idea of how the Batonka people were faring in regards to food supplies, crime among themselves.... and of how they viewed what little Government interference there was in their lives.... there were a few general enquiries of the whereabouts of certain Africans. The answers soon became virtually predictable. '*Ah, ishe. He is away at the farms.*'

Previous patrols to Bumi had all reported that they'd been unable to locate any....or just the odd one... *nganga* or witchdoctors in the Omayi TTL. I was determined to rectify that situation because my 'pre-patrol brief' had indicated that guerrillas.... whilst they may have tried to abandon the tribal authority in favour of a political one.... weren't beyond visiting *nganga* to obtain a special amulet that would ward off the White man's bullets in an engagement. I was to 'remind' any *nganga* I located....if any.... that the visit of such people had to be reported to the authorities. Mola and his senior men were not forthcoming with details of any *nganga* in their area and I soon gained the impression my mission would be a difficult one.

Rosemary stayed at Bumi for a further three days. When I saw her back down to the water taxi I wasn't to know we wouldn't meet again.

Back in Chief Mola's area I learnt from several senior men....guarded as their responses often were ....that the man wasn't universally popular. If nothing else there was the question of a successor when he passed on and he was a relatively old man. I also learnt the Batonka people 'could take or leave' the White man, especially if he was an agent of the Government. More than once as we approached the crop guards huts we glimpsed the occupants slipping away, having espied our approach. However I soon learnt that if one was patient and remained near the hut the occupant/s would generally come out of hiding and extend the customary greetings and courtesies. And the offer of a *fodgika* (cigarette) usually helped win their trust.

*'The chief has said he wants you to take him to Bumi and to buy him beer.'*

A couple of days in the local area and I unwisely decided to pay a last courtesy visit to Mola. After practically dismissing me out of hand he engaged in an animated outburst to Toto and I gained the impression that I was the subject of his upset. When Toto managed to turn to me with a translation it appeared I'd somewhat neglected the normal protocols and not offered the chief a gift on my arrival at his kraal. Toto believed that were I to take Mola to Bumi for him to drink beer my 'oversight' would be overlooked. I had the uneasy feeling I was being somewhat conned rather than provided with an avenue of redemption, but consoled myself that once the chief had a beer or two in him he may relax enough to be more forthcoming about matters of interest to us

. Far from dressing up to visit 'civilisation', Mola was in the rather nondescript attire of worn shirt and shorts. At Bumi I gave Toto ....a teetotaler...enough money to buy Mola a couple of bottles of beer and some extra to buy himself a cold drink at the resort's African bar. Then retired to the European 'water-hole' for a quiet beer mindful it would neither legal nor prudent to drive a Police vehicle in an inebriated state. It was just as well. After a further couple of requests from the barman via Toto, for '*more beer for the chief*' I finally got the rather 'tipsy' man into the middle seat of

the Landrover. It was close to nightfall but warm and I had the windshield raised on the vehicle.

*'Nyama...maningi-i!.. nyama-a!!'* (plenty of meat)

Thank heavens Toto was alert, and not above placing his hands on a chief, for Mola.... on espying a small buck or rabbit that bounced and dodged it's way down the dusty road before us....leapt forward from his seat to drape himself across the vehicle's bonnet mounted spare wheel all the while piteously decrying the lost opportunity for fresh meat! Toto literally hauled the inebriated tribal leader back into his seat by the waist band of his raggedy shorts and one thin arm. Thank heavens, he did, the thought of losing a tribal chief in such circumstances, especially one without an heir, and the paper-work involved, was too horrible to contemplate. I received no information of use from Mola nor any thanks for my 'gift of beer'. Perhaps he felt it was his due for past perceived predations of his land by the White man.

The next day I headed away from the lake and over a range of hills into chief Msampakaruma's area. The old chief was a big man and clearly nearing the end of his days. He was lying in a hut propped up by cushions with little more than just a faded cotton sheet about him. I'd enquired of a headman of the chief's whereabouts and after a messenger had been sent into a hut Toto and I'd received permission to meet the man. Clearly he preferred not to speak to us in a supine position and as we stood, just inside the doorway, with the help of a couple of attendants he was assisted onto a chair. Conversation was difficult....stilted and rather contrived....but, through Toto, I expressed the wish the chief would recover his health. Unlike Mola, the chief had apparently fathered offspring with a number of wives, a couple who were present and I felt I was on safe ground to enquire of them. I learnt from one of the attendants that there was a well attended beer brink not far from the chief's kraal and the chief's elder son, Tsauro, would be there.

*'Ah, Toto. Perhaps you will drink this very good beer.'*

*'Ah, no sir. I am sorry, I do not drink any beer.'*

A short drive and a five minute walk brought us to the kraal where perhaps a hundred adults and innumerable children were gathered. Once again I hesitated, rather than walk straight into the gathering. Two or three senior men approached us, returned our greeting and led us to the side of a hut in the shade where a pair of stools were placed ready to accommodate us. We were seated close to the drums of the milky, somewhat 'off-white' kaffir beer and I noticed several dead flies on the surface of the brew. Toto's abstinence from alcohol meant I had to exercise good manners as a representative of the *mapolisa* and accept beer from our hosts!

*'Tatenda chieswa'.* (Thank-you very much.)

At least the plastic container appeared clean and the brew was free of flies. It was flat and slightly sour, as opposed to the subtle and carbonated bitter edge of European beer. And, given I felt obliged to drink it, quite palatable. I had to tell Toto.... who'd watched my first few tentative sips with an air of amusement and expectation....that I was '*so sorry you cannot enjoy this very nice beer.*' Nevertheless I consumed the contents of the bowl rather slowly and, when it appeared the alcohol content wouldn't see me readily incapacitated, expressed my pleasure as I accepted a refill. All the while the gathered kids, once they'd overcome their shyness, jostled each other, giggled and watched my imbibing with some amusement; especially when I sought to further entertain them by screwing up my face after each mouthful of the brew. Toto engaged in conversation with the senior men. It appeared that the consumption of beer had also made them more relaxed in the company of Police. After further praising of the quality of the beer, I declined the offer of another. I'd

noticed an African male of about thirty-five standing alone and watching Toto and myself. As we climbed to our feet and walked in the general direction of the man he intercepted us. And addressed us in English.

*'I am Tsauro. Son of chief Msampakaruma.'*

After I'd explained that we were on a general patrol, rather than on specific enquiries, Tsauro seemed keen to engage with us and to emphasize his importance to his people. We obliged him and I soon learnt he'd been better educated than his peers and both read and wrote English with little apparent difficulty. Shortly, after asking us to wait for his return, he'd disappeared into a hut to soon return with a school exercise book.

*'I am the clerk for when my father holds Chief's Court.'*

Tribal chiefs traditionally had the authority to hear cases brought before them on civil matters such as a demand for damages to be awarded to a complainant for destruction of crops by cattle or goats belonging to another person. Tsauro had printed in pencil a summary of each case his father had heard along with the decision handed down and the monetary or other compensation awarded the plaintiff. Tsauro had dated each case and I realised it was father's ill health that accounted for the fact that Chief's court hadn't been held for some time. I perused the hand-written records, all the while preening the man's ego for his accuracy and diligence, before handing the book to Toto who was equally forthcoming in his praise.

We moved on to talk of general matters, taking in his father's ill health and tribal concerns before I raised the question of *nganga* in the Omayi TTL. I was careful to emphasize that we had no problems concerning the witch-doctors, rather that our meeting with them would be in the nature of our visits to sub-chiefs and kraal headmen; basically social rather than an investigation into their practices. I believed that whilst there was still a Witchcraft Suppression Act in existence, it was not unlawful for the *nganga* to dispense *muti* (medicine) or cast the bones and make predictions. Just don't kill a baby to enhance the power of your medicine!

Tsauro was a little hesitant and patently uneasy with my request for names and, I indicated Toto put my request in his own *Chishona* language, before moving away from the pair to watch over the happy gathering, a number of whom were quite animated and became even more so for my benefit when they realised I was an amused onlooker. It was perhaps fifteen minutes before Toto rejoined me.

Success! He'd done his job well and Tsauro had agreed to meet us two days hence in a location....described in detail to Toto.... some distance from his kraal with a list of practising *nganga* in the Omayi TTL. Understandably we were not to reveal his name as the informant. Nor did he want to be seen handing written information to us, the Police....his 'Chief's Court Records' notwithstanding. Toto had gained the same impression of the man as I had; he was not particularly popular with the rank and file of his people. And Tsauro had seized on our visit to try and at least impress us with his ability and tribal authority and to publicly demonstrate to his people his casual interaction with European police..

I'd learnt that there was basic accommodation for Europeans ....little more than a room, a bench and a couple of bunks....not far from the beer drink and after visiting another near empty kraal, the inhabitants were mostly where I'd just been, I drove to where we'd spend the night. And there was another Police Land-rover!

*'Johnny!! What the hell are you doing way out here.'*

*'Bloody Castell! More to the point, Denis, what the hell are you doing here in the Omayi TTL?'*

*'On patrol of course. Meet Bruce.'*

Bruce was a Police Reservist of about Denis' age and from appearances also not averse to a drop of anything that contained alcohol, including the hard stuff. It was hard stuff! Denis and Bruce had come across an illegal alcohol still further south and had confiscated several bottles of *kachasu*, the illegal and potent distillate. And they were heading for Bumi Hills....miles out of the Karoi Police area to where Denis had been posted from Harare....to buy more booze and Coca Cola to drink with the *kachasu*.

I hadn't seen Denis for about a year and drew a chuckle from him when I told him of Rosemary's visit. After all he'd originally introduced her to me. He was all for me accompanying him back to Bumi Hills but I was a man with a mission. After arranging to meet him again on his return in a couple of days....work permitting.... I watched him head off to Bumi without a care in the world. Far from upholding the law he really was 'a law unto himself,' that man.

*'Sir! That snake is a puff-adder. A very big one. And there is a kraal nearby with piccannins who play near him.'*

The day after the encounter with Denis I was driving up a long dusty slight incline when the keen-eyed Toto saw a snake hanging down a low bank. Below us on the same side of the road the tops of kraal huts.... which I'd planned to visit on our return.... were visible.

I stopped the vehicle and reversed back to view the reptile. It was definitely a puff-adder and easily the biggest I'd ever seen.

*'Perhaps you should shoot it, sir. It might bite a piccannin when they are playing.'*

I'd run over the odd snake before and finished them off with a stick....even whacked one with a rifle butt.... but had never attempted to shoot one. Oh, well, part of a man's duties.

*'Boom!!' Bugger!*

The impact threw the snake into the air and, only wounded, it disappeared into the foot high grass on top of the bank. I climbed the bank cautiously. Toto found a tree branch about eight feet long and whacked the grass with it. I was thankful I was alert and armed with a semi-automatic when I realised the snake was coming straight for me. Boom!! Boom!! And I'd retreated down the bank again.

*'Here he is, sir.'*

Toto worked the stick under the dead reptile and lifted it off the ground. It had to be well over two feet long....a big one for a puff-adder.

*'Nyoko!!'*

Drawn by the shooting, a number of the kraal people....after Toto's loud cry of explanation.... plucked up courage to venture up to see the dead reptile. Some ventured they'd seen the snake before near the kraal and agreed it had been a good idea to shoot it.

Following the rendezvous point instructions Tsauro had passed onto Toto we identified where we believed the meeting would take place the following day, before visiting another two kraals and choosing one to make camp in a spare hut.

*'Pilly...pilly, ishe.'* Malaria was common among the Batonka people and medical clinics almost non-existent. I wasn't alone in carrying aspirin tablets....to help reduce the fever of re-occurring malaria....when I patrolled inhabited areas near Kariba and the afflicted tribesmen often asked for them. We could only give them three at a time; their lack of understanding of how analgesics worked meant that to give them a couple of days worth of the pills would see them consumed all at once, however much one tried to explain otherwise.

*'I think the huku are fat here, sir.'*

*'Ah, Toto, you just want to eat chicken.'*

One had to be desperate for fresh meat to eat one of the chickens that scratched for sustenance around the huts. But, there were occasions when one had the time...to go through the bartering and cooking processes.... and had forgotten just how tough and stringy the last bird consumed had been.

*'Three shillings.'*

*'Ah...ah! Ikona, baas. That bird is a five shilling one!'*

*'Three and six.'*

*'No...no...baas. Four shilling'*

*'Ok, four shilling.'*

The gathered adults would laugh and cheer at the bartering process. Probably one time when the White man didn't get all his own way!

Then the chase was on to much cheering and amused cackles. The unfortunate bird would be pursued around huts and through the trees by up to six young kids until, having run off every last vestige of any condition it previously had....if any... it was trapped and caught. I'd like to think that being plunged headfirst into the boiling pot of water and held under brought a quick end to its suffering. The bird was cut into pieces and pot roasted. Finally it was served along with a dish of steaming *sadza*. (A staple of the African people; mealie meal cooked to the point where it was malleable.) Sometimes a green vegetable was also provided. Whatever, Black and White ate from the same dishes. And, invariably tough as it was, I still praised the quality of the chicken. After all I'd chosen the bird in question and would lose face to admit I hadn't chosen wisely!

Salt was in demand and often hard to obtain where the more isolated Tribal Trust Lands were situated. To that end some Police patrols carried a bag of coarse or rock salt and purchased chickens with an agreed number of mugs of salt.

Toto and I rose early the following day, drove to within about five hundred yards of the rendezvous point, parked and then proceeded on foot. I didn't want to in any way prejudice the handing over of the information I sought. If our passage was observed I wanted the meeting with Tsauro to appear random and the handing over of the information look as if I was merely checking his *situpa* (Registration Certificate).

*'He is here, sir.'*

If Toto had harboured any doubts...as I certainly had... of the man's appearing as arranged it wasn't apparent in his voice. Tsauro just seemed to materialise out of the undergrowth. A brief exchange of greetings and he wordlessly handed me a folded piece of lined paper torn from a school exercise book. I refrained from opening it at that time. I didn't want to appear over anxious to peruse what had been written.

*'Tatenda...tatenda chieswa, Tsauro. Do not worry; perhaps we will visit the nganga...perhaps not. There is no problem with them.'*

I hoped my reassurance didn't sound too contrived. I handed him the crumpled packet of cigarettes I carried....I had more in the truck. *'For your journey home.'*

A brief smile, a short exchange with Toto, and he was gone.

*'He returns to his kraal now.'* Toto was forthcoming with a translation.

Tsauro had listed four names and given enough tribal details to make it worth our while trying to locate the *nganga*. Why the man gave me the names, or even knew himself of the existence of at least two of them, who resided outside of his ailing father's 'tribal domain', will ever remain a mystery to me. Whatever, he'd deemed it important enough to walk over five miles from his kraal to give us the information we sought.

But, it wasn't until we'd located a person on the list and identified him as a bona fide *nganga*, that I allowed my reservations about Tsauro's information to be put aside. Before Toto and I left the Omayi TTL three weeks later we'd located three of the four men listed. None of them appeared surprised at our visit, nor did any show any overt resentment or a defensive attitude at our intrusion into their lives. And my preconception of just where an *nganga* fitted into African tribal society was somewhat subjected to amendment.

When I asked Toto as to how we should approach the *nganga* he believed we'd get better co-operation if we presented them with a small token gift 'as payment for their services'. The first we visited was quite relaxed about our presence and invited us into what passed for his '*consulting room*'. My gift of a tin of meat was accepted with a nod of thanks and a token bringing together of his hands. We were invited to take a seat. Certainly there was evidence of his '*calling*' in the room; a number of animal skulls and pieces of dried skins, including snakes, adorned the walls and baskets held dried plants, roots and all. And, yes he did cast the bones and read them ...offered to do as much for Toto and I. Our declining his kind offer brought much nodding of his head and an understanding chuckle. People brought their problems to him; women who couldn't conceive, parents who feared their chronically ill child had been cursed and young men wanting *muti* (medicine) to increase their virility. Perhaps the same range of health problems dealt with by Western doctors, psychiatrists and alternative practitioners. Certainly the *nganga* carried a certain status in the African community, much as that we once accorded doctors in our society....before they dispensed with their three piece suits and exclusive idiosyncrasies.... But, after meeting and questioning the three *nganga* we located, I hadn't developed the idea in my mind that they wielded any major decision making powers in a community; however much certain individuals deferred to them. I secured an assurance from each of them that they'd report any visits to us from '*guerrillas seeking muti or amulets to ward off Government bullets*' without any real conviction that they would.

My decision to spend another day visiting kraals before returning to Bumi Hills meant I'd missed meeting up with Denis Castell as I'd intimated I would. But, I learnt he was still in the area and figured we'd come across each other again before too long.

*'That bloody mate of yours and his side-kick can stay away from here.'*

Castell and the reservist had apparently ....those who knew Denis well would have said predictably...played up at Bumi. Badly, as only befitted Denis when the mood took him. I struggled to keep a straight face....never mind adopt a serious frown.... as my friend's catalogue of sins was presented to me by the resort's manager. I learnt that Denis and Bruce had had a couple of beers and then been given permission to use the resorts swimming pool. Apparently the manager had turned a blind eye to the coca cola bottles and glasses on the edge of the pool that the pair retired to quite frequently. Harmless enough he reasoned. But, what he didn't discover... until too late... was the bottle of *kachasu* smuggled into the pool area to add to the coke. And sadly, he confessed he was also too late to prevent a totally inebriated Castell from disgorging his capacious stomach contents into the pool itself! Oh, dear!

I checked in with Kariba and confirmed I had nothing to report.

As so often happened with Police work, that happy situation wasn't to last long. The following day we made an early start to travel to a couple of kraals marked on my map. As we travelled rather slowly along an undulating gravel road I saw movement in the light bush on my side and realised a rather large antelope was galloping parallel

to our vehicle through the sparsely situated trees and bushes. I slowed to match its speed and to try and identify it. Its horns were vaguely similar to those of an eland but shorter and the beast was somewhat lighter. It certainly wasn't a kudu either. Or any other buck either Toto and I had seen before. After accompanying us for all of two to three hundred yards the antelope veered off and disappeared.

A short time later we came across a Tsetse Fly Control truck with a European supervisor and about eight Africans seated on the back armed with the ubiquitous SMLE .303 rifles and were signalled to stop.

*'You see that big black-mane lion shot dead back down the road?'*

I indicated I hadn't and drove on after being given relatively precise directions to find the dead king of the jungle.

He lay in open bush about twenty-five paces off the road. It both saddened and annoyed me to view the dead animal for he truly had been a noble beast. I'd learnt that the black mane apparently doesn't indicate a separate species of lion, but is rather a feature a male lion develops with advancing years. This was an old fella I viewed but one still in good condition. Fortunately the Tsetse Fly gang hadn't trampled all over the area. In rather short time Toto and I found a 30.06 bullet shell, I determined the offender's vehicle was quite possibly a Landrover equipped with a common Dunlop tyre and the offender quite likely wore relatively smooth sole footwear. Lions were Royal Game and I wasn't too certain whether I should in fact have had the beast skinned for 'The Treasury'.

Back at Bumi I instructed Toto to make discreet enquiries about Findson's movements of the previous two days. The latter drove a Land-rover equipped with the same or similar Dunlop tyre tread I'd seen at the scene of the shooting. And he also owned a 30.06 Sako Finnbear rifle; the weapon he'd used to dispose of the python. I informed Police Kariba of the shooting, added that the lion had been dead for at least a couple of days and was in the early stages of decomposition....a lie; stuff having to skin the brute ....and that I was following certain leads.

A/C Toto from his enquiries ascertained that Findson had driven the same road two days previously but no information was forthcoming from his African staff regarding the lion shooting.

*'You're not going to pin that one on me, Mr. Policeman.'*

Findson was in the resort's bar and ready to go on the attack.

*'What do you know about the dead lion up the road there?'*

*'I know it had fuck all to do with me. Tell your bloody askari to stop harassing, my staff.'*

I was in uniform and the last thing I wanted at that time was a public argument. Had I been more determined to secure evidence against Findson I'd have confiscated his rifle and had our Armourers check markings on an expended shell against the one I'd found at the scene of the shooting. But, both the two Africans who'd accompanied Findson on the day of the lion's death kept to their story.... when questioned again by Toto...that no shooting had taken place. And having got my teeth into the rural patrolling at Bumi...especially after obtaining the names of the *nganga* in the area...I was keen to get back into the *bundu*, and meet its occupants.

I first became aware that there was another European Govt. agent working in the area when Toto and I... walking down a path through quite dense trees and undergrowth towards a kraal...were suddenly confronted by a group of perhaps six rather upset piccanins fleeing from three or four teenage boys who, from their laughter and exhortations to the terrified kids, weren't exactly bent on causing any grievous bodily harm to the youngsters. A burst of explanation from one of the older

lads to Toto brought a laugh from the African policeman and an explanation. A medical team was working through the Omayi, vaccinating as many children as could be rounded up. The older kids who'd been vaccinated previously were despatched to catch the younger ones. I don't believe there were any cultural concerns amongst the African regarding vaccinations; just a fear from the young ones of the White doctor and her Black assistants who administered *muti* to their arms through a 'gun'!

Rhodesia; indeed Africa, could have done with a lot more people with Doctor Louise Westwater's pragmatism, quiet determination and compassion.

I'd heard it said of some White men; more often those men who worked the soil and could engage with the Africans on a daily basis; who spoke the language; understood the Black man's unique culture and perspective on life and could ever exercise patience or reach consensus when they're at odds with his own way of thinking: '*He's a real Africa man'*

In the short time... perhaps an hour... I spent in Louise Westwater's company I knew I was in the presence of '*A real Africa woman.*' From her dark, sun burnished, and wrinkled with age face shone two eyes that carried the conviction that White and Black could find common ground when commonsense and goodwill prevailed over fear and its resulting racism and bigotry.

I subsequently learnt that Louise was, or had been, the Mashonaland Medical Officer of Health. Whether she'd retired from that position when I met her I am not sure but she was definitely a hands on person not an office bound administrator. Using a staff of two Black assistants and a Land-rover modified to suit her work she worked in sometimes remote African populated areas trying to reduce the effects of diseases....malaria, bilharzia and glaucoma...that were endemic amongst African people living in the rural areas.

She used what she described as a 'Heath gun'...I'm sure it had a more technical name....an appliance with an external barrel about 20mm across that housed a myriad of short needles. When applied to the arm there was no real penetration...just a faint roughening and painless contact with the skin that allowed the vaccine to penetrate and do its thing. As each child received his dose he was handed a sweet, a rare treat for a rural *piccanin*. And as I watched, there were times when an arm was gripped and examined and a hapless kid was scolded for daring to try 'seconds' for his chance of another sweet!

*'I was driving and saw the rhino on my side. It was a hurried stop and everybody piled out the passenger door just before the brute slammed into my door and tore it off its hinges! I keep the holed door on the back of my jeep to show the rural people we're not going to be put off our work. That even a chipembere can't stop us.'*

I salute you, Louise Westwater. And hope you made old bones in the country you loved. Perhaps the holed Landrover door you carried into your battle against disease could have become a monument to one who sought to make a difference....a shrine to be visited and pondered on by White and Black alike.

*'You're a silly bugger, Johnny. Why the fuck didn't you cut it's paws off for yourself. Where is it?'*

I'd encountered Denis Castell again. And I wasn't prepared to make a return journey to the site of the dead lion. I lied to him; told him I'd heard someone else had secured the paws for a trophy. Anyway Denis had his own trophy in a tool-box in the back of his vehicle. One... very much alive... average sized puff-adder he'd caught.

*'Whatta you going to do with it?*

*'Take it back to Karoi to show the school-kids.'*

*'The kids would have all seen one before.'*

I gave Denis details of the antelope I'd encountered and straight away he declared it to be a roan antelope which were relatively rare and apparently protected. Castell ought to have known; earlier in his career he'd once poached one at night and realising what it was had disposed of the head and declared the carcass to be that of a kudu!

It was mid-afternoon and Denis and Bruce had already 'spliced the mainbrace'. I had a warm gin and tonic with them and in hindsight I was glad I had that drink...it proved to be the last time I'd see Denis. But, I wasn't to know that within a couple of hours he was desperately wishing I'd meet up with him again!

I got the story by phone from Denis after my return to Kariba about three weeks later. Basically, the captive puff-adder somehow bit him on a finger and he didn't have a Fitzsimmons Antivenin kit in his vehicle, but had seen the one in mine. A number of attempts to contact me on VHF vehicle radio had been a futile exercise; the terrain was far too steep for a VHF reception..

He'd then consumed about half of a bottle of gin. True!! And when predictably...at least for people other than Denis...that didn't work; he'd sought help at a mission further south. Antivenin was administered but with little hope of success; several hours had elapsed and for the stuff to work it had to be injected within minutes, not hours. Denis and Bruce had set off for Karoi and hospital treatment. And a wheel came off the Landrover! It was recovered and re-attached using nuts 'cannibalised' from each of the other wheels.

Denis was still undergoing treatment, when I spoke to him, with ongoing attempts being made to save the finger. But, later I heard the sadly neglected digit finally had to be removed.

Through the grapevine I learnt that Denis remained in Zimbabwe after Independence; had become ill and had gone down to Johannesburg for treatment.

When Denis Maslyn Castell-Castell's name appeared in the Police Roll of Honour for 1984 I was saddened but not unduly surprised. He was still only in his late fifties that incorrigible, and to many in the BSA Police, rather legendary figure. But, the human body can only take so much before something has to give. RIP Denis.

*'Boom.'*

*'Da..da..boom.'*

*'Da..da..boom..da..da..boom...boom...boom.'*

*'Bastards!'*

The Batonka people's use of drums to communicate between kraals in the long valley we foot patrolled over three days became a source of somewhat wry amusement and light-hearted speculation between Toto and I. We'd enter a kraal and spend some time with the headman having a general and generally amiable conversation about crops, crime and health matters etc. When the time came to leave for the next kraal we'd ask the headman not to use the kraal's drum to warn of our approach to the next kraal we planned to visit. It wasn't that we wished to sneak up on the kraal, it was a matter of finding people still in the next kraal. The Batonka could take it or leave it when it came to contact with White people and often would find an excuse to visit their mealie crop if warned of our approach. Which meant we'd have to wait for their return or seek them out. But, our entreaties to not use the drums always fell on deaf ears. Sometimes we'd be scarcely four hundred yards from one kraal enroute to the next and the first tentative '*boom*' would be heard behind us to be followed by the reply from ahead of us. At best it gave us a rough indication as to how far we had to go! And Toto and I took some wry amusement by speculating as to

*'whether we'd reach that next grove of masasa trees'* etc. before the first beat of the drum was heard.

Initially I'd assumed that the drum message heralded the approach of Police details but on asking a headman I learnt the message basically meant 'the Government is approaching', which covered Agricultural and Game department staff as well as we 'donkey-wallopers'.

*'Ah..ah..the gun is no good. The barrel is too small.'*

At one of the larger kraals that boasted a sub-chief our reception was rather more friendly than we'd come to expect. The small, wiry and grey-haired older man wasn't hesitant about engaging with us. After the usual polite formalities had been exercised my rifle became the focus of some discussion among the senior tribes people and the consensus was reached....passed on to me by a smiling and chuckling Toto....that basically a weapon with such a small calibre as mine, was rather useless. Especially when placed alongside the Sub-chief's bigger bore 'real' gun used for crop guard duties.

At my request the man produced his gun, a flintlock musket literally old enough to have seen service at the battle of Waterloo. I was somewhat interested...make that intrigued....with the weapon, more especially when I learnt it was still in use; indeed loaded, as I admired it. And there was no problem showing me the ammunition and what propelled it. Unscrewing the ramrod, the old fellow used the screw on one end to retrieve the first lot of wadding, dried stringy bark well rammed home. The ammo was something else! Mostly it appeared to be quarter inch pieces of heavy guage wire with the odd nut and small washer added for good measure. I expressed my admiration but, to truly appreciate the gun's worth I averred....rather than to see the powder... I'd have to see it fired.

The 'wadding' was jammed back down the barrel and tamped down quickly. Clearly the senior man was enjoying the opportunity to impress the *mapolisa*.

I waited, one eye on the hammer and the other on the end of the barrel. The hammer fell with a dull and rather disappointingly muted thud. A pregnant pause.

*Whoo...m...pha.* (Note the absence of an exclamation mark.)

Clouds of smoke, cackles and cheering far louder than the gun's delayed report.

*'Aah...mushe.mushe..sterek!'* (Very good!) I smiled and clapped my hands and a chuckling Toto joined in. Soon he was in converstion with the man again. Clearly he was trying to impress the sub-chief with the potential of my rifle. Would I fire it?

A small troop of baboons made their way across a hillside, perhaps three hundred metres away. I aimed to miss them....not a problem with me...and...

*Ka..boom!!.....ka..boom!!.....ka..boom!!*

Women screamed and pulled shrieking kids to their heaving bosoms. Men shook their heads in wonderment and predictably the baboons bounced away unhurt. Suddenly there was a rush towards me from a dozen kids and soon they were fighting and squabbling over the three empty shell cases that several pairs of keen eyes had seen ejected from my weapon.

When Toto and I made our farewells the sub-chief was still unconvinced about my rifle. Big was still better in his rheumy eyes.

*'Nyoko!'*

*'Where...where?!"*

Given the tribeman appeared rather relaxed as he uttered the dreaded word 'snake' didn't mean I should share his apparent nonchalance. Certainly the immediate vicinity appeared reptile free.

Toto questioned the man who gestured towards the nearest hillside and soon the A/C was providing an explanation. Possibly as much as two hundred yards distant a python, the sun glinting off his body, slowly made his way across the ground. I was somewhat fascinated as the snake all but disappeared behind clumps of bush only to reappear in full again. Thankfully there were no suggestions I shoot it on the grounds it posed a threat to the kraal's people.

It was time to return to Bumi Hills to check in with Kariba. As we neared Chief Mola's kraal we came across two vans and their young European female occupants. The leader of the group of college girls, a teacher of about thirty, quickly explained that they had the necessary authorisation to be in the Omayi TTL, the girls were basically on a familiarisation exercise with the rural African populace and there was absolutely nothing we Police officers could do to assist her or enhance their bantu experience. Jane may have gone jungle but she wasn't looking for Tarzan!

Back at Bumi there was work I hadn't allowed for to be done.

*'Man, I've got a permit to shoot game for nyama for my boys.'*

Hans Retief seemed quite relaxed when I approached him concerning a dressed kudu carcass hanging in a chiller at the resort. I decided not to ask to see the permit; the man had helped me out on my arrival at Bumi and it was common for gang overseers to have 'pot' licences. But an African had sought out Toto on our arrival with a tale of woe involving Findson and indirectly Retief. Employed by Findson, he'd been accused by the man of something he vehemently denied doing and been sacked. An attempt to get wages he believed were owing to him had been met with the threat of physical violence.

*'Did you ever see or be told about baas Findson shooting a shumba... lion?'*

I shamelessly took advantage of the man's falling out with his employer.

*'Ah..ah, no, nkosi.'*

Bugger!

But, he had been with the baas' Findson and Retief when baas Findson first shot the kudu and when it got up again baas Retief shot it with his big gun!

The situation was worthy of investigation. Without enquiring of my reasons, the resort manager was quite happy for me to inspect the kudu carcass. A heavy calibre rifle had shattered the chest area of the beast, damaging much of the forequarters. And high on the neck was another bullet entry and exit hole from what I guessed to be a lighter calibre rifle.

Findson went on the attack but, I wasn't backing down this time. No, he didn't have a permit to shoot game. Yes, he had gone with Hans Retief to shoot a kudu for meat and he'd taken his rifle along in case it was needed. Hans had wounded the beast and he, Findson, had finished it off. What was wrong with that?

I told the man there was quite a lot wrong with his story; no animal could have regained its feet after the damage caused by Retief's heavy calibre gun. And I had a former employee to back up my own findings and suspicions.

Findson finally admitted to a contravention of the Wildlife Conservation Act...Chapter 199, Section 16 (2)(c)...'Hunt game without a licence'....according to the entry in my notebook, and duly paid the statutory rather small monetary penalty for his offence. He argued that nothing was owed to his former employee and predictably denied threatening violence against the man. The puzzle of who shot the lion wasn't resolved. The other puzzle of why he, Hans Retief, had chosen to take an elephant gun to shoot a kudu....as large a beast as they are.... and not borrowed Findsons more appropriate lighter calibre rifle I saw as further proof that Findson had always intended to take the first shot as had happened, illegally or not.

The Game Dept. ranger initially believed my reported sighting of a roan antelope to likely be a mistaken one. But, shortly after my return to Kariba he passed on the information....and confirmation... that a roan antelope had indeed established itself in the Bumi area, apparently a rather isolated and rare thing to happen.

But, Bumi Hills wasn't isolated enough to escape the attention of the powers-that-be of the BSAP!

*'Johnston, the OC, Mr. Lamont, is flying into Bumi for an inspection the day after tomorrow. I'm arriving on the Police launch late morning tomorrow. I'll have yours and Constable Toto's suitable uniforms.'*

Bugger! An Annual Inspection practically in the middle of the bloody bundu?!

The last time I'd seen the OC I'd been on road-block duties near Makuti and he'd questioned me as to whether I'd shaved before coming on duty. I'd been tempted to point out that the spartan facilities that prevailed at Makuti....no electric (generator) lighting after about 9.00pm or before 6.00am... made it hard to shave for a 5.00am duty start but, opted to tell a white lie. Of course I'd shaved before reporting for duty, I just neglected to admit it was about twelve hours previously!

Insp. Chris Carver was on time at the wheel of 'Sir John Chancellor' and once the boat was secured it was back to the Police post for a feed and a cuppa over which I detailed any events that may have been of interest to him. Then it was tidy up and cleaning time.

*'It's a bit slow, sir, but it does drain away.'*

When the toilet was flushed or the shower was used it appeared there was a restriction in the sewerage pipe to the septic tank which I'd previously ignored; hoping that with further use it would go away. When Chris suggested we investigate I wasn't a particularly happy man about what may be discovered: a couple of weeks previously....during Rosemary's brief sojourn at the post... I'd carelessly flushed a condom down the jolly *kazi!* (sl. for toilet) The best solution was for me to suddenly become a particularly diligent plumber cum drain layer...with Toto's willing assistance...and leave my superior to more academic matters involving Post records etc. The wayward prophylactic proved to have apparently by-passed the obstruction and after a period of digging and running flexible lighter pipes through the main works all was flowing well again.

Late afternoon I ran Toto back to the launch where he'd remain overnight on guard and work on polishing his boots and leggings in preparation for the forthcoming Ocs visit. Insp. Carver and I retired to the resort's bar for a beer or two before having a meal there and then returning to the Post for a night of broken sleep on my part punctuated by misgivings as to how the inspection would go.

The plane was on time....still quite distant when we picked it up....but, Constable Toto hadn't appeared at the airstrip.

*'Go and see what's holding up the bloody man, Johnston.'*

Toto stood up on the foredeck of the boat on my arrival in the vehicle. *'You should have been at the airstrip twenty minutes ago, Toto. What's the problem?'*

*'Ah, sir...I can't. There is a big problem'.* Toto struggled to explain and looked near the point of tears. *'My leggings were on the front deck of the boat...after I polished them. Later when I was sleeping there was a thump and the boat rocked. I quickly looked out and saw a hyena running away with one of my leggings! I can't go to the parade.'*

Oh, dear. But, not appearing on the parade...it was already of minimal size.... wasn't an option as far as I could see.

*'You can and you will. I'll explain to the Member in Charge and the OC. Get in the Landrover now!'* Toto and I'd got on well on the patrol and I hated suddenly having to exercise uncompromising authority. *'They'll understand.'*

The plane....a twin engine Beechcraft (Baron?).... had not only landed but the OC and an Inspector were alighting when I reached the airstrip again with my rather upset A/C.

Insp. Carver's attention was on the approaching pair when I fell in behind him and indicated Toto stand behind me. A quick glance back from our Member I/C to ensure we were in line and looking smart.

*'What was the problem?'*

*'A hyena ate one of his leggings, sir'.* There was no time for a detailed explanation.

*'What!!'*

*'True, sir.'*

Chris Carver turned back to the now closing in pair and even from behind him I saw he appeared to struggle to keep his self-control. A final quick glance back to me.

*Sotto voce*, but with an edge to his tones that confirmed one didn't jest within seconds of what was tantamount to an Annual Inspection, albeit in a 'bush setting' *'You tell him, Johnston.'* Then facing forward again and the sharp command.

*'Details...details, shun!!'*

Assistant Commissioner Lamont returned the salute and after a few words with Insp. Carver confronted me. *'7354...P/O Johnston, sir!'*

*'You're on a temporary posting at Bumi Hills, Johnston?'*

*'Yes, sir, Constable Toto and I are patrolling the Omayi Tribal Trust Lands, sir.'*

Then he moved beside me to face Toto. And the poor young man didn't appear up to the task of explaining why his lower legs sported woollen khaki issue socks and not customary brown and highly polished leather leggings expected of an A/C on a formal parade.

I took the risk. *'Sir. Permission to explain Constable Toto's missing leggings.'*

When Lamont shifted his focus back to me without comment.... or indication I was out of line.... I continued. *'Last night a hyena ran off with one of his leggings, sir. Actually jumped onto the Police launch and stole it from there, sir.'*

*'Yes, sir. It is true, sir.'* Toto found his voice again.

Lamont's accompanying Inspector managed to keep a lid on his rising mirth and the officer himself allowed a brief smirk before his comment. *'Well I've heard a lot of excuses on parades in my day but that's the first that involved a hyena'*. And turning towards our Member I/C; *'Dismiss the men, Mr Carver.'*

I truly felt sorry for my patrol companion after the parade. Clearly he felt he'd 'let the side down'. I didn't see it that way and wondered if alone on the launch the previous evening he'd had to listen helplessly and with some trepidation to the somewhat chilling 'wa-a—yo-op' cries of the beast as it had closed in on its' meal for the evening. Hyenas were universally detested but, I only saw them on rare occasions, although one morning after sleeping the night in a hut I discovered the crunching noises that had disturbed our sleep had been made by hyena dining on dried animal bones.

I can imagine Larry Lamont dined out on the hyena story for some time! The Bumi Hills Police Post inspection.... unlike the fiasco of the Sinoia Annual Inspection of several months before....went quite well and was all over in a couple of hours. The plane departed and I ran Insp. Carver back to the Sir John Chancellor. Before he cast

off he ducked into the interior of the launch to quickly reappear with a musket and indicate I take it from him.

*'I'd sooner stick with my FN, sir.'*

*'Yeah, right, Johnston. It's been rendered U/S. You'll see the details of who to return it to in the piece of paper on the barrel. We'll send the launch for you in about ten days or a fortnight. Constable Toto is to report to me on his return and to give me a written report on the missing legging for Ordnance.'* A contrived sigh and a shake of his head. *'A hyena...bet they haven't heard that one before. Ok. Carry on patrolling.'* And as the boat pulled away from the small jetty, a smile and a brief wave.

*'Have a good trip back, sir!'* I liked the man; promotion hadn't meant he'd eschewed his human side and promoted one of uncompromising authority as I'd occasionally encountered in other members of the force.

I handed the musket to Toto: *'For you to shoot the hyena that eats leggings.'*

*'Ah..no, sir.'* Toto's smile told me he'd recovered from his trauma of the preceeding few hours.

Keen to get away from Bumi and back into the TTL, I removed the piece of paper wrapped around the barrel of the ancient weapon, handed it to Toto with instructions to find out as soon as was possible... from local Africans... the location of the owner's kraal. I then placed the musket on the back of the Landrover.

Toto had the information in less than an hour and better still, the kraal was in Chief Mberi's area; one we hadn't visited as yet.

Mberi we found to be rather less than communicative and I left his kraal consoling myself that at least we'd paid him the courtesy of a visit before we began to visit other kraals in his area. We drove as near as possible to kraal of the 'modified' musket and Toto took the weapon from the back of the Landrover.

*'Toto. The piece of animal hide that was tied near the hammer! It's missing!'*

Toto found the small square of antelope hide and it was apparent the hand-woven cord had caught on an obstruction and broken. I reattached it as best I could. The kraal muskets had apparently often been passed down through generations of the one family and it was believed....by a number of Whites, including myself....the tribes people considered the weapons harboured certain tribal spirits. They'd been rendered unserviceable as much to protect the owner from injury should one explode as to deprive an African of a weapon he could use for nefarious purposes.

*'Toto. Tell him we are sorry the cord broke but we rejoined it. Ask him the significance of the piece of hide.'*

A brief discussion with the kraal head, a chuckle from Toto and I learnt the fur served no other purpose....certainly nothing of a spiritual nature.... other than to be placed under the weapon's hammer to keep any rain off the charge!

Generally we relied on a detailed map of the Omayi TTL to seek out the inhabited areas. Mostly the kraals were situated in valley floors in arable land areas and were marked on the map with a small black square. However there was one relatively isolated area showing a couple of black squares and the pencilled notation under it from a former patrol in the area that said, *'No sign of habitation.'* I determined it was an area some six miles from any vehicle access. I also determined to see for myself if it really was uninhabited.

Cst. Toto and I carried sufficient food and water to allow for an overnight stay in the area and made reasonably good time through undulating country that appeared to be of poor arable quality. It was hot and dry and seeing a large baobab not too far off the track I decided it would make a good spot for a rest and a snack.

*'Ah, no sir! I don't think it is a good place.'*

Toto was clearly unsettled and the basis of his apprehension were a number of wood and fibre 'figures' arranged near the base of the large tree. Whilst my A/C was unable to explain the significance of the man made symbols they obviously had a spiritual component and I wisely agreed we seek another spot to rest. After a gentle climb over a period of perhaps two hours we crossed a low saddle and began a gradual descent into a broad valley.

*'Wa.a.a.a.!! Ee.e.e.eh!!'*

Proof that the small black squares on our map indicated inhabited kraals was presented to us in the form of a trio of piccanins...aged perhaps four to five...who on not observing our approach until we were perhaps thirty yards from them; formed a tight interlocked mass of legs and arms and wailed piteously. We stopped and waited. Toto found the incident amusing; I was a little puzzled at the extent of the childrens despair. Finally Toto turned to me; *'Perhaps if you stay here, sir. I will try to explain that it is ok.'*

Toto approached the trio talking all the while but, the kids weren't into being calmed down and with a final screech they broke formation and fled with Toto's laughter dying in their wake.

Ten minutes later we entered a tall and healthy stand of *mapfundi* (Kaffir-corn) and shortly after that a well established kraal came into view. Smoke lazily rose from a cooking fire but of the inhabitants there were none to be seen. We waited on the edge of the kraal for perhaps fifteen minutes before a rather ancient *mdala* (old man) emerged from the corn and strode towards us. Toto greeted him and shortly a number of males joined the senior man. Toto explained our encounter with the children and that drew chuckles and an explanation from them as to the children's seemingly exaggerated fears.

*'It is you, sir. The mdala says many of the piccanins have not seen a murungu (White man) before.'*

Really? Toto conversed further and learnt that the last White people to visit the area had been at the time of the elephant cull, five or six years before. Certainly we appeared to have been the first *Mapolisa* to visit the kraal for a number of years. When the women followed their men folk and emerged from the corn the children with them were obviously inordinately curious but still a mite fearful of my presence.

*'Tell the mdala, Toto, that the people look healthy and well fed.'*

The headman's reply indicated my statement had some merit.

*'Ask him, Toto, if they still get fish brought from the lake.'*

*'Ikona!'* This time the old man was prepared to show his ongoing grievance at his peoples displacement from his original kraal nearer what had been the Zambezi river before it became Lake Kariba. Silly, question, Johnston!

*'What about the elephant cull?. Was there maningi nyama (much meat)?'*

*'Ndio!'* The headman all but drooled at the memory of how the 'Government' had driven the elephants down the adjacent inhabited valley, shot a number of them, and let the tribes people have all the meat once the tusks had been removed.

I'd already learnt from a Game ranger that periodically elephant culling took place in the North-west of Rhodesia. I was told the Kariba 'herd' had been fixed at about one hundred and sixty-five beasts and when the numbers grew to perhaps twenty above that culling took place. The animals were driven by ground parties and fix winged aeroplanes.... some of which were fitted with air-horns like the dreaded German Stuka of WW11....into areas accessible by the African poplace before the cull took place. Tales were told of Africans climbing inside the rib cages of the

slaughtered beasts seeking out special cuts of meat being cut themselves by the *pangas* (machetes) of others who'd chosen to remove a rack of chops! Some men bore the scars or missing fingers from previous times of Government culls of the *nzoe*. Certainly there was none of the rich red meat wasted. And such was the memory of the great meat harvests it wasn't uncommon for rural Africans to use those events as a measure of passing time.

Years later when I lived near Nelson and had made the acquaintance of Fred and Jessie Petersen....the parents of George of BSAP, Kariba....I learnt from Fred, who'd been employed by the Game Dept. for a time and was involved in a number of elephant culls that.... contrary to my long-held assumption that it was old matriarchs and tuskers that were shot.... it was actually the young breeding cows that fell to the hunter's rifles. It made sense; one could still obtain a licence to shoot bull elephant in the 'sixties and sell the ivory. Denis Castell-Castell told me he'd hunted elephant for a number of years...occasionally in Northern Mocambique where Fred Petersen had also hunted... and related that the licence to shoot an elephant cost one hundred pounds, ivory fetched two to three pounds a pound weight and with luck the sale of a set of tusks would off-set the licence and other costs. Denis had actually been 'measured up' for a new elephant gun...a Rigby-Mauser as I recall...which would be manufactured in England by one of the well known gunsmiths, when sanctions imposed on Rhodesia after UDI meant the weapon couldn't be delivered to Rhodesia. Denis also had a single tusk that weighed about twenty-five pounds in his possession which he couldn't sell because it had been obtained without a licence. A not untypical situation for the intrepid...if somewhat flawed... Castell-Castell!

Satisfied our presence had been noticed by all the relatively isolated community; Toto and I left there to return to our vehicle. I determined that on my return to Kariba I'd erase the '*No sign of habitation*' notation on the map. I wouldn't go as far as to write '*Habitation observed*' : that omission still allowed future patrols the option of choosing whether or not to visit the area!

Chief Negande was the last of the Batonka chiefs in the Omayi TTL we were down to visit. His kraal was situated on relatively high ground and quite close to a road. Negande....we were told by a senior man...wasn't in the kraal but in the fields below us where the *mapfundi* crop had been cut that very day. We located him late afternoon near a couple of huts which served as crop guard dwellings. He was a tall, well built man with a bearing matching his senior status. Affable enough, he appeared to welcome our presence and readily offered to share his evening meal with us. I produced a welcome tin of bully-beef which would serve as the relish. My contribution to the meal wasn't all altruism on my part, I'd previously learnt the hard way that dried goat meat with a greenish tinge wasn't a White man's idea of a generous addition to a meal!. Ingrate I was!

Negande, Toto and I smoked and conversed on matters pertinent to his area as we awaited the younger of the two wives with him to produce the *sadza*. It finally appeared, steaming hot, with an accompanying green vegetable, *nderere*. *Nderere* was a vegetable similar to a gherkin in size and shape that when boiled for the right amount of time was quite palatable and easy to scrapeup from the serving bowl with a piece of *sadza*. The young woman...probably still in her late teens...had apparently overcooked the vegetable and I compounded the opprobrium she faced from her husband by exaggerating the vegetable's elasticity; stretching it over a foot at times before it broke away from rest of the bowl's contents.

*'Can't you see the White man is short and has difficulty with the nderere!'*

Toto translated but, already....before I had a chance to ease the situation...Negande had sprung to his feet, delivered a couple of slaps to the upper body of the young woman and sent her to a hut loudly bawling her heart out that she be deemed to be an incompetent cook. I hastened to assure the big chief that I was enjoying the meal but the damage had been done.

With equilibrium back to normal Negande announced that there'd be a dance, a celebration.... I assumed to relate to the crop harvest.... that evening in his kraal up on the ridge. The *mapolisa* would be honoured guests. A further discussion with Toto brought the news that we'd be really honoured were we to donate a goat to the evening's festivities. Not in the habit of leading a string of goats on patrol I learnt that ten shillings would pay for my shortcoming. Why not? We'd shared food with the man after all. A party would round the evening off quite well, I felt. Toto concurred.

Together with Negande and his two wives we made our way along a path through the freshly cut *mapfundi* and up the slope to the kraal. Already a drum was beating and an air of excitement among the tribes people was readily apparent. Stools were fetched for Toto and myself and any misgivings I'd held that our presence as Police may put a dampener on the celebration soon evaporated. Nevertheless I determined I'd keep in the background.

It was a night to always remember. As the drummers increased their tempo so the dancers increased their physical effort. Young nubile women.... presumably still single.... moved as a line towards the men gyrating and swivelling their hips, shaking and flaunting breasts unencumbered by clothing; seemingly abandoned, lost to the all pervading beat of the drums and the moment. And the men responded, the more uninhibited breaking the line, stamping out on a lone mission to catch the attention of a particular maiden they fancied. Advance and retreat, let the body movements and the facial gestures spell out the message of desire and the wish for future engagement.

Soon the older people were drawn to dance and honour the spirit that provided their sustenance. Occasionally one or more would move close to catch our attention, momentarily engage with us, flashing teeth and the hint of a promise that could never be acted on. And when I climbed to my feet and briefly answered the challenge with a laugh and a parody of their actions better suited to a rock and roll dance floor their own cackling laughter showed their appreciation. Toto's easy unforced laughter at my actions reassured me I wasn't besmirching the good name of the Force.

'Nyoko'. A senior man had approached Toto and sought his attention. I picked up the dreaded 'snake' word and had to enquire.

It was late in the evening and the older people were slowly dispersing to their huts. An elderly woman had been bitten by a snake, I learnt. Further enquiries and I learnt I wouldn't have to make a dash to our vehicle for the snake antivenom kit; the bite had been inflicted some time....apparently more than a week...before and, despite the peoples application of their natural *muti*, the site of the attack had become very bad and their *ambuya* (grandmother) would require hospitalisation.

Further questions from Toto confirmed the Irvine and Johnson boat would be doing pick-ups of dried fish from the nearest fishing camp the next morning. I decided we'd transport the woman down to this camp on the lake edge and see she was conveyed to Kariba for treatment. After sleeping at the kraal Toto and I left at dawn to fetch the vehicle and bring it closer to where we'd uplift the woman. She was seated near her hut and the actions we witnessed confirmed the legendary stoicism of her people. The rather filthy rags were removed from the bite site on the side of her foot and using a 'monkey-stick' (a section cut from a fibrous tree) she was scraping away the decaying, and undoubtedly gangrenous, flesh until fresh bleeding indicated the

wound was free of it's suppurating mess. I'd seen my fair share of blood and guts and gore in my job, but the sight of that woman patiently cleaning her wound....it was down to the bone....was enough to make me turn away lest the tears that prickled my eyes displayed my weakness. Even Toto found himself turning away with a sigh of revulsion.

After farewells male members of her family carefully lifted the matriarch into the Landrover and we travelled for about fifteen minutes down to the fishing camp where we were happily rewarded by the sight of the fishing boat chugging into the bay. She really was an '*African Queen*' type craft with the near full awning across the boat and a smelly and oily old, open to view, diesel thumping away amidships.

I remembered that Africans....technically at least....were expected to pay one shilling for hospital treatment, however involved, and gave her about three shillings indicating through Toto that the extra money was for food. Her seemingly minimal *katunda* (gear) was wrapped in a none to clean towel. The African skipper of the boat wasn't as disposed toward helping his fellow man as we were and declared that all passengers on his boat....never mind the reasons for his services...paid a shilling. I demurred quite strongly pointing out that the woman's plight was enough to waive any charges and the Police would be waiting for her arrival at Kariba. Later I was less than smug that I'd won my point and done my good turn for humanity when I realised that the passengers fees may well have been part of the African skipper's wages or salary.

I radioed Kariba giving them the ETA of the boat and indicated that the patient wasn't capable of walking up to the hospital. If they didn't pick her up they'd have arranged for the hospital to do so. The BSAP were rarely short on compassion for Black and White alike.

Further visits to kraals in Negande's area followed. I could happily have stayed in the Omayi TTL/ Bumi Hills area for another month but finally the message came for us to tidy up the post and expect the Police launch at a given date and time.

Back at Kariba I was given four days off general duties during which I was expected to write up the customary Patrol Report. Most PO.s didn't enjoy writing up details of their patrol but I looked forward to the exercise....a perusal of previous reports gave me the headings and issues to comment on. Most reports seemed to vary in length from six to ten pages. A gut feeling told me mine could well be quite a bit longer.

Another gut feeling, physical this time, told me I was far from well, health wise. Given I was rather partial to beer....some would say overly so....it was understandable that, on the first afternoon of my return to Kariba, I'd accompany a couple of other Police guys down to the Cutty Sark Bar (generally referred to as 'Gordon Bunny's 'after the owner') . What wasn't understandable, as far as my mates were concerned, was my taking but a sip of the amber liquid before deciding it wasn't for me and opting to drink Coke instead. Near bloody heresy, they decided! Back at the quarters early evening and I developed flu like symptoms and began vomiting. And there appeared to be blood in my 'offering'. My batman, Makiya, solicitous about my health, voiced the opinion :*You are very sick, baas. You must get help.*'

Shortly an older PO friend ,whose advice I generally valued, arrived in my room and concurred with my batman's diagnosis. Perhaps ten minutes later Yvonne... a Sister at the Kariba Hospital and sometimes treated rather poorly on my part, girlfriend.... arrived in her car and brooking no argument conveyed me up to the hospital.

*'I'm almost certain it is malaria.'* Dr. Patricia Goddard, in charge of the hospital and a close friend of Yvonne's gave her rather more professional diagnosis. When I admitted I'd run out of the daily dosage of Daraprin anti-marial tablets some eight or ten days previously it didn't appear to add weight to her opinion but I was immediately given an injection of Chloroquin to be repeated every three hours. Blood was taken for testing.

My idea of malaria had been gained mostly from the movies and had the afflicted person in a coma and near death's door with a fever lasting a couple of days before it broke and they survived. Any other outcome wasn't worth contemplating! But, at best my symptoms weren't any worse than a bad case of flu. Sure I went through slightly feverish followed by cold clammy spells, but if that was the worst the disease could throw at me I'd be back enjoying my beer in no time.

*'I've come for more of your blood, sah.'*

The regular injections continued and twice daily a big imposing Black medical assistant, Josiah, would appear with his big meaty hands clutching a kidney tray of hypodermic syringes and a collection of needles. He had a broad, toothy and very expressive smile and was an affable and overtly genial guy. After undergoing the procedure a few times I decided Josiah needed some advice on the size of the needle he was employing and.... looking through his tray as he indulged me with a beaming smile of silent amusement.... I finally chose the thinnest needle available and triumphantly pointed at it. *'That's the one, Josiah!'*

*'Ah, no, sah. It is very thin. Too thin for blood taking. It would just take so long.'*

Bugger it then; I had tried.

On the third day after Josiah had departed with my sample of red stuff he was back in the ward shortly afterwards and indicated....allowing I was willing....I follow him to the hospital's laboratory.

*'See, sah. If you look you will see the blood cells. Only one cell is now divided into black and clear halves. Your system is nearly clear of malaria.'*

Sure enough on looking through the microscope's eye-piece I viewed what the Lab. assistant had pointed out. I'd be out of the place in no time. But, fate had other ideas!

*"One of the guys phoned up, Johnny, and asked if it was ok for a few of them to come up later after work and have a beer with you. I told them it was alright, but you musn't have more than the one can. Promise."*

On duty, Yvonne entered the ward early afternoon with a welcome announcement. I gave Yvonne my word I'd be sensible. Insp. Carver had made a visit on the second day to enquire after my well-being and to suggest I'd better not write up my Patrol Report in the condition I was in. And if a mate on duty found himself up at The Heights....especially if he just happened to be also going out with a Sister...I could expect a very brief visit and a less than cheerful opinion on my apparent state of recovery.

When most of the station's White complement entered the ward later....lead by our friendly SB man, Nigel Seaward.... I began to wonder if my peers were in possession of a prognosis for me far worse than I'd believed and had come to pay their last respects! And Nigel didn't help by suggesting I'd probably have *bilharzia*....a rather horrible and somewhat feared affliction caused by small water snails that was overcome by deep and painful injections.... along with sleeping sickness both waiting for the malaria to clear before they made themselves apparent! During the customary banter, trading of insults and false declarations of how much I

was missed I slowly sipped on a most welcome can of beer. Just the one, but they departed with my promise that I'd rectify my enforced sobriety once I got out of the place. But, the fickle hand of fate decided that that wasn't to be as soon as I'd hitherto expected!

Considering myself to have reached a perfectly ambulatory stage of recovery from my illness....alright, capable of walking....I spurned the idea of using a bottle to pee in and set off down a fairly long and narrow corridor to the toilet situated at the end of it. Soon my pace slowed, the corridor appeared to be narrowing and on unsteady legs.... and realising I was in serious trouble health-wise.... I turned back to my ward. That was the last thing I remembered for a time. Apparently I'd made it back to activate the alarm buzzer at the head of my bed and was found on the floor beside my bed in a delirious and near unconscious state.

Then followed periods when I was barely conscious and others when I apparently wasn't, times when ice packed in towels were placed on my body to reduce the fever, times when a terrible teeth chattering cold spread through me and as many as seven blankets were heaped on me. Uniformed Sisters and Dr. Goddard came and went but seemed to converse among themselves as if from afar.

Some time in the early morning....about twelve hours after their onset....the symptoms abated somewhat leaving me tired and washed out. Dr. Goddard visited and after confirming I'd had a relapse and experienced malaria at its worst....albeit for a relatively short period.... she announced that rather than further doses of Chloroquin....which clearly had not done the job completely, she was prescribing a new anti-malarial drug, Camaquin, for me. She also was of the opinion that the efficacy of the Daraprin I'd supposed to be taking daily shouldn't have been compromised by my not taking it for the ten days I'd admitted to. This was of no small comfort to me; I'd wondered if I wasn't eligible for some censure from my superiors for 'Unfitting myself for duty' by not sourcing some more Daraprin to take whilst at Bumi Hills.

Camaquin, Dr. Goddard informed me, was considered to be one of the first quinine derivatives that could be employed to both prevent malaria and cure it should it occur in a person. I also learnt that, far from being a disease that was routinely and easily dealt with, malaria caused a number of deaths each year in areas where it was prevalent, including among Whites. Years later when we renewed contact after nearly four decades, Peter Ruck informed me that sadly his first wife had succumbed to malaria in the 'seventies' leaving him with three young children to raise.

Whatever, within a couple of days of my relapse, Josiah gave me the all clear regarding my blood tests and I was ready to resume work and impatient to leave the place. You can leave the next day I was told by my professional carers. And they had a farewell gift...make that more a procedure...for their rapidly becoming less than model patient who'd seized many opportunities during his stay, when well enough, to jokingly cast aspersions on everything from their efficiency and compassion to their sex life!

Mid afternoon on what proved to be my last day at the hospital...despite what I'd been previously told...my somewhat intemperate jibes ceased when the routine of a thermometer was jammed in my mouth. For nearly twenty-four hours my temperature had been normal. This time it apparently wasn't. Shake..shake...and the instrument was back in my gob and a concerned looking Sister was pulling aside my unbuttoned pyjama jacket to check me for spots, a rash or whatever. A cool hand checking my suddenly less than complacent brow; another check of the thermometer, a sigh, a shake of the head and a departure for a second opinion. Another Sister's

perplexed and frowning face and a ‘*Something’s not right*’ shake of the head to my increasingly earnest entreaties for an explanation. Finally.

‘*Don’t be too alarmed, Johnny, but all doesn’t appear well. To be on the safe side we’d better reduce your temperature with an ice bath. Spread the rubber sheet on the bed, undress and lie on it on your back while we arrange for the ice and towels.*’

‘*Bugger! Really!*’

‘*Yes, really*’.

‘*You’re having me on?*’

‘*No we’re not. We’ll be back soon.*’

It’s one thing to unquestioningly bare all when medical people deem it necessary, and obviously no novelty, or source of embarrassment, for them to view one’s private bits, but when one is feeling quite well indeed and two rather attractive females both known to him.... shortly to be joined by a third actually ‘known’ to him in the Biblical sense.... descend on him with a wet towel full of ice cubes that lands fair on his ‘old fella’....already cowering in the bush, so to speak...and this outrage followed the observation made to his lover that from one aspect at least they couldn’t see what she sees in him....and believe me after the cold pack was removed there was even less to see....and the titters become unbridled laughter.... it’s understandable that today I rarely accept on trust medical advice, diagnosis, or even opinion, without employing a certain degree of consideration forethought and on occasion even downright cynicism!.

Lost for words for once....well those employed by a gentleman...I was. But, at least I was told I could get dressed and go back down to my quarters but, to take it easy for a few days. Especially with my beloved beer.

And I swear that before the earth had completed even a couple more rotations on its’ axis, everyone in the wider Kariba area who were aware of my existence were also privy to the clinical details of the Kariba Hospital Sisters awful, unwarranted and unprofessional revenge on an innocent young member of Rhodesia’s finest. And even worse, any attempts on my part to elicit any sympathy for the assault on my person from my peers was lost to ribald comment and laughter. Especially on those occasions when the Sisters in question....the perpetrators....paid a visit to our beloved canteen, The Jam Jar Inn, and I was present!

‘*I’ve had plenty, thank-you, sir*’.

The occasion was an invitation by Insp. Carver and his wife, Moira, to a pre-Christmas gathering at their house.... rather than in the canteen.... of the European members and I’d stuck to my promise to moderate my beer intake. In fact I had just the one beer, sufficient to get me in the mood and included in the customary banter that flowed when the rigid rules are relaxed somewhat at such events. Everyone behaved themselves and were enjoying our superior’s hospitality until the dogfight started! Brutus, a retired Police dog seeing out his final years at Kariba, apparently inadvertently let off the chain, had chosen to join in the party and immediately ran foul of the Carver’s Dobermann....right in the middle of the gathering. Insp. Carver grabbed his dog, George Petersen remembered he’d spent his youth on a farm and valiantly tried to extricate Brutus’ fangs from the Dobermann, suffering a deep bite on a finger for his pains, and the remainder present protectively clutched their bottles and glasses. Thirty-eight years later when George was visiting his parents in Nelson (NZ) and I began ‘*It was you that got bitten on the finger at Chris Carver’s....*’ George held up the scarred digit in answer to my question.

My Patrol Report of my time at Bumi Hills and in the Omayi TTL ran to eighteen pages, near twice the length of any previous report. I carefully edited it....as

I would a newspaper article I'd written....and submitted it to Insp. Carver who'd read it, note any point that may require attention and then forward it to the CO who'd do the same before it would be filed at Kariba.

*'Well, Johnston, you didn't quite get there. A very good effort all the same.'*

About six months later at Marandellas, Chief Inspector Dick DeCourpalay, my next...and last...Member I/C summonsed me to his office. His opening statement left me quite puzzled until he pushed my Bumi Hills Patrol Report in front of me and indicated I turn to the back page.

Insp. Carver and Supt. Mallon of Kariba had both appeared impressed with the report and the latter had ordered the document be forwarded to Mash Prov. (Provincial HQ) for their perusal. Further nice notations and then the 'bomb-shell' at the bottom! The Deputy Commissioner had been so impressed with my report that he'd ordered it be sent to the Training Depot as an example of what would be expected from recruits when they'd be required to submit future Patrol Reports! Bloody, hell, generations of future rural policemen could curse my name and the expectations now placed on them. Most unlikely! A couple of newly trained cops I spoke to couldn't even recall any tuition in writing up patrol reports, never mind any references to the author. But, that was the BSAP Depot; drill smartly, groom and ride your horse well and anything else was incidental!

C/I DeCourpalay's '*...you didn't quite get there.*' was pointing out that the report hadn't made it to the Commissioner's office where it could possibly have earnt a Commissioners Commendation.

*'Basically you're to sit on this hill and observe and note the passage of any craft; especially if it appears to have come from the Zambian shore. One of you can also do a short patrol down the lake edge to check the fishing camps and make sure they're aware of their responsibilities regarding the reporting of strangers in their area. I want a twice daily sitrep. Communications should be good from as high as you'll be.'*

To be fair one couldn't blame Insp. Carver for the situation Rob. Hay....newly out of Depot and a recent arrival at Kariba...and an African Constable and myself found ourselves in on what should have been less of a patrol and more of an observation exercise from a high hill on the shores of Lake Kariba. I'd been cleared for normal duties after my bout with malaria but, had to admit I was still far from peak fitness. Never mind, in theory at least, there was little walking involved.

The plan was for our group to be transported by Game Dept. vehicle for about thirty-five miles in a westerly direction....our vehicle was apparently out of action....from a drop off point on the lake edge. Once we'd reached a large fishing camp on the south side of a large lagoon we'd prevail upon the fisherman to paddle us across the perhaps four hundred metres of water and then tramp for perhaps an hour and spend another hour climbing the hill in question. On the fifth day we'd be uplifted from the Lake edge by Police launch. Piece of cake; proper holiday when compared with some patrols!

Rob was a Rhodesian, fairly tall and well built and rather laconic, not given to ready comment without some prior consideration. He was about six years younger than myself but I instinctively liked the man. Normally on a patrol we'd pay heed to the amount we had to carry but given we'd be transported by vehicle most of the way we opted for a 'few extras'. Did we ever! Rob loved his spuds and onions apparently but I couldn't see we'd consume whole bags of them! I left it to him to finally decide what to take but for the only time I can recall we decided to actually weigh our packs. Rob's pack, which included a transistor radio; *'It could be a bit boring up there,*

*Johnny.*' weighed in at close on eighty pounds. Mine was a measly seventy-four pounds! Besides that we had our rifles and a portable radio which we'd share with carrying duties.

*'You guys are really going to have a holiday, aren't you.'* PO 'JB' Jaboob, the boat skipper.

*'Yeah. Why not; we'll enjoy the break from you types.'* Me; particularly looking forward to getting back into the *bundu* after my enforced absence.

*'There could be a problem, sir. I've heard that the rains have washed out a bridge. It may not be possible to take you all the way.'* The spoilsport African driver for the Game Dept. trying to put a dampener on our high spirits.

Bugger...bugger...BUGGER!! Still miles....we estimated about fifteen at least... from the fishing camp; our destination for that day, we came across an impassible river with its irreparable...in the short term anyway...remains of a bridge. By virtue of length of service I was in charge but, Rob readily agreed we press on on foot. By virtue of rank the A/c didn't have a say in the matter!

Late afternoon when my pack was killing me, and I was a barely better than a shuffling wreck who held up the other patently fitter members, I called a halt near a stream. Rob and the A/C...aware this was my first patrol since my illness... had been rather solicitous of my health and had taken a few items from my pack to lighten it for me. That night it rained, light, but frequent showers that had us huddling under our ponchos and cursing the weather gods. I was first up in the morning to get a brew going.

*'Fer-fucks-sake! Bastards!!'* Not ants or snakes but aggressive.... sting-in-the air and bite you 'cos thay felt like it.... scorpions that had taken refuge from the rain in my pack! At least three of the nasties. Rob and the A/C soon discovered others in their packs.

Why we hadn't crossed the river before making camp I don't know; perhaps physical exhaustion had extended to my rational thinking capacity as well. Rob and the A/C decided to risk walking across the log that spanned the perhaps four metre wide stream. The current wasn't a problem and I correctly estimated the water was only mid thigh deep. Mid stream I decided to adjust my pack and leant forward to take the weight off my shoulders. Rob and soon the A/C suddenly laughed and let out yells of '*Watch out. You'll have ants all over you!*' The tin of condensed milk with a pair of holes in the top in a side pocket in my pack had discharged much of it's contents on my neck and shoulders! At least I had plenty of water to wash it off!

Later that morning we stopped for a break and unfolded the map to get an idea of what faced us. Rob and I both agreed as to where we were map wise. But, disagreed as to the quickest route to take to the fishing camp. I believed we should continue on the path we were on which led first to the lake edge and then followed the lake to the fishing camp. Rob argued that were we to take a direct route to the camp through a nearby valley we'd probably save a couple of hours tramping. Whatever route we chose we'd arrive at the camp too late that day to cross the lagoon and scale the hill beyond it. I'd been a drag on the other pair and finally and reluctantly agreed to let Rob and the A/C take their chosen path and I'd take mine. Not a very wise decision in hindsight! Especially when after Rob and the A/C had departed I discovered the radio by my pack, it being my turn to carry the damned thing. Half an hour on my track and just when I was wondering if I'd even make the camp before dark I came across an elderly African male coming toward me. I asked of the camps direction and distance in English and received a shrug, a '*sorry..sorry...baas*' reply. I'd have to resort to my very limited and dodgy version of Shona or *chilapalapa*.

*'Ah..mdala. Mawedzi ere kupe'.* (Ah, old man. Where is Mawedzi?)

The old fellow brightened and pointed to the left of where I'd determined the camp should be.

*'Pa duzi?'* (Is it close?)

*'Ah...ikona, baas. Pa duzi..duzi...'* (No. It is not so close.)

Damn! I'd learnt that the more *duzis* expressed the greater the distance!

I offered him a cigarette, smoked one myself and was about to shoulder my burden when the African who'd walked off some distance returned and indicated he carry my pack, a gesture I readily acceded to and showed my appreciation by offering him the remaining half packet of fags. In half an hour we reached the lake's edge. Shortly we were joined by an African child of about twelve. An exchange between the elder man and him and the parting with a shilling on my part and the youngster took up the radio. Oh for a camera to have captured the great white *bwana*, rifle in the crook of his arm, striding nobly ahead of his porters! I'd show that man Hay how a more 'senior man' covered the ground! It was after mid-afternoon when we strode into the relatively large fishing camp. After customary greetings with the headman I thanked and dismissed my 'porters' and awaited the arrival of the other pair. When they eventually did appear it was from a totally unexpected direction and they weren't carrying their packs. They'd arrived at the camp a couple of hours before I had.... been shown a spare hut to place their packs in.... and after a feed had gone off on a '*recce*' to determine the length of the lagoon! I made light of my route to the camp, shamefully omitting to mention I'd had my gear carried for me.

The camp people were friendly and having Rob who could speak the local lingo...at least *chilapalapa*...meant it wasn't difficult to arrange our conveyance across the lagoon the next morning.

*'Jeez, Rob, you'll have to tell them nothing to report. No unidentified vessels observed. We can't admit we're not at the OP yet and are still thrashing around in the bloody undergrowth a couple of miles short of our objective!'*

Rob had turned the radio on for our morning sitrep and I was relieved his call was accepted without any comment. After all we were supposed to have spent the previous two nights on the observation post!

My Dad often spoke of an African 'Sanders of the River' film he'd enjoyed as a younger man.. And early that morning when the African youths dragged a flat-bottom all steel, rather narrow craft of about fourteen feet into the lagoon and indicated we board it with Rob, the A/C and myself sitting near the middle of the boat and with four teenage paddlers each side and a piccanin, barely more than four and actually small enough to crawl under the seats; his job to bail out the water that entered through the welds.... and plug as many leaks as he could by biting polystyrene off a block and pressing it into the gaps.... we set off on the perhaps four hundred metre lagoon crossing with the paddlers chanting in unison; I couldn't help but think of the Sanders that Dad had spoken of. And once I was satisfied our baler was up to the job and we wouldn't sink, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

We reached the OP at about mid morning after having a scare from a small herd of zebra we spooked on one of the series of plateaux we crossed on our tramp to the summit of the hill. Across the lake we could literally see for many miles and I had the added comfort that at last our radio sitreps would no longer be 'half-truths'.

By early afternoon I reckoned I was fit to travel down the lake edge to the first of the fishing camps. Essentially we'd lost two nights in getting to our objective and I didn't want to leave out the fishing camp patrol part of our exercise. Rob was content and relaxed enough to remain in camp with just his transistor radio for company. With

considerably lightened packs the A/C and I went down to the lake again and followed a game trail along its edge. Fishing camps were often situated on lagoons and such was the case when, across about one hundred and fifty yards of water, we espied a small camp of about four huts with the same number of men moving about outside them.

*'Ah, sir, they want to know if they can bring their boat across to take us to their camp.'*

One of the men had shouted out and my A/C had translated. I looked towards where I believed the head of the lagoon was....a matter of a couple, perhaps three hundred yards away.... and told the A/C to tell the man we'd walk around it. It was only about four o'clock so time wasn't an issue. Two weary hours later, dispirited and beginning to wonder how many other miscalculations I'd make before the patrol ended, we entered the camp! The men were genuinely happy to see us and had prepared extra food of *sadza* and fish for us to share their evening meal. The fish, bream, was most welcome; the only time I'd ever been offered it on a patrol as I recall. I certainly didn't envy Rob on his hilltop wading into his onions and spuds!

After the meal I offered cigarettes all round and over a fire we chatted and learnt more about fishing practices and its viability for the tribes people. Irvine and Johnson, who held the concession to take and market fish from Lake Kariba supplied both nets and boats....flat bottom steel punts such as we'd crossed the lagoon in that morning...and regularly sent a boat around to pick up the fish that had been subjected to a combination of sun and smoke to preserve it. The fisherman argued that the money they got for the fish was very little for the effort they put into catching and preserving it. I didn't know enough of the economics of the industry to form the opinion that perhaps yet again, this was perhaps a case where the Black man was being exploited. Eventually tiredness overcame us and we retired to a spare hut to sleep.

I awoke early to the morning sounds that precede the sun's appearance. A light mist rose rather eerily from the edge of the lake and as I watched, about a mere eighty yards away, a large number of impala were slowly, quite unconcernedly, walking up from the lake's edge to the cover of the trees.

African police members had always found me relatively easy to approach. I believed I tempered the constant and deliberate emphasis some European policemen used to promote the division in our rank structure without allowing what I considered to be an over familiarity that could jeopardise basic discipline.

My A/C had also been observing the impala and was engaging in low and somewhat serious conversation with the fishermen.

*'Ah, sir, these men say they haven't had nyama since the last elephant cull. Perhaps five years ago. They have been very good to us. Maybe we could provide them with some nyama.'*

The request was framed in a broad beaming smile as only an African could provide. That it was an offence to shoot game without a permit didn't particularly concern me....the case involving Findson excepted! Rather it was a case of... given my mediocre ability with the FN.... me not wanting to lose face with the Africans by only wounding or missing a beast completely! Finally I decided I'd try to provide our hosts with the highly prized *nyama*. Resting my rifle against the side of a hut I watched through the sights until a large male stopped and faced me from about eighty yards away. Then shot him clean between the eyes! The Africans, my A/C included, were completely lost to excitement, charging at the fallen animal and grabbing it as if it may well still require restraining. The hero of the moment, I walked with feigned

nonchalance toward them and issued my instructions. Only the meat was to be kept; hide, horns, head, feet and bones were to be buried in the bush. Should the Game Dept. visit and find the meat you don't....

Enquiries of the fisherman elicited that the next camp was not so far away, but not too close either. About a *duze* and a half I determined! Gone was my lack of energy of the previous days and we reached the fishing camp of about a dozen men after about an hours solid tramp. They had nothing untoward to report and there were no requests for *nyama*. The Batonka drums had remained silent!

After reminding them to report any future suspicious visitors to us....just how they would carry out that exercise, I didn't know or attempt to specify....and wishing them all the best with their fishing, the A/C and I returned to our camp of the previous night. Only two of the men were present and, anxious to demonstrate they'd followed my instructions regarding the disposal of the impala's bits and bones, they led me to a freshly dug 'grave' in the bush and began to shovel out the loose soil until I called a halt to their labours and indicated I was happy they'd complied with my instructions. Apparently the meat had been cut into strips and was drying in another part of the bush. The other two men were lifting nets on the lake near the remains of trees killed off when the lake formed. Shortly they brought their craft into the lagoon. They had about half a dozen bream lying in the bottom of the boat. Without prompting they indicated we board their craft and shortly afterwards we disembarked on the far side of the lagoon.

Rob had nothing to report and when he notified Kariba as such he received in return details of our pick-up for the next day.

My posting to Kariba saw the end of my involvement with my Lomagundi PATU stick. But, the guerrilla incursions across the Zambezi continued.... albeit with small groups involved.....and our Kariba patrols had an increasing emphasis on looking for signs of the passage of the armed men.

*'You'll be flown down the Zambezi Gorge in a South African chopper before daylight to this point here. You'll make your way up the river to be picked up here on Wednesday. You'll have Doug Edley and two A/Cs with you. Call us when you reach the RV point.'*

Insp. Carver had a map spread before him and had indicated the important topographical features we had to cover. He didn't need to tell us what to look for.

Doug was a member of the local Police Field Reserve. A relatively heavy-set man in his late forties I'd never patrolled with him before but knew him quite well socially and instinctively liked him. However; given the apparent arduous nature of the country we would cover, I wondered if my Member I/C had chosen wisely in his second European detail. Then finding out that A/C Nelson....a man I had patrolled with and instinctively disliked.... was one of the two African details on the patrol didn't exactly leave me brimming with confidence that all would go well in the succeeding two days.

Before the short patrol was to conclude with the debrief in the Member I/Cs office I'd already privately conceded that perhaps I, myself, hadn't been his best choice to lead the patrol!

*'Say, man. You sure this river is the one we gotta drop you guys off at?'*

The South African Tech. Sgt. had conversed with his pilot before tugging off his head-phones and turning back to me with a folded section of map covering the area in question. His finger had traced down the map to stop at a narrow gorge intersecting the main river cliffs.

Shit! I didn't know and had been relying on the pilot to have been fully briefed on his mission. Interpreting topographical maps had never been my forte. Below us in the late pre-dawn the Zambezi was a shiny ribbon snaking between high dark cliffs. I took the map from the technician and counted down the rivers from the Kariba dam. Then gambled I'd got it right.

*'That's the river, Sgt.'*

The head-phones went back on and shortly the Alouette began its' descent. And my blood pressure began its ascent! I'd flown in choppers twice before....once in Depot during training....and wasn't 'a nervous passenger', but, I'd never had the responsibility before of choosing which part of what appeared to be a most God-forsaken place we were to de-buss!

*'It's no good. We're going back to have a shufti at the last river we passed.'*

The technician was unequivocal in the decision just made. The Flying Officer did a 'one-eighty' with his aircraft and headed back up-river. The approach to the high sandy bank of the preferred river was slow, measured and clearly involved all the pilot's skill and concentration.

*'Soon as I yell 'Right!' you get out quick. On the pilots side.'* The Tech. Sgt. waited for the pilots signal and it came just as we felt the choppers skids touch the top of the high sloping bank. *'Right! Out! Out! Quick as you can!'*

Doug heaved his pack out and followed it quick-smart. As did A/C Nelson. The other A/C carried a Greener shotgun and clearly the sling was caught in an obstruction which delayed his departure.

*'Chop! Chop! Out! Out!'* The aircrafts skids had lifted from *terra firma* when the A/C finally disappeared with his weapon. I threw my pack out and rifle in hand jumped. I am convinced that had my landing not been on soft and sloping sand I may well have been killed, or at least suffered broken a leg. As it was I landed with a sickening '*whoomp!*' that left me winded. The choppers engine noise increased as it powered up to gain height and the machine was soon disappearing. And Doug was soon hovering over my prostrate form with good advice!

*'Bloody hell, Johnny. Use a parachute next time you leap from that high out of a plane!'*

I could only nod and fight to get my breath and wits back. Once I recovered I passed the less than welcome news to the rest of the group that we'd commence our patrol travelling downstream, not up, to allow for coverage of the ground my briefing by the Member I/C had included.

The going was slow and I decided that once the tributary in question was in view it would be time to turn back and travel upstream. It was still early morning when we'd returned to our drop-off point. Shortly, upstream from the scene of 'my great leap' we encountered an obstacle that would again challenge my physical capabilities; a slip that left a broad seemingly smooth and steep face that went down into the river itself. Given my poor 'head for heights' and the fact I'd discovered my near new 'poro-crepe' sole issue boots had relatively poor grip on rocks I deemed we may well have to climb above the slip. A/C Nelson thought otherwise and slowly, carefully picking his way, managed to traverse the near smooth slope. The other A/C followed and both made it to the other side. Doug had been a quarryman for much of his life and was confident he'd make it across. But, when I suggested we try and climb above the slip and bypass it he readily accepted my suggestion.

*'Wait there for us! We'll climb around the slip and meet you where you are!'*

Trusting the A/Cs understood me, Doug and I began to climb the steep slopes that gradually grew more difficult until I made the decision to return to the river.

We'd lost about an hour but, I wasn't concerned the A/Cs weren't in sight. They could have moved on to a shady spot to relax and await our arrival. Doug slowly made his way across the slip, reached the other side and announced it would be far from easy for me. Then he produced a roll of strong string, tied a stick to one end and floated it down to me. I stripped off to my underpants, kept my issue web belt on and after getting my pack and rifle balanced I had them floated and towed back to Doug. Then I confessed to my companion that I wasn't only a hopeless rock climber, I was at best a very mediocre swimmer!

*'Tie that to your belt! I'll pull you if needs be!'*

Again the cord floated back to me. I'd naturally been acutely aware that the Zambezi harboured some nasty crocs but a keen examination of the area revealed only a number of tiger fish....some quite large....below me in the slow running water.

On Doug.'s signal I dived across the water and executed a very vigorous parody of the Australian Crawl (over-arm to we Kiwis) until I was well clear of the water again. Doug was laughing fit to bust a gut and was later to relate the incident to others within my earshot in varying forms; perhaps the funniest detailed how I'd have '*reached the main Kariba road had I not been held back by the cord tied to my waist!*'

We hadn't travelled far when it became obvious that the A/Cs had not waited for us. I was annoyed but Doug was particularly angry. We pushed on with me determined and confident we'd catch the errant pair but it soon became apparent that Doug wasn't keeping up...starting to limp a little... and finally he admitted to having wrenched his knee in our travels. I could hardly feel frustrated or annoyed with the man, it had been me who'd caused us to lose time in the first place!

The terrain varied considerably; in places we climbed around sheer rock faces that had the river directly below us; sometimes we crossed relatively flat and easy going areas where hippo had left the river and fed on the vegetation.

*'Look at that bastard!'*

Going through an area of thin bush just above the river there was a sudden noise and movement about twenty metres ahead of us and a fairly large croc slid down the bank into the river. Further on as we climbed around a bluff above the river I more than once made the comment to Doug that I believed the croc was following us only to have Doug laugh and dismiss the idea. When we came to an area where a shingle and sand spit extended some twenty odd metres into the river, Doug announced he wished to fill his water bottles. Without stating my intention I remained higher on the bank on 'Croc-watch'.

Carrying just his two water-bottles Doug chose to move to near the outer end of the spit where there was more current and possibly fresher water. He'd filled one bottle and was crouched over the second '*when I saw it*' and instinctively flung my rifle up to my shoulder.

*'Get away from the river, Doug!!'*

Less than four metres from my companion a large croc. ....easily visible to me....was gliding in for the kill!

There was no hesitation on Doug's part. For a big man he moved rapidly in the soft shingle with one purpose in mind and without a backward glance. The croc., all of its back and tail visible above the shallow water, spun about in its frustration of being denied a kill, found deeper water, dived and then moved rapidly along the bottom and upstream around the end of the spit leaving a plume of brown dirty water to drift lazily down-stream.

*'What-the-fuck, Johnny?' Doug managed through his heavy breathing.*

*'That trail of muddy water was made by a bloody croc. having a go at you!'*

I'd given up the idea of trying to catch up to the perfidious A/Cs and could only hope they'd wait at the RV for our arrival. They carried the radio and the map of the area. I was relying on simple arithmetic to count off the rivers we passed to choose the point where we'd climb up to the RV!

When I chose late afternoon to call a halt for the day it was on an area of flat ground above the river. Below us, comfortingly not too close, we could hear hippo and there were signs...comfortingly not too fresh....that the hippo had visited the place to graze in the past. Of some discomfort....seemingly mocking us....were the boot-prints the two A/Cs had left in their passing. I was tempted to take just my rifle and alone put a 'fast dash' in to see if I could reach the errant pair at their camp for the night, but after talking it over with Doug. finally concluded I'd had enough exertions for the day.

The ground was cold, hard and dry. It was near impossible to get comfortable but I must have dozed off because sometime, long before daylight, I awoke and became aware of the sound made by grass being wrenched from the ground. It just had to be hippo I reasoned in a sleep dulled mind, suddenly sparking to acute awareness. I slid my rifle away from the edge of the sleeping bag and took it up. Reached behind me with it, hoping to tap on a recumbent Doug and make him aware of our plight. No result. Dimly out of the corner of my eye I could see a dark form that periodically moved.

*'Doug. ....Doug....Doug.'* Why couldn't the bloody man see and hear what I could?!

*'DOUG!!'*

*'Whadda-you-want, Kiwi?'*

The dark form straightened up and as it moved closer transformed itself from a belligerent quadruped interrupted in his grazing to a rather bemused biped bearing an arm-load of dry grass to stuff under his groundsheets and gain more comfort and hopefully a more restful slumber!

Doug was adding to his chronicle of stories to relate about his patrol leader!

Half an hour after leaving our camp the next morning....perhaps a mile of tramping....we came across the evidence of the A/Cs evening camp. A further hour of relatively easy going....keeping in mind Doug's troublesome knee....and we reached the tributary where I believed we must climb to our RV point. When we spied the A/Cs boot prints doing just that my spirits lifted somewhat. I was still confident that Nelson and the other A/C would be waiting at the RV and I wouldn't be faced with a 'please explain' from my Member I/C about the 'divided patrol'. No such luck

Once we'd climbed the escarpment we had about a twenty minute easy tramp to the bush road. It was then we heard the distinctive sound of a Land-rover making its way towards the RV and shortly it stopped about a hundred and fifty metres from us across a narrow gut...a dried up tributary. I yelled to the driver once I'd seen him leave the vehicle and he acknowledged the call.

*'Snake...Doug!!'*

Crocs, 'hippos' and now another 'nasty'!. I'd led the way down the narrow loose shingle track; opting to move quickly to keep my balance and stay upright. The snake was dark brown, long and moving across the track. I literally jumped right over it as I shouted a warning to my companion who followed closely behind me.

*'You bloody shit!. I'll fix you!!'*

Doug, who'd been carrying an SMLE for the patrol couldn't stop in time, went down on his backside and slid rapidly downhill pushing shingle and reptile before him with his rifle flailing the air and his curses turning the same medium blue!

*'It's gone, Doug.'* I'd seen the last of the snake rapidly disappearing into the bushes alongside the track.

There were no A/Cs at the RV; they'd explained to the driver, who'd expected us early morning, that 'the European police may be much later because of their difficulty with the terrain.' On dropping the A/Cs back at the station the driver had been sent straight back to the RV to await our arrival. In effect we'd been barely an hour behind the A/Cs and I was in a rather bad mood when I fronted up to Insp. Carver for the debrief.

*'You were in charge, Johnston. It was your responsibility to keep the patrol together. I'm not going to formally charge Nelson with disobeying any order you gave him but, I will punish him as such by sending him out on the next patrol.'*

Nelson hated patrolling so I suppose I could take some comfort from my superior's ruling on the matter. When I explained the outcome of the debriefing to Doug he was furious and all for confronting Insp. Carver or Nelson himself. I reminded him that 'the buck stops at the top' and like it or not I'd been at the top...in charge of...the recent patrol. He reluctantly backed down but, 'dined out' on details of the patrol when he subsequently visited the Jam Jar Inn; more especially 'my swim' and the hippos that never were. I reminded him on those occasions in my defence that I'd 'heroically' saved him from being croc. 'skoff'.

When Insp. Carver outlined a Field Reserve exercise I'd take part in, I wasn't to know my participation was part of a bigger plan. Our full-time reservist, Alec Burger and a couple of A/Cs would also take part. Ostensibly Alec.s and my role were as observers and co-ordinators of transport and communication etc.

Very early on Saturday morning about a dozen keen men, mostly Rhodesian born and at least six of whom I knew, assembled at the station, were divided into two groups and were transported to the *bundu* about five miles east of Kariba township. Perhaps the main objective of the exercise was map reading....learning to fix and reach topographical points marked on their maps....and general bushcraft....practising moving easily and quietly through the bush all the while keeping alert for the presence of anything out of the ordinary.

I soon came to the conclusion that I was merely the Regular Force 'representative' on the exercise; they had their plans and ideas of how to go about them.

*'Jeez. Hope they're not hungry.'*

Reg Anderson, a previous patrol companion, and I were walking at the front of our group when on coming out from light bush into an open piece of country he suddenly stopped and signalled the remainder of the group to do the same. About a hundred and fifty yards from us out to one side, in the sun but against the edge of more bush, was a pride of nine lions. Mama and Papa and four half-grown ones were in a resting state; three young cubs were playfully bugging their seniors. It was obvious they'd observed our presence, but apart from a couple of the half-grown lions lazily climbing to their feet.... yawning and looking our way.... there was no other reaction from the pride.

Perhaps it was because of the potential 'fire-power' of our group or our numbers, but I wasn't in the least bit apprehensive sharing that piece of the *bundu* with Felix Leo. Somehow I'd never factored lions in as being a serious danger when we patrolled; my previous 'close encounters' with them had been infrequent and whilst in a vehicle; never an occasion of any real alarm. However, I was to learn from guys in my group when we stopped for a rest and talked of what we'd seen earlier, that lions had in fact attacked humans....mainly rural Africans....and weren't to be dismissed

too lightly. Years later Bill Schollum, a Kiwi who'd served for twenty-five years in the BSAP was to relate how he'd been once stalked by a lioness intent on making a meal of him. He'd also apparently been bitten by snakes more than once.

Discipline among the Reservists...volunteers to a man.... wasn't perhaps of the standard expected of we Regulars but they were generally keen to play their role as an irregular force that could be assembled at short notice to face any sudden security threat to their beloved country. When we made camp for the night a veritable feast was prepared, a marked contrast from the minimal 'luxuries' we Regulars enjoyed when on patrol! Aware the two A/Cs would possibly feel a little uncomfortable in the presence of so many Whites I ensured they weren't ignored and was gratified when our groups self-appointed cook invited them to partake of some of the prepared food and some of the members engaged with them in light-hearted banter.

When we moved on the next morning I was soon aware that our water supplies were running low. There was no more to be obtained in the particularly arid area we moved through and the temperature was rising at a near alarming rate. Mid morning we met up with the other group which included Alec Burger and was lead by Elfy Eleftheriades a well known and generally well liked local Greek....Cretan, I believe to be strictly correct....storekeeper from Kariba Heights. Elfy's brother, Terry, generally referred to as '*Machapisa*' was also a storekeeper, but in the African township at Kariba and remained as such for a number of years after Independence.

Elfy had great delight in recounting their adventures to me of the previous day and night. Apparently the previous evening Alec had had a bad dream turned into nightmare and on believing he was being charged by a rhino had attempted to run in the supine position in his sleeping bag. Tears ran down Elfy's face as he recalled witnessing the event. I was to learn from another member of the group that Elfy hadn't been backward in providing goodies from his shop for the evening meal and they'd all dined like the proverbial kings. As with our group, Elfy's lot were low on water.

Our destination was the Kariba Airport and it was my task to phone for transport from there. I determined that when our objective was perhaps a couple of miles away I'd push on ahead with the hope the transport would reach the airport not long after the group would.

*'Sir. One of the Europeans has no water and he's been trying to get Constable Mapfumo to give him some of his.'*

One of the 'virtues' I possessed...as did the average White policeman... where the African Police were concerned was that I was approachable and wasn't given to dismissing them without fully listening to their concerns. I approached Mapfumo and as a younger and less confident man he was initially reluctant to confirm the senior A/Cs ....Cst. Chamunorgwa's...version of events. Rather than risk antagonising the European reservist....a man known to me....I decided that in setting off for the Airport taking Mapfumo with me the problem would be solved.

Away from the group the A/C confirmed he'd been approached by a White whose attitude when seeking water from the younger Black man seemed to have escalated from a casual request to little better than bullying. Only the intervention of the older A/C had seen the younger Black deny the White water from his own apparently meagre reserve.

The heat was abominable, easily the worst I could recall. As we approached the airport the heat shimmer had the buildings hovering above the ground. Kariba airport was an official met. office recording station and I had to ask the temperature of the duty officer there.

*'A whole one hundred and twenty-four degrees, my man. Fahrenheit of course.'*  
 Bloody hell! Fifty degrees Centigrade!

That evening, well after sunset, the thermometer in the Jam Jar Inn was still reading one hundred degrees F. Re-hydration with cold Lion beers was a medical necessity not an indulgence!

*'The powers that be have instructed us to set up a local PATU stick consisting mainly of Police Reserve details. You'll lead it and have Constable Chamunorgwa as the African detail. I want you to take him up to the rifle range with a .303 and see how he goes with it.'*

I hadn't had a lot to do with Constable Chamunorgwa, aside from the previous Police Reserve exercise, but saw him as a more suitable man than a few of the other A/Cs stationed at Kariba.

I gave him a 'crash course' in fire-arm safety procedure on a range, put up a standard near man sized target and, once I'd ascertained he could both load the weapon and understood the sights, instructed him to adopt the prone position a hundred yards from the target.

*'Take aim and in your own time fire three shots at the target.'*

Boom! Oh, dear....shit oh, dear! The bullet ploughed into the ground well off course from the target and barely forty yards from the firer.

*'Try another, Constable.'*

Boom! No better....worse if anything!

*'Ah, sir. The rifle is not good.'*

*'Let me try, Chamunorgwa.'*

I'd never been anything but rather average with the SMLE.

Boom! Boom! Up to the target to view two holes in it. White man's superiority with arms rested in good hands!

We moved up to fifty yards with no better results from the African. Trying not to unduly prejudice my health, I moved to a position where I could observe Chamunorgwa's 'technique'. It was awful; just prior to firing the rifle he cringed...possibly fearing the recoil...which saw him close his eyes, twist the rifle on it's side and just prior to yanking, not squeezing the trigger, lower the weapon a little.

At about twenty yards I had the Constable stand up in the braced position and fire three shots at the target. Only one scored a hit but, it was enough to cheer the man up. To further enhance the White man's mastery of fire-arms I marked Chamunorgwa's hit with a ball point pen and from the same twenty yard mark fired two more shots in quick....as quick as one could with a bolt action rifle....succession at the target from the hip. Two hits.

*'No, sir. The only use a three-oh would be to him was if a bayonet was fixed to the end of it.'*

I readily concurred with Insp. Carver that our African detail would carry a single-shot, lever action Greener shotgun on the PATU patrols.

PATU patrols weren't confined to the Police area where the participants were drawn from. My first patrol with Field Reservists, Reg. Anderson, Doug Edley, Willy Molyneux all of Kariba and Constable Chamunorgwa was in a African TTL that bordered an African Purchase area nearer Karoi than Kariba. We were out for three nights and essentially were 'showing the flag' and trying through enquiries of the local Africans to establish whether there'd been strangers observed in the area.

*'I have brought you some milk. From my own cow.'*

Peter Beremauro was a wealthy and successful African farmer, who owned his own farm and employed over one hundred African labourers to work with his mealie

and tobacco crops, cattle minding and clay brick-making enterprises. We'd approached him late afternoon on the first day of our vehicle patrol and he'd readily agreed we could sleep the night in a clean concrete floored storage shed that was about fifty yards from his own house. We'd barely set up our gear when he appeared again with a welcome billy of chilled milk for our use. He was a modest and rather quiet man but, given his good command of English we were able to have quite a chat with him about his farm and staff relations, basically the same issues raised on patrols of White farms. Clearly he supported the Smith Government and voiced concern about the attempts at infiltration of Rhodesia by those of his race set on replacing the Whites with a majority government....Black rule.

I was later to learn that Beremauro even provided part-time employment for a White mechanic to service his rather large fleet of tractors, trucks and farm implements.

We visited several other African farmers in our three days but, while they were all welcoming, none appeared as prosperous as our 'host' of the first night. It was interesting for me to observe the interaction between Doug and Reg....Rhodesian and South African born respectively....and the African farmers and their labourers. Whilst the latter were still 'tractor boys', 'farm boys' and even 'garden boys', the Black farmers were accorded more respect and attempts were made to ensure we Whites recognised their status and achievements. It may have helped that most Black farmers, if not all, would have qualified to vote on the B role at national elections and most would probably have voted for the Smith Government (Rhodesian Front) to ensure preservation of the status quo!

Another Black man I remembered, a man who could on occasion be rather irascible and outspoken and who made no secret of his pro-White feelings, in spite of the fact he'd once.... allegedly at least...been shot in the leg with an air-rifle by someone vehemently opposed to his political beliefs and stance; was the African Postmaster of the Harare Post Office. On a salary reputed to be fifteen hundred pounds per annum....much more than that of a humble PO....he easily qualified to vote.

Ever since I'd had my tussle with malaria there'd been rather a cloud hanging over my future at Kariba. Dr. Pat. (Patricia Goddard) had voiced concern that I may have '*suffered some damage to my spleen*' and a further bout of malaria may result in serious health problems. At a post-malaria check up she told me I would perhaps be at less risk were I to serve in a station outside the 'malarial belt'. In her words, '*For preference the coldest station the BSAP has.*'

*'Right, Johnston. Tidy up any outstanding work and get ready to go on transfer to Marandellas. Dr Pat's report indicates another bout of malaria could be a disaster for you healthwise.'*

Such orders didn't brook any argument or plea for reconsideration or reversal.

*'So I've done my three in the BSAP...And that's enough for the likes of me.'*

'Lyrics' put to the BSAP Regimental march; Kuma Kayi.

It was a time for some reflection and consideration of my future. I'd completed my three years contract and was now a 'Two-bar Patrol Officer' or Patrol Officer above the Efficiency Barrier, to give the addition of another gilt bar on my epaulettes its proper name.

Marandellas was a bigger station than I'd imagined it would be. Aside from the CO for the district, Supt. Guy Houghton, there was the Member in Charge, C/I Dick DeCourpalay, two Inspectors, Peter Woods....but always referred to as Ticky.... and Merv Pringle. Three married SO.s ....one in SB....lived off the station and the PO.s

were accommodated in older, but adequate quarters. There were also two full-time Police Reservists, one Hugh Maynard, was an Reserve Inspector. Marandellas also boasted a well known and equally well patronised Police Canteen, The Stables.

After reporting to and having a ‘brief chat’ with the CO, it was time to be briefed by Insp. Woods as to my general duties. I learnt that patrolling, as at Sinoia, was relatively infrequent and restricted mainly to the farming area although there was a TTL, Soswe, that was patrolled on occasion. So it was back to ‘real’ police work with no chance of diversions such as the road-block or PATU call-outs I’d enjoyed at Sinoia and the frequent rural patrols I’d undertaken and so much enjoyed at Kariba. But, I soon gained the impression...and never really had cause to question it...that unlike Sinoia with the morale problems I encountered there, Marandellas was a ‘happy station’ that was well run. With enough interesting incidents and cases to keep one occupied.

*‘Where is he. I’m sick of him playing silly buggers!’*

It was late afternoon on a Saturday and I was the sole PO on duty and in the station Charge Office. The middle-aged White woman demanding information from me was well built, in a buxom and blowsy way...and well fired up. Enquiries on my part revealed the man she sought, her husband, had recently been appointed as a brewer at the local Heinrichs Chibuku African brewery and I realised I had indeed met the rather diminutive man in the same Charge Office. But, instinct told me to deny any knowledge of the man to the angry woman and my reluctance paid off.

*‘You police are always hiding him from me. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.’*

Far from taking on a sense of shame I felt justified in my actions when on further enquiries I learnt that a Court directive prohibiting the woman from any contact with her estranged husband had been in place for several years. A few days later I again met the man concerned, a quiet and likeable guy who, aware his ‘ex’ was on his trail, sadly conceded to me that he’d soon have to move on to avoid her as he had so often in the past from locations ranging from Capetown to Lusaka.

*‘Have you ever in the past been charged with a crime.’*

*‘Ah, no sir, never.’*

The expression ‘*the long arm of the law*’ in my opinion can be a rather cliched one, but one older African, accused of theft, had cause to be reminded of a past ‘misdemeanour’. The White overseer of a factory that packaged milk powder had cause to believe that an employee of long-standing was periodically helping himself to the company’s product. An A/C carried out an investigation without obtaining any definite proof of the man’s guilt and the accused didn’t waiver in his denial of any wrong-doing. I had him fingerprinted and checked to see if he had any previous convictions. Despite his vehement denial I discovered that he had previously been convicted of ‘Theft as a servant’....twenty-six years previously! But, lacking any ‘real’ evidence I finally dismissed the man with ‘a warning’ deeming him to be suitably in awe...and not likely to offend again; if indeed he actually had....of our dredging up his distant past.

Marandellas wasn’t all mundane police work. Not long after my posting there....and possibly ‘triggered’ by my openly bemoaning the opportunities to get out into the *bundu*... I was chosen to be the lone ‘*bandit*’ in a Police Reserve exercise. One Friday evening I was transported to a rural Greek owned store where I’d stay the night. The following morning I was to depart the store at daybreak and make my way through farmlands to a fixed point, some eight miles away, where the exercise would end, hopefully...for the Police Reserve.... with my capture. On the way I was to leave a few

'signs' of my passing such as sweet wrappers. When an aircraft of the Police Reserve Air Wing (PRAW) neared me, I was either to remain stock still or seek cover if available. I'd be carrying an old SMLE and no ammunition for it. I'd also carry a portable radio to notify Marandellas should I become injured or lost.

Now, farms in the Marandellas were known for their tobacco and mealie crops but the ones I'd traverse also included rugged cattle country with areas of bush and scrub dotted with rocky *kopjies*. Having experienced a leopard hunt in similar country in the Sinoia area I must admit to feeling rather vulnerable on this occasion. Especially when I discovered I'd rendered my radio U/S by losing the aerial for the damned thing.

I was in open country when I picked up the engine noise of the first of the PRAW planes to search for me. I sprinted for what cover was available and reaching it remained stock still until '*the danger*' had passed. But, aware I had to keep moving... or allow my as yet unseen pursuers to close on me... I opted to move from cover to cover when I deemed it safe. After about fifteen minutes the plane disappeared but an hour later another was overhead looking for me. Mid afternoon, becoming somewhat footsore and looking forward to a feed I espied a tobacco curing shed in the distance. Just before reaching it I took refuge in a short trench of about four feet depth. I'd barely got my breath back when I heard voices and an unequivocal order to exit my cover without rifle and with hands above my head!

*'What took you guys so long?'*

*'Shut up and keep your fuckin' hands in the air.'*

My cigarettes were 'confiscated', I was made to place my hands against the shed and was roughly patted down before my interrogation as to previous movements began. Jeez, those Reservists played rough! None seemed impressed at the amount of ground I'd covered before detection.... including that from the searching planes.... I was later to learn. Finally I was cleared; the exercise was over, and I could recover the radio and rifle.

It was a chance remark I overheard; '*Her brother in the RLI was killed in the Valley.*' that lead to my meeting, Diane, a Sister at Marandellas, and becoming her boyfriend for a time. Hers was a sad story, Chris, her brother had been her only sibling and barely eighteen at the time of his death. (I've already outlined how at Kariba I took the original message of his death and that of another RLI trooper (Binks) in an ambush.) Diane had also had the misfortune to lose her parents and I believe her step-mother was her closest living contact. Ours was never a fully physical relationship for which I was later grateful. I was drinking rather heavily and in retrospect consider I treated her in a rather cavalier fashion; especially when on revisiting Kariba on leave '*I took up where I'd left off*' with my girlfriend there. My 'infidelity' and duplicity found it's just desserts; on my return to Marandellas I learnt my indiscretion hadn't passed unnoticed and shortly after I was to receive a letter from the young woman in Kariba basically telling me '*what a bastard I'd been to treat her so badly*'. I had nothing to offer in my defence to either girl. Diane was well liked by her peers and for a time I was somewhat of a pariah in her circle of female friends, a couple of whom were dating policemen.

Life and work went on. Early one evening a farmer phoned me to report a dispute between two of his labourers near the farm compound had led to one killing the other. It was dark when I reached the farm and rather than accompany me to the scene the farmer indicated his boss-boy would....*I'll leave such matters to you guys.* ... take me and my A/C down to the compound. Commonsense said I should have driven the Landrover to the scene but I'd already begun asking the boss-boy of

what he knew of the incident as we walked in the moonlit night towards the compound down a walking track through long grass. Suddenly the African stopped and indicate I do the same.

*'Where is the dead man?'*

*'Agh..ah... Here, baas.'*

Switching on my torch I discovered another step would have had me literally stumble over the deceased! I'd seen too much killing to be more than mildly surprised. He was a man in his twenties and patently had suffered severe head wounds from an implement. Shortly my A/C.... careful not to include his fingerprints in those of the accused.... located and presented me with a blood stained *badza* (a home-made native axe with a blade on one side and a crude point on the other.)

On enquiring of the whereabouts of the accused I was told he was making his way on foot to Marandellas to give himself up to the Police! It somewhat angered me that the farmer had apparently adopted the attitude that the serious crime involving his employees was entirely a police matter that didn't require any input or co-operation on his part. I felt that he could have at least detained the accused until our arrival.

*'That is the one, baas. He is the man who did the killing.'*

With the body in a 'body-box' we were proceeding back to Marandellas with the boss-boy in our vehicle when we stopped to pick up the accused determinedly...a man on a serious mission... walking alongside the road. On my instructions the A/C 'warned and cautioned' the man he was under arrest for murder. Perhaps I'd been away from real Police work too long with my Kariba posting for my rather cursory examination of the deceased's head wounds before I placed him in the Mortuary...and conclusions as to their extent and location.... was to later lead to a certain amount of embarrassment on my part when the case was brought before the High Court in Salisbury.

*'Patrol Officer Johnston; can you confirm to the Court that this is the native axe recovered at the scene of the killing and further outline to the Court the exact location of the wounds to the deceased allegedly caused by this implement.'*

The Prosecutor held the axe, blade uppermost and moved it from side to side as he and everyone else....with perhaps the exception of the dejected and resigned to his fate accused man...awaited my answer. I regretted then that, for reasons I can't recall, I hadn't attended the autopsy as was usual in sudden death cases.

*'That is the axe and I believe that the spike of it actually penetrated the ear cavity on his left side, My Lord.'*

The Prosecutor was quick to realise my 'oversight'.

*'That's possibly so, My Lord, but the Post Mortem report indicates the primary and fatal wound was nearer the base of the skull. Now tell me, Patrol Officer Johnston; how heavy would you say this axe was?'*

Bugger, the man. Did it really matter...certainly it was heavy enough to inflict a fatal wound. I had to provide an answer.

*'Perhaps about four pounds, my Lord. A little heavier maybe.'*

Another heave or two with the axe as the Prosecutor weighed up the axe and my answer. His assessment.

*'Possibly five pounds or a little more, my Lord.'*

I couldn't help but reflect on the advice SO Bailey at Stodart had given me nearly three years before about not just assuming certain details or first impressions regarding injuries to injured or deceased persons and of how I'd failed rather badly in this case.

The accused had admitted to the apparently premeditated killing, '*I waited for him. He caused me so much trouble and I wanted revenge. I struck him with my badza.*' which, on my further questioning of the man, had apparently came about because the deceased had 'borrowed' a blanket from him and refused to return it or pay compensation of twenty-five shillings. My assumption...but not wish; I was not in favour of capital punishment...that the man would face the gallows was proved wrong. Whilst he was found guilty of murder, his plea of provocation was accepted and he was sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment with hard labour.

My next case involving a death was a rather more straightforward one; suicide by hanging. It took place in the Soswe TTL. An African Sgt. and I with the informant drove as near as we could to the scene of the tragedy which we'd been told '*was on a hill in the bundu.*' We had barely exited the Landrover when the Sgt. after speaking to the informant, pointed and announced; '*There he is, sir, on the ridge.*'

Possibly as much as three hundred metres away, silhouetted against the skyline, the deceased hung below a convenient branch...for his sad purpose anyway...from a small but strong tree. He'd taken a leather suitcase strap, formed a noose with the buckle end, fastened the free end to the branch above his head and strangled himself by raising his feet up off the ground. An elderly man, I was never really provided with any specific reason for his terminal action. But, I can still bring the scene of his death to mind.

The African male was about thirty years of age, read and spoke English well and keen to get a driving licence. And I had no hesitation in passing him on the theory side of the examination. We exited the station and climbed into his PA Vauxhall, a vehicle popular with African drivers.

*'I want you to listen to my commands and drive looking at the road all the time, not at me. If I say 'Stop!' I want you to stop immediately. Ok?'*

*'Yes, baas, I understand.'*

Wisely I chose an infrequently used side road to get an idea of the man's general handling ability of his 'borrowed' vehicle. It wasn't good but I was privately prepared to put his erratic gear changes and uneven clutch deployment down to his initial nerves at having a White policeman sitting alongside of him.

*'Now. I want you to drive down this road and turn right onto the main road. Ok?'*

*'Yes, baas, I understand.'*

The straight section of side road had the customary 'Stop' sign where it met a main and busier road. Whilst I felt the driver was approaching the aforementioned sign a little fast for a person with his limited experience I very unwisely chose to say nothing. He had employed the indicators and....

*'Stop!...stop!!!'*

Oh dear. Shit, oh dear.

*'Have I made a mistake, baas....you said I must turn right onto this road.'*

I'd also assumed the man would obey the Stop sign, wait for the road to be clear and proceed as instructed. The blaring of horns weren't music to soothe and restore my racing heart to a normal rate. And the look of puzzlement on the faces of drivers and their passengers ....as they slowed and negotiated their way around the Vauxhall stalled in the middle of the road....admitted a certain amusement when the uniformed presence in the offending car was noted.

*'Get out of the car. I will drive you back to the station.'*

*'Have I not passed, baas?' (It's true he asked that of me!)*

My next 'client' was female, White and in her late teens. Well educated, as in having attended a private school in Salisbury, she nevertheless struggled a little with the theory part of the driving test but generously for the following reason I allowed her a pass. I'd had the Member I/C previously explain to me that the young woman was in a matter of a few weeks leaving Rhodesia for Lisbon (Portugal) to join the diplomatic service there and having a driving licence would be most advantageous for her. Don't be silly about it, but as long as you consider her safe to drive we'll let the Portuguese put up with her while she overcomes any lack of driving skills and experience. Right, sir. Understood.

What I couldn't understand was why the poor young woman's mother hadn't allowed her daughter to use the customary vehicle she'd apparently practised driving in. The 'column change' farm *bakkie* (pickup truck) she'd 'substituted' for the test was such a disaster of a vehicle that I chose to not check if it was even road legal in case I'd be forced to disqualify the young woman before she'd even demonstrated her ability behind the wheel!

*'Just relax. Concentrate on the road and pretend I'm not here. I'll give you plenty of warning of what I want you to do.'*

After apologetically pointing out to me that her driving practice in the pick-up could be measured in minutes....undertaken that morning....rather than hours, she soon had me making silent but prayerful promises of future homage to St. Christopher as with one hand in a white knuckle grip of the wheel and the other employing the column gear change lever as a conductor would his baton in a lively piece of music, the young woman erratically and with low curses of frustration conveyed us down a thankfully deserted section of back road. I had her stop the vehicle and practice changing the gears with her eyes on the road and not on the column lever. That brought an improvement but in no way was I prepared to let her loose on the main road until she'd undergone several of the exercises such as stopping and starting on a hill...abandoned when it was discovered the handbrake wasn't up to the task...and the customary 'three point turn'....conducted in the wide entrance to the railway station.

*'I have to pick up some papers from my father at the DCs (District Commissioner) office.'*

*'Your father works there?'*

*'He is the District Commissioner.'*

Perhaps another apparent reason why I'd been instructed to be 'lenient' with testing this particular driver.

*'Then let's drive round there.'*

As we approached the offices of the local administration for the Marandellas area a certain White policeman felt our visit shouldn't go unheralded. Coincidentally he remembered he'd omitted to test the young woman on her reversing ability. Poor fool! After all she had already demonstrated she could at least engage reverse gear when carrying out her three point turn.

*'I want you to swing over to the right side of the road. Then stop and reverse through the entrance to the forecourt. Check the road behind and both ways before you carry out the manoeuvre.'*

Now the entry to her father's place of work was at least three vehicle widths wide and bordered by a tidy and obviously well tended hedge.

*'You're going well....oops..engine stalled....never mind, start again and carry on...not so fast...clutch/accelerator pedal confusion.....pickup cruelly taking advantage of any human restriction and control.....Ooooh!! crunch!...feminine cry of*

despair as the progress of her vehicle was halted by a nasty, useless, inappropriately situated hedge.

*'Oh, bugger!'* Under my breath on my observing smartly uniformed African doorman of establishment smartly ducking inside the building to report the apparent attack on the hallowed offices of local government.

*'Good afternoon, sir, I....'*

*'What the hell do you think you're doing, young man?'*

*'It was my fault, father...I misjudged my...'*

*'It wouldn't have happened if he'd chosen a more appropriate place for you to carry out the test. People enter my grounds looking ahead, not over their shoulder.'*

It was easy at that moment to understand why men in such authority make instant, wise and unequivocal decisions on any issue they confront that's out of the norm.

Oh, the dilemma. Finally the White policeman....endowed with far less authority and infinitely less acumen than the young woman's father....made the decision to fail the shaken lass. And strongly advised she fronted up for the next practical test in a vehicle she was familiar with.

She obtained her driving licence with about a week to spare before her posting to Lisbon.

Dean Acheson was a Secretary of State for the USA Government (in the JFK or the Lyndon Johnson administration, I believe). Duke Acheson, his brother, was a well known farmer in the Marandellas district.

*'Johnston, I'm at the Country Club. You're to come up here now and pick up young Acheson. He's been drinking and has been thrown out after making a nuisance of himself.'*

Our CO, Supt. Guy Houghton would have noted the time of his call to ensure his orders were acted upon immediately.

At the Country Club.

*'Will his father come in and pick him up from the station, sir?'*

*'I've phoned his father suggesting he come and pick his son up but, he's asked us to hold him overnight at the station as a lesson to him. Send him home in the morning.'*

The seventeen year old youth was drunk but co-operative in a 'not-a-care-in-the-world' state. Back at the station I kept him in the main room behind the Charge Office away from curious African eyes. He declined the offer of a cup of tea. There was a slight problem; as with virtually all district police stations there were no designated separate facilities to hold White prisoners. There were some who would have said that any White who disgraced himself enough to warrant overnight detention should be made to make do in African cells anyway. Finally young Acheson conceded he'd be happy to sleep on the floor of the radio room....after promising not to touch anything there on pain of prosecution 'for sabotage of a Government instillation'....and after the provision of blankets was soon sleeping the slumber of the young and carefree. The duty A/Sgt. promised to keep an eye on him when I went off duty.

Next morning, a Sunday, I had Duke Acheson on the phone.

*'But, Mr. Acheson. He's lost a shoe somewhere.'*

*'I don't care if he's in his bare feet. He's to walk home and if I learn he took a lift I'll take him back into town and make him start again. You pass that on to him please.'*

The Acheson farm as I recall was about six miles from Marandellas but the young fellow accepted his ‘punishment’ without any overt anger or frustration..

Another well known farmer in the area, Mike Hill, was also known as “*The Corporal*”, a rank he attained on overseas service. Grown cynical of those other former serving members who’d been commissioned and prefixed their names on their letter boxes or road gates with their military ranks such as Colonel, Captain or Wing Commander etc, Hill had proudly prefixed his name for all passersby to see with Cpl., a gesture which caused his fellow farmers, ex-officers included, a certain amount of amusement, especially when they addressed him using his humble rank.

One wouldn’t be totally unfair to label our Special Branch section of the BSAP as an organisation that operated in a somewhat autonomous fashion. But, given their relatively low numbers, they had to maintain a good working relationship with we uniformed ‘lesser beings’ because when an operation of their making required the sudden deployment of large numbers of police we were generally immediately available. Through my time with PATU at Makuti and a few other call-outs, I’d had a fair involvement with the *malurkas*, as they were often affectionately referred to, and I found them generally quite easy going and rarely given to exercising the authority of rank as was the want of senior men in the Uniformed Branch. Such was the case when four of we POs at Marandellas were briefed on a ‘operation’ to be carried out in the Mtoko area.

The situation was a somewhat complex one involving subversion, civil disobedience, a perversion of African spiritual beliefs by men intent on furthering their political ambitions and the ubiquitous bogeyman of African politics; intimidation.

When Special Branch first became aware that an *nganga* (witch doctor) in the Mtoko area, who was known as the *Nhoreka*, had been ‘persuaded’ by local members of the banned ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) political party to assume the mantle of *Mhondoro*, or spirit medium of her people, they sent an older African Detective Constable to the rural area to work undercover and to obtain as much information as he could concerning the situation. He undertook his duties well over a period of several months and was able to confirm Special Branch’s suspicions that the ZANU people were ‘grooming’ the woman to preach civil disobedience to her people in her ‘new role’ as a *Mhondoro* or spiritual channel to the African supreme being *Chaminuka*. The *Nhoreka* was to exhort her tribes people to no longer dip their cattle, register their dogs, pay their annual tax (one pound, as I remember), carry out contour ridging (an exercise to reduce erosion) of their lands or any other civil requirements under law. As proof of her god-given authority, the *Nhoreka* announced that a local, hitherto bone dry river (a drought prevailed in the area) would have water appear in it before the rains came...if and when they did indeed arrive.

Members were co-opted from adjoining stations and one hot late winters day about forty of us, European and African assembled at the Mtoko Police Station. Our brief was to travel by vehicle to as close as we could get to the *Nhoreka*’s kraal, march the remainder of the distance and arrest the woman. Then the potential bombshell....the scary bit.

*‘You are all to draw weapons from the police armoury. The worst scenario is this woman could have the support of up to eight-thousand of her people.’*

Bloody hell. I probably wasn’t alone at that moment in bringing to mind the Battle of Shangani of seven decades before where one Major Alan Wilson with thirty odd militia perished in an attack by several thousand of Lobengula’s Matabele warriors. Never mind the local tribesmen we’d face...if any.. were Mashona and

considered less warlike in temperament to their traditionally hated Matabele neighbours to the south. Poor consolation having Rhodesian history books remember me as a member of the heroic Mtoko Patrol where forty brave men of the BSAP died attempting to arrest one stroppy tribeswoman!

We travelled in convoy, debussed at a previously designated point, crossed a dried up river bed and began marching.... soon to be trudging.... in the intense heat of an early afternoon. Down a long valley, occasionally moving through areas of previous years mealie crops, forty men cursed the heat, stumbled over the broken stubble of corn plants and periodically cast glances over the surrounding hills for signs of '*the eight-thousand*'.

Then. '*That is where she is, sir.*'

The elderly SB D/Cst pointed out a trio of pole and dagga huts about three hundred metres away. Crop guards huts, I assumed. When we were about fifty metres from the huts we were halted. The SB D/Cst accompanied two of the senior European men as they neared the huts. A younger woman at the entrance to a hut was spoken to before she disappeared indoors. A few minutes later the *Nhoreka*, a relatively tall woman of perhaps fifty dressed in a long off-white garb emerged from the hut accompanied by two younger women we learnt served as her acolytes. I believed then that she'd been expecting us. Certainly she accompanied us without any outward display of anger or resentment on the return trip to the vehicles. The '*eight-thousand*' never eventuated and forty relieved men soon forgot that such a possibility had ever existed.

*'Johnston is on the right track there but the main issue is not ascertaining her status but proving she used her influence over her people in attempting to incite them to carry out acts of civil disobedience.'*

Prior to the '*Mtoko incident*' I'd read a book on African beliefs and religious faith that outlined the status and duties of the spirit medium in each tribal area and the initiation ceremony people aspiring to such a position underwent. I stuck my neck out so to speak.... surprising a few of my peers when questions were asked as to just what the spirit medium, or *Mhondoro*, meant to each tribe....by outlining what I knew of African religious practice. The SB man indulged my 'superior knowledge' for a few minutes before letting me down gently!

We retired to the Mtoko Country Club where the only Kiwi present drank too much, performed a well received *haka*, got back to the Landrover and remembered commenting to a colleague that I'd left my cap behind before I collapsed. I was to learn later that I was assessed by a local doctor as requiring hospitalisation and was conveyed to Marandellas Hospital by ambulance. I regained full consciousness as I was being carried along a hospital corridor, sat up on the stretcher to the consternation of the two bearers, swung my legs over the side of the stretcher and stood up, albeit a little groggily. True! As quick as I'd gone down at Mtoko so I'd apparently recovered at Marandellas!

I was kept in hospital overnight and released the next morning. The Member I/C understandably wanted a '*please explain*'. I admitted to drinking brandy generously bought for me by patrons of the Country Club but whilst I was certainly intoxicated my subsequent 'behaviour' was a little strange. Perhaps dehydration and drinking on an empty stomach contributed to my sudden collapse. A shrug and a shake of the head from C/Insp. DeCourpalay told me to be more temperate in future.

The *Nhoreka* was found guilty of offences under the Law and Order Maintenance Act and sentenced to six months imprisonment. She was to serve her sentence in the African Police Camp and not behind bars. I wasn't alone in feeling a

degree of sympathy for the woman who'd fallen prey to the conniving of men with corruption and intimidation underlining their political schemes.

My performing my rather contrived version of a *haka* wasn't a regular event but one late Sunday afternoon, undoubtedly somewhat fired up with booze, I agreed to perform '*my routine*' for the nurses from the hospital who'd visited The Stables. One nurse, Tina, who was dating a fellow cop.... and was understandably a more regular visitor.... suggested I'd look more '*authentic*' were I to have a full facial *moko* (she called it 'tatts') inscribed on me with a mascara pen. And to be even more authentic I removed a musket from the canteen wall.

*'Ko mate pakeha!!'*

The rampant warrior was just getting into his stride when a loud '*Whoops!*' from behind him and looks of amusement turning to collective horror from the onlookers as with a life-saving duck of his head our station's senior man avoided being brained by a wildly waving musket being used as a prop by a seemingly out of control junior member executing a fierce dance of South Pacific origins! Ruined...as in bringing to a sudden end... my routine did Supt. Houghton, but I was included among those he purchased a beer for which indicated some degree of forgiveness for the threatened 'assault' on his person!

*'By the way, you've still got your flags up.'*

, Late in 1968, Rhodesia decided to further demonstrate her independence of Britain....despite our Regiment's Honorary Commissioner being the Queen Mother....and a directive arrived at all Police stations to the effect that after the tenth of November...three years after the UDI...the Union Jack would no longer be flown and '*Flag-poles, one, to be returned to....made that bit up*' On the particular date I was the sole European detail on late afternoon/night shift when a couple of hours after sunset a young European entered the Charge Office. He immediately explained he was fellow comrade in arms.... a soldier on leave... and he'd broken the fan belt of his car and lacked a suitable spanner to install the spare he carried. I managed to find a spanner for the job in a Landrover and as he left to sort out his problem he made the comment regarding our flags. I assumed that whichever African detail was responsible for lowering our flags had got confused by the '*flag directive*' and wasn't staging a solitary and silent protest at another step Rhodesia had taken to emphasise her separation from any future political influence Mother England may exert over the rebellious colony.

As I directed an A/C to rectify the omission I suddenly had a thought and followed him to the flagpoles where, to his bemusement and somewhat confusion, I lowered the Union Jack myself. I was later to assert to fellow cops and others that, given Rhodesia was the last country in Africa to fly the Union Jack at Government instillations, '*I'd probably been the last person to lower the Union Jack on the African continent, other than at British Embassies.*' But, then again I may have got that wrong. And my assertion didn't provoke any real interest from those I inflicted it on!

Traffic enforcement, other than the investigations following a vehicle accident, was a low priority in rural areas but, one day...with 'real' work being at a minimum... myself, another PO and an A/C were instructed to 'carry out checks for speeding motorists' on the main Salisbury road outside Marandellas. Apparently we were to measure off a certain distance, hide one member, the A/C in the bushes at the start of the 'speed trap' equipped with a radio, a PO at the end of the said 'trap' with a stop watch and radio and have the other PO further down the road to stop any offenders who crossed the marked area in less than a calculated time. When the

motorist passed the A/C he was to shout '*Right!*' into his radio prestle switch which activated the next PO into pushing the button on top of his stop watch who in turn signalled the third member when it appeared the motorist....sound complicated...we thought so and after enjoying the break from the office for an hour were able to report that motorists in the Marandellas area were exceptionally law-abiding, especially when it came to speeding!

When a man in his late twenties, normally resident in Umtali, had been thwarted in love by a young woman, Beulah, he wrote her a letter intimating that he may take his own life. The woman passed on the letter to Police Umtali who contacted us indicating the man, driving a large early model American sedan, was believed to be heading for Salisbury. A young PO was sent to maintain a watch for the vehicle on the Umtali side of Marandellas. When a vehicle matching the details given approached him, the PO signalled the driver stop. As he approached the vehicle the driver put a pistol to his head and took his life! I didn't carry out the Sudden Death investigation but, read the 'suicide note' when it arrived at Marandellas. It was a sad record of a man obsessed with a woman who didn't reciprocate his passions. And accustomed as we were to death...often in violent circumstances...we could only feel sorry for the young PO who'd had to actually witness the last moments of a man's life.

*'Nobody is sure what exactly is going on but we've received word that an African female has died in what may be mysterious circumstances. I want you to visit her kraal, talk to anyone who may know what happened and look for any obvious signs of anything untoward. If everything appears above board leave her to be buried by her family; if you have any doubts bring the body in for a Post Mortem.'*

One late afternoon, when I was 'On Call if needed' Insp. Woods summonsed me and outlined the above task.

It was a relatively long drive to the dead woman's kraal and following my A/Cs directions we reached it just after dark. We were directed to the hut containing the deceased woman and after expressing my sympathy I asked an older woman to pull back the sheet covering the corpse so my A/C and I may examine her upper body. This provoked an increased keening from the women present and sad reflections from the male relatives. She appeared to be a woman in her mid to late twenties and had been dead for several hours. What intrigued me was her pallor. Instead of the light-grey/yellow-brown colour I'd previously noticed in deceased Africans, hers...on her face and neck...was an off-white colour infused with a red-pink rash, almost like a 'condensed' chicken pox rash. Apparently the rash covered her entire body. Through the A/C I learnt she had taken ill a few days prior to her demise but hadn't sought medical treatment for her ailment...what ever it was. I learnt the woman was no longer married and had returned to her kraal only recently from Harare African Township. Satisfied that the grief being expressed was real and equally content....after further detailed questioning from the woman's family....that foul play such as poisoning didn't appear likely, I sounded out the A/Cs opinion and he concurred with me that we leave the body for the family to conduct their funeral. I was aware that other police details might arrive at a different conclusion but I didn't have any misgivings in expressing to Insp. Woods my 'Appears to be natural causes.' finding. Whilst I didn't as a matter of course abhor Post Mortems....some I felt could be quite interesting...I did feel that some 'mysteries' are best left as such when there was no apparent criminal content present!

One didn't always have that '*What have I done now and what excuse can I dream up,*' feeling when summonsed to the Member I/Cs office. One such visit late

in 1968 had me searching for answers however and basically put the seal on my decision to leave The Force and to return to NZ. C/Insp. DeCourpalay put me at ease before getting straight to the point. He believed that despite my having only completed just over three years service, my age (26yrs) and my generally being able to investigate and put together a good case for Court meant I should seriously consider undergoing the next promotion course to Section Officer. Then the ‘sting in the tail’.

*‘Section Officer Ferguson (our Police Prosecutor) is looking to promotion himself and a transfer elsewhere. If you pass the promotion course....and I don’t see why you wouldn’t....you can succeed him as our Prosecutor.’*

I tried to portray a pleased and pleasantly surprised face to my superior but his summation of my future career was at odds with my own. I promised to think over the Member I/Cs plans for me and to get back to him. Before I left his office he produced a radio message form and said; *‘You went on that exercise to Mtoko to arrest the witchdoctor woman, didn’t you?.’* How could he forget; I’d returned to Marandellas in a bloody ambulance! Then: *‘Read this. I think you’ll find it interesting.’*

Basically what the relatively lengthy message from Police Mtoko outlined was that the local District Officer had carried out a patrol in the same TTL the *nganga* (The *Nheroreka*), had been removed from and he’d found that despite the rains being late the tribes people were generally happy, appeared well fed and were carrying out their civil duties. However, in line with the *Nheroreka*’s assertion.... prior to her arrest.... that water appearing in a local river before the rains came would demonstrate her spiritual powers and further prove she was indeed the tribe’s *Mhondoro* (spirit medium), the patrol actually saw significant pools of water in a section of the hitherto dry river bed. Fortunately experience had taught locals in the area that... rare as it was....the ‘phenomenon’ had occurred in the past and was believed to have been brought about by a ‘*subterranean subsidence*’ and not as a result of a spirit medium’s prediction. So there....case closed.

I recall seeing C/I DeCourpalay and Insp. Woods standing in conversation and receiving the ‘best wishes’ of other police members as they awaited the outcome of their applications for a commission. Both were turned down but Det. Insp. Jock Waugh...often referred to in endearing, not derogatory terms as ‘Jock Wock’... happily accepted our congratulations when he received word of his commission.

I gave the question of my time in the Force my full consideration from a number of angles. I’d been away from NZ for more than four and a half years and whilst my parents and siblings hadn’t exactly expressed it as such, I knew they’d welcome me back home. I’d also missed the weddings of my two siblings; Edith first and later Mervyn. Africa was just so far away from NZ, flying was complicated and expensive....one flew via London in that era....and boat travel would eat up six weeks of my leave for the return journey. And somehow becoming a Police Prosecutor....whilst it may be of a limited duration....seemed counter to the adventure I’d sought and found in the BSAP, especially once I’d made the decision to apply for a District posting. Even as I found day to day police work interesting and stimulating enough, the thought of prosecution work....albeit with its own challenges.... seemed a sideways step into a ‘desk job’ which went against my restless need for action. And one wouldn’t find answers as to whether or not one left or remained in the Force from his peers. It was an individual decision to be made and not one that provoked a ‘wringing of hands’ from fellow cops should one elect to depart ‘Rhodesia’s finest’. Indeed of my training squad (6/65) of sixteen men, eight were to leave after less than five years service; three of them once they’d ‘done their three’.

The decision once made I reported to the Member I/C that I'd serve a further three months....one had to give that much notice unless exceptional circumstances arose....and leave the Force on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1969...three years and eight months after my attestation. My decision was received with the half expected '*Oh, well if you're certain that's what you want to do, Johnston.*'

Work proceeded as normal and my parents welcomed my decision that would see my return from my adventures on the Dark Continent.

*'Hey, mapolisa. How are you?'*

One Saturday, when I was rostered to be on duty on the late shift, I decided to visit the Marandellas Show early in the afternoon. I was on my own when I saw a pair of guys, one of whom I recognised from a brief meeting of nearly a year before.

*'Ah. Joe Conway. How's it going?'*

Joe introduced me to his rather taller and well built companion....also a member of the SAS....Tony 'X' (Former SAS members will know to whom I am referring....why I don't reveal his surname will also become apparent).

After a chat and a beer together I left the pair and returned to the station.

*'You're not touching me until I know my mate is ok.'*

At about 8pm that evening the Marandellas Hospital phoned to say they needed relatively urgent assistance following a road accident involving a pair of soldiers. I notified the detail 'on call' to get to the Charge Office and drove to the Hospital. The news was bad. Tony had been driving his Vauxhall towards Macheke with Joe as his passenger when he'd rolled the vehicle. Joe was unconscious and in a critical state on a bed around which the curtain had been drawn. Tony was pacing about the same room expressing concern for the condition of his friend. From the Sister on duty I learnt that Tony had shoulder injuries that were of some concern and which would need seeing to but, Tony wasn't co-operating. I'd been summonsed to the hospital to restrain the restless and recalcitrant soldier so the Sister could administer a sedative by injection. A double dose had been prepared she assured me out of his earshot.

Bloody hell, Sister, have you seen the size of the man....three axe handles across the shoulders....even if one was a bit dodgy; and one of a team trained to kill with a little finger as his OC, Dudley Coventry, had pointed out to me at Makuti, a year or more previously. My concerns, expressed in facial contortions and low pleas for understanding, fell on scornful ears. I'd have to do my duty even if it meant being maimed or worse! I was aware that as soon as Tony saw the Sister and her kidney tray of 'weapons' again he'd adopt a very defensive position...one of attack...verbally anyway.

*'Right, Sister; I'll try and lure him into the corridor while you remain out of sight. When I yell 'right!' you come running and get that needle into him.'*

And there'll be no time for niceties, no alcohol swab and the '*this will only be a little prick.*' routine. And aim straight with that needle, Sister, the poor prick trying to secure your intended 'victim' is dozy enough without the need of a double strength chemical fix!

On the excuse of having a cigarette together I got Tony out into the corridor. He accepted a fag from me and as I opened the matchbox to light the cigarette I heaved my shoulder into him, pinned him against the wall and yelled '*Right!*'. The Sister moved quickly, needle through cloth into his thigh.

*'Don't move, Tony. You'll break the fuckin' needle!'*

Then rather an anticlimax instead of the expected physical or verbal abuse as the discipline and awareness of circumstance, so necessary in his specialised unit,

kicked in. '*You bastards won't put me out with your mickey finn. I want to be here for my mate.*'

Tony continued pacing with even more determination and stayed on his feet for a long five minutes after the double-dose injection....far longer than the Sister had predicted....before we lead him in a drowsy state to a bed where his injuries could be assessed.

Sgt. Joe Conway was transferred to the Avenues Hospital in Salisbury and died later without regaining consciousness.

Only days after Conway's death I was to be directly involved in a tragedy of my own. One Sunday I was serving behind the bar in The Stables when Ben Marshall entered the establishment. Ben, an SO, had recently had postings in Lomogundi but our paths had rarely crossed. Ben had a reputation as being a bit of a character, a man who'd allegedly obtained a copy of Mao Zedong's (Mao Tse Tung to some) Little Red Book from a captured guerrilla and was prone to quoting aloud from it to junior policemen when he was Member I/C Nyamapanda!

Ben had relatively recently suffered a head wound during an engagement with terroists in 'The Valley' that had required the fitting of a metal plate to protect his fine brain and had been transferred to Salisbury for ongoing medical treatment. His trip out to Marandellas in his little Auto-Union car had been an effort to relieve the boredom of his present existence. How much beer was safe for him to consume was beyond my calculation but my eventual '*Perhaps you've had enough now, Ben*' suggestion was met with a response that was typical of the man who often followed his own set of rules. Opening the jacket he wore so only I behind the bar could witness his actions, he revealed a 'thirty-eight' revolver in a shoulder holster. And just so I didn't become confused with his wants he reached his opposite hand in and lifted the weapon just free of the holster... without comment... even as with the other hand he gestured towards the beer fridge! Yes, Sarge. Silly me...of course I'll serve you...have it on me!

I was on call out if needed later that afternoon and stopped drinking well before the possibility of having to go to work. Handing over bar duties I went to my room, got into uniform and returned to The Stables late afternoon just as Ben was leaving. As was often his want on a Sunday, Supt. Houghton entered the bar and also as was his want on occasion he shouted a round of drinks. I declined a beer with thanks, explaining I was on call out if needed, but at his insistence accepted a non-alcoholic drink.

Then the phone call to the canteen from the Charge Office. '*Johnny; you're wanted immediately. SO Marshall's had an accident on the way back to town.*'

Out of The Stables and across to the Charge Office at the run. An A/C was waiting beside the only Landrover available. A recently trained young PO also visiting from Salisbury elected to go with us to the accident and took the middle seat. The Landrover was a long-wheel base three door vehicle used in the main for conveying prisoners or any heavier loads. As such the rear suspension had been 'beefed up' which meant the rear of the vehicle was higher than the front and when driving at night the headlight beam was much shorter than that of our normal vehicles.

It was becoming dark as I left town and I floored the accelerator. As I approached the railway crossing a short distance from town I came up behind a slower travelling early model Peugot station-wagon. Once across the lines and observing no oncoming headlights I elected to overtake on a long sweeping corner. I was alongside the station-wagon with my headlights on dip when a pair of Africans on a cycle loomed up quickly in the reduced beam. I slammed on the brakes and swerved but to

no avail and was probably still doing 30 mph when we collided. The station-wagon continued on as I brought my vehicle to a halt. One of the African pair was obviously dead, the other critical and near death. I tried to stem the worst of the blood flow from his horrendous injuries but felt there was little hope for him. I radioed the station, requested an ambulance be sent and explained my situation. Arrangements were made for details from Salisbury to attend to Marshall's accident which proved to be without any significant injury to the man. Insp. Woods arrived in 'civvies', determined that the injured man was dead and announced that I was to go off duty immediately. I explained briefly that I hadn't seen a light on the cycle....a dynamo type was fitted....and both the A/C and the young PO backed me up.

Traumatic events can trigger behaviour out of the norm in a person. Instead of returning straight to the station and my room, I requested I be dropped off at the flat of two sisters, young women I barely knew. The pair with another flatmate recognised I was a man who needed feminine understanding and unquestioningly accepted my presence. I was directed to the bathroom to wash the blood off my hands and arms whilst they made coffee for me. One of the young women fetched a pullover and at her insistence I put it on once I'd removed my jacket so she could wash out the blood stains on it. I probably did most of the talking but, they were both sympathetic and practical....recognised my need to 'unburden myself'. I owed them a big thank-you and perhaps a token of my genuine appreciation for their compassion but can only recall verbally thanking them when I returned the pullover later.

*'On dip the lights of that vehicle show barely twenty yards ahead. And there was no other vehicle available.'*

*'You can't use that as an excuse, Johnston. If you felt the vehicle had any faults you should have driven it accordingly or not used it at all.'*

The next morning I was intercepted by the Member I/C before making it to his office to report on the events of the previous evening. Basically C/Insp. DeCourpalay was sympathetic of the situation I found myself in but he still had his duty to perform. He informed me that Police Standing orders meant that following an accident the driver was automatically suspended from getting behind the wheel of a vehicle until he'd undergone a brief refresher course and test back at Driving School (Cranborne). In the meantime I'd carry out normal duties and be assigned an A/C driver should I require transport.

*'Did anyone assess, Johnston, to ascertain his degree of sobriety.'*

The Member I/C had turned aside to explain my accident to another senior man when the CO, Supt. Houghton appeared on the scene and made his comment within my earshot. D/I DeCourpalay was quick to defend me.

*'Inspector Woods attended the scene and believes there was nothing to suggest Johnston shouldn't have been driving.'*

Houghton moved on and I waited until he was out of earshot. I was clearly angry as I spoke to the Member I/C again.

*'Mr Houghton's got a short memory, sir, he offered me a beer yesterday afternoon and I turned it down after explaining I was on call-out if needed.'*

*'Alright, Johnston. The issue of your sobriety has been laid to rest.'*

I instinctively liked Dick DeCourpalay and was sad to later learn that his son, David, had lost his life in the Bush War.

I wasn't in a state of mind to work on any of the cases I had on hand. Obtaining the key to the Exhibits Shed, I entered it and viewed the mangled cycle. And observed that the dynamo drive wheel was engaged with the cycle wheel! Had the deceased pair actually been showing a light I'd overlooked? Would the enquiry go against me if

the person conducting it observed what I'd just seen? I moved the dynamo to the 'off' position closed the door behind me; paused and re-entering the shed re-engaged the dynamo. Call it discipline, conscience or whatever; human nature meant I'd try and 'cover my butt' but not to the extent I'd tamper with evidence.

What hadn't been established by midday was the identity of the deceased pair. It was assumed they were labourers from a farm in the area but, for the enquiry to proceed one had to at least know the names of the unfortunate men.

*'Johnston, you'll have to go to the Mortuary and fingerprint the deceased from last night. I'll phone the Hospital and get them to get the bodies out for you.'*

Others may consider that Insp. Woods directive was somewhat callous, given the vulnerable and 'fragile' state I'd understandably be in. But, I was a member of the BSAP and had had over three years to work out that 'if you broke it you fixed it' and you were expected without question to accept responsibility for your actions. I accepted the order without demur. Just as I'd had to accept the Member I/Cs comments regarding the suitability of the vehicle I'd driven the previous evening.

The extent of the horrific injuries to the deceased were even more apparent under light which had me confining a narrow focus to the job in hand. I'd never fingerprinted a dead person before and both deceased were well into rigor mortis with fingers that were curled. It was a difficult task that had me bending fingers to the point of nearly breaking them....I'd considered doing as such before rejecting the idea as somewhat callous... before inking them and rolling the paper about them to get the fingerprint impressions.

Before the fingerprints could be used to try and identify the deceased further enquiries by African police established they were workers from a farm in the Marandellas area and their names were Edward and George. Their bodies were uplifted from the mortuary and taken away for burial.

About a week after the accident I was notified, along with a number of other details, mostly African, that after dark tests would be carried out at the scene of my accident. With the Member I/C driving, Insp. Woods alongside him and myself in a rear seat we proceeded to the scene in a different vehicle from the one I'd been driving. Other details would control traffic and an African Sgt. with his cycle would 'act the part of the victims'.

Initially the Sgt. was to just stand with his cycle at the accident spot whilst the vehicle was driven with headlights on full beam and then braked hard once the Sgt was observed. The Landrover stopped well short of the man. The exercise was repeated with the lights on dip with a similar result. Then the Member I/C had the Sgt. cycle slowly towards us; after assuring him we wouldn't be on a collision course! On full beam at the maximum speed permitted we stopped opposite the Sgt. who'd been instructed to brake as soon as he saw the vehicle do so. The same exercise again with the lights on dip and we stopped a measured thirty-eight feet beyond the African policeman!

*'That's enough. All details back to the station.'*

Little comment had been made on the short journey to the station other than short asides between the senior men but as I left the vehicle for my room Insp. Woods uttered the words that did much to lift my spirits.

*'Well, Johnston. I reckon you'll sleep a lot better tonight.'*

C/I DeCourpalay called me into his office the next morning to confirm that he was satisfied I hadn't been culpable in the farm workers deaths and a report would be submitted as such to the CO. Given I had little more than two months before I took my discharge....and Marandellas had a big enough complement of African details

with driving licences to ‘chaffeur’ me if needed....I wouldn’t be sent to the Cranborne Driving School to have my own eligibility to drive Police vehicles restored.

Basically the tests had confirmed....as far as they could be with a certain margin of error....that even had I been driving a standard Landrover the odds of avoiding the deceased pair on their unlit cycle wouldn’t have been good. As to the issue of whether the cycle had had it’s light functioning, the two witnesses with me in my vehicle were unequivocal that neither had seen a light. Most of my peers managed a ‘*Good one, Johnny.*’ when details of the tests were made more public but, I wasn’t in the mood for celebrating. As we’d been told more than once at Cranborne when we were in training for our licences; ‘*You have an accident after what we teach you and even if the other fellow runs a Stop sign and you hit him, you bear part of the responsibility for the accident.*’

‘*Oh, gawd. You’ll have to brush up on your behaviour and etiquette, young man. Terribly formal are Merv’s dinner functions. Best bib and tuck-in affairs. Don’t know that a colonial, like you, would really be up to it.*’

Whilst Insp. Merv. Pringle was a reasonably affable and easily approachable man he worked in a role that appeared to require little contact with we junior men. Each year in mid December Merv. and his wife hosted a formal dinner party for a member from each rank and given they knew of my plans to leave the Force the PO invite was given to me. I should have known that in enquiring of Insp. ‘Tickey’ Woods...also invited...as to what to expect at the dinner, that he wouldn’t exactly provide answers guaranteed to put me at ease. ‘Tickey’ had a rather droll sense of perspective on life that he loved parading when the occasion arose; which in his case was rather often. And as a raconteur on his experiences in the Force he was up with the best.

Not surprisingly none of my fellow PO.s appeared in any way jealous of the honour accorded me in the dinner invite. But, despite Tickey’s ‘dire warnings’ I was determined to show my superiors I had what it took to foot it with my rather more experienced and arguably more sophisticated seniors.

I nearly pulled it off to. Lost it in the use of the ‘eating irons’....well silverware, actually... department!

It was one thing to be in a Police Canteen when more senior men were present, but entirely another to be crammed into a private lounge filled entirely with men I’d only address as ‘Sir’ or ‘Sarge’. To be fair an attempt was made to put me at ease and a glass or two of beer helped ease me into the spirit of the evening.

Mrs Pringle’s summons to the dinner table.... splendidly adorned with white linen, silverware, tasteful decorations and predetermined seating places....saw the commencement of my descent into flawed gastronomical procedure and ultimate shame. To be fair to myself the carefully placed cutlery seemed to extend almost as far as to meet up with that of the adjacent diner. Showing my middle-class breeding I wisely selected the round, rather than the oval spoon, for the soup course. But, over-confidence can be the dreaded catalyst for future disaster. When we reached the dessert course I was left to ‘attack’ it with a fish-knife, overlooked at the entre stage, and the larger fork I should have employed with the main dish!

‘*I’ll fetch a dessert spoon and fork for you, Johnny.*’

Ever the attentive hostess....fully aware of the mounting cutlery meltdown occurring across the table from her.... Mrs Pringle was on her feet and heading for her finest cutlery drawer.

“*Sorry, Mrs Pringle, I wasn’t watching....*”

Insp. Pringle’s glower implied a ‘*How the hell did you manage that, Johnston?*’

Supt. Houghton's eyes flashed his amusement and in bringing his table napkin quickly to his mouth, I swear he stifled a laugh.

Predictably, Tickey Woods was less circumspect and his deep chuckle was accompanied by a wink and a low comment for my benefit that he had after all implied we of colonial origins were indeed risky invites to a formal dinner!

The rest of the dinner went without hitch. And Mrs Pringle laughed off my 'gaffe' even as her husband probably allowed a silent prayer that next years dinners' PO be a little more versed in culinary ways.

*'Four days and three nights, Johnston. You'll have Constable Elias with you. He knows Soswe quite well.'*

Music to my ears. Away from the office, rifle, pack on the back and the beckoning and beloved *bundu*....well Tribal Trust Land anyway. I knew little of the Soswe TTL but, was informed the rains hadn't arrived yet and basically the area was in the early stages of a drought and my briefing included that of checking out the food stores in the various kraals and keeping an eye out for any overt signs of hunger. I was also to check out local cattle prices with a view to explaining that a kraal could purchase a certain quantity of mealie meal for the sale of a single beast.

*'Ikona, mambo, we need our cattle for ploughing.'*

*'All of them? You have so many.'*

*'Ah..ah, my son, he gets married soon and he needs so many mombe (cattle) for the labola (bride price).'*

In some of the kraals food stores seemed rather low, or I was led to believe they were, and in one of them I believed there were certain indications of hunger....not outright starvation or the horrible *kwashikor*, a form of malnutrition, a protein deficiency, that caused the younger kids to have develop pronounced pot-bellies even as they lacked sufficient food.... but the people seemed rather listless and dispirited. However, the headman, a grey haired, real old, near toothless *mdala* (old man) recovered enough spirit to argue strongly that he shouldn't have to sell a beast to purchase food supplies. I gave him the going price for an average condition cattle beast....about thirty pounds....and outlined how many bags of mealie meal he could purchase for that amount of money. No....*ikona, baas*... the Government should send them food because they were hungry. I took details of the kraal with the idea of passing on the headman's 'request' for food on to the District Commissioner at the conclusion of the patrol.

Unlike the Omayi TTL near Kariba where the Batonka people were rather insular and led a more self-sustaining lifestyle, the tribes people of Soswe provided a lot of manual labour for the neighbouring White farms and were more outgoing and engaging in European company. And more prepared to challenge any of my assertions or assumptions they didn't agree with. But they were generally friendly enough and prepared to provide the *sadza* if I provided the relish...generally tinned meat or fish...and the after dinner cigarette of course.

Late afternoon on our last day we approached a rather small kraal where a number of the buildings were the rather...by European standards anyway!... more conventional rectangular wooden sides and iron roof structures with windows instead of the round pole and dagga huts one usually encountered in the Trust lands. I realised the main building was a school. With no headman apparent I sought out the teacher and was directed to a small dwelling adjacent to the school. Expecting a younger African male to answer my knock on the door I was surprised when it was answered by a young woman of perhaps twenty-five.

*'May I speak to the teacher, please.'*

*'I am the teacher.'*

Amusement at my apparent confusion brought a sparkle to the woman's eyes. I gave an apologetic laugh and a 'sorry' before explaining that Constable Elias and I were on a routine patrol of Soswe and would like to spend the evening at the kraal. She indicated that we may use a room attached to the school. And when it became obvious I wished to sound her out about the general well-being of her pupils and other people in the area, she invited Elias and I into her living room cum kitchen and invited me to take a seat on the only spare chair. Using the excuse he would go to our 'accommodation' and organise our evening food, Elias soon departed. As we were conversing in English I think he felt a little spare and there was the issue of African male chauvinism. Clearly he wasn't comfortable in the presence of an obviously better educated African member of the opposite sex!

The ensuing conversation with the young woman was to be one of, if not, the most illuminating and interesting I had with an African...certainly with a female anyway... in Rhodesia. Ensuring that the door remained open.... to help put the young woman more at ease and reinforce the idea I had no ulterior motives.... and pointing out that both my career in the BSAP and my time in Africa was coming to an end, I was able to carefully draw her out on subjects from education of the Africans to the differences between those African, the majority, who continued to follow allegiance to the time memorial tribal heirarchy and those who through better education and understanding of the wider world were tending to lead lives less subject to tribal authority.

The young woman seemed to be interested that I sought a deeper understanding of her people; even when I'd indicated that in less than two months I'd be on a boat heading for New Zealand. I gave consideration to what I asked her...only briefly scouting the edges of politics, so as not to cause her to become suspicious I had a hidden 'Government propaganda' agenda...and her replies were equally considered. When I reiterated that I'd expected the school-teacher to be a male she admitted that it wasn't easy for an African female to receive the education that would allow her to rise above her peers. She appeared to be in no hurry to end our discourse on various subjects...I even managed to convince myself she welcomed the opportunity to show the extent of her education and obvious intelligence....and dusk was rapidly approaching when Constable Elias appeared to announce '*there is food, sir*'. I wished the young woman all the best for the future and she thanked me for that.

*'I think the man who wishes to marry you will have to gift many cattle to your father?'*

My farewell rejoinder to the young teacher earned me a light and knowing chuckle. Clearly the young woman still believed in following the tribal dictates regarding the provision of *labola*.

On my return to Marandellas I wrote up an unusually, for me anyway, modest patrol report....I'd had my time of trying to impress my seniors....and passed on the information to the District Officer regarding a possible shortage of food at a couple of the kraals I'd visited.

Within days of my return from Soswe TTL I was back into a rural area near Soswe. I'd been briefed to meet up with one Chief Chiota who apparently had information of interest to us. Information not serious enough to involve SB apparently. The venue for our meeting was to be an African bar the Chief frequented.

It was to be a day where I was especially grateful I had a driver. The A/C and I arrived at the bar before the chief and I decided I could enjoy a beer. My A/C accepted a Coke. Shortly I saw a large early model American sedan approaching fast

in a cloud of dust. It braked to a halt off the short strip of seal in front of the bar in a graunch of gravel. The large figure of the chief emerged from the back seat just after his chauffeur opened the door for him. Clearly this was a man who believed in at least some the trappings that went with authority. And to reinforce his elevated status he wore the brass crescent of his chiefly rank about his neck. He strode purposefully towards me hand extended and introduced himself. Pointedly my A/C was virtually ignored when I attempted to introduce him to the man.

*'I'll have the same as the Chief, thanks, and I will pay for it.'*

We moved into the bar where the chief announced he'd have his 'usual' and I was soon made aware that I'd made two errors in the space of one statement! Pushing a pound note across the bar I was a little dismayed to see how little change I received; until I realised what the chief meant by his 'usual'; a small bottle of gin....we sometimes referred to them as 'quarter-jacks'....that held five tots of liquor, rested before each of us with a glass apiece. Oh, dear!

What a man was expected to endure to preserve the efficient reputation of Rhodesia's finest!

As we imbibed, the Chief, a rather ebulient, extroverted and not particularly circumspect man, given his authority, regaled me with his 'adventures in Europe'. I'd previously heard talk of how the Rhodesian Government had escorted a group, the figure thirty was mentioned, of Chiefs abroad in an apparent attempt to both keep them 'on side' with the Government and at the same time show them....by escorting them through virtual slum areas in countries such as Italy, Greece and Spain etc....that universally all White people did not lead priviledged lives as was the general perception by the indigenous people in Rhodesia. Chief Chiota displayed a special badge that had been struck to indicate he'd been one of the 'priviledged thirty' on the Chief's Tour.

Any attempt to draw the Chief out on the matters concerning him seemed to get side-tracked by other issues. And when I sought the diversion of a comfort visit to the rather primitive toilets and returned to the bar to both discover Chiota had paid for another round of 'quarter-jacks' and to refuse his hospitality may well imperil, if not erase completely, any goodwill the Govt. had previously invested in ensuring the man's undying loyalty, I saluted the chief's generosity and set about consuming it. Chiota could afford the drinks, as with other chiefs he received thirty pounds per month from the Government coffers.

I was seriously drunk on duty....still without a bloody clue as to what information I'd been despatched to obtain from the big African....when I bid him farewell and we retired to our individual vehicles, myself unsteady of gait much to the barely concealed amusement of the A/C.

Back at Marandellas I went straight to the 'troops' dining room and persuaded the cook....mercifully still on duty....to bring me food and strong coffee. Our cook, an elderly if somewhat genial and accomodating reprobate, well understood my plight for on more than one occasion he had himself been 'drunk on duty'. Indeed, there was one day we'd retired from The Stables to the dining mess for our supper only to find there'd been no food prepared and the cook was not only absent, but had been arrested by the African police and detained for 'bad behaviour.' Worse, the duty A/Sgt. wasn't initially in the mood to overturn his decision to deprive us of 'cookie', as we were want to call him; and only an appeal to more senior police to intervene saw the crestfallen man back in his kitchen where with the assistance of myself and another PO he managed to put a meal together.

It's a falsehood that coffee can remove or considerably reduce the effects of alcohol in a person but, by making myself scarce when any senior senior man neared me that afternoon I escaped rebuke or worse for my intemperance. And I managed to put together a report that suggested one Chief Chiota was apparently both an exceptionally loyal man where the Government was concerned and apparently one with few, if any, concerns that required any police investigation.

*'You'll have to go, Johnston, if there's as much involved as she says there is.'*

My next visit to the countryside, a European farming area, was on a Sunday. I received a phone call from a farmer's wife reporting the loss...she was adamant by theft....of a number of rather expensive; possibly as much as two thousand pounds worth, of jewellery items. When she gave me details of where the farm was located and indicated it was the best part of forty-five minutes drive from Marandellas by Landrover, I decided, after verifying from a map that the alleged offence had actually occurred in our police area, to get Insp. Woods' opinion of whether or not I should actually attend immediately, given I'd have to organise a driver. I wasn't unduly upset when I was instructed to abandon the Charge Office for a Sunday drive.

*'I wore the jewellery to a function last night and on my return, late in the evening I removed it and put it in this box as I always do. This morning I discovered it was missing, the box was empty. The only person with permission to enter my room is the maid and she denies knowing anything about the theft.'*

The A/C was sent to the farm compound to locate and further question the maid who'd apparently worked for the 'victim of the theft' for at least six years and thus to my mind was an unlikely suspect. The husband of the woman had left the farm that morning before the jewellery was discovered to be missing but, the woman was sure he'd confirm her version of events. Who else could it be but, the maid, I was told. And when I suggested the woman try and recall her movements of the previous evening, she reiterated her jewellery was always returned to its proper container and her tone of voice indicated that she didn't appreciate me implying otherwise.

The A/C appeared with the alleged offender who was clearly distressed and still denying any theft from her mistress. A search of her room in the compound had failed to locate any items of jewellery and he discreetly indicated to me that he believed she was innocent of any wrongdoing.

*'It's alright, officer. I've found it. Silly me; I'd put it away in the drawer without putting it in the container first.'*

The woman had re-entered her bedroom and revised her actions of the previous evening. She had the grace to apologise to me but, clearly wasn't impressed with my *'I'm only doing what I'm paid for. Perhaps the maid is the one who deserves the apology.'*

*'Ah, sir, I knew that girl didn't steal the missie's jewellery.'*

*'So did I, Constable.'*

I had the consolation that Insp. Woods would accept my absence from the office and the rather lengthy 'vehicle mileage' undertaken as being worthwhile. Resolving a 'crime that never was', was a better solution than working on one that unsolvable.

As my time to leave the Force neared I found myself doing more shifts in the Charge Office. It made little sense for me to investigate a case when, if a prosecution was involved, I'd have already left the country.

*'Sergeant! That'll do!'*

One evening when I was in the office adjacent to the Charge Office and an altercation with yelling and shouting took place behind the main desk I looked through the doorway to see an A/Sgt. vigorously slapping a man in handcuffs about

the head and loudly berating him, all this in front of the A/Cs and members of the public. Clearly, the man who'd been sitting on a bench had urinated on the floor and upset the elderly Sgt. who only reluctantly broke off his physical admonishment at my command.

*'You don't hit a man when he's in handcuffs, Sgt.'*

Feeling the situation was resolved I turned back into my office but, the Sergeant followed me. He was clearly angry with my rebuke. And as he drew nearer I detected alcohol on his breath.

*'Why do you talk to me like that in front of the junior Police?'*

Mindful that the only time previously....the incident with Cst Magayisa in Sinoia....that I'd seriously challenged the behaviour of an African member of the Force and not achieved a particularly satisfactory resolution, I chose my words carefully.

*'You should have ordered a junior man to take the prisoner to the toilet, Sergeant. It is not good for a senior man....'*

*'It is not good for you to talk to me like you did! Myself, I have more than thirty years service in the BSA Police.'*

The inference that my judgement of the sorry incident ....even given I had the authority to do so....was flawed due to my far shorter length of service wasn't lost on me. But, I wasn't going to back down and nor was I going to have the Sgt. charged for his intemperate conduct. I didn't want to end my career, however brief, with a senior man nearing retirement having a black mark against his conduct. I tried what was little more than a bluff.

*'Ok, Sergeant. If you are not happy with what I said then tomorrow we can both go to the Member in Charge and you can explain why to him. I am not going to apologize for what I said.'*

The still unhappy Sgt. left the office muttering to himself without taking me up on my 'offer'. Any relief I felt was for him, not myself. I am far from being a lone voice when I say that to this day I believe the reputation and efficiency of the BSAP....still regarded by so many people as without equal in its day....could not have been attained without the loyalty, dedication, efficiency and in so many cases, courage, of its African members.

Of course there were times when the 'efficiency' tag became a little frayed on the edges. New Years Eve 1968...my last in Rhodesia...comes painfully to mind. Before returning for supper at the mess I'd spent part of the afternoon imbibing with fellow cops at The Three Monkeys, a well known tavern in Marandellas. See nothing...say nothing...hear nothing...The Three Monkeys. Before the sun rose on a new year, myself, in company with another on duty cop, a guy who'd served in a British police force briefly before he decided he could no longer ignore the call to duty in Rhodesia, were to really make monkeys of ourselves! Would we'd followed the see nothing...say nothing and hear nothing axiom!

It all began when Dave phoned The Stables at about 9.00pm to say he'd been having trouble with a' drunken runaway teenage girl' in the main street of town. I'd already indicated I'd not go out drinking after supper and mindful of the perils of a sole policeman dealing with young and White female drunks ....my Sinoia incident comes to mind...I carelessly volunteered to assist my fellow man in uniform. She was reasonably well dressed, very happily drunk and co-operative to a degree after Dave had had to run after her and drag her back to the Charge Office with an A/Sgt as witness to his 'faultless conduct' and threaten her with handcuffs should she repeat her escape attempt. She informed us that she lived at Eastleigh, a suburb of Salisbury,

and had come to Marandellas for a day of good fun. Her public conduct had drawn the attention of White and Black members of the public alike and clearly she'd have to be kept off the streets and returned to her home. I radioed Salisbury Central to sound out the chances of them sending a vehicle to return an inhabitant of their city to her home. The PO referred the matter to the SO who sought out the instructions of the duty Inspector ....

*'No, Marandellas....you'll have to deliver her to us and we'll handle it from then on.'*

Thanks. Typical town branch attitude.

I phoned Insp. Woods and informed him of the goings on and assured him the stand-by detail had been informed to man the Charge Office in our absence.

The trip to Salisbury, normally about an hour, went without incident. The young miss was less than vocal but I put that down to the booze and her activity induced tiredness. At Central I soon discovered that it was no bloody wonder Salisbury wouldn't despatch a vehicle! A single PO manned the long desk and from behind an office door the unmistakeable noises of a good party in progress disturbed the night air.

*'Ah, Johnny! How's it going!. Grab a chair and have a beer!'*

I'd served in the BSAP long enough to be recognised by a few of the PO.s and SO.s enjoying themselves. Dave lost any inhibitions about drinking on duty and we accepted and enjoyed a beer before we made our farewells.

*'It's after eleven o'clock, Johnny. While we're down here you got any objections to us visiting my fiancee at the Nurses Home. She's on duty. Won't stay long.'*

Technically we'd be off duty by the time we reached Marandellas again and why stand between a man and his love...on New Years eve of all nights.

They were nearly as bad as the Central cops when it came to boozy partying! A number of the partying women were even still in their smart white uniforms. Dave introduced me to his fiancee who secured us a beer each. As with several of the other uniformed nurses, she'd leave us periodically...probably to check on patients....before returning to the fray. They at least paid lip service to duty and responsibility and made an effort... unlike those bastards at....

We were on our way home, comfortably full of beer and at peace with the world when 1969 arrived.

Barely seven hours into the New Year my peaceful and well earned slumber was irrevocably destroyed. Only half awake I stumbled to the phone. Who the hell...

*'Johnston?'* The unmistakable voice of authority. Insp. Woods.

*'Yes, sir. Happy New Year, sir.'*

*'Same to you but you'll discover you've made a less than happy start to the year. That girl you took down to Salisbury last night. Where did you leave her?'*

*'At Central, sir. They said they'd deliver her to her home in Eastleigh?'*

*'She doesn't live in Eastleigh....she's the daughter of the (a senior civil servant in Marandellas whose name I won't reveal to protect all the parties involved in the shameful incident) and he's not a happy man! Get down there with PO X and bring her back to Marandellas.'*

Clearly Dave's and my interrogation of the young woman the previous evening hadn't been vigorous enough! Unlike the experience of a D/S/O. who related the story to us concerning an A/C who'd died in unusual circumstances whilst on leave about four years previously. An autopsy and investigation hadn't brought any resolution as to cause of death and whilst investigations had ceased the case was still open. Then a

breakthrough. An African informer prepared to state in a court of law he'd witnessed the murder of the unfortunate A/C. And better still he had about four others who'd back his story up!

The accused was arrested and detained by the D/S/O who obtained statements from all the 'witnesses' and then presented his '*overwhelming evidence*' to the obviously guilty man. The accused vehemently denied any knowledge of the '*murder*' and repeatedly asserted that he could prove the truth of his alibi. And he did when further investigation showed he was in '*the stockies*' (prison), as he'd claimed, the day the A/C was allegedly murdered!

As the crestfallen detective was to admit to us. '*I'm definitely going to have to use less vigorous interrogation methods in the future!*'

A different and more diligent shift than those of the previous evening manned the Sby Central desk and the young woman was uplifted without adverse comment. By the time we reached Marandellas a number of the staff were taking advantage of the public holiday and were already imbibing in The Stables. When the cause of all the trouble declared she '*Wasn't ready to face her father yet;*' we adjourned to the bar where I bought her a Coke and a beer for myself to toast the New Year amid false allegations pertaining to my efficiency and gentlemanly conduct of the previous evening from my peers. And once the girl had been returned to the bosom of her family, Insp. Woods delighted in relaying details of Dave and my 'shenanigans' to those who hadn't been aware of them!

I had one more day to savour in the rural area when a mate lent me his fishing gear and dropped me off at a farm where there was a stream...with permanent water in it!...and a series of small dams. I spent the afternoon fishing for black bass, fish that could grow to a pound or so in weight and as I recall I caught and released three or four. It was a time alone to reflect on my African experience and understandably the impending end to a life I generally enjoyed so much readily surfaced. By the time my lift arrived to return to Marandellas I'd satisfied myself that I'd made the right decision in electing to return to New Zealand. But, that didn't stop my fellow PO.s from observing my lack of enthusiasm for a session in The Stables that evening!

*'Will you be able to stay in Marandellas for that date or do we have to see about rescheduling the case?'*

The case....to be heard at Macheke....of Tony (the SAS guy) who was charged under the Roads and Roads Traffic Act with 'Culpable Homicide' was set down for three days after my date of discharge (31/1/69). I indicated to Insp. Woods that I would have enough 'time up my sleeve' to attend the case as a witness for the Prosecution as long as the Defence didn't seek a remand.

In my last month as a policeman I had studio photographs taken of myself in uniform and purchased a new BRNO 30.06 rifle for sixty pounds to take home.

I decided I had to try out the rifle and obtained a lift to the local rifle range only to discover there was a 'shoot in progress'. One of the shooters was Wrex Tarr, a well known man of a number of talents. Aside from being a very good shot he was a radio announcer of repute and a singer who wrote a number of his own songs that evoked the Rhodesian spirit. One song, I recall, 'The Terroists Lament' was very popular and I had a copy of it on a '45' for a number of years.

I wasn't exactly welcomed onto the range and it seemed that only with reluctance...after my plea I was soon to return to NZ with the weapon...was I allowed to try out my brand new rifle. My shooting was disappointingly rather mediocre. But, then with a few exceptions, it always had been.

I determined to hold a farewell party to be remembered by and to include the African police in a separate function at the same time. I sent out invitations to all members of all ranks I could bring to mind in the area with whom I'd served, including officers and senior men ...many of whom attended...and a number of guys from Salisbury. I'd already discovered that I was only permitted to take one hundred pounds Rhodesian out of the country with me and already learnt that on discharge I'd have rather more money ....from leave not taken ...than I'd expected. To hell with the cost of my last days in the Force and indeed in Africa!

The party was set down for my last day in the Force. Because of my pending attendance to give evidence in the Macheke Court against Tony, the SAS guy, C/I DeCourpalay indicated I could remain in the PO.s quarters at the station for the duration of the case. Somehow I felt uneasy at that idea, it seemed to be dragging out my complete severance from the BSAP. Reserve Insp. Hugh Maynard, a single man, with whom I'd enjoyed many a beer and exchange of life's experiences had a flat in town and a spare bed. I took up his offer of accomodation.

*'C'mon, Johnny. They're all waiting for you back at the canteen.'*

The African police appreciated my generous allocation of beer to them and I received a genuinely warm welcome when I arrived at their camp. A senior Sergeant told me that in all his years of service I was only the third European member of the Force he could recall who'd held a function for the African police on his discharge. I downed rather more beer...it seemed every man from Constable to Sergeant wanted to individually toast my health and wish me well for the future...than I'd intended and it wasn't until I became aware of Ticky Woods' presence that I knew it was time to make my somewhat heavy of heart farewells of those men I'd so much enjoyed serving with. A last handshake with the Sergeants and senior men and I followed Ticky to the awaiting vehicle.

The men, with the assistance of wives and girlfriends, had decorated The Stables for a party. On one wall was a large map of Rhodesia and another of New Zealand drawn on sections of cardboard. The beer flowed and trays and plates of nibbles and snacks were produced from the kitchen.

I became '*Johnny*' to all men that evening even if I couldn't bring myself to address any man, Inspector and above as other than '*Sir*'.

Speeches were mercifully short, dreadful tales...true or otherwise...were recounted of my 'quirks and misdemeanours' and the females present were asked to '*block their ears*' ...with little chance of compliance...when the bawdy songs were sung. I was presented with an ostrich skin covered cigarette case and a Ronson cigarette lighter by the wife of a PO I served with. I was pleased when Diane, the young woman I'd previously treated in a rather cavalier fashion, made an appearance to wish me well for the future and I was able to impart the same to her.

*'C'mon, Johnny...time for that special Kiwi farewell.'*

To be fair I didn't deliver my best *haka* that evening....the beer was telling on me somewhat....but, it was heartfelt and went down well with the guys and gals. Farewells, without promises of future meetings, were made as individuals and couples drifted toward their vehicles and home. 'Bunty' a civilian whose company I'd enjoyed at his home on a number of occasions had attended the farewell with his twenty year old daughter whom I'd met on a couple of occasions. The young woman and I danced together as the late evening mood became more melancholic and we eventually retired to my room for a 'snog and a cuddle' with no expectation from either party of a full consummation of our new-found but circumstance doomed relationship. Later, after I'd walked her to her home near the Police camp, it was time for a last hug and an

exchange of best wishes for the future. I still had three nights to go before I left Marandellas but decided I'd already made enough hard decisions without the additional one of farewelling a young woman I'd began to grow fond of.

*'Dear, God, please send a big bomb.'*

The following day I moved into Hugh's flat. Born in India to a father in the military, Hugh gave the initial appearance of being a rather introverted man who contained himself well. He'd certainly led a rather adventurous life which included a 'stint' in 5 Commando, Mad Mike Hoare's mercenary unit as the platoon commander of a mortar section which Hugh bemoaned was never really utilised as it's best '*Because we were always on the move, never given time to set our mortars up and use the bloody things!*'. Whilst never appearing to stress about any particular issues, Hugh was prone on occasion,,especially when someone or certain circumstances hadn't matched his expectations... to cast his eyes skywards and utter his plea: '*Dear, God, please...*

Hugh believed in eating well and putting the time into his meal preparation. His regular, as in weekly, ox-tail stew took three days to prepare....a little cooking and further additions of extras each day....and three days to consume. It would be easy to label Hugh a misogynist, certainly I never saw him even at ease in female company. But, I found him very interesting and good company.

Given my time in Rhodesia was nearing an end I was one of the first witness' called in the case against Tony of the SAS. I actually travelled to Macheke with the Magistrate about whom I knew very little other than that he was a member of The Church Of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Our conversation stayed clear of any references to the case about to be heard.

*'Mr. Johnston. You were serving as a member of the BSA Police at Marandellas when you received a call from the Marandellas Hospital requesting your assistance to help restrain the defendant who required medical treatment. Can you describe to the Court the condition and behaviour of the defendant.'*

The Macheke Prosecutor was a PO whom I knew. Like myself he was an 'older man' who'd joined the Force in his twenties. He was self-assured, not universally popular among his peers but quite competent and understandably determined that Tony, the SAS man, would be found guilty as charged. He warned me prior to the case that Tony's counsel was a barrister of some repute. I'd also learnt, not that it was relevant to the case, that the lawyer had either been a former MP or had had ambitions in that field.

As to Tony's condition and behaviour; I related to the Court what I'd seen without going into detail. The accused was basically unco-operative with myself and the medical staff and singularly focussed on the welfare of his stricken companion. And until the sedative he'd been administered took effect, the defendant had remained on his feet pacing about the ward.

*'Would you say he'd been drinking?'*

*'He'd definitely been drinking earlier in the day. I encountered him and his now deceased companion earlier in the day at the Marandellas Show and I actually had a drink with them. About three hours prior to the accident.'*

*'Would you say he was intoxicated when you met him at the Show?'*

*'No, your Honour, he wasn't showing any outward signs of intoxication then?'*

Tony and his defence counsel had their attention focussed on me awaiting my answer to the inevitable question that would follow.

*'And at the Hospital; would you say he was intoxicated when you saw him there?'*

*'Of course I smelt alcohol on his breath, your Honour, but I didn't observe any great degree of intoxication. He was basically steady on his feet.'*

*'But, not prepared to co-operate with you and the medical Sister who wished to administer a sedative prior to him having the treatment he required.'*

Clearly my summation of Tony's condition and behaviour hadn't been exactly what the Prosecutor would have liked.

Worse was to come when he concluded his questioning of me and it was the turn of the Defence.

*'If it pleases you Honour I would like to present to the court a clinical finding in the field of psychology. It is relevant to this case.'*

There followed a brief summation of the behavioural patterns one could expect from a person in shock including a struggle to focus, a continual restlessness, an apparent inability to understand instructions and other symptoms that could loosely be applied to Tony's behaviour on the night in question.

*'Would you say, Mr. Johnston, that the behaviour of the defendant you witnessed at the hospital was consistent with him suffering from shock as I've just outlined to the Court?'*

I was suddenly 'between a rock and a hard place' and conscious that all eyes were on me. To agree completely with the Defence counsell's outline of the symptoms of shock would lessen, if not remove completely the issue of whether or not Tony's accident and subsequent behaviour was largely the result of intoxication; a strong factor of the Prosecutions case. I knew from experience that a conviction for Culpable Homicide often resulted in a term of imprisonment and I didn't want that for Tony. Who hadn't on occasion in Rhodesia driven a vehicle after consuming alcohol? Certainly, I had.

*'Yes, your Honour, the defendant's behaviour could have been as a result of shock as outlined by his Defence.'*

The Prosecutor frowned and was clearly both disappointed and annoyed with 'my evidence'. He had no questions for me. Just a passing aside as we left the Court later. *'You didn't do any favours for the BSAP today.'*

*'I'm not in the BSAP, now T...'*

I have on occasion revisited my actions of that day without any reservations or guilt as to the stance I took.

Twenty years were to lapse before I learnt from a former comrade in arms of Tony that he'd escaped imprisonment and had apparently been convicted on a lesser charge to that he'd been indicted for. And another twenty years ...forty-one years after the accident that cost his friend his life....to learn from another man who'd served with him, that Tony was working in Kalgoorlie, a mining town in Western Australia.

*'He's never given up blaming himself for Joe's death.'*

Don't carry the guilt to the grave, Enoch.

I had two nights in Salisbury before I had to catch the evening train to Johannesburg. I took up Mike and Jacqui Gaizely's offer of a bed. Mike had been in Depot at the same time I had and had left 'after his three' to take up work as a draughtsman, his occupation in Britain prior to joining the BSAP.

Catching up with serving members I'd encountered or previously worked with took up my days and evenings until the final farewell at the Salisbury Railway Station before a number of off-duty men, and even several in uniform who'd found an excuse to be there; Salisbury Central was a short walk from the station.

*'Tahi..rua..toru..wha! Ko mate, pakeha...!'*

. Here I was leaving a country where the prospect of future Black rule was a very real issue; if not an inevitability. '*Ko mate, pakeha...kill the White man!*' At heart I certainly didn't wish ill of White or Black. But, within three short years the reality of life in Rhodesia was to sadly include the deaths of many White and Black.

*"I don't think any of us who were there will forget that last war dance you performed on the Railway Station.'*

Nigel Seaward, a long-serving member of Special Branch with whom I'd served at Kariba and renewed contact with, thirty odd years after I'd left Rhodesia, believed my farewell *haka* was a classic. As did another couple of former comrades I renewed contact with. Certainly it included me waving around my rifle but, I'd have to admit that heartfelt as it may have appeared, I was rather 'under the influence'.

*'Cheers, guys! Fambai zvakanaka!' (Go well!)*

A final wave from my carriage window to men who'd go back to their desks and for ever how long, go on serving in; 'One of the finest Police Forces in the world' just as the advertisement in the South African magazine had told me nearly four exciting and generally fulfilling years before.

Today; even given my relatively short service, when I look back on my time in the British South Africa Police, it is with both satisfaction and pride in a job generally...but, admittedly not always...well done.

Members of the BSAP I served with, encountered or knew well. Listed in alphabetical order including their Reg. No. station and rank when I knew them.

5975 Abbots Michael 'Mike'. S/O. Harare.	Pg. 43
Anderson Reg. Police Field Reserve, Kariba	
4741 Bailey William, 'Bill'. S/O (M i/c) Stodart. (Harare)	Pg. 24, 31
3916 Bailey Alec 'Bill' Supt. (PATU )	Pg. 106, 109
7872 Barber David. P/O. Kariba	Pg. 127
3342 Barfoot Frank 'Slash.' Comm. Pass-out Parade Depot	Pg. 22
6784 Bird Richard 'Dick' P/O, Stodart (Harare)	Pg 24, 31
7212 Brown Anthony 'Tony'. S/P/O. Depot	Pg. 12
4245 Buchanan William "Buck" Supt. (PATU)	Pg 106
Burger Alex. Police Reserve. Kariba.	Pg. 189, 190
7750 Burridge Peter P/O. Salisbury	Pg. 53
5382 Butler Insp. Chippinga. Met at Beira PEA.	Pg. 54
5305 Carver Christopher 'Chris'. Insp. (M i/c) Kariba.	Pg. 123, 133-4, 137, 149-52, 155 157, 158, 171-3 178, 180-1, 185, 189, 191
4305 Cannon John, Supt. Sinoia	Pg. 72-4, 116
6978 Carney Daniel P/O Matapi (Harare)	Pg 25
5158 Castell-Castell Denis. 'Pom-pom' P/O Harare, Karoi	Pg. 116, 137, 157, 162, 165-68, 175
3948 Collier Eric Supt. PGHQ	Pg. 6
6518 Cook-Yarborough P/O Depot.	Pg. 6
7359 Cubitt Bertram 'Bert' P/O Depot	Pg. 11, 134
5272 Deasy Patrick Insp. (M i/c Villa Salazar)	Pg. 97, 101

4443 De Courpalay Richard, 'Dick' C/I (M i/c Marandellas)	Pg. 181, 192, 200 203, 206-7, 216
5251 Dolby John Insp./T (M i/c Driving School)	Pg. 23, 25
Edley Doug. F/Res. Kariba	Pg. 185, 191
Eleftheriades Alf. F/Res. Kariba	Pg. 190
6615 Ferguson Paul S/O Marandellas	Pg. 203
7318 Firth Martin P/O Depot and Harare	Pg. 48-49
4774 Fletcher John 'Butch' D/Insp. Sinoia	Pg. 104, 113-4
6491 Fowlis Eric S/O Sinoia	Pg. 104
6450 Fox Charles P/O Sby.	Pg. 80
7412 Gaizely Michael P/O Depot	Pg. 218
7371 Gale Michael P/O Villa Salazar	Pg. 97
4562 Goldie Cedric 'George' S/O Sinoia	Pg. 116-7
7515 Hay Robin 'Rob' P/O Kariba	Pg. 181-3
5968 Hatch George S/O Harare	Pg. 65-66
Hill Norman Res./Insp. Sinoia	Pg. 109
4234 Hobley William 'Bill' D/C/I Sby.	Pg. 37
4456 Houghton Guy Supt. Marandellas	Pg. 192, 198, 201 205-6, 209
4014 Hughes 'Spike' Supt. Salisbury	Pg. 42
6479 Hunt Edward 'Ted' P/O Karoi/PATU	Pg. 113
3966 Isikson 'Monty' (C/I, M i/c Sinoia)	Pg. 72, 94-5
7081 Jaboer Ferris 'JB' P/O Kariba	Pg. 182
5087 Johnson Robin Insp. Sinoia	Pg. 72-5, 94-5
6835 Kenelly Eric S/O/T Depot	Pg. 8, 13-15
6730 Knight Michael P/O Sinoia	Pg. 87, 94-95

4052	Lamont Laurence 'Laurie'	Asst. Comm.	PGHQ	Pg. 171-72
7280	Lebeish Roger	S/O	Kariba	Pg. 150
6319	Looker Christopher	D/S/O	Sinoia	Pg. 115
4622	Mallon Edward 'Ted'	Supt.	Kariba	Pg. 130, 133, 181
6188	Marshall Ben	S/O	Lomagundi	Pg. 205
6004	May Paul	D/S/O	Sby	Pg. 59
	Maynard Hugh,	Res./Insp./T	Marandellas	Pg. 193, 216
6983	McDade Gerald	D/P/O	Harare	Pg. 41
6146	McGowan Robin 'Jock"	S/O	Harare	Pg. 28
4777	McIntosh 'Takkie'	Insp/T	Depot	Pg. 22
7364	Miller Graham 'Dusty'	P/O	Depot/PATU	Pg. 7, 122
	Molyneux Willy	F/Res.	Kariba	Pg. 191
7099	Musson Colin	P/O	Sinoia	Pg. 72
7348	O'Hara Peter 'Paddy'	P/O	Depot	Pg. 19
4086	Osborne Wlliam 'Bill'	Insp.	Harare	Pg. 29
4756	Pearce John "Johnny"	Insp/T	Depot	Pg. 10-11, 17-18
7519	Peterson George	P/O	Kariba	Pg. 123, 157
4757	Pilbrough Ronald	Supt.	(OC Border Control)	Pg. 122
7272	Piscopus Charlie	P/O	Salisbury	Pg. 39
4310	Pickard Bert.	C/I	(Member I/c Harare)	Pg. 42-43
5670	Pringle Mervyn	Insp.	Marandellas	Pg. 192, 208-9
7071	Richards Michael 'Mick'	P/O	Stodart (Harare)	Pg. 25, 63
6508	Rogers Graham	P/O	Sinoia	Pg. 105
7367	Ruck Peter	P/O	Depot Lomagundi	Pg. 5, 8, 14, 23 28, 30, 74, 179
7398	Rundgren Kenneth	P/O	Depot	Pg. 5

7061	Saunders	Peter 'Jock'	P/O	Sinoia	Pg. 73, 105
5562	Saul Eric	Insp.	Lomagundi		Pg. 155
6961	Sayers Hugh	P/O	Kariba		Pg. 124
3693	Schollum Bill	Supt.	NZ		Pg. 22, 190
5827	Scutt Gordon	S/O/T	Driving School		Pg. 26-7
5976	Seaward Nigel	D/S/O (SB)	Kariba, Sby.		Pg. 53, 178, 219
6906	Sergeant Michael	P/O	Harare		Pg. 63
5165	Silliss Don.	Insp/T	Depot		Pg. 9
7357	Smith Ivan	P/O	Depot		Pg. 11, 13-14, 21 23, 68
7305	Standaloft Peter	P/O	Depot	Makuti	Pg. 134
6063	Stock Alan	S/O	Harare		Pg. 36-7, 39
4169	Trangmar Ronald	'Trangers'	(D/C/I Depot)		Pg. 12, 16, 19, 20-21
3631	Van Sittert Eric	C/Supt.	(Commandant Depot)		Pg. 10, 12, 19, 20
5143	Vye John	D/S/O	Salisbury		Pg. 62
7366	Walsh Jack	P/O	Depot		Pg. 12-13, 15
6269	Watson Peter	'Chunky'	P/O	Sinoia	Pg. 94, 119-20.
5617	Wilmot Austin	S/O	Hatfields		Pg. 27
4949	Winchcombe Gerald	'Gerry'	Insp./T		Pg. 7-9, 11, 15 16-17, 20-23
7595	Winters Ian	P/O	Umtali		Pg. 53, 57
W/P/O 123 Winters Shirley (nee Swanepoel) Umtali					Pg. 53, 57
4317	Woods Peter	'Tickey'	Insp.	Marandellas	Pg. 192-3, 202 203, 206-9, 212, 214-6
4071	Wright Douglas	"Shiner"	Supt.	Depot	Pg. 10