



THOUGHTS

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Am I My Brother's Keeper?

The man stood waiting to cross the road chewing on a half eaten sandwich with pieces of bread falling from his lips. About 45 years old, he was unshaven and inclined to fat. An onlooker who was walking by stopped to watch the man noticing that his face was plumpish with the beginnings of a double chin. The man's eyes were small and mouse-like, his hair stringy and showing signs of baldness. He was unshaven. Small indentations on either side of his nose showed that he wore glasses.

The man waited, peering to his left and right as the cars passed by, looking for a gap in the traffic and then as one appeared, he almost sprinted across the road.

Sprawled on the pavement behind him was a beggar; scrawny and unkempt, his legs crossed, his hands in his lap and his head bowed as if in submission. Neither saw the other yet they occupied the small space; they were no more than one metre apart.

The onlooker stopped to ponder the situation, two human beings so close and yet so far apart. He approached the man waiting to cross and, pausing before engaging him in conversation, asked,

'Excuse me, I hope you don't mind what I am about to say but have you seen the man who is lying on the pavement behind you?' The man still holding the half eaten sandwich stopped munching, turned and looked at the beggar.

'No, I hadn't but so what?'

'Don't you think it is, um, strange that two human beings are physically so close and yet so distant?'

The man looked more closely at the unfortunate beggar and said indignantly, as if to justify himself.

'I work hard for what I have!' and turned away. As a gap appeared in the traffic he crossed the road.

The onlooker walked on trying to understand what had just happened. He wanted to learn more about each man before he could come to terms with what he had seen, such inequality and unfairness.

Later he learned that the man was named Philippe. He was French and had been in London for more than 10 years. He worked in a local restaurant as a Sous Chef. He had hoped to become a Chef but now the years were catching up with him. He had never quite made the grade and had settled for the lesser post. He was married to one of the waitresses. They had no children. He had seen the beggar on many occasions so much so that the man had become invisible to him.

Back in the safety and familiarity of the restaurant, Philippe thought about the conversation he had just had with the stranger. The more he thought about it. the angrier he became. What bloody right had a complete stranger to question him about the beggar? What did he know about my life anyway? He didn't know the struggle I've had. London's not an easy place to live in. People are unfriendly, no frankly harsh. I know what it's like to be invisible.

He needs to serve at a restaurant to know what it's like to feel really invisible. I don't think I will ever get used to the indifference that so many diners show to their waiter, that strange indefinable combination of service and invisibility so I know what it feels like to be invisible. I live with it every day. But there is something enlightening about being unseen. I can travel through the world without even touching it. In my own thoughts and actions, I travel alone as in fact do we all.

Meanwhile the onlooker had walked on becoming increasingly aware that he also had not really seen the beggar, had not shared the cold loneliness of his life and worse had not given him a penny to ease the burden of the day.

The onlooker couldn't forget the beggar and then recalled the story in Genesis when God asked Cain, 'where was his brother?' Cain had replied, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The question and the answer have since reverberated down the ages.

The onlooker realised that God knew where Abel was. He knew that Cain had killed his brother so why did he ask what was in effect, a rhetorical question, one whose answer he already knew. So the onlooker decided that the question must have had a much deeper significance. He decided that it could only mean one thing namely that each and every one of us is responsible for each other.

Returning to the beggar on the pavement, what responsibility do we as individuals have to ensure that we can live independently, able to earn enough money to feed and clothe ourselves and others whom we chose to befriend or love and not be a burden on society. If we stopped and talked to the beggar what would he say about that? Would he tell the truth?

Let's have an imaginary conversation with him.

'Good morning! How are you?'

'Sorry are you talking to me?' He would reply.

'Yes I wanted to greet you and ask you how you found yourself in this unfortunate state.'

'It's a long story. I'm hungry, please buy me breakfast and I'll tell you.'

I helped him to his feet and we walked slowly across the road and down a side street to a small café. He was dragging his left leg and I made a note to ask him about it later. We settled ourselves at the back of the room at a small table. He ordered a full British breakfast and I had a coffee. I resumed the conversation.

'Why don't you start at the beginning?'

'OK, it's all rather boring I'm afraid. I was born 34 years ago in Manchester. I was the only son of a comfortable family. My father was the manager of a supermarket. I went to the local school and got good grades. I wanted to be a doctor but at that time there was no free University education and my father couldn't afford to pay the fees so I left school and worked with him in the supermarket.'

'What happened next?'

'I became ill with asthma and pneumonia and couldn't work for three months. During that time my father died. My world fell apart as I was very close to him. My mother and I were also very close but after my father died she began drinking and over a period of two years she became an alcoholic. We began to argue over her drinking until I couldn't bear being with her even though at one point I was drinking with her. That was the beginning of my downfall. I lost my job and my home and began to live in a hostel at night and roam the street during the day looking for work but my clothes were dirty and I smelled. No one wanted to employ me.'

As I listened I realised how close we all are to being like him. An illness, a death, an addiction and our lives fall apart. This man was an intelligent articulate person whose life had become impossible through no reason of his own. How many more people have found themselves in a position like his, I wondered? We sat in silence while he ate ravenously stuffing large portions of food into his mouth.

Finally when he had finished the plate I asked him tentatively.

'If you could, what would you do about people in your position?' He thought for a while and then muttered,

'It isn't easy. It's facile to assume that our circumstances are never of our own making and that we are not responsible for our mishaps.' His answer surprised me. I thought that he would repeat the well-worn excuse, bad luck, in the wrong place at

the wrong time but no he actually suggested that the individual played a significant part in his own downfall.

'I am surprised by your answer.'

'Most people are. I often talk to my fellow beggars. Yes I'll use the word but I don't like it. Most of us are simply trying to get enough money to survive. They always blame someone other than themselves and hate it when I say,

'I don't agree.'

'What makes you hold such a different view?' I asked.

'Well, if I look back at my own life, I see moments when I had a choice and made the wrong one. I can't blame anyone else.'

'Give me an example.'

'Well, when I lived with my mother and she began to drink, I shouldn't have joined her. I should have sought help for her. Instead I kept her company so to speak, and so began my own downfall.'

'Don't you think you're being very hard on yourself?'

'Yes of course but then the truth is usually tough. We all know what is right and wrong but we rationalize; we make excuses; we justify; anything other than face it.'

I sat taking in what he was saying. My own life had been so much easier than his. I hadn't been faced with the decisions that he had faced. Maybe that is the crux of the matter. It is how we deal with the challenges and clearly some have easy ones than others. That's what we call luck. I suddenly remembered his limp and decided this was the time to ask him.

I began,

'I hope you don't mind me asking you about your leg, your limp.'

'Oh that,' he replied, 'it was broken in a fight.'

I waited for him to continue.

'I was going to my usual doss house in central London. It was late, when I came upon a fight, a man was hitting a young woman. He was much bigger than her and she kept begging him to stop.

'I should have passed on and said it was none of my business but of course it was. I couldn't just stand by and ignore what was happening so I went over to them and told him to stop.

He turned on me and told me to mind my own business.

It is my business, I told him. What he was doing was wrong, I shouted becoming a bit concerned for my own safety. Then suddenly he let the girl go and came for me. I put up my hands to protect my face when he kicked me very hard. I felt the bone crack and fell to the ground screaming in pain.

'That'll teach you to mind your own business.'

I heard the girl shout at him to stop.

'Help him you've broken his leg. Call an ambulance.'

The man pushed her aside and ran off. I lay there unable to move when I heard the girl on her mobile calling for an ambulance. The last thing I remember before I passed out was her quietly speaking, 'thank you.'

I watched his face while he told his story. A calm serenity came over his worn features. I could see that he was proud of what he had done.

'That was an amazing act of bravery,' I said. 'Did you get an award or some recognition?' He paused,

'You are the first person I've told about what happened.'

A New Life

I seem to be entering a new phase in my life. The thought of returning to the UK has prompted it –a fear that I may not return- dreaming a lot about the past- really clear pictures of past events and people. I tend to cry when I hear sad things on the radio such as today on 'Boston Calling,' the story of a young girl whose family was killed at Hiroshima. She is now a grandmother with a daughter married to an American living in the USA with her own children.

I am reminded of that song 'Every time I say goodbye I die a little,' by Cole Porter

But I need to go back to see Sarah and Paul and the grandchildren

I have just bought some bananas from a small road side seller. The young man and woman sit in garbage, they can smell the rotting food and vegetation but do nothing, when confronted they go mute.

What is stopping them from changin, from cleaning their patch? They are familiar with the supermarket and TV so why don't they learn? What is it that prevents these young people from changing? Is it some sort of pride as if to criticize is to condemn? No one other than a Kenyan knows anything- as a foreigner I am ignorant.

Travelling to London

Am now in the UK and have some time to think about the journey. I arrived in good time at Mombasa Airport and found the place almost empty. Checked in and went to the lounge, why does it have to be up two flights of stairs? Fortunately, I was helped by a porter. The room was nearly empty with only one other traveller. I sat and thought about the journey. I always feel a little apprehension while awaiting the flight.

The whole enterprise seems to be impossible, to sit in an airtight tube at 30,000 feet, travelling at 500 miles an hour? We must be mad. But it all went well. Comfortable seat, not too crowded; the usual stop at Addis Ababa, a very busy terminal. I went to the lounge and settled into the loungers in the restroom. Ate a fruit salad and tried to sleep. The flight was called but I was taken to the wrong gate, one for Israel, but saved at the last minute and rushed to correct one- was the last to board, all in a bit of a hustle.

Found my seat –not very full and did my usual- settled down to sleep –no evening meal -the night went quickly. Breakfast tray was overflowing, just too much food. I didn't have the cooked plate, just the fruit and yoghurt.

Landing was very smooth, hardly a bump then cruising to the gate. Several security checks before making my way to the luggage carousel. I found my luggage. It had already been removed and piled up on the floor. Through customs and out into the concourse. I saw no one who looked like my driver but I waited and Mike arrived. After about a forty-minute drive, I arrived at Donald's who was at home. He has guests from San Francisco staying- Barbara and Michael.

Age 91

'I am 91,' he said quietly with a slight smile. He was a big man with a large flat face, wispy hair and saggy lower eyelids. His wife sitting beside him was diminutive and rarely spoke. He hardly referred to her as he described how they were going to see his son. His voice was slightly husky like so many older people. It wasn't long before he told me he had gout and took allopurinol.

She piped up,

'I don't take any medicine.'

We met on a train. They had reserved tickets and at first couldn't find their seats.

'I think we must be in the wrong carriage,' he said to no one in particular.

'Don't be silly,' she said, 'this is the quiet carriage, pointing to the sign on the window. Don't you remember you booked it specially?' he nodded. 'Then they must be here somewhere.'

I could see some reserved seats opposite me and pointed to them.

'These could be yours?' I said.

He checked his tickets,

'Yes these are ours.' They sat down and looked straight ahead saying nothing.

'Where are you going?' I asked. I am a bit inquisitive and like to hear other people's stories.

'I have four children, three boys and a girl,' he said as if she had had nothing to do with their existence.

She then said,

'He sent the chauffeur.'

At first, I didn't understand what she meant.

She repeated.

'I rang him to take us home after her birth but he sent the chauffeur instead. I am still angry, our daughter is now 40.'

He said nothing.

They sat in silence staring ahead as the train growled and rolled as it speeded up.

He opened a bottle of water and I noticed that he had large hands the backs of which were veined and discoloured. You can always tell someone's age by their hands, it seems the hands age faster than the rest of the body.

Coincidence- A Marathon Runner

What a world of coincidences? Mine happened recently. A flight booked to depart at 7 pm was retimed for 5 pm but I wasn't told. Being a punctual bore, I had arrived at the airport at 5pm thinking I had two hours in hand to be told that the flight was about to depart. I was met by an assistant who hurried me to the check-in desk, rushed me through the formalities and spun me on to Passport control.

The place was strangely quiet and the desk was empty-the officer was about to leave. He saw me arrive and returned to his post. I rushed on through empty corridors with offices pointing to the next door. Finally I walked down the empty walkway to the plane.

But that was not the real excitement of the trip. That was to come later, on the second leg of my journey from Mombasa to Addis Ababa. It was where we changed planes.

The second leg began about four hours later. I was sitting next to a petite dark skinned young woman who was Ethiopian. I resisted my habit of talking and sat quietly reading. She soon fell asleep.

We were nearing London when she asked for some help in completing her visa documents. She was travelling with her mother so we completed both sets of papers.

I wrote down her name, which meant nothing to me at the time and I then asked why she was visiting the UK. She muttered something, which sounded like 'marathon' but wasn't clear, and I didn't ask her to repeat it. I then remembered that she had put the word 'Marathon' on the section asking 'reason for visit'.

Then I became interested

'Marathon,' I said.

'Yes,' she said, 'the London marathon on Sunday, I won it two years ago.'

I couldn't wait for Sunday. At 9 O'clock sharp I turned on the TV and waited for the Elite women to line up at the start. There she was waiting to get going. I watched much of the race but sadly she didn't figure in the first three to cross the finishing line.

Cooking

From the time when I first began to understand a little of the world around me, I recall a mantra which my mother often repeated.

‘There is no such thing as women’s work, just work’

From a very early age, I was taught by example to be a ‘housewife’, to make my own bed, to do my own light washing, to cook a simple meal, to wash up afterwards, and later to sew, knit, darn, use a sewing machine and a washing machine etc.

These skills came into their own when as a trainee surgeon I lived on my own in an apartment in Sheffield for over two years prior to getting married. One of the essential skills was the ability to cook and with it the ability to shop, to choose fresh vegetables, meat etc and to select a variety so as not to get bored by the same diet.

What I realised was that cooking is really chemistry. Heat from a variety of sources converts one raw material into another and that many agents act as catalysts -they facilitate the chemical process- such as yeast, which could be replaced by baking powder, white of eggs etc. I learned that recipes could be modified if I understood the role of the various agents.

I then began to learn about a balanced diet and the importance of daily fresh fruit and vegetables, together with fish, chicken and not too much red meat. So it became easy to plan my meals especially as fresh produce requires no cooking.

I also realised that so called fast food or prepared dishes often contain a lot of sugar, salt and preservatives which I knew should be avoided if at all possible.

So the scene was set. I would never need to go hungry or lack a good diet as long as I had access to fresh produce and a source of heat. Now in the twilight of my life. I chose to live alone, able to fend for myself for as long as possible.

Democracy

In 2012, Mohammed Morsi claimed that he was the first democratically elected President of Egypt and as such would continue to guide the country. After one year of a four-year term as president, the people decided otherwise and went to the street. After several days of confrontation between them and the Muslim Brotherhood, the Army intervened and deposed him. There is now a non-elected leader in control, who has promised that he will in time conduct new elections.

Morsi interpreted Democracy as the process of election, free and fair, open and transparent. Having stated that, he then selected advisers, all from the Muslim brotherhood. He was thought to be trying to Islamize the country. It was his failure to understand the essence of Democracy that destroyed him.

His actions have been likened to those of Hitler who in 1936 was elected as a result of a democratic election but then disbanded the government and introduced a dictatorship.

Democracy is much more than the process of election. It is a philosophy first outlined in the 4th C BC in Athens. Then the choice was only given to an elite who were considered knowledgeable enough to vote. In the 19th and 20th C, as a result of the suffragette movement, most modern states gave the vote to all citizens. It is a system that gives all citizens equal rights under the law, to justice, education, health, religion, freedom of movement, etc.

On the face of it, this can be considered undeniable but on careful thought, there is *no freedom in poverty*. Without the means, many of the above rights are beyond reach for millions.

The elimination of poverty is therefore one of the guiding planks of democracy that has been recognized by the United Nations charter.

Fraser Nelson, Editor of the Spectator writing in the Telegraph in 2013 said
It is Capitalism not Democracy that the Arab world needs. It was a well thought out well written article whose title was misleading – He was arguing for the principles of freedom which includes amongst others, a right to trade i.e. Capitalism but much more.

He quotes Margaret Thatcher who after her death in 2013, was so denigrated in the British press.

‘Freedom,’ she said, ‘depends on the strength of the Institutions; Law and Order; a free press, the police, and an army that serves the government, not runs it-*my addition* and so much more- such as the elimination of poverty etc.

It is often thought that having a constitution that defines in writing the rights of the citizens would safeguard them and provide them equal protection under the law.

But that is not so.

During the years of slavery in the USA, (1619-1856 -246 years), the slave owners argued that a slave was not a citizen; he was an object, a property and therefore the democratic rights enshrined in ‘All men are born equal’ and ‘have equal protection under the law’ didn’t apply.

Diana

22 Jan 1944 -2015 Who knows?

It has been almost ten years since Diana died at a hospice in Leeds. She would have been 71 today. How would my life have been different had she lived? I would never have come to Mombasa, never met Celina and who knows would Andrew and Sean have been born?

I think we would have in time moved from Leeds. Diana always wanted to live by the sea, perhaps the East coast Near Scarborough. She would have continued her Art and her teaching.

As her parents had by that time died she would have been free to travel to become the person she always wanted to be. Our marriage may not have lasted, as she may have wanted more freedom, not tied to an older man.

If one extrapolates my experience to that of others, it becomes apparent that so much of what happens occurs by chance, including the actual birth of individuals (unless you believe that there is a divine hand at the tiller).

What would I have done? It's so difficult to guess. Would I have taken up writing, I certainly would not have gone sailing and not owned a half share in two boats.

Could I write the story, a story in which fate plays a part? In which the future revolves around a chance event, which changes the pattern of what is to come. Is that not what always happens? A door closes and another one opens.

How are we to understand the forces that are acting so arbitrary and capricious without any apparent purpose? Any plans? Any indication of what is to come.

It's like a piece of flotsam in the sea being pitched here and there and washing up on a beach on some far off island. Where it dries in the sun, to be picked up by an islander and put on his fire, to cook his meal. As the wood burns, it is reduced to ashes and carbon dioxide, a gas that rises into the air and is absorbed by the leaves of the tree nearby to be converted into starch to feed a bird. Isn't conception like that a million sperms race to be the first to penetrate the female egg and form the next generation.

Can we ever begin to understand let alone control this paradox, the fire that snuffed out the lives of the residents of a high rise building in London, a chance event, a one in a hundred happening that changed the lives of so many?

How to accept that? To see it as just one of those things? Is there a plan or purpose? It is so difficult to see one yet are our lives and the lives of the trillions of people that have gone before us of no purpose? As I sit on the train watching the scenery go by, it all feels so real, so permanent as if it will go on forever.

But I know it won't. I also will become a memory and then fade away until forgotten and this struggle, this happiness and sadness will become nothing. How can I make it have a meaning, make it last beyond my days? Can I or is It just hubris?

Four years have passed since I wrote this and I have just celebrated my 86th birthday- I am still here, still struggling to understand, no wiser but still questioning. Many of my contemporaries are no more, just a memory as I will be sometime in the

future. Meanwhile I take each day as it comes, grateful for the time, the present, the now.

Dying

The recent death of a dear friend Cecil was a stark reminder of my own inevitable demise. We had known each other for over thirty years during which time, I had grown to admire and to cherish our friendship.

Very different in many ways to me, he was a Yorkshire man through and through and I was born in the East end of London. Our paths crossed by chance when I came to work in Leeds as a surgeon. He was a Physiotherapist so it wasn't long before we met each other. Soon our families were meeting socially and our friendship deepened.

Our wives became friends but then my wife died and soon after so did his. We sometimes talked about it wondering why we had been spared but not them. As I write I want to say a last word to him but can't; I will miss our time together. Going to Leeds will feel very different. It won't have that same excitement about meeting an old friend. I will drive past his house and think of him.

Eric Dies

A close friend Eric Harvey, whom I had known many years ago, died. The news saddened me and made me think about the past and the passing years. That night when I tried to sleep it was on my mind, a deep unhappiness that all things must end. I felt a great sense of sadness although we hadn't been in contact for years.

Eric and I first met at Mill Hill School in 1947. I think the fact that we were both Jewish brought us together in what was a school for the sons of English Clergy. After we were sixteen, we shared a study together.

Leaving school, he worked for Salter Rex, an Estate Agency, which was eventually taken over by Foxton's with whom he remained until retirement. I went on to Medical school and in time became a surgeon.

My strongest memories are of the time we shared a flat at 44 ½ Fortess Road in Kentish Town. Arthur Whittaker, Eric and myself were three very different people but shared a lot in common. We would have a big Sunday lunch of roast beef and all the trimmings.

I had met Diana by that time but we were not yet engaged. Sandra, Eric's girlfriend later to be his wife and Diana would do the cooking while we three went to the Pub. They would never agree to that now, nor would I have wanted them to.

I was the best man at their wedding and he in due course was mine. We lost touch when I began my medical training.

He continued his attachment with Mill Hill School by being an active member of the Old MillHillians. He was a keen golfer. He lived with his wife Sandra in Radlett until his death in 2016.

I went to visit her in 2017. She told me that he had developed Alzheimer's.

The loss of a friend reminds us that time is passing and that the next generation is pushing at the door. They need to take the reins and in order to do so we must move aside. It is not easy for us to accept that the struggle which we have been through seems in the end to be meaningless.

Some say that the older generation hands on knowledge and experience to the new but in practice it seems that each generation learns the hard way by making its own mistakes. So progress is not a smooth line but a jerky one of stops and starts and sometimes a slide backwards.

The loss of a friend reminds us that time is short and the *Now* is here. Not to wait, not to delay but to do all that we can *Now* and to see our loved ones as often as possible.

Evolution

I recently saw a programme on the Galapagos Islands presented by David Attenborough. The 19 islands and 107 islets and rocks evolved over millions of years, each the top of a volcano appearing in sequence. As a result, there are the same species of birds and animals on each island but with mild differences. These differences are thought to have arisen because the animals and plants were separated and subjected to different influences. It was these differences that became the basis for Darwin's theory of Evolution.

Fast forward and a man called Mendel began to experiment with peas. He showed that it was possible by crossing different varieties of peas to produce new species.

The same has been done in the cattle industry, with dogs and cats and of course with food. The food we eat today is a far cry from what our ancestors ate.

Generations of cross fertilisation have led to the modern carrot, the tomato, the potato etc. These changes have come as a result of crossing one species with another. They did not require an intelligent designer. They are the product of cross fertilisation.

Food

'*We are what we eat*' is a phrase often heard today but what does it mean? Surely if I eat prawns I don't somehow become a prawn or do I? Well not exactly, of course but if we eat too much of one food, the body simply absorbs it and stores it even if we don't need it.

For example, if we like to eat fatty foods such as chapati, chips, fried chicken, we will simply store the fat on our body as obesity.

In some ways the body is like a machine. If we eat a lot of prepared food which contain preservatives, these can collect in our bodies and we don't really know if they are harmless.

DDT is an insecticide widely used which is very effective in killing a wide range of pests but we now know that it becomes stored in the human body and may be harmful.

Antibiotics used to fatten animals are also stored in our bodies. Are they harmful? We don't know but it is self-evident that we would be better off without them. More and more information is being gathered that ingested antibiotics may alter the body's bacteria and create resistant forms.

Plastics have become increasingly used for everyday packaging. Recently we have realised that they are indestructible and fragments are becoming widely distributed in our drinking water and in our bodies.

Friendship

Sitting on the balcony of a room at the Queens Bay hotel in Cyprus on holiday, I ponder on the nature of friendship. Like all human needs, it is a complicated and often poorly understood emotion. I have come here with Ron, someone who I admire for his tenacity and drive but who seems to need to talk about himself and his experiences.

He needs an audience, to enable him to recite accounts of his life and views. It is as if having lived an event, he has to recount it to others, time and time again to give it credibility. At heart, a raconteur, he seems to need a listener to establish his own identity

What do I want from a friendship? Ultimately and basically, it is for me a matter of trust and reliability; the ability to feel absolute confidence in another human being. It is not necessary to be in regular contact with that person as long as I feel that we are able to relate to each other on a common level without guilt or pretension.

Sharing common interests is often the basis for a friendship. At least that is the way I have met people who have become friends. Friendship requires effort. Friends need to remain in contact and long periods of separation without contact can lead to a progressive loss of common interests, each going his or her own way. In practice, it is often one person who maintains it.

At this stage I have only made reference to friendships with men. Can I have a friendship with a woman? I think yes, if we are both involved in a common project. But when the friendship is based solely on social and cultural interests, the fact that our genders are different usually means that there must be some physical attraction to accompany the intellectual exchange.

I have not found age to be a barrier, although the younger person often defers to the older in discussions in which age is equated with experience; is perceived to be relevant.

Otherwise the two despite their age differences meet on an equal footing, in which the younger often teaches the older a skill or activity. Perhaps the most unusual and interesting friendships are those forged in shared experiences such as the weekend I spent with the Mankind project.

Getting Older

The morning sun rises early bathing his bedroom with a warm soft glow. He wakes and looks up at the shadows dancing on the ceiling. He hears his breathing and feels a pulse in his head.

'Another day, I am alive.' he says to himself. He lay still enjoying that moment of being. Then he moves his arms and legs. They respond painlessly.

'I've passed through another night and the day awaits me.' he says aloud.

His phone rings and a familiar voice says,

'Hello Dad, I love you.' It's his adopted eight-year son Andrew going off to school. He feels a warm glow in his heart for him so young and so alive.

Gone are the tensions of his youth, the melancholia that I woke with, the fear of facing another day. All that is behind me now as I look forward to the day ahead. So many friends are now no more but the memory of them is still strong: a close school friend with whom I shared a study and later a flat died last year; a medical colleague who became a close friend died recently in his sleep.

'Why him and not me?'

So many questions remain to taunt me, simple ones like 'what's it all about?' Last night as I looked up at a star-lit sky with the full moon casting shadows on the trees, I marvelled at the universe and wondered, I could do no more than wonder. So many issues remain unanswered.

He thought that with age would come a greater understanding of who he was but if anything he comprehends less as his knowledge increases. Where did he come from? Where was he going? Was this the end? Was there no other purpose than to live and die and become a memory for a future generation, a name on a tombstone?

It seemed such a waste. All his strivings, the many challenges he faced, the decisions he had struggled with, were they all for nothing? He is just one of the millions who have gone before, the unknown men and women who had faced the same questions?

In heaven, that is what the believers would say but for me that was too easy an answer. But what was the alternative?

Are we just a carrier of genes, as some scientists would argue, merely a conduit for an eternal game of evolution leading nowhere?

And what of the universe, that immeasurable space that stretches out further than we can conceive. Where did it come from? We can ask such a question but to date it remains unanswerable. So what are we to make of it? Accept that it is there and just live our lives from day to day or strive to understand it.

Imitation in Sculpture

In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue 'Africa the Art of a continent', Tom Phillips refers to Nelson Mandela's opening words in his speech to the Organisation of African Unity in 1994 held in Carthage.

He said,

'All human civilization rests on foundations such as the ruins of the city of Carthage in Tunis. These architectural remains; like the pyramids of Egypt; the sculptures of the ancient kingdoms of Ghana; Mali and Benin; like the temples of Ethiopia' the Zimbabwe ruins and the rock paintings of the Kgalagadi and Namibian deserts, all speak of Africa's contribution to the formation of the condition of civilization.'

The exhibition, the first of its kind, opened at the Royal Academy on the 4th October 1995. It presented an enormous range of creative work from the four corners of the African Continent. Looked at from a European viewpoint in the twentieth century, the work seemed primitive and ill-formed.

African Art consists of everyday objects used in normal activities; bowls, utensils, sleeping pillows and the artifacts of beliefs, the spirits and the Gods. Wherever possible these items were decorated with intricate carvings of ordinary scenes. It shared the Egyptian oeuvre of animal-like spirits depicted as Gods for every occasion.

Only by understanding the world of the indigenous peoples who created it, can their enormous contribution be comprehended. Ladislav Segy in his book 'African Sculpture, 1958' describes it as 'one of the great artistic heritages of the world.'

Modern Western Art as we understand it today has a much shorter and different pedigree. Until the Impressionists, it has always been a representation of man and may have evolved as a means of recording everyday life long before the era of photography.

By the late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century, Art had moved from depiction and decoration into a deeper exploration of the physical world. Yet it had its roots in African Imagery.

The iconic painting by Picasso's 'Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)' 1911 heralded a new movement taken up by Matisse, 'Blue Nude,' 1907 and later by Epstein's, 'Sun God' 1910. New media have carried the ideas further, film, sound, light and electronics have all been utilised to seek a greater understanding of the world and man's relationship to it.

Sculpture- Art and Decoration

Art and decoration have always been at loggerheads. Many sculptors struggled to free themselves from the shackles of the past where decoration was a central theme in sculpture. Rodin broke free and explored the human body in all its activities, a far cry from the statuary of Neoclassicism (Canova 1757-1822)

In 1940 Jacob Epstein wrote of his work,

‘I believe myself to be a return in sculpture, to the human outlook, without in any way sinking back into the flabby sentimentalisation of the merely decorative that went before. The deeply intimate and human are always sought by me and so wrought that they became classic and enduring.’

The Mankind Project

Some time has passed since that weekend and as Paul my son predicted, the initial enthusiasm that I felt at the time has waned somewhat although not completely. The forthcoming August weekend should help to rekindle that spirit of camaraderie that I felt at the time. Then we shared the most intimate parts of our lives without reserve or pretence and came away strengthened by the experience.

Can I have a friendship with my children? Many adults talk about their friendship with their son or daughter implying a relationship of equal involvement and commitment. Is that really possible with a child who by its relationship to the parent inevitably has some dependence either emotionally or financially?

Prior to my wife's death, I did not feel the need to have friends and tended to rely on the men that I met in the course of our socializing with her friends. After she died, I realized that I had nothing in common with these men and had to find my own. This turned out to be easier than I thought.

I found my friends amongst the interests that I shared and soon luckily had a number of good male friends upon whom I could rely and who allowed me to speak freely and frankly without fear.

My brother Geoffrey gave me a piece of good advice. He said "avoid people who make you feel sad or depressed. Do not search out those who are depressed or need support. They will only make you feel sad and depressed yourself. Rather associate with people who are happy and at ease with themselves as they will infect the same feeling into you.'

There is however inside me a desire to help those who are less fortunate than myself and therefore I am unwittingly drawn to those who are weak and unhappy. I must learn to resist this as it does make me unhappy and introspective.

Truth in Sculpture

When I began to make art and sculpture some years ago, I sought a path built on the ideas of Rodin and Epstein. I knew that I did not want to carve or sculpt inanimate objects. I had not fully realised why I felt this and have often been criticized because my work doesn't look like the real thing.

Nevertheless I have always thought that a wooden, metal or stone copy of an animal for example completely failed to express the unique qualities of that creature. I admire those sculptors who can make what are described as lifelike figures, portraits or animals etc. But I have always felt that there was something lacking in their work, not that I didn't admire their skill and dedication.

Recently reading Nelson Goodman's 'Language of Art', I have gradually understood a little more about the reasons on which my reluctance was based. In the first part of the book he writes about 'imitation' and 'copying'. He points out that there was no work of art, painting, sculpture etc. that can actually copy an intact natural animal or object. All it can do is convey one aspect of the object but its success still depends on the viewer's view as to how the imitation is viewed.

The reception – that is what we see and interpret – and how we process information is intimately connected and unique to each of us by virtue of our genetic and environmental influences – even a photograph which is often considered to be the most accurate image suffers from the same limitations. The viewer when s/he looks at a work of art brings to bear her/his own input.

Aristotle, perhaps the earliest philosopher to address the subject of imitation speaks about the 'essence' of an object. He suggested that it is not possible to convey all the essential features of an object; all we can do is to see or describe one or more of them. He was of the opinion that this essence is the truth, which we search for but can never reach.

For example, he talked about the 'essence' of a horse, its horsiness, i.e. those aspects of horse that makes it a horse not just one or two horses but all horses. He stressed that all world objects encompass the same essence. Painting, sculpture and photography are all means by which we attempt to understand the visual world, but they all suffer from the same limitations. None can encompass the totality of the qualities that an object has.

Michelangelo, Canova, Rodin, Epstein to mention only a few artists, have produced some remarkable figurative sculpture, full figures, busts etc. They are described as life-like in their execution. They are said to look exactly like the person portrayed and yet a moment's thought and the observer realises that it cannot be so.

They are inanimate, they do not breathe, move, look around, speak etc. Despite that they manage to capture an aspect of the living person, a characteristic, be it humour, anger etc. But then how could they do more, after all they are made of stone or bronze? Such is the paradox of imitation. It can never be the real thing or as Aristotle would say 'never attain the truth'.

What is a sculpture? How is it more than an object?

R M Rilke was 28 when he wrote his monograph on Rodin in 1903. Rodin was 43 at the time and was in his best years. Rilke tries to describe what sculpture is.

He writes,

'Sculpture was a separate thing as was the easel picture but it did not require a wall like a picture. It did not even need a roof. It was an object that could exist for itself alone, a complete thing around which we could walk and which one could look at from all sides. And yet it had to distinguish itself somehow from other things, the ordinary things which everyone can touch. It had to become impeachable, sacrosanct separated from chance and time through which it rose, isolated and miraculous.'

This definition excludes almost all African Art, which if nothing else is functional and plays a role in the life of the maker.

William Tucker (1974) in his 'The Language of Sculpture', a book based on a series of lectures given at the University of Leeds writes of Rodin that *his contribution to modern sculpture was, the independence of the work from specific subject matter or function, its internal life, the concern with material, structure and gravity as ends in themselves- the affirmation of surface, of the perceptible physicality of the medium.*

In the Twilight

It takes so long to understand what life is about. From the moment we are born until the moment we die, we explore the world and struggle to make sense of it; the paradox of great beauty and terrifying evil that challenges us.

That certain things are inalienable is self-evident but there is within us all a need to find answers and most spend their lives searching. Death is one of those infallibles, no matter how often and in what manner we approach it, it continues to pose an enigma. That it is inevitable does not make it any easier to accept.

Although brought up in a Jewish home, the intervention of the 2nd WW, our evacuation to Bermuda and my education at a Public School has diluted my beliefs to the point where I am at most an Agnostic or more accurately an Atheist.

While I accept that everyone has a right to his or her opinion. I have great difficulty in understanding how intelligent and knowledgeable people can be believers. It requires such a leap of faith to believe in a good God, a caring loving spirit who will cherish and protect us. The evidence, such as it is, is so flimsy.

The lack of any archeological evidence doesn't seem to challenge the believer. The frequent manipulations of the contents of the Bible with the rejection of material not thought to be relevant smacks of a conspiracy, a need to keep the people in ignorance.

The very language, which is used by the churches and religious people, is pompous, pretentious and grandiose. Much was written at a time when most were illiterate. Even the new rewritten texts indulge in a special religiosity to elevate the contents to some higher meaning. The expression 'Don't let the facts interfere with your prejudices' is apposite.

That moment when we wake and realise that we have been given another day is surely one of the most joyous ones, another day to be alive to see and feel. That it is a miracle cannot be challenged. That the complex chemical reaction, which is what we are, nourishes a brain that can feel and see and care is without doubt truly marvellous but is that enough to confirm that there is a God.

As each year passes and more and more of our miraculous world is revealed; as we understand more and more about how we tick, it is understandable that many will continue to reach to a higher power to explain it. But the very act of untying the chemical knot, to reveal the processes that underlie our being could be said to question the presence of a divine chemist.

But the eternal issue remains, where did it all come from and if the answer is God, then where did she/he come from?

Jo Cox RIP

17th June 2016

Jo Cox: 'she truly believed in a better world'

The mindless killing of Jo Cox, an MP in North England yesterday shook the Western World. All who heard about it will have been affected. I felt an immense sadness as tears pricked my eyes- a life hardly started had been viciously ended by the action of an enraged member of the public.

We will hear that the perpetrator was deranged and therefore less responsible for his actions. Later the finger will be pointed at the police and the social services, that will be shown to have overlooked something that might have prevented this appalling act. Eventually the whole awful event will be sanitised as an unavoidable occurrence, the price we pay to live in a free society.

Instead it was in my opinion the act of a mindless bully who grew up to believe that violence solves problems. Killing her he believed would stop a movement that he opposed. How wrong he was.

Finally the finger will be pointed at the gratuitous violence that we see on the TV, in films and on the Internet and the part it played in the death of this young promising life. 'We are all responsible' will be the cry.

Has individual accountability been assigned to the pages of history?

Kenya and Sculpture

In 2005 I first came to Kenya. I found that the local art was predominantly imitation, beautifully carved animals in ebony, rose wood and less valuable hardwoods. It was in the finest tradition of African Art. While the technique was superb, the subject matter was limited. Few artists were exploring the essence of their subjects, the elongated form of the giraffe, the energy of the lion, the majesty and patience of the elephants. To carve exquisite copies of nature didn't attract me not least because I hadn't the ability to do so.

I turned to the native soapstone. It is quarried locally and is readily available. Though predominantly white, it comes in many forms streaked with colours.

Usually cut in rectangular blocks, I prefer irregular stones, which allow my imagination to see what is within. It sets up a dialogue between the stone and me and determines my imagery.

I favour a combination of figurative and abstract forms being influenced by the work of Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. A flat roof has provided the site for my outdoor studio

I started this discussion with the question, what is art? I now extend it to why Art? What role does art play in society, in our lives? Why will patrons pay millions of pounds to own an original? The reasons are complex and conflicting. Before Art became a commodity with value, it simply acted as an adornment or an illustration of an idea or a view.

There is a belief that it is one of the few human activities that celebrates creativity, the act of making something new, different, unique and original. In the past teaching was loosely divided into the Arts and the Sciences based on the belief that one is creative, innovative, imaginative and the other planned, structured and systematic.

A moment's thought soon shows these definitions to be flawed. Any scientist will tell you that her/his discipline demands imagination and vision and that without these "arty skills" science would flounder and waste.

Human Joints

Human joints are very different from mechanical joints. In the latter lubrication in the form of oil is required for smooth movement and to minimize wear. The human joint on the other hand has a very slippery lining. Its surfaces are lined by articular cartilage, which is smoother than ice. The lining cells of the joint produce a fluid called synovial fluid and this acts to nourish the cartilage cells. So unlike a mechanical joint, fluid in a human joint is abnormal.

It is believed that when the joint is resting, its nutrition is compromised and that it needs movement to remain healthy. This may explain why we often need to walk about to relieve pain and why exercise of all types keeps our joints healthy.

Osteo-arthritis is the collective name for non-infective conditions of the joints. It shares some similarities with infection, in that the joint is swollen and warm but there is no pus and no microorganisms are involved. There are many different forms; some also involve other tissues such as the skin and the eyes.

A group of chemicals called anti-inflammatories have been developed to counteract the inflammation associated with arthritis. Drugs such as aspirin, Ibuprofen and diclofenac all have an anti-inflammatory action. Since an increase in blood supply and fluid production is the body's natural response to disease, many argue that a drug that suppresses these natural responses would be contra-indicated. Nevertheless they do seem to be helpful.

What we do know is that by relieving the pain they allow improved function, which would otherwise be restricted. Muscle wasting and joint stiffness, the after effects of disuse are reduced so that when the condition has recovered, a return to normal function is more likely.

How do things get better is a question often asked? Because most things do. The answer lies in our evolution. The human body has transformed over many millions of years during which time systems have been tried and rejected until we now have the most sophisticated fail safe procedures imaginable to protect us from damage.

Every function is protected by these guardian angels that come into action spontaneously as required. We are all familiar with the way bleeding stops, blood clots and cuts heal. These are the obvious ones but there are thousands of others silently working on our behalf to protect us from harm.

Modern medicine works hand in hand with the body's systems to keep us healthy. Even the magical antibiotics would be useless if the body didn't step in after the infection had been controlled to clear up the mess and remove the dead bacteria, the pus and the necrotic tissue. Once that has been achieved, the body rebuilds the damaged tissue replacing lost cells until the integrity of the part has been restored.

Kilaguni Lodge Tsavo West

John, our driver, had collected us the day before at 8 am for the long drive to the Lodge. Passing through the outskirts of Mombasa, we drove west leaving the airport on our left. Very soon we were in open country where the road improved and for a short distance became a well marked dual carriageway.

We passed several small villages and then reached Voi and the extensive fields of Sisal on either side, for which that area is famous. We stopped at the Kilimanjaro Craft centre where we had a welcomed cup of coffee and took time to explore the rows of carvings made by local craftsmen. I obtained a piece of ebony which I hope to carve. Then on to our Lodge, arriving at about 2 pm. A short break to wash and clean up and then into lunch; a hearty help-yourself-affair.

We had about an hour's rest before the evening game drive. It was cloudy with a light rain when we set off and because of this we did not expect to see much. However we were delighted to see a large male elephant quietly munching just off the road. It was a good omen. The plains were green and lush with many areas of wet land so the animals did not need to come to the main water holes where we were most likely to see them. The hills in the distance were covered with low clouds and occasionally a peak would be visible above the low-lying mist. Nearby there were large rocky outcrops covered in bush.

We soon came upon the area where an historic volcano had spewed out rocks and larva. Looking as if it had happened yesterday, the wall of larva was now partly covered with low shrubbery. There were many giraffes silently chewing from the high and low lying acacias. A pair of ostriches charmed us with a mating dance. Small groups of zebras moved slowly as they ate, their striped bodies contrasting with the undergrowth.

A family of chattering baboons stopped for a moment to watch us as we approached and then, not finding us interesting, moved on into the shrub.

Several wildebeests were busily engaged in obtaining their lunch and took no notice of us as we paused on the road to watch them. A pair of dainty Dik-dik were unmoved by our presence.

While watching out for the animals we were repeatedly surprised by the birds, brightly coloured starlings; a brown owl watching immobile from the branch of a nearby tree -several families of chattering weaver birds preparing their hanging nests, small doves flying just ahead of the van and then veering upward showing the white bars at the tips of their wings.

We manoeuvred along the path of rich red clay, now in a poor state from the rains that had washed away large areas revealing rough irregular stones over which we bounced. By now it was getting dark and we turned around and headed back to the camp.

A short break to rest, shower and change before dinner, held in an enormous Boma. The space was lit by candle light at each table so that the water hole with its low lighting was visible to all. This had an unexpected effect. It attracted hoards of moths and small insects, which dropped onto our table, our plates, into our drinking glasses and onto our food. Only the strong hearted could ignore their attention. The faint hearted were appalled and said so. It appears that this is a very unusual occurrence and was probably due to the wet conditions.

The following morning drive was disappointing as we didn't see an elephant all morning and had returned to camp a little bit disappointed. We cleaned up, packed and made our way to breakfast. It was as usual a feast and neither of us could resist eating too much.

On the homeward journey however we came upon a terrible scene. A female elephant had been hit and killed by a lorry on the road. The carcass had been dragged to the side where under the direction of the police, the tusks had been removed and the local people were feverishly hacking off the raw flesh and removing it.

It was like a scene from Dante's *Inferno*; the enthusiasm with which the locals removed the flesh was nauseating and revolting. That majestic animal was being reduced to a pile of edible flesh. From a western viewpoint it seemed horrifying but on a practical level, the beast was dead, the flesh was fresh so why not take advantage of 'one's good luck' and enjoy the feast.

Naming Titles

There is a long history of naming works of art. This is presumed to help the observers understand the visual message contained in the work and also to identify one work from another. It seems to be self-evidently useful. But if the process by which we understand images is considered. It soon becomes evident that each of us brings a unique self-view of the world to bear on images. Even simple images of a cat can create confusion when observers are asked to describe it. Each will bring his or her previous experience which will influence their opinion.

Many artists deliberately avoid naming their work on the basis that the observer is now free to make up his or her mind as to the content and meaning rather than being prejudiced by the artist. I am in favour of less information about the meaning of the work but perhaps more about the process of the creation of the work.

My interest in sculpture was inspired by my late wife's vocation as an artist. It was a natural evolution from my surgical practices with both having in common, a physical involvement and a mechanical discipline.

But despite my introduction to the Art world at college, I struggled to understand what art was trying to say, what role it played in my life? What purpose would it have? Uncertain where to begin, I turned to the materials, which were at hand, which included ash and bamboo. I began exploring their qualities: bamboo, long, straight, hollow, very tough. It became open pieces, bent and twisted to exploit these qualities. Ash, a hardwood, has a parallel grain allowing it to be cut into long narrow along the grain. These were very malleable and flexible. They lent themselves to being laminated and then distorted and twisted then making large open works.

In time I gained a BA in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University (1997) and a MA at Leeds University (1999). I continued to make work in my barn and began to exhibit with the Yorkshire Sculptors Group. One of the members was a Dutch stone carver called Gerrit.

Having closed the barn I continued to work intermittently with Gerrit in his studio in the garden of his home in Wetherby, North Yorkshire. Where I worked in stone-Serpentine, Sandstone and Limestone.

In the UK I show my work with the Yorkshire Sculpture Group and also have my own shows. I have sold some pieces privately.

Nothing is Ever As It Seems (or One Doesn't Know What One Doesn't Know)

On Boxing Day, an unexpected invitation to visit some friends from Leeds who had arrived in the port of Kilindini on their luxury cruise found Geoff, my older brother and I driving across Mombasa. We had in our possession passes which had been sent to us by our friends. The traffic was light as we approached the port ready to show them in order to visit the ship.

In the event we were told in no uncertain manner that our passes were invalid. What we had been sent were useless documents. That situation is in my experience too frequent an occurrence. We were ushered into an office and met the duty officer who on seeing our documents told us that we required passes.

He directed us to the on-duty officer for Inchcape, a shipping company. He was a quietly spoken efficient man who immediately took charge as if what he was doing was very familiar. We followed him to his office about half a mile away. It was closed but he arranged for it to be opened, switched on his computer and copying machine

and after a very short while provided both Geoffrey and I with the necessary documents to enable us to get passes. He then took us back to the office at the port where we presented the documents and in due course after paying 120 Kenya shillings (about one Pound) were given three passes one for our driver and one each for ourselves.

Some 45 minutes later we again presented ourselves at the gate. On this occasion the reception was quite different. The guard checked our documents and we were duly waved through the gate on our way to the boat.

We could see the super structure and funnel of the Silver Mist Tourist Ship towering above the pile of containers stacked up in the port. After meandering around them we drove on to the quayside where the ship was docked. Coming down the gangway to greet us were John and Hilary. After some further security checks, we mounted the aluminium ladder onto the ship at the fifth level. It was really good to see them again and I was reminded that we had last met one year earlier at John's seventy-fifth birthday party. He had aged a little, and seemed to have lost height. Hilary on the other hand looked fit and vibrant. They were pleased to see us and made us feel very welcome.

After a guided visit around the ship which included the swimming pool on the top deck, the theatre, the casino, their cabin, and the gymnasium, we went to the bar for a drink. It is difficult to describe the sheer luxury of the rooms and facilities. Lunch was served in the stern restaurant. We were offered a buffet fit for a king. Every possible meat and fish dish tastefully displayed was on offer. Beautifully garnished salads, seafood and fruits added to the bountiful meal. A chilled white wine accompanied the food. It was a memorable occasion that we talked about for many weeks after.

Pain: Friend or Foe

We are all familiar with pain of one sort or another. From an early age we experience it either following a fall or a cut, a loose tooth or a burn. We know to fear it and to respond to it and that most pain gets better.

Pain evolved as a protective response and that it helps us avoid further damage. How does it arise? Studies have identified pain receptors in our skin and other organs that when stimulated send messages to our brain which are perceived as pain. Stick a pin in your hand and you will feel a sharp prick. Touch a hot surface and you will feel a burn. These are all responses from the specific receptors in your skin. So far it's easy, but what about the pain that comes on without any obvious cause? That is more confusing and worrying, particularly if it seems unrelated to what we do or what we eat.

The only way to determine the cause of a pain is to take a detailed history and answer questions like,
How long have you had it?
What does it feel like?
What makes it better, worse? And so on. In this way the pain can be related to a system such as digestion or defaecation.

How should we respond to pain? One way is to take a painkiller, a chemical that blocks the painful nerve impulse so it doesn't get to the brain. That seems obvious but maybe it's unwise.

For example I accidentally walk on a needle, which sticks in my foot. Instead of removing it, I take a pain killer to suppress the pain. Surely that can't be a good idea?

Many pains however seem to have no obvious cause and they are the ones for which many will seek Alternative or Complementary therapy such as Homeopathy, Acupuncture, reflexology and many others. These treatments do not seek to identify the cause but attempt to treat the symptoms.

It woke me again last night and I had to get out of bed to get some relief.

What causes a pain that is worse when you are resting and eases when you are standing and walking? It suggests that it is arising from a joint.

Port Reitz Clinic - Doctors Visit from “Cure”

I don't think I fully realised that although I had left clinical medicine many years ago, it still held a fascination for me. This was surprisingly revealed to me during my recent visits to the Port Reitz Clinic in Mombasa Kenya.

The wide range of clinical problems presented was unexpected with many conditions that I had never encountered before; some disorders of development, others caused by trauma and others tragically by errors of treatment.

I found myself drawn into the clinical situation and was both amazed and dismayed by what I saw. The surgeon, with whom I sat, a youngish man in his final year of training, showed great skill and maturity only advising surgery if it could really help the patient and not for some doubtful cosmetic benefit. There were three volunteers from the USA attending the clinic. Although none of them was studying medicine, they all had a life studies interest, one was a physical trainee, another a biologist.

I had some reservations about returning to clinical medicine after so many years and am yet to see exactly what role I can play.

Patients that made a big impression on me included:

- A young woman with a wistful smile lifted her long skirt to show a below knee amputation following an untreated infected snake bite.
- A five year old with a grossly scarred and misshapen hand caused by a burn.
- Stiffness of the knee as a result of an ill placed injection requiring surgery and extensive physiotherapy.
- A large sausage shaped keloid scar of the face,
- Cerebral palsy
- And then the congenital conditions, club foot, spina bifida, arthrogryposis multiplex etc

Poverty - Lottery Game

It is tempting to believe that our future is in our own hands and that if we work hard we will succeed but reality suggests a very different truth.

A long term study presented in a TED (Technology Education Design) talk showed that where you are born and grow up determines most people's success in life. Born in a village in Kenya, you are more likely to be unemployed, and to die young. Sadly very few escape the lottery of birth.

Reading

Ever since sounds became concreted into words, man has read. At first speaking was the only way that information was spread but with the development of the alphabet and the press, the written word became the most important means of conveying ideas and meaning. In time, the source of all accumulated knowledge was stored in books. These were collected together in libraries of which there are now immense numbers.

The act of reading has been the most important way in which people absorb facts. Today millions of people also read for pleasure. What does that mean? The story draws the reader into another world and away from his or her real world. It is a form of escapism. For many it is a means of avoiding for a while the reality, the humdrum, the day-to-day repetition of tasks. The reader can move into another world, a world of her choice. She can go anywhere, from reality to fantasy. She can experience every emotion and travel to all corners of the world and beyond into space.

With the advent of the computer, the digital screen can now replace the physical book. Devices such as Kindle attempt to bridge the gap between the physical book and the screen. Initially it was thought that these devices would replace the physical book. Whether they do remains to be seen.

Since I wrote this the internet has evolved so that now information is stored in large computer banks and can be accessed online. No longer do we need to read books or visit the library, the information is available at our fingertips. Even so, books continue to be in demand. Many of us forget that the information stored on a computer is electronic and can be wiped out in a flash- not so a book many of which have lasted thousands of years.

Renata

He was late! He had left his house in good time but the bus seemed to have other ideas. It stopped at all stages lingering for as long as possible at each or so it seemed, to emphasize its power over him, It was also delayed by road repairs and diversions. He found himself almost running along a crowded street avoiding on-comers: side stepping some and stopping in front of others so as to avoid colliding. He almost tripped over the uneven paving stones in his haste not to be even later. He so disliked being late and others who do the same. It seemed to him to be a sign of disrespect as if the other person's time didn't matter.

'Well, it does,' he would say defiantly.

He entered the restaurant instantly aware of the cacophony of voices. He looked around. She was seated with her back to him but he immediately recognised her by the curve of her neck and the tilt of her head. She must have felt his presence because she turned and smiled that warm all encompassing smile that lit up her face and made her deep brown eyes shine.

He was besotted and although he was old enough to be her father, she never made him feel his age. On the contrary in her presence, he was young, carefree and happy and able to feel confident, chatty and at ease.

He muttered a mumbled 'sorry' but she waved it aside and motioned to him to sit in the vacant chair by her side. They had met at this restaurant on several previous occasions and he liked to occupy seats side by side. It gave him a chance to glance at her, admire her profile and more, He could touch her gently on the shoulder almost by accident. She was wearing a pale green blouse with the two top buttons undone. He could see the valley between her breasts, snowy white and irresistible.

He avoided the temptation to comment upon what he saw. They greeted each other with a hug. He noted that she had already ordered a cup of tea served in a white porcelain bowl like the French. Menus were handed to them and they studied them in silence.

'It's lovely to see you,' he whispered. 'You look gorgeous.' She smiled.

After studying the menu she ordered the smoked salmon dish with prawns and assorted cold sauces.

'You had that last time', he commented.

'Yes, I like it.' She added. He liked to have something different each time just for variety but he agreed, looking at her fresh salad, that her dish did look very inviting,

'Why don't I order another cold plate and perhaps we can share?' he suggested.

'Of course why not?' She replied, leaning forwards enabling him to smell the light flowery perfume that she was wearing. The dishes arrived and they began to eat.

'How are you getting on with my editing? You don't seem to have made many changes.'

'That's what you think. I have kept your style but have had to change many words and alter your punctuation quite a lot. It's a slow process.'

How did she do it? He wondered and as if reading his thoughts, she added.

'I put two copies of your story onto the screen side by side. I leave the left one, the original unchanged and only work on the right hand one. In this way I do not lose or alter your original, so that I can always refer to it when necessary.'

He listened Intently visualizing the two copies on the screen, the one unchanged and the other being edited.' Sensing his silence, she said,

'It's the way we do it in the trade. All submitted written work has to be edited before being printed no matter how well known the writer. You need the eye of another person to pick out the mistakes and omissions. Although some writers are very accurate, others are down right careless.'

They ate in silence each in his own thoughts. He marvelled and recalled how this unlikely friendship had developed. It had happened in a most unexpected way.

He had gone to a sculpture exhibition at the Royal Academy of the work by Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill and Gaudier Breshka. He was standing admiring a wonderful piece by Gill, a small nude female figure carved in white limestone. He had been looking at it for some while when he became aware of someone standing to his left. Without turning, he said aloud,

'Isn't that the most beautiful carving?' He turned to find a young woman standing next to him. She replied without a pause,

'Yes it is beautiful, I love Eric Gill's work,' and that is how they met. They continued to meet whenever he was in London, usually for lunch and often at the same place in Marylebone High Street.

Occasionally they would meet at Kenwood in the cafe. Afterwards they would walk across Hampstead Heath. Their parting was always painful to him as he became increasingly fond of her; love would not be too strong a word for his feelings.

He knew in his heart that their relationship could be no more than a close friendship but despite that he found himself continually thinking about her and fantasizing about their relationship. Stupid as it may sound he even thought of asking her to marry him.

She had separated from her husband so in his dreams he felt that she was available. Love is such an illogical emotion, quite irrational and unpredictable. There is a tendency to think of love as a young person's emotion but he knew that it was not so. In many ways he loved more strongly as he got older. Perhaps it was because the older person has more time to think about his feelings, not being pre-occupied by the demands that a job makes upon his time. Be that as it may, the feelings of love for another human being can be some of the strongest emotions we ever feel.

Sailing

I seem to recall that I first went sailing in Bermuda at the age of 7 but I don't think I really understood the principles so that when I returned to it seventy years later I was really beginning from scratch. As a novice I began to crew on a Bosun, a heavy twin sail boat with one of the experienced sailors at the Mombasa Yacht club.

I was shown how to hold the jib so as to maximize the power of the wind by keeping it full but not too full as to lose wind. This involved continual adjustment both of the sail and my position in the boat. If it keeled over I had to hike out to balance the boat.

Eventually I decided to get my own boat as this seemed to be the best way to improve. I duly bought a second hand Laser, a very popular international designed boat with a single main sail.

It has been quite a challenge requiring considerable agility and strength. Fortunately I seemed to be able to cope with both thanks to Bobby, my trainer who makes me do things with weights that I didn't believe I could.

I have graduated to being able to compete in races although coming in long after the other boats had finished. But that is Ok, I don't feel the need to be a winner, all I want to do is to slowly improve, gain confidence and eventually feel in control. I don't feel that yet.

Sleep

Sleep is essential for health yet very little is understood about it. Why we sleep remains unclear yet all mammals need to sleep, the length depending to some extent on the climate. In very cold climates animals hibernate for many months, a state akin to sleeping.

Sleep has been extensively studied in man and we know that there are up to five stages of sleep. We begin with light sleep from which we are easily awakened (Stage 1). Our eyes move slowly and we may feel a sense of falling.

Stage 2 follows this when our eyes movements stop and our brain waves become slower.

In Stage 3 or deep sleep all eye movements stop and it is difficult to wake us. REM (Rapid eye movements) sleep follows. Breathing becomes rapid and jerky. The eyes move suddenly and limbs are immobile. The brain waves are similar to those of a conscious person and it is thought that dreams occur during this period.

In Stage four we are in deep sleep and in phase five we dream.

Without sleep we rapidly become disoriented, confused and disturbed.

From a layman's point of view, sleep is a pleasant and refreshing experience.

Modern travel through time lines can cause confusion and affects memory and concentration. Happily this is rapidly regained once sleep is acquired.

Sunlight - Walking in My Shadow

It is almost midday as I leave the shaded coolness of the café and walk into the sunlight, its brightness and heat suddenly strike me and for a moment I am blinded and dazed. A hat protects my head otherwise the UVL would quickly burn my thin scalp skin. I look down and see I am walking in my shadow, as the sun is almost overhead, we are within 400 kilometers (250 miles) of the equator.

Sunlight is essential for all life on earth. It is the source of all energy even that stored in coal and oil. These were originally derived from trees and are nature's great deposits of carbon. The sun reacts with chlorophyll, the green pigment in the plant's leaves, to produce starch, one of the stable sources of energy used by the body. It is this latter equation that captures the sun and tames it. Without vegetation, the world as we know it couldn't exist.

Most of us are aware of the power and menace of sunlight and apart from the obvious heat it emits, there are dangerous rays that while invisible can be very damaging to the body.

Light is composed of a rainbow of colours. Those we cannot see beyond the blue end include UVA, UVB and UVC. UVA and UVB can cause damage to the skin (sunburn) whereas UVC is almost completely absorbed by the earth's atmosphere.

Now some facts:

The sun is the largest object in our galaxy. It is composed of 70% Hydrogen and 30% Helium.

Slowly over time, the Hydrogen is being converted into Helium with the release of energy-sunlight. The sun is 4.5 billion years old. After another 5 billion years it will have converted all the Hydrogen into Helium and its energy will run out. By that time its size will have increased to absorb the Earth.

The ancient Egyptians had a clear understanding of creation and the heavenly bodies. They believed that Ra was the sun god and the creator of ancient Egypt. He was usually shown as having the head of a hawk with a fiery disk depicting the sun as his crown. Ra had two children, the sun and the air. Their children became the earth and the stars. Horus their grandson cried one day and humans were made from his tears.

The Greeks had their own beliefs about the sun. They worshipped Helios, a clean-shaven handsome man in purple robes with a golden aureole or corona. At night he would return to the East by floating on a golden cup in a stream called Ocean- the mythical river which encircles the earth.

For the Romans it was Apollo, one of the more important Gods, the God of the sun. He was thought to have an association with healing including the conquering of the plague. Legend says that he had a great victory against Python the earth Serpent.

This turned out to be correct because in the 1920's, scientists identified vitamin D, a hormone produced in the skin by the action of the sun, to be an essential for the growth of healthy bone.

A deficiency of Vitamin in childhood leads to Rickets and in adults, Osteomalacia. Studies have confirmed the essential role of sunshine in producing it in the skin.

In Rickets the growing ends of the bones, the gristle especially in the long bones fails to convert to bone resulting in stunting of growth and deformity leading to permanent disability. Exposure to 30 minutes of sunlight in fair skinned people will produce the daily requirement. In dark skinned people it requires a slightly longer exposure.

In recent years, there has been a growing belief that sunshine has an important psychological effect also. The acronym SAD (Seasonal affective Disorder) had been coined to describe individuals who become depressed during long dark winters.

The incidence of suicide increases in northern countries during the winter when the sun may not appear for up to six months. The use of a light box, exposing the individual to artificial ultraviolet light can be therapeutic.

What of the future?

Man has already begun his flight from the sun when he first stepped onto the moon. By the time, this earth is doomed; Mankind may be safely settled on another Earth somewhere in the galaxy.

Tears of Joy - A Thought For Tomorrow

'Don't cry Daddy, don't be sad.'

'I'm not, Andrew, these are tears of joy.'

It's that time of year when I am drawn back to my past- the passing of time, time that moves faster and faster each year and departs so quickly. I almost dread the finality of December as the present year moves into the past. That moment when the clock strikes one and the New Year is ushered in. No time to change anything. At those moments all regrets are imprisoned, set in stone for all time, a memory happy or otherwise, good or bad. Nothing in the past can now be changed.

It's a time to wonder if only? - if this or that hadn't happened, he or she would have been spared. How could I have done better, been kinder, more generous, less selfish?

Was I really able to change or was it all already determined by my nature and nurture? How do I accept the way chance plays a role in my life, the lottery of birth? So many ways in which it could have been different, better or worse. Was I the one in charge? How much did circumstances steer me into one direction or another? Am I a free agent, the master of my destiny or just a piece of plastic on the ocean of time?

There is no way of knowing. It is perhaps when we look back over our lives and ponder on some of the decisions we made or were made for us that we might, only might, have a greater understanding.

I want to believe that every life is a unique opportunity to fulfil her or his potential, to grasp the opportunities offered and to live a life of love and beauty. That is what life offers but how many are able to achieve that through no fault of their own. How often does the lottery of their birth cruelly dash any hopes of this being fulfilled?

It must be changed but how?

The Americans

He was tall and overpowered me as he reached out to shake my hand. He had a full head of light brown hair tinged with grey and a soft American drawl. He spoke quietly leaning forwards as if in confidence. She was thin and athletic, initially unstoppable as she took over the conversation. She spoke almost without breathing allowing him occasionally to say something. He was in Oil or something and had taken early retirement. He now draws and paints, she added as if he was her child.

We met in a small hotel in Leeds. The dining room was almost empty when I entered.. I think there was one other couple. They were leaving when I greeted them with 'Hello' and 'Have a good day'.

She stopped, smiled and returned the greeting. I recognised her American accent immediately. She said 'yeah we are from California,' and we became friends. They were Sandy and John

The following morning at breakfast, we were beckoned to come and sit at their table and our friendship developed. They had met at school and dated through college. She described how she saw him and said to herself he is for me. He took a little longer to be convinced that she was the woman for him.

They were now celebrating more than fifty years of marriage. He managed to stay more in the conversation and never seemed to be aware of her prattling. We parted three breakfasts later exchanging cards but probably never going to see each other again.

After they left, I had some time to think about The United States. One thing I knew was that they were not united. In fact, there were 51 States that had agreed to come together under a Constitution. But each state had many of its laws which conflict with the central Federal law as it is called. Capital Punishment is an example. Not all states support it although it is a Federal Law.

The Gym

It is about 6 am when the repetitive beeping of my alarm wakes me. My bedroom is already flooded with bright sunlight, but still cool and fresh. I turn over and look out to see the distant trees and the blue sky. I feel a slight anxiety which I rapidly dispel..

I am due at the Gym at 7.15 am so I must get up; I take a cold shower as it is already too warm to have a hot one and I prepare a light breakfast, fruit, a slice of toast and tea. I dress remembering my small towel and water bottle. Collecting my things, I make my way to the bus stop, a short walking distance from my home.

On the way, a workman coming the other way greets me, 'Jambo'. Meanwhile a 12-seater bus controlled by a driver and conductor is waiting to leave on the other side of the road. It is called a Matatu and is the public transport. It comes every 5 minutes.

'Mtwapa,' they call out, I wave and cross the road, while they wait for me. I get into one of the seats next to huge locals, who press against me, as there is so little room. The interior is hot with the smell of sweating human beings. Fortunately, I'm only going two stops. The bus accelerates rapidly, the radio blares, a repetitive rhythm with a high-pitched female singer.

We careen along the bumpy road, overtaking whenever we can, the driver resting his right elbow on the window. Within 5-10 minutes. I arrive at my destination, a place called Bora Bora and I alight.

A short walk and I enter the grounds of a local hotel, La Puezza, where the receptionist wishes me a cheery good morning and I make my way to the gym on the ground floor.

I walk past their small swimming pool and beyond I can see the beach and the open sea. The sun is bright and the day is warm. I enter the gym and meet Gerald who always gets there first. He is just finishing as I start. The air conditioner is working so the place is cool and comfortable.

Onto the cross trainer and 15 minutes of exercise It is then that I begin to daydream, to take my mind off the discomfort of the repetitive movements, up and down to and fro, the sweat flows, and my legs begin to ache.

Where shall I go today? I'm off into a dream world separating my mind from my physical self. In this way the time passes quickly and the 15 minutes is soon up. By this time Bobby, my trainer, had arrived. He is in his early 30s, well built with an attractive smile and a very friendly personality. He'll train me for about an hour taking me through a variety of exercises with weights and on the floor.

He has a wide repertoire so that I rarely repeat them yet I manage to work both my upper and lower limbs. I always finish up with a series of abdominal exercises on the floor. The hour is soon up and I walk back to the bus and the short journey to my apartment. I'm always pleased when the exercises are over, although in a strange way I do enjoy them.

The Jews

An Essay Concerning the Jews": Mark Twain Published by Harper in 1899

"If the statistics are correct, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvellous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other nations pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

The Mombasa Club

It was about 11 a.m. this morning, when I walked across the square in the bright sunlight from Forex – the foreign currency bureau in the old city of Mombasa and entered the grounds of the Mombasa club, founded in 1897. The Ascari (guard) opened the gate and I walked through the shaded car park to the entrance. I was greeted by a smiling receptionist with my first name.

'Hello Martin, how are you?' She took my hat, and jokingly promised to look after it as she knows how much I value it.

I climbed the broad steps two at a time lined by colonial architecture from the late 19th century with the open plan of the large airy rooms. The club was originally built by the Colonists to accommodate the social and business needs of the many strangers and foreigners who were living and working in Mombasa at the time.

Now, 60 years later, following Independence, the membership has slowly changed from an all European one to the present mixture of African, Indian and European. Most of the latter were born or brought up here in Kenya

It has one of the best views in town situated next to the Old Portuguese Fort Jesus with a view of the Indian Ocean to the right and the broad lagoon to the left. On the opposite bank is English point, a diminutive Cleopatra needle in white stone, the whole of which is exposed when the tide is low but the base of which is submerged at high tide.

On the first floor is a broad balcony overlooking the water with tables and chairs in simulated white painted bamboo. Sitting there, the only sound heard is the squawking of the crows and the light swishing of the leaves of the coconut trees that line the seashore. Ceiling fans turn lazily, prompted by the slight breeze from the water.

I am alone, apart from a waitress, and another couple, both reading and I think of the many thousands who have passed through the club since it was first opened and how much it has changed not in the building but in its membership.

Looking out to sea, I can see a tanker on the horizon crossing from the north to enter the harbour. There are several small fishing boats and a sailboat and beyond, a cruiser, almost certainly coming from a spell of duty off the coast of Somalia. I think of Lindsay, the lone sailor who has sailed from Australia an extraordinary achievement, which he dismissed as if it was an ordinary and every day event.

The Mombasa Yacht Club

The Mombasa Yacht Club has an illustrious history dating back to 1910 when several senior professional men under the leadership of Judge A T Bonham Carter first established the club for sailing men and women. Prior to that, the club's minute book records that between 1906 – 1907, several races were held between the following boats:

- Mbuni owned by H C E B Barnes,
- The Charlotte Jackson owned by A T Bonham Carter
- Mr Mdudu owned by W H Tanner
- Norma owned by R W Hamilton
- And the occasional Public Works boats

The clubhouse was originally situated at Kilindini. In 1914, it moved to Mtongwe and then in 1942 to its present site situated at Liwatoni on the west side of the island not far from the infamous Likoni ferry

The Club was finally established at a meeting on the 2nd April 1910 attended by the following worthies:

- Judge Bonham Carter in the chair
- Judge S.Carlei
- Commodore: Judge Hamilton
- Vice commodore Herr Lenn
- Treasurer: Mr W. J. Wright.
- Secretary: Mr Wold,
- Mr Charles Atkinson.
- Lieutenant Bisaquiet who resolved to have a Mombasa Yacht Club

It is now the oldest Yacht Club on the Continent of Africa

A cool breeze ruffling the leaves and sending up small waves across the blue waters, greets the visitor as she/he walks through the club house onto the veranda. It is just three pm and the fiery heat of the sun is beginning to subside.

About twenty people will arrive over the next few hours to enjoy the calm serenity of this place and some 5 -6 sailors will take part in the regular race that is due to start at 5 pm.

The others will sit and chat, drinking a cold beer and preparing themselves for dinner under the stars, which will be served at about 7.30 by Chef Boniface and his assistants Jacob and Kevin.

Some are Brits born and bred in Kenya to parents who came and settled before Independence. Others came to take up jobs in transport and shipping. But they are all getting older and there are few young ones to take their place so new members must either come from local African youngsters or the club will gradually fade away.

At Xmas and New Year, the members are joined by their children and grandchildren who have come for the festivities from all corners of the world, an Australian family from Brisbane, another from Ireland, a third from the Middle East etc.

An unexpected visitor this year has been Lindsey, an ex-policeman from Australia, an intrepid single handed round-the-world sailor who has moored here to rest and refurbish his boat. Earlier in the year a one-armed Japanese world sailor visited the club.

Yacht Racing

At about four o'clock, preparations for the race begin. The course is written up by the Officer of the day, a meandering route around the buoys on either side of the waterway. Those taking part arrange for their boats to be rigged by Eddy and his assistants.

When rigged the boats are manhandled down the ramp on their trolleys and eased into the water. The trolleys are removed when the boats are floating free. The rudder is fitted and the centre board inserted. The sailors set off to the start, which is the club buoy some 50 metres off the club lawn.

The Club History

In 29 3 08 the first recorded race, *the 1st Kipevu Race* was raced from the Committee Boat at Kilindini Pier to a Shoal beacon, a Mark boat in Port Reitz half way between Ras MKadini and Single baobab on the shore, a sailing distance about 12 miles.

The boats taking part were:

- Kagee Bonham Carter
- Mbuni Winkler
- Seagull Lemm
- Agnes Rayne
- Ubique Ford
- Noma Hamilton
- Falcon Aarup
- Inhalanzi Sykes

There is no record of the winner.

On the 6 9 08 *the 2nd Kipevu Cup* was raced by 11 boats and was won by Kagee

On 27 1 09, '*The Hermione Handicap*' was established on the occasion of the visit of HMS Hermione and the Cable Ship Sherard Osborne.

The Course was an imaginary line drawn between the bridge of HMS Hermione and G skiff, two cables east of her, round a mark in Port Reitz, to about 600 yds SW of Port Reitz and then about 600 yds NW of Mkunguni, round the skiff at the starting line and round the mark in Port Reitz

A distance of 10 nautical miles. It was won by the Hermione Gig

Further races took place on the 14/3/09, 15/7/09,

On the 24/10/09 the Cavaliere L Frigerio Cup donated by the named was won by Bianchina owned by Cavaliere himself.

The Radio

Like many inventions that changed our world, the radio was not the creation of one person but the product of a number of discoveries by scientists working on different aspects of the problem including the discovery of Electricity, Electromagnetic rays, Telegraphy, Magnetism and Receivers.

Together they were responsible for the modern radio, a device that allows the listener to hear sounds sent from transmitters anywhere in the world.

Despite the invention of the Movies, Television, Computers and Mobile phones, radio continues to hold a special place in my heart. What is its special appeal? I think the fact that it doesn't involve vision may be the clue. The other media are all essentially visual and require the full attention of the viewer for their enjoyment.

Radio on the other hand is solely aural which means that the listener can be doing many other things including cooking, cleaning etc. while at the same time listening,

Furthermore unlike the Movies and TV, the radio listener is required to employ imagination to fully enjoy the medium. The best example of this is the radio play. This form of entertainment is closer to reading. By means of sound effects the radio producer can convey to the listener a wide range of imaginary scenes that in the visual media would require the actual physical object to be used.

The introduction of the computer and software programmes has added a new dimension to the medium

My preference for the radio may be an age-related phenomenon since the younger generation does not seem to share the same love of the radio, as do the older members of society. The young seem to prefer visual imagery rather than having to imagine the radio scene. Despite the new technology, the radio continues to be a successful form of entertainment and in these days of cutbacks, is a relatively inexpensive way of providing information and entertainment.

The Sound of her silence

I had seen her in the Out-patient's Department two weeks earlier, a thin, pale young woman lying on a stretcher, her eyes closed, her breathing shallow.

'What's wrong with her?' I whispered to the nurse. She moved away from the patient and in a low voice whispered,

'She has breast cancer- it's advanced. There's not much we can do.'

I read her notes, 34, single with a young child; a lump found in her breast 3 years earlier; had the lump removed- it proved to be cancer. Then a blank. I thumbed through the notes, there were no other records. That was strange.

'Where are her follow-up notes, her further treatment?' I whispered to the nurse. 'Where are the rest of her notes?'

'There aren't any, she just disappeared from follow up.'

Some weeks later, it was just dawn when I got a call from A&E to come and see a patient who had just arrived. In the pale light I recognised her immediately. It was the same young woman I had seen earlier. Now her condition was much worse; as pale as a sheet, her breathing rasping, beads of sweat on her brow.

I panicked, what could I do to help her?

My Senior, Dr Peter was on call to cover me and I rang him.

'Slow down,' he shouted as I rattled off the story.

Then in a measured tone he said,

'There is nothing you can do, make her comfortable and let her die.'

The words 'nothing you can do, let her die' shook me. I choked back my fear. I was in my first year since qualifying and still had stars in my eyes believing I could change the world.

His words struck me like a blow, 'let her die'. That's not why I became a doctor, to stand by and watch a life slip away.

No! I shouted back at him 'no I won't.'

Then I heard his voice quiet and understanding.

'OK do your best,' and then almost in a whisper, 'it won't make any difference.'

I returned to her bedside. That can't be true. There must be something I can do?

'Nurse, please. I want to set up a drip set and bring me some Prednisolone. a type of Cortisone,' I waited in the semi-darkness by her bedside, conscious of her breathing, slow and loud rattling in her throat. Her eyes opened pleading with me. I think she was saying,

'Let me go. I'm tired and I need to sleep.' But I was not listening. I was a warrior and this was a battle I was going to win.

The trolley arrived and in a short while I had inserted a line and was giving her a low dose of the Steroid. I felt jubilant as the pale yellow liquid dripped slowly into her arm. I patted her arm,

'You will feel better now.'

I returned to the office to write up my notes.

Suddenly,

'Doctor come quickly,' I arrived just in time to see her take her last gasp and lay still. I shall never forget the sound of her silence.

Sculpture? How is it more than an object?

R M Rilke was 28 when he wrote his monograph on Rodin in 1903. Rodin was 43 at the time and was producing some of his best work. . Rilke tries to describe what sculpture is. He writes,

‘Sculpture was a separate thing as was the easel picture but it did not require a wall like a picture. It did not even need a roof. It was an object that could exist for itself alone, a complete thing around which we could walk and which one could look at from all sides.

And yet it had to distinguish itself somehow from other things, the ordinary things which everyone can touch. It had to become impeachable, sacrosanct, separated from chance and time through which it rose isolated and miraculous.’

This definition excludes almost all African Art, which if nothing else is functional and plays a role in the life of the maker.

William Tucker (1974) in his ‘ The Language of Sculpture’, a book based on a series of lectures given at the University of Leeds writes of Rodin, ‘that ‘his contribution to modern sculpture was, the independence of the work from specific subject matter or function, its internal life, the concern with material, structure and gravity as ends.’

The Sculpture of Africa

In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue 'Africa the Art of a continent', Tom Phillips refers to Nelson Mandela's opening words in his speech to the Organisation of African Unity in 1994 held in Carthage.

'All human civilization rests on foundations such as the ruins of the city of Carthage in Tunis. These architectural remains like the pyramids of Egypt, the sculptures of the ancient kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Benin, like the temples of Ethiopia, the Zimbabwe ruins and the rock paintings of the Kgalagadi and Namib deserts, all speak of Africa's contribution to the formation of the condition of civilization.'

The exhibition, the first of its kind, opened at the Royal Academy on the 4th October 1995. It presented an enormous range of creative work from the four corners of the African Continent. Looked at from a European viewpoint in the twentieth century the work seemed primitive and ill-formed.

African Art comprises everyday objects used in normal activities; bowls, utensils, sleeping pillows and the artifacts of beliefs, the spirits and the Gods. Wherever possible these objects were decorated with intricate carvings of ordinary scenes. It shared the Egyptian oeuvre of animal-like spirits depicted as Gods for every occasion. Only by understanding the world of the indigenous peoples who created it, can their enormous contribution be comprehended. Ladislav Segy in his book 'African Sculpture, 1958 describes it as 'one of the great artistic heritages of the world.'

Modern Western Art as we understand it today has a much shorter and different pedigree. Until the Impressionists, it has always been a representation of man and may have evolved as a means of recording everyday life long before the era of photography. By the late nineteenth and twentieth century art had moved from depiction and decoration into a deeper exploration of the physical world. Yet it had its roots in African Imagery

The iconic painting by Picasso's 'Les Femmes d'Alger' 1907 heralded a new movement taken up by Matisse, 'Blue Nude,' 1907 and later by Epstein's, 'Sun God' 1910. New media have carried the ideas further, film, sound, light and electronics have all been utilised to seek a greater understanding of the world and man's relationship to it.

Art and decoration

Art and decoration have always been at loggerheads. Many sculptors struggled to free themselves from the shackles of the past where decoration was a central theme in sculpture. Rodin broke free and explored the human body in all its activities, a far cry from the statuary of Neoclassicism (Canova 1757-1822)

In 1940 Jacob Epstein wrote of his work,

'I believe myself to be a return in sculpture to the human outlook, without in any way sinking back into the flabby sentimentalisation of the merely decorative that went before. The deeply intimate and human are always sought by me and so wrought that they became classic and enduring.'

Thoughts on Imitation not Truth in Sculpture

When I began to make art and sculpture some years ago, I sought a path built on the ideas of Rodin and Epstein. I knew that I did not want to carve or sculpt living or inanimate objects. I had not fully realised why I felt this and have often been criticized because my work doesn't look like the real thing. Nevertheless I have always thought that a wooden, metal or stone copy of an animal for example completely failed to express the unique qualities of that creature. I admire those sculptors who can make what are described as lifelike figures, portraits or animals etc. But I have always felt that there was something lacking in their work, not that I didn't admire their skill and dedication.

Recently reading Nelson Goodman's 'Language of Art', I have gradually understood a little more about the reasons on which my reluctance was based. In the first part of the book he writes about 'imitation' and 'copying'. He points out that there was no work of art, painting, sculpture etc. that can actually copy an intact natural animal or object. All it can do is convey one aspect of the object but its success still depends on the viewer as to how the imitation is viewed. The reception – that is what we see and interpret – and how we process information is intimately connected and unique to each of us by virtue of our genetic and environmental influences – even a photograph which is often considered to be the most accurate image suffers from the same limitations so the viewer when he looks at a work of art brings to bear his own input.

Aristotle, perhaps the earliest philosopher to address the subject of imitation speaks about the 'essence' of an object. He suggested that it is not possible to convey all the essential features of an object; all we can do is to see or describe one or more of them. He was of the opinion that this essence is the truth, which we search for but can never reach.

For example he talked about the 'essence' of a horse, its horsiness, i.e. those aspects of horse that makes it a horse not just one or two horses but all horses. He stressed that all world objects encompass the same essence. Painting, sculpture and photography are all means by which we attempt to understand the visual world, but they all suffer from the same limitations. None can encompass the totality of the qualities that an object has.

Michelangelo, Canova, Rodin, Epstein to mention only a few artists have produced some remarkable figurative sculpture, full figures, busts etc. They are described as life-like in their execution. They are said to look exactly like the person portrayed and yet a moment's thought and the observer realises that it cannot be so. They are inanimate, they do not breathe, move, look around, speak etc. Despite that they manage to capture an aspect of the living person, a characteristic, be it humour, anger etc. But then how could they do more, after all they are made of stone or bronze? Such is the paradox of imitation. It can never be the real thing or as Aristotle would say 'never attain the truth'.

Naming, Titles

There is a long history of naming works of art. This is presumed to help the observers understand the visual message contained in the work and also to identify one work from another. It seems to be self-evidently useful. But if the process by which we understand images is considered. It soon becomes evident that each of us brings a unique self-view of the world to bear on images. Even simple images of a cat can create confusion when observers are asked to describe it. Each will bring his or her previous experience which will influence their opinion.

Many artists deliberately avoid naming their work on the basis that the observer is now free to make up his or her mind as to the content and meaning rather than being prejudiced by the artist. I am in favour of less information about the meaning of the work but perhaps more about the process of the creation of the work.

My interest in sculpture was inspired by my late wife's vocation as an artist. It was a natural evolution from my surgical practices with both having in common, a physical involvement and a mechanical discipline.

But despite my introduction to the Art world at college, I struggled to understand what art was trying to say, what role it played in my life? What purpose would it have? Uncertain where to begin, I turned to the materials, which were at hand, which included ash and bamboo. I began exploring their qualities: bamboo, long, straight, hollow, very tough. It became open pieces, bent and angled to exploit these qualities.

Ash hardwood has a parallel grain allowing it to be cut into long narrow along the grain. These were very malleable and flexible. They lent themselves to being laminated and then distorted and twisted to make large open works.

In time, I gained a BA in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University (1997) and a MA at Leeds University (1999).

I continued to make work in my barn and began to exhibit with the Yorkshire Sculptors Group. One of the members was a Dutch stone carver called Gerrit

Later I worked in stone- Serpentine, Sandstone and Limestone. Having closed the barn I continued to work intermittently with Gerrit, who had a studio outside Wetherby in North Yorkshire.

In 2005 I first came to Kenya. I found that the local art was predominantly imitation, beautifully carved animals in ebony, rose wood and less valuable hardwoods. It was in the finest tradition of African Art.

While the technique was superb, the subject matter was limited. Few artists were exploring the essence of their subjects, the elongated form of the giraffe, the energy of the lion, the majesty and patience of the elephants. To carve exquisite copies of nature didn't attract me not least because I hadn't the ability to do so.

I turned to the native soapstone. It is quarried locally and is readily available. Though predominantly white, it comes in many forms streaked with colours. Usually cut in rectangular blocks, I prefer irregular stones, which allow my imagination to see what is within. It sets up a dialogue between the stone and me and determines my imagery.

I favour a combination of figurative and abstract forms being influenced by the work of Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. A flat roof and a stone table have provided the site for my outdoor studio
In the UK I showed my work with the Yorkshire Sculpture Group and also have had my own shows. I have sold some pieces privately.

Why Art?

I started this discussion with the question, what is art? I now extend it to why Art? What role does art play in society, in our lives? Why will patrons pay millions of pounds to own an original? The reasons are complex and conflicting. Before Art became a commodity with value, it simply acted as an adornment, an illustration of an idea, a view or an object.

There is a belief that it is one of the few human activities that celebrates creativity, the act of making something new, different, unique and original. In the past teaching was loosely divided into the Arts and the Sciences based on the belief that one is creative, innovative, imaginative and the other planned, structured and systematic.

A moment's thought soon shows these definitions to be flawed. Any scientist will tell you that her/his discipline demands imagination and vision and that without these "arty skills", science would flounder and waste.

Those I Have Loved

My Mother

In recent years I have thought more and more about my mother. I remember her as a calm, thoughtful, loving woman rarely raising her voice, rarely losing her temper although she must have done so with bringing up three very different sons in the most difficult circumstances. My memory of her before Bermuda is vague. But I have strong memories of her presence on the Liner that took us away from war-torn London to an island paradise.

I see her in her prime riding her bicycle in Bermuda where we spent five years during the Second World War. I see her long dark hair flowing out behind her as she swept along the narrow roads.

Born in 1899 in Bialystok? In Poland at the end of the nineteenth century, she was the elder of two children to Zada and Bubala Zussman and came to London with them in 1903 when aged 4. She lived with her parents at 83 Downs Park Road Hackney E8 in a detached Victorian house set in a large plot of land.

I know little about her earlier life or education. In her twenties she worked with her father in his Cabinet-making business, probably as a secretary. She met my father through her brother Joe. He sadly died young of meningitis.

She was shy and not initially attracted to this red-headed, loud, boisterous worldly man dressed in the latest style. But he persisted and they were married in 1929.

Her parents built them a house in a portion of their land and called it 83a. Her first son Geoffrey was born in 1930, I was born in 1932 and hoping for a girl, her third son Donald was born in 1935. I have vague memories of our life until the war.

After the war started, we moved from Hackney to an apartment in Wealdstone, North London, where we were bombed and had to rush to a shelter in the Car park. Finally Dad decided that we should leave England and we went to Bermuda on a liner from Liverpool.

Our stay in Bermuda was idyllic; warm weather, soft pink sand and blue skies. On the boat out from Liverpool, Mum met another family, a divorcee, Fay Gussak and her son David. The two families decided to set up home together in Paget, an area just outside Hamilton the capital. We three boys initially went to Warwick Academy and then Saltus Grammar School.

Later Fay met an American Sailor and went with him to the USA. Mum kept home and later we moved to Westmeath cottage, a bungalow in a small estate where lush plants including bananas, loquats and many more surrounded us.

Memories of a large bunch of green bananas ripening under the stairs.

I lived with Mum while attending St Mary's. The divorce from my father hit her very hard and it took a long time for her to feel sufficiently at ease to socialise. In time she met Sydney, a widower and had a very successful second marriage until he died.

Having qualified as a doctor, I moved away from London in the course of my training to be a surgeon but we kept in touch and Mum would often visit and stay with us in Leeds always bringing her knitting bag with her.

DAD- I write him a letter

It took me many years after his death before I was able to forgive my Dad and begin to understand the hardship of his life. His meeting with Diana, my future wife to whom he said after the introduction, 'you are going to ruin my son's life.' was traumatic.

It happened by chance when Diana and I were in the USA and we went to see Michael, my cousin, a psychiatrist who was living in Boston. I remember talking to him about Dad and my feelings about him. He thought for a few minutes and then said something that surprised me.

'Write him a letter,'

'Write him a letter?' I repeated surprised. 'He's dead! What good would that do?'

'Do it,' he said, 'do as if he was still alive and tell him how you feel. Don't spare the details, tell it all, pour out your deepest feelings. Try it, you'll be surprised what comes from it.'

'What do I do with the letter?'

'Keep it; you may want to read it at a later date. Wait and see.'

So I did it. It wasn't easy. I was not used to writing hate but I did. Strangely it helped and slowly I began to understand how difficult his life must have been in the early days and even later, working in a cold damp garage for years.

Despite that he continued to employ his brother Sam, support his sisters, Queenie and Sadie and looked after his Dad. I began to understand why he took up with Marie during the war years when at any time, he may have been killed by the bombs.

Gradually I began to shed the hate and the anger and replace it with understanding and sympathy.

Dad was born in the East End of London at the turn of the twentieth century. He was one of eight children, four girls and four boys. He was the oldest boy; his older sister Bertha was the oldest girl. His mother, my Grandmother, kept a stall in the market and later a shop. His father Harry was born in Russia and came to England during a pogrom. As I understand, he was weak and depended greatly on his wife who sadly died quite young leaving my father to support the family.

Dad left school at sixteen and worked initially in a coal depot. Soon after he began to drive a taxi and became very successful eventually buying his own cab. In time he purchased many others so by the time the War came he was one of the larger Taxi Proprietors with a fleet of up to one hundred or more Taxis .

After my parent's divorce, I used to visit him in The Bishops Avenue, one of the premier roads in London where he was living with Marie, his second wife and her daughter Ruth. I went every Sunday to collect my £6 pocket money. This kept me going while I was attending a course at the Royal College of Surgeons.

It was always a painful visit. He couldn't resist making fun of my premature balding and when I introduced him to Diana, his retort was to say to her that she was going to 'spoil my career'. This and many other criticisms increasingly alienated me against him.

I was in Leeds when his health began to deteriorate. Marie had died and he was living with Pamela, his housemaid in the house. I came to London to visit him. I found him in the bedroom, a shell of his former self crouching in a corner mumbling to himself, now badly afflicted by Alzheimer's.

Soon after he was admitted to hospital. One evening I had a phone call from the Doctor telling me that Dad was very anaemic and wanting permission to give him a blood transfusion. He told me that Dad had inoperable stomach cancer. I realised that nothing could be gained by that and asked him to let Dad die in dignity. He died soon after.

As I write this, I recall Dad greeting me in his garden at Bishops avenue wearing his dressing gown and wellington boots. It's a memory that I cherish.

Mike Abberton- Orthopaedic Surgeon

Mike was appointed after me at the LGI. Previously in the Parachute Regiment. He was inclined to stuffiness and pomposity. But in time we became good friends. He was married to Margaret and lived in a large Victorian house just outside Leeds- he smoked a pipe. After his death, I gave the oration to him in the Roman Catholic Church in Leeds.

Fery Batmanghelidj –Water --They are not sick; they are thirsty

Ferydoon Batmanghelidj was born in Iran in 1930 or 31 and died on the 15th November 2004. He attended secondary school in the United Kingdom, at [Fettes College](#) in Scotland, and was trained at St Mary's Hospital Medical where we met and became close friends. I would often visit him at his home.

Towards the end of our studies, he asked me to read a handwritten manuscript called 'The importance of water' that he had written. I read it and laughed 'Nonsense' I said.

He subsequently practiced medicine in the United Kingdom before his return to Iran. It was years later that I learned of his fame.

He claimed that he had discovered the medicinal value of water in treating the pain of [peptic ulcers](#) during his detention in prison by treating inmates with water when medication was not available.

He advanced this position in a guest editorial in the [Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology](#) in 1983.^[3]

In 1992, he authored *Your Body's Many Cries for Water*.^[6] In this book, Batmanghelidj asserted that chronic [dehydration](#) was the root cause of most pain and many ailments, opposing the use of drugs to cure conditions that he claimed could instead be addressed by increased water consumption.^[1]

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCfDzPs8tvA>

He has claimed elsewhere that water provides energy for the body and brain, by splitting into its component [hydrogen](#) and [oxygen](#).^[6]

Cecil Davies (1925- 2016)

I met Cecil during my tenure as Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon in Leeds. I was introduced to him and sent my private patients to him. We became close friends as did our family, Often sharing a Friday night dinner at their apartment cooked by Eve, his wife.

Hangs Up His Straw Boater

by John Fisher

Cecil Davies who died on July 15 aged 91 was a well-known State Registered physiotherapist and podiatrist, who worked at St James's and Chapel Allerton hospitals Leeds as a diabetic podiatrist for some 18 years. He was also known for his wide knowledge of music right across the community.

Born in Leeds in 1925, Cecil attended Lovell Road School and Leeds Central High School, prior to transferring to Roundhay School following the outbreak of war. He remembered the grim wartime mood in Chapeltown where he lived and vividly recalled Dunkirk, and the widespread sombre feeling in the community. The family also had an air raid shelter, built by the gardener in the grounds of his home, but the safe refuge collapsed before it could be used, so it was replaced by a room in the basement of the house reinforced with wood and iron.

A close friend Percy Stern recalled first meeting Cecil in January 1960 when a wave of anti-Semitism swept Chapeltown Road. Anti-Semites daubed swastikas on Jewish butcher shops, grocery and greengrocery establishments. "We both were members of AJAX and, together with other members, would meet nightly in an (illegal) betting shop, located on the parade at the end of Saville Road, owned by Norman Priceman and Elky Leviten. We used to go out and check the security of all significant communal buildings, shuls, the Jewish school, cemeteries, shops."

Cecil was also a leading light in the junior organisation for Leeds Jewish Charities and helped organise hugely successful fundraisers.

He and the late Bernard Williams formed Leeds Jewish Blind Society's functions fundraising committee at the request of the late Jack Lyons who brought in Eric Sacks to act as chairman. Bernard was vice chairman and Cecil was treasurer.

Cecil's father was the late physiotherapist Percy Davies and in 1946 Cecil joined the practice with his late brother Leonard, remaining there until retirement in the 1970's.

In 1952 the late Louis Harrison formed a building committee to move the Leeds Home for Aged Jews from Cowper Street to a site in Shadwell that was to become Donisthorpe Hall, and Cecil was part of the steering committee.

His involvement with the care home began as a young lad, being taken there by his father, the home's honorary masseuse, to assist him in a professional capacity. Cecil used to tag along and carry his bag.

Many years later Audrey Manning, who was head of volunteers, invited Cecil to form some activity for the men in the home which would include residents and the wider community. He decided to form a Boy's Friday Club, a gathering of men who would debate and discuss the weekly news. Forming it with Sonny Lee and Martin Nelson, Cecil became its only chairman, its driving force and motivation.

But it was music that played a huge part in his life. He was to forge a musical partnership with the late Alan Vann and the duo, taking the initials of both their first names, became known as C&A, touring many synagogue leisure clubs, care homes and Leeds Jewish Blind Society with their unique styled musical requests programme.

Barry Abis, co-chair of BHH Leisure Club said "When Irene Collins and I took on the running of the club, Cecil was the first presenter to offer his help, together with Alan.

They were a great act and Cecil regularly danced around the hall with his straw boater and cane. He was a gentleman, a one-off, and will be sadly missed."

Candace Grant, on behalf of Donisthorpe Hall, said "Cecil was a charming kind gentleman who brought his wonderful musical programme with Alan to entertain the residents -- the sessions were so popular they always left residents wanting more.

"We will all miss him; he will be remembered as a great character who was always there for us when we needed him."

Cecil married Eve [Levy] in May 1952 and is survived by two sons Michael and Peter and two grandchildren. Eve died in May 2010.

Possessing a wicked sense of humour Cecil was a splendid mimic, and an expert on all types of music. He was a member of the White Rose Barber Shop Singers and always maintained that "music speaks all languages, it's a panacea for every ailment, we should always have music in our lives. There's nothing quite like it.

Brian Goodall (1932-2023)

Like many good things in life, I met Brian by chance and we have remained close friends since. It was some time before I was due to retire that I had decided to learn about Fine Art following Diana's example. As I was still working, I chose to spend several evenings attending part time courses on the different aspects of fine art.

This included Drawing, Painting, Modelling and Sculpture. The latter I did at Wakefield Institute which is where I first came into contact with Brian.

A big but not tall man, he had an infectious smile and a natural rapport with his students. He himself trained at the Leeds College of Art in Photography following in his father's footsteps. He then worked as a professional photographer for the police documenting road traffic accidents.

He was a multi-talented man able to turn his hand to anything, a skilled joiner, plumber, builder, the list just goes on and on. He and his wife Kate live in a bungalow in Ossett near Wakefield, He had built his own workshop with every conceivable appliance. He repaired their roof, he redid their drainage pipes. He designed a flower and vegetable garden and built a bedroom in their attic

The man was a genius but with it a quiet modesty. He was a skilled archer and so much more. He wrote well and was particularly interested in local history, churches and monasteries. He was a motor mechanic and maintained his own car.

Our friendship developed during my time at Wakefield. We shared a great deal but also differed on some fundamentals. He was a Reiki master and a naturalist favouring nature's remedies over scientific ones. Every Thursday afternoon I and a devoted band of mature students attended his sculpture class. As time went on, I would meet him for lunch before the session and we became close friends.

He was the sort of man who had a lot of friends because he gave so much of himself. We kept in touch over the years and I tried to see him whenever I came back to the UK.

Sadly, a few years ago, he began to develop retinal detachment and despite treatment was virtually blind. But this has not deterred him and despite his disability he manages to maintain a very active life. We continued to keep in touch and when I went to the UK I made a point of visiting him.

Joe Grimberg 8/4/33-17/8/2017

Prominent lawyer Joe Grimberg, a mentor to many legal minds including Senior Counsel Davinder Singh, died on Thursday (Aug 17) at Mount Elizabeth Hospital Orchard, Singapore. He was 84.

We met at Mill Hill School during the years 1946-51 and became friends. I remember his love of cricket and his keeping the score in a special book during any 1st Eleven matches. We lost touch when our paths separated. He returned to Singapore and was called to the bar in 1957 to become a well known Lawyer.

In 1987 he was appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court. I contacted him some years later and we made a tentative arrangement to meet in London but we never managed it because he became ill and died. His sister phoned me to tell me the said news

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon said in a tribute: "*We are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Mr Joseph Grimberg. Joe was a dear friend and colleague to many of us on the Bench. He described the late SC Grimberg as "the finest of his time and quite frankly he was peerless".*

Donald Hall

I was one of Donald Hall's students in the Science Sixth form at Mill Hill School. I owe him an enormous debt. I remember he asked me what I wanted to do knowing my love of nature, I was undecided. He suggested Medicine and then drew up a special curriculum that allowed a number of us to apply to study medicine at London University.

We needed to study four subjects: Physics, Chemistry, and Botany Zoology. I was duly admitted to the 2nd MB course at St Mary's Hospital Medical School and went on to be an Orthopaedic Surgeon in Leeds. I later learned that I was one of many whom he had guided into medicine.

Some years after his retirement, Diana and I were in Dorset and decided to call upon him. He welcomed us and showed us some of the drawings of bridges that he was doing. We learned that he had influenced a large number of his students to become medical men.

'Old MillHillians will be sorry to learn of the death of Donald Hall on the 28th October 2018, well into his nineties. Donald, who had retired to the West Country, had been a master at Mill Hill from 1938-1974. He achieved a 1st Class Honours Degree at Cambridge before following an illustrious career as a Biology and Science teacher at Mill Hill.

In 1944 he married Enid Stancliffe, a Winterstoke matron and then became Housemaster of Collinson from 1945 to 1969. He was also for a time Director of Science and Treasurer of the local preservation society. He was noted for the meticulous care and patience of his teaching and the enthusiasm and scholarship he inspired in generations of the Medical Sixth, many of whom did go on to pursue a career in medicine. He will be remembered with great affection by so many of his former pupils whom he advised, helped and influenced.

Ron Lipman (1919- 2017)



Ron Lipman was born on 25th February 1919 to Bessie and Bernie, children of Polish Immigrants. He died in 2017. We met through the Boy's club and continued seeing each other after he was a resident at the Jewish Home in Leeds/ I stayed in The Guest room.

He was educated in Leeds and from an early age was interested in Bodybuilding and had a magnificent physique. On the 15th September 1939, the outbreak of the 2nd WW, when aged 20, he enlisted in the Royal Artillery and trained as a vehicle mechanic. He was described as of 'fresh' complexion with brown eyes and black hair. He was engaged in two campaigns with the BEF and BIF and was discharged from the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry on the 1st January 1944 after 4 years and 135 day's service with the rank of 'Gunner'.

On demob. he began work as a commercial traveller for a leather goods company (Harmony Handbags) and a Jewellery firm (Adrien Mann). Ron would sell wholesale to stores (and store chains) around the UK, and he also made overseas trips, to the continent, to source the goods in Italy, France and elsewhere.

Ron also designed some of the jewellery, making drawings - not engineering drawings but creative sketches - for factories to fabricate the items.

In his job as a commercial traveller Ron would spend Mondays at home doing his paperwork and be away from the house Tuesday through Thursday or Friday. On his return he would often eat and then rush off to the Art School for the evening. From a young age Ron showed a natural skill in drawing and painting.

He married Shirley Rima and had two sons, Jonathan and Simon. Sadly, the marriage did not last. From an early age, Jonathan recalls the smell of Linseed oil and pigments and helping his father gesso the canvases. During this time Ron spent all his spare time at the Art school, called at that time the Jacob Kramer College of Art. Following the family break up Jonathan and Simon move to their maternal Grandparents Annie and Morris Moss.

In 1990 Ron commenced a Foundation Art course at Jacob Kramer School of Art. Under the auspices of his Bachelor's degree in Fine Art, Ron spent 6 months in Madrid, Spain, learning to sculpt using power tools.

For some years Ron had been producing imaginative covers for Bima, the Street Lane Synagogue Publication

Having completed his BA, Ron enrolled at Leeds University to do an MA. His dissertation thesis was on the subject of 'The delayed emancipation of the European Jews after the French revolution'. His MA tutor was Eva Frojmovic Director, Centre for Jewish Studies University of Leeds.

She writes:

Ron enjoyed every minute of studying. He was an extremely cheerful presence in the classroom, and always worked hard - he truly came out of retirement in order to take the MA in Modern Jewish Studies. He felt that our expanded definition of culture, with direct attention to popular culture, validated his own experience as a child of the Jewish working class. He loved reminiscing about the old Jewish Leeds of Leyland's and Chapeltown, the back to backs and lack of mod cons.

Feeling confident, he approached the same tutor and asked her if she would be his mentor in a PhD on the subject of the Falashas. She said that there was no one in the University who knew enough about the subject to see him through. Undaunted he applied to the University of Manchester where he was interviewed by Professor Jackson, an expert in Jewish and Professor Alexander an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls and he was accepted

In 2005 at the age of 86 he received a PhD from the University of Manchester on the subject of '*Limits of Jewish Identity: Jewish attitudes to Black Jews of Ethiopia in the 19th and 20th Century*'. He said at the time 'that it was the most important, exciting and emotional day in his life.'

Michael Nelson. A cousin. (1932- 2017)

Michael and I had a lot in common. I was 10 days older than him. He was the oldest son of Sydney, my father's youngest brother. I have memories of staying with the family on their farm in Hoddesdon. Like me he became a doctor but chose the specialty of Psychiatry.

He decided to go to the USA and worked in Boston where I caught up with him during Diana's and my trip across the USA after completing my year at Johns Hopkins Hospital. It was he who suggested that I write to my deceased father expressing my rage against him. Sadly,

Michael suffered from Manic Depression most of his life and died peacefully at the age of 85.

Gerrit Van Hoff



At sixty, Gerrit is a tall powerful man whose physique is well suited to his chosen career as a stonemason.

He insists that he is not a sculptor, a term he limits to those who don't know what they are going to produce. He has a clear idea of the final product be it a garden ornament, a house name, a memorial stone or a decorative piece.

He begins with a drawing, which he then carves accurately.

We met as members of the Yorkshire Sculptor's Group, which was founded in about 2000 by like-minded sculptors mainly based in Yorkshire who wished to exhibit together.

Born in Holland, he came to England for personal reasons and has remained since. He lives in a small cottage attached to a farm in Long Marston, a small village close to Wetherby in North Yorkshire.

A row of tall trees that give it a special shade and privacy surround his semi circular garden, which abounds with many of his works. Since meeting, he has placed some of mine in the garden. He built an open-air studio in which he works, consisting of two workstations both of which are protected from the rain.

I have worked with him on many occasions for up to a week, staying at a local B & B. Although he makes and sells his carvings, his main source of income is his other love, namely a book collector and seller.

One of the tasks he set me on was to carve a bust of an Egyptian pharaoh in Yorkshire Limestone. It was a very enjoyable experience. I usually worked in the open on a banker, which he built up from heavy stone, he worked nearby undercover. It has been a very congenial relationship.

He is always willing to help me out to give advice about my work. I have learnt a great deal from him, particularly with regard to accurately copying from another piece. This has been a good discipline for me, since most of my work is free and if I

make a mistake, I merely change the form, or the idea. The need to observe closely and to measure carefully has been very good for me.

Doctors to whom I owe a great debt-

Mr Jack Batchelor (Batch)

I first met Mr Batchelor when I attended Guys Hospital for an interview. He was a tall distinguished looking man with a neat mustache, steely blue eyes and a strong upright posture, a man who exuded confidence, who had the appearance of a quintessential Englishman!

He had achieved a great deal in his chosen profession as an Orthopaedic surgeon and this included being President of the British Orthopaedic Association.

Born John Stanley Batchelor on Norfolk Island, a stone's throw from New Zealand, in 1905 and came to England in his twenties. He was the third generation of doctors who had trained at Guy's Hospital where he played rugby. He worked under TT Stamm and C. Lambrinudi before becoming a Consultant in 1945.

I first worked with him when I was appointed Registrar in Guy's A&E department. From the outset, his meticulously accurate history taking and clinical examination, had a strong influence on my clinical training.

At that time an accurate clinical diagnosis was the backbone of diagnosis and treatment. Years later a number of special investigations, especially MRI and Radioactive Scans has shifted the emphasis.

It was he who set up a Back Clinic at Guy's Hospital, possibly the first in the UK. It was the experience of attending this clinic that kindled my interest in Spinal Disorders which I continued as a Consultant in Leeds.

I had realised that back pain as a clinical problem was dull and lacked glamour so that traditionally back pain sufferers usually got short shrift and were bundled off to a Physiotherapist or given a back support, when so much more could have been done to relieve their suffering.

Following his example, I set up a Spinal Outpatients, dealing only with patients with Spinal problems. This clinic gave me access to information from which I could develop new treatments and evaluate existing ones.

As a result I wrote a number of clinical articles which were published in major medical journals. This interest prompted me to become a member of ISSLS (International Society for the study of the Lumbar Spine) and in the UK, the Back Pain Society of which I became the President for a year.

I travelled abroad to Canada, the USA, Japan and Europe in the course of my Back Pain Interest.

Batch' had a number of operations to his name including **an extra-articular fusion of the foot** for Polio **and a subtrochanteric Osteotomy of the femur** for severe OA of the hip. This was long before Replacement Arthroplasty became a routine Operation.

I recall so many memories of him striding across the department smiling and acknowledging everyone but there was a shyness about him which occasionally manifested itself as a stutter.

He was generous to a fault and always hosted his class of students to a dinner in a luxurious Restaurant at which he was accompanied by his wife Marjorie, a slightly built debutante type. I lost touch with him for many years but later heard that he was an inpatient in New Cross Hospital, one of the units which he had set up and served.

I visited him there some time before his death in 1987 and vividly remember seeing him sitting by his bed still tall, upright and impressive. I greeted him but his eyes were clouded over and staring into the distance. He didn't recognise or acknowledge me. It was as if he had not seen or heard me, his essence was no longer there. I left saddened by the cruelty of fate that allowed Alzheimer's disease to rob this talented man of his humanity.

Batch was one of many people who have had a significant effect upon me. Even as I write so many years later his warmth, consummate skill and generosity remain with me, it was an honour to have known him.

Mr R Campbell Connolly- Neurosurgeon RNOH (1919-2009)

I worked with him at the RNOH in Stanmore. He was a great inspiration: a meticulous surgeon, very gentle and very precise. He taught me the importance of respecting the tissues and being as gentle as possible. So much so that in my own unit in Leeds many years later, I specialised in Spinal surgery using the same techniques that I had learned from him.

Obituary- The Telegraph 18th November 2014

Rainier Campbell Connolly was born on July 15 1919, the son of a solicitor, and brought up in Brighton. His paternal grandfather, Colonel Benjamin Bloomfield Connolly, CB, was a distinguished military surgeon who had seen active service in several wars and been decorated for bravery.



Connolly was educated at Bedford School and did his medical training at St Bartholomew's Hospital (Barts).

During the Second World War the training period was shortened so as to accelerate the production of doctors for the armed forces, and Connolly qualified in 1941, just before his 22nd birthday.

After a house officer post in neurosurgery at Barts, he was sent to Oxford to work at the Military Hospital for Head Injuries. This 300-bed specialist wartime hospital head injury unit had been established at St Hugh's College under the direction of Brigadier Sir Hugh Cairns, Nuffield Professor of Surgery.

In previous wars there had been little or no specialist treatment for head wounds, subsequently recognised as a major cause of avoidable death and disability.

Connolly served in the RAMC from 1943 to 1947, attaining the rank of major. Between 1943 and 1945 he served in No 4 Mobile Neurosurgical Unit (MNSU) in Italy. Over a two-and-a-half-year period No 4 unit treated more than 6,000 cases, including many wounded partisans from both Italy and Yugoslavia. About a quarter of these cases were treated in 86 days following intense fighting in northern Italy. During such times, the surgeons regularly operated for more than 14 hours a day, often with as many as four patients being anaesthetised simultaneously. As a result Connolly acquired enormous experience of traumatic neurosurgery.

The adoption of Cairns's policy of early definitive surgery for the treatment of cranio-cerebral wounds together with the availability of penicillin had a dramatic effect. During the early days of penicillin there was no antibiotic resistance, and it was therefore extremely effective. The drug was not administered by injection, but

applied directly into the head wound.

Connolly and other members of the team were mentioned in despatches.

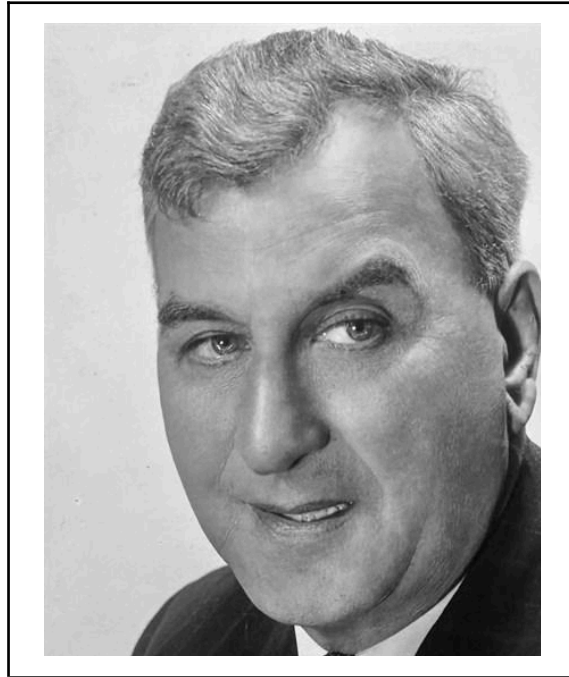
Seven years later he returned to London as consultant at Barts', initially as number two to the late John O'Connell and subsequently as senior neurosurgeon until his retirement from the NHS in 1984. He also worked at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, King Edward VII Hospital for Officers, the Wellington Hospital and the London Clinic.

Connolly could not have been less like the stereotyped image of the successful London surgeon as exemplified by the fictional character of Sir Lancelot Spratt, in the "Doctor" films of the 1950s. Whereas Spratt was presented as brusque and overbearing, Connolly had a relaxed, easy manner and a quiet, unaffected charm. Kind by nature, he was held in great affection by his colleagues, his staff and, most importantly, by his patients.

He continued in private practice for many years after his retirement from the NHS.

In 1948 he married a fellow doctor, Elizabeth Cullis, daughter of the late Professor C Gilbert Cullis. His wife, their son and two daughters all survive him.

Mr Wilfred Hynes (1903-1991)



I spent two years in Sheffield of which six months were spent in the Plastic Surgical unit at Fulford Grange, a small self contained unit headed by Mr Wilfred Hynes, a plastic Surgeon. He had extensively studied and written about a wide range of topics including flap vasculature, cleft palate speech and pharyngoplasty. He gave a Hunterian Lecture in 1953 on his Hynes Pharyngoplasty which is still used to this day.

It was a most rewarding time and I think it laid the foundation for my subsequent successful surgical career. He was an avuncular man, softly spoken, kind and generous. He edited my first clinical paper on the treatment of Malar(cheek bone) fractures.

We met initially in the Theatre, He asked me to scrub with him. I became aware that he was watching me closely and I asked him why. He replied that he could tell a surgeon by the way he scrubbed.

I never found out if I passed the test but learned a great deal from him. I learned to take free skin grafts with the Braithwaite knife, how to raise skin flaps, make skin tubes, -all the procedures needed to treat the soft tissue injuries associated with severe trauma. Today's surgeons call upon the plastic surgeons for their help but because of my training I was able to do most myself. Mr Hynes taught me to handle the skin as gently as if the patient was still awake, a lesson I never forgot.

He edited my first clinical paper (which incidentally never got published) on the treatment of Malar (cheek bone) fractures. He read the first draft and tore it to pieces. He taught me the importance of saying what you mean in the most precise and accurate manner.

Obituary: British Journal of Plastic Surgery-Vol 44, p551-552, 1991

Wilfred Hynes M.B. B.Ch., F.R.C.S. Eng. Wilfred Hynes died peacefully at home on March 11th. 1991. Born in Leeds in January 1903, he was educated at Leeds Grammar School. followed by a First Class Honours medical degree from Leeds University, qualifying in 1927. He also obtained the Primary Surgical Fellowship as a student. He was appointed as Resident Anaesthetist at the Sheffield Royal Hospital, where he rapidly changed course to surgery. He subsequently became Honorary Consultant in General Surgery in 1934.

At the outbreak of the Second World War he was one of the first physicians from Sheffield, along with his colleague Dr T. E. Gumpert, to volunteer for military service. He served in the R.A.M.C. and reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, seeing service in West Africa, Normandy, the Benelux countries, and ultimately Germany. Prior to this period, he had observed that there was a desperate need for reconstructive surgery and devoted his surgical skills to this.

Within a week of demobilisation in 1945, the new Plastic Surgical Unit was opened at the Royal Hospital, Sheffield. The unit soon found a home in Fulwood Annexe, with some additional beds in the Children's Hospital and a burns unit at Wharnccliffe Hospital. Once the Department was established he turned his attention to investigating a number of fundamental problems.

He was interested in the physiological changes in the small blood vessels in tubes and flaps, not only to improve understanding but to speed up their transfer. He hoped to introduce scientific methods for assessing the circulation at a time when decisions in tissue transfer were made largely on clinical grounds.

To this end he published the atropine test and the fluorescein/ histamine test (jointly with A. G. Macgregor). Having inherited many "failed" cleft palate repairs he soon realised that additional tissue would have to be introduced. He devised the first sphincter pharyngoplasty which improved the speech results dramatically and this became the basis of his Hunterian Lecture.

At the same time his interest in hydronephrosis, which dated from his time as a general surgeon, was rekindled by his colleague J. C. Anderson. the urologist. He produced a most elegant method of repair, based on plastic surgical principles, which has been accepted universally. Always on the look-out for ways of avoiding the use of tube pedicles, he recorded simple alternative methods, for example "shaving" and skin grafting for unstable scars and radio-dermatitis, and the reverse dermis graft as a form of skin cover for selected sites.

One of his last publications was a contribution to the problem of lining the contracted eye socket. He was particularly interested in providing a good anaesthetic service and made sure that the necessary equipment was available for his colleagues. He patiently taught and encouraged a large number of surgical trainees and visitors who doubtless will remember some of his sayings, such as "keep it simple" and "there must be a better way".

On retirement in 1969 Wilfred Hynes had created a major academic plastic unit with much external 551 552 British Journal of Plastic Surgery recognition.

During his tenure he was a Member of the Council of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons, President of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons, and Hunterian Professor of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Even in his 86th year he was made Honorary Member of the Craniofacial Society of Great Britain. About the same time, he was invited to read a paper to the British Society of Urologists. In this, his last paper, he emphasised the need for all surgeons to apply plastic surgical techniques inside the body as well as on the skin surface. He was devoted to walking. He also continued to play his much beloved piano.

Robert A. Robinson 1914-1990



Robert Robinson, a former director of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, was an authority on total hip joint replacement and one of the developers of an operation that alleviated much of the pain associated with the removal of cervical discs. He came to Hopkins in 1953 and was the first member of the orthopaedics faculty to be named a distinguished service professor.

I had completed two years at Senior Reg at Guys when Batch suggested that I should get my BTA (Been to America) He had a close relationship with Robbie Robinson at Johns Hopkins and arranged a year's Sabbatical there. We travelled by ship, Sarah was two years old at the time.

He was seated at his desk, a big man, about fifty with a mop of white hair and an infectious smile. He received me warmly and through the year I was with the department, was always good-natured and friendly.

Dr. Robinson, who died in 1990, has been praised by his colleagues as a "scientific surgeon" who trained a generation of physicians who became leaders in orthopaedic surgery. Dr. Robinson said that his greatest satisfaction was in "seeing a patient able to do something he could not do before, as, for instance, to walk without pain." The professorship is held by the chairman of the department.

R B Zachary 1913-1999



Robert Bransby Zachary, Consultant Paediatric Surgeon, Sheffield Children's Hospital 1947-78; Professor Associate in Paediatric Surgery, Sheffield University 1976-78 (Emeritus); died St Alban's, Newfoundland 1 F

I worked with Robert Zachary in the Paediatric Unit. He had a severe scoliosis but it didn't seem to affect his energy or enthusiasm. I remember that he drank Horlicks in sister's office after a night's operating sessions and we had many as children were referred from other hospitals and would often arrive in the dead of night.

A devout Roman Catholic, he never declined to treat a sick child no matter how severe the disease or deformity. I recall one night when we spent 8 hours operating on a new born child with severe exomphalos, a condition in which the abdominal wall falls to close allowing the bowels to spew out onto the exterior.

In this case the whole gut was gangrenous and had to be excised which meant that there was insufficient remaining bowel to sustain life. Most surgeons would have let the child die without surgery but that did not seem an option for Zachary, needless to say the child died. It made me think about the nature of religion. As a religious man why couldn't he have accepted 'God's will' and let the child die. He seemed to be battling between himself and His God.

He had an illustrious career but his 'fanaticism' had another outlet in the treatment of the condition of Spina Bifida. a congenital condition of the spine often associated with severe neurological loss. John Lorber, a Paediatrician and colleague had followed up a large number of these children until adolescence. His study showed that despite all types of surgery to help these children walk, when they came to puberty, they were often more comfortable and less conspicuous in a wheelchair than struggling in callipers and crutches. Lorber's study concluded that because of the very poor quality of life for many of these children, severe Spina bifida should not be treated at all. It appears that Zachary did not accept this finding and continued to strive to get the affected children to walk arguing that each child should be offered a chance even if at a later date the surgery did not benefit them.

A discussion article by Barron H Lerner 14 June 2005 in the New York Times reviews these two opposing views. I learned a lot from Mr Zachary although at that time I had not formulated my own views as to the role of surgery in congenital conditions. As an aside issue I note that there is now a new non-surgical treatment for Exomphalos developed in the USA provided the sac is intact.

I recall one patient who made a very strong impression on me. She was a twelve year-old with Spina Bifida who was incontinent. I was planning to give her an artificial bladder made from a small part of the bowel into which the kidneys would drain and which would open onto the abdominal wall. It sounds unpleasant but it can be a life saving procedure as it prevents repeated urinary tract infections.

I was waiting in the theatre when she was brought in anaesthetized. I looked up and saw her small familiar face before the gowns covered her. I remember experiencing a feeling of paralysis. I froze, unable to move. I had become acutely aware of what I was about to do, to cut into another human being. It seemed such a terrible assault and at the same time represented an act of faith that she had in me. In that moment which I shall never forget I became conscious of the privilege that each patient bestows upon a surgeon, to allow another human being to hold your life in his or her hands. It may seem trite to some but at that moment the feeling was palpably real. As the gowns covered up her face and only the operating site remained visible, I reverted to being the surgeon.

Paediatrics is a particularly demanding specialty as the staff is often dealing with very small severely ill children. The importance of establishing an intravenous line in these frail often dehydrated children cannot be overemphasized. The ability to set one up is essential but it is a steep learning curve and when the new registrar begins he or she takes a while to become proficient. A study carried out by one of the nursing staff showed that as the new staff begin their appointment, there is sadly an increased mortality until they become experienced. This study resulted in a change of practice whereby a senior member was always available to cover the junior until he or she had become proficient.

Time

Time is on the one hand measurable, definable and physical and on the other ethereal, mystical and mercurial. A journey by air through several time zones demonstrates this to be true. The traveller starts from his home in sufficient time to check in at the airport. A traffic jam delays his progress and time races as he repeatedly looks at his watch. Arriving late at the check in, he then waits for the flight to depart, time hanging like a heavy cloud each minute dragging itself past the last. Once on board the flight is delayed and again time seems to stop.

The journey creates the greatest time confusion, as invisible time zones are crossed. Time slows as the passenger waits for his drink or food and speeds up when he sleeps. A stop at an intermediate country again challenges the perception of time.

Sitting in the lounge, the clock seems to go backwards but when a young, pretty woman engages you in conversation, the journey passes too quickly. A delay due to the weather or a mechanical fault again brings time to a halt.

In practice, the physical nature of time has in reality little relevance to our perception of it. Time is measured in our heads. It is our experience of time which is a true measure of it. The fact that the physical clock ticks evenly throughout the day merely reminds us that a clock or watch has no perception of time. It can only measure the physicality of time.

Nature has no place for time. It changes throughout the year depending on the length of the day, the temperature, the rain and the sun. In space, time is an irrelevance; the distances are immeasurable and eternal.

Yet without an agreed measure of time, modern life would be chaotic. Before there were timepieces, man depended on the sun to guide his life. Sunrise was the time to leave one's bed, sunset the time to retire.

Violence Begets Violence

Violence seems to dominate in every part of the world today. It is as if no one can resolve a problem without resorting to it. Yet few believe that violence is hard wired in the new born child, that a child learns violence in the womb. At birth a child's mind is considered to be like a clean slate upon which the family writes its future. It can be a loving caring one or a frightened hidden one, the choice is ours.

In each generation, children experience the influence of their parents and then apply that culture to their own young, perpetuating both good and harmful influences? If the mother felt the pain of violence from her parents, she would in moments of stress resort to the same response to her child's misbehavior.

Shouldn't we ask, 'is there such a thing as a naughty child?' A child can be obstinate, head strong or questioning. Playing games with the family computer can be naughty wrong or the product of an enquiring mind.

Each form of behaviour can be seen as a learning experience or being naughty. So the question is how do we break that long tradition of imposing our will on a child, to stand up against our past and say there is a better way?

It is the way of loving, of caring, of kindness and gentleness, of forgiving and understanding. These are strong enough influences to overcome the inheritance of the past. Let's see if a new generation can bring change and create a world of which we can all be proud.

It begins with today's youth. They must be prepared to reject the traditions of the past and create a new morality, a morality that no longer allows the thinking of the older generation to dominate the social structure.

Youth must learn to stand up to their parents and grandparents and say no we reject your ways, we choose empowerment, not punishment. We choose freedom to allow our young to grow up in a forgiving environment, where values are explained and not force fed, where a mistake is not a failure but a learning experience, a broken glass is not a tragedy, it is what it is, a broken glass.

Then we will have started a revolution in which a new born child can grow up without fear, confident and safe, safe in the knowledge that each is unique and valued not for some imposed set of values but for his or her unique qualities.

Wakening Tuesday 12.1.10,

In the twilight of waking this morning, I returned to my former home in Leeds to Sandmoor Avenue and found myself walking in the front garden, up the front drive and onto the path leading to the front door towards the flower bed in front of the porch. It was very quiet, not a sound, no birds, no car sounds, nothing.

I noticed the short green shoots of the bulbs suggesting it must have been sometime in early spring. I was aware of movement inside the house and assumed it was Diana. I felt calm and at ease, happy and relaxed. It all seemed very real and natural.

As I recall the events now some hours later, it still seems real and I have no sense that it was imagined. But I was in Kenya, a far cry from my past home in Leeds. It made me think about the dilemma of reality and imagination and raise such question as,

Did the past really exist or is it a figure of our imagination? And if it did exist, how close to our memory of it was the reality.

As a child I remember sitting in the front seat of a large open car with my father, driving along the Strand in London. I recall it as an enormously wide road, yet going there some years later; I found it to be quite an ordinary road, not wide by normal standards.

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to discuss our upbringing with my brother who is two years older than me. His recall of those early events is very different from mine. Which version is correct? Are they both correct and both wrong?

There is no way of knowing. So when I read an account of childhood by a famous person I remember my own uncertainty and have come to the opinion that there is a great deal of creative writing going on.

Walking

We take it for granted and don't even think about it. We get up from a chair or bed and move around the room on our two legs seemingly unaware of the miracle that we are experiencing. Yet it could be seen as one of the most important qualities we possess.

Homo sapiens is the only living mammal that solely has biped locomotion, the lesser mammals having a combination of bi and quadrupedal gait.

Bipedalism in man is associated with very specialised anatomy of the foot, lower limb and spine. Why it occurred remains a mystery. Once it appeared, it undoubtedly conferred great advantage on us.

Apart from the ability to move quickly in order to avoid danger, it allowed a change to occur in the upper limbs. They evolved from a walking limb to a holding limb with a prehensile digit, the thumb.

Both the human hand and the foot have very specialised anatomy not seen in any other species. The adaptation of the hand with its ability to oppose the thumb to the digits (fingers) has been considered by some to be one of the most important evolutionary advances, allowing man, the use of primitive tools and in time a whole gamut of machines.

To the man in the street to whom walking is a natural way of life, these details are of little interest. To him it is a means of transport that is readily available, a leisure activity, a sport and much more. Friends and lovers share it and the heart loves it.

What If? To have or not to have?

It was a chance medical consultation in London. I had gone to my local doctor to discuss the recent flareup of my eczema. She carried out a medical examination including listening to my heart. She heard an extra sound that indicated that I had a leaking Mitral valve, the one between my left Atrium and my left Ventricle.

It is 1998 and I have returned to Mombasa to give me time and space to consider the pros and cons of the Mitraclip operation. What if I do nothing and simply get on with my life? Are the prognostics suggested by Dr Smith correct? Just because it can be done, should it be done?

On the other hand, I only have one life and I need to get it right. Will I miss the boat and become so disabled that I can't get back to the UK even if I needed to?

And what of the operation? What can I hope from it? Life is precious and I have a lot to live for.

OK let's decide to go ahead, what are the risks? I understand that I need to have a GA. Will the anaesthetist respect my concerns about my previous urinary retention and use minimal drugs? Will she/he say I will and then disregard my wishes?

Can the clip slip and if so what would the effects be and can they be corrected? Will the operation be successful but I go into acute retention and need a prostatectomy?

And for how long? Will unloading the left ventricle allow it to recover or will it remain damaged and progressively deteriorate.

These are some of the questions that I am wrestling with. Is there anyone who can answer them honestly?

Friday 10th August, I have been back in Mombasa almost a week and already I feel more relaxed and at ease. Being with Celina and the boys has brought a degree of normality back into my life. She has taken it very philosophically and has been praying for me. I can begin to rationalize and think clearly about the future.

On that basis I can see that it makes sense to go ahead with the operation. It is probably the ideal time when I am still reasonably fit.

It is thanks to my career that I can afford to have it done privately. I have for a long time believed that the NHS needs to be more selective in the applications of its resources so it is appropriate not to offer them to a man in his 86th year and use them on a younger person.

Just spoke to Paul, he will probably be in SA but will let me know ASAP

Just heard on the radio that Sir V S Naipaul died aged 85 after an amazing life. He talked about the importance of writing in his life. Much of his work was non-fiction. Perhaps that is the way I should go. I would love to try a book on the part of the body similar to the elements book by.

Having thought for a while I decided to seek the opinion of Prof Mayet. He replied promptly having seen my scans etc. and advised a wait and see policy. I feel greatly relieved.

I decided to see if I could speak to Dr Smith and was able to while he was on holiday in France. We had a very detailed discussion about the pros and cons of proceeding with the op. I was persuaded with his argument that my ventricle is showing signs of failure and with the available evidence we don't know whether the ventricle will improve after surgery so why wait.

The issue of the NHS paying is a red herring as far as I am concerned. So we are all set.

I feel relieved that I have made the decision and am now impatient to get on with it.

30th August 1998, Admitted to Harefield Hospital for Heart Op.

It went very smoothly. I have very scant memories of what happened. I remember getting onto a trolley and being wheeled to the theatre. I shimmed myself onto the narrow table and said Hello to Dr Smith and the others. Then suddenly I had no recall until what seemed a few minutes later when I woke clear headed and alert.

Simon, who had waited for me, said it was four hours later. I had quite severe bruising of my right groin less on my left groin also my left wrist and right neck. I was discharged Saturday Sept 1st. Bruising cleared quickly and is now totally gone

But it's a big but, they inserted a urinary catheter and I went home with an indwelling catheter. Happily I was able to get rid of it.

Tuesday 2nd October 2018

I did it and am now back in Mombasa. In many respects it feels like a dream-not something that happened to me, but I know it did. Was it the correct decision? - only time will tell. All the signs of it have faded. My abiding memories are of the amazing friendship I experienced from Simon and Harold as well as Sarah, Paul and Celina.

I still feel tired and a little breathless on exertion but I am walking every day and hope things will improve. It all depends on whether my left ventricle can strengthen now that it is not having to do twice the work.

Saturday 6th. Dinner with Chris at the Mombasa Club – sneezing ++ a cold coming on.

One week later- had a bad week coughing and spluttering all the time- slowly getting better- it was just what I didn't need. Have been reluctant to walk not good.

Harefield's are dragging their feet over the repayment Why? I have agreed the amount so what are they waiting for? Money paid but nothing from Gerri-Will my complaint have any effect? Finally repayment came in full

Thursday 18th -Cough and cold much better though still dragging on. The water works tablets must be taken soon after meals or else I feel slightly woozy because of their effect on my blood pressure.

Woke with blurring of vision- lasted several minutes- saw Optician – needed slight adjustment to my glasses- no Cataract. Am using single lens glasses for the computer, much better clarity.

Wednesday 31 Oct 2018 I was waiting at the MYC to come home when I noticed a left Hemianopia – the vision in my left eye had reduced to a central rectangle. It lasted less than a minute and then cleared. I have had no recurrence.

Have noticed a slight increase in unsteadiness on my feet, especially when I get up at night to pee.

Am getting lazy, not walking enough-keep making excuses. Must get a grip

Conclusion: *Life is what you make it. Don't think too much. Help as many people as you can and get as much pleasure as possible.*